

EPISTLE: 2 PETER

3



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PRACTICE QUIZ

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The two epistles of the Holy Apostle Peter are closely linked: the apostle tells us in 2 Peter 3 that he wrote both “to stir up your pure minds by way of reminder” to follow the holy prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself in righteousness (2 Peter 3:1-2).

There is a potential problem for Christian believers: the apostles preached the imminent return of Christ – and almost 2000 years have passed since their time – and yet Christ has not returned; scoffers will state that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (3:3-4). St. Peter responds to this criticism with two points. First, he notes that “by the word of God” the heavens and earth were created and have been sustained (even through the flood during the time of Righteous Noah), but God has also “reserved for fire” the ungodly until the day of judgment (3:5-7). Secondly, St. Peter also points out that God is not restricted to time as we experience it; instead, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (3:8). Therefore, we should remember that God is simply being patient, giving all sinners the opportunity for

repentance (3:9). St. Pachomius the Great puts it like this, “Let us not look upon God’s patience as ignorance. He holds back and delays so that, when we have been converted to a better state, we may not be handed over torments.”

St. Peter tells us that the day in which Christ returns will be “as a thief in the night” (3:10), meaning we will have no way of anticipating precisely when it will happen; as the Didache simply warns us, “Be ready, for you do not know the hour in which our Lord comes.” The apostle tells us that the heavens and earth as we currently experience them will be “dissolved” and transformed into a “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (3:12-13) – they will, as St. Methodius says, be purified and renewed.

The monk Andreas explains how we are related to the destiny of the created world: “It is not just we, says Peter, but the whole creation around us also, which will be changed for the better. For the creation will share in our glory just as it has been subjected to destruction and corruption because of us. Either way it shares our fate.”

How should Christians live in the meantime? St. Peter answers, “Looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (3:14). We should also beware falling into wickedness, and instead “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:17-18). A key to this is always keeping in

mind what we have been taught by the Holy Apostle Paul: the longsuffering of our Lord is our salvation (3:15).

LIFE TIP

St. John of Damascus explains how we should avoid people who twist the meaning of Holy Scripture: “The enemy of our souls has made some people turn away from the straight road and divided them by strange teachings and taught them to interpret certain sayings of the Scriptures falsely. But the truth is one, and it is that which was preached by the glorious apostles and inspired Fathers and which shines in the universal Church.”

