

II Peter 3

In I Corinthians 13:13, there are three great realities mentioned: faith, hope and charity. That verse tells us that the greatest of these is charity, but that does not negate the importance of the other two. And it is one of those two that I would like to discuss a bit with you today. Both faith (or believing) and hope are actions of the mind of a believer. Unlike believing faith, hope is directed towards the future rather than what is available now.

Romans 8:24,25

Hope is for that which is not available yet as this passage describes. Hope is always directed towards the future. One of the effects of hope is described in Hebrews 6, where God's Word tells us that hope is an anchor to the soul (Hebrews 6:18,19). For a ship, the anchor keeps the ship from drifting off from a specific spot. That is what having hope does for us – keeps us from drifting off.

When we as believers think of our hope, we often go in our minds to the gathering together of the Church, the Body of Christ, as described in I Thessalonians 4 and I Corinthians 15. That is understandable and the gathering together is certainly an event that we are patiently waiting for. But really, that event is just a beginning point. It happens in the twinkling of an eye. Our hope is surely comprised of more than that, stretching out for eternity. As I mentioned, hope provides an anchor to the soul, something that keeps us from drifting off. I would like to read with you a passage that has helped me to build that for myself.

II Peter 3:1a

This phrase tells us that this is the second epistle written to this group. So, we want to look briefly at I Peter to see who was being written to. Whenever we are reading God's Word, we want to be aware of to whom it is written and of whom it is true.

I Peter 1:1 – 3

The word "strangers" simply means "sojourners" or "temporary residents". "Scattered" is the Greek word *diaspora*, the dispersed. This is a term that is used

to describe the people of Israel who had been scattered from their homeland. We remember that people of Israel were scattered or dispersed to other areas by the Assyrians in II Kings 17. Another scattering happened in II Chronicles 36 by the Babylonians. Still another occurred in Acts 8 when Judean believers were scattered abroad by the persecution following the death of Stephen.

Also remember that, following the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, Peter, James and John extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas. They indicated that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles (the heathen), but that they would continue to minister to the circumcision (Israel). Galatians 2:9. This epistle is addressed to those dispersed of Israel.

The areas mentioned here comprise several different regions in what we call Asia Minor. It is worth noting that Paul had been ministering in (and writing to) at least some of these areas. He had been through parts of Galatia and the cities of Ephesus and Colosse are both in the area that is mentioned here. Back to II Peter.

II Peter 3:1,2

Peter was writing to them to help them remember what they had previously been taught. We certainly can't remember something that we have never learned or heard. It is also true that the Word of God that we have heard doesn't help us if we don't remember it.

II Peter 3:3,4

There have always been scoffers and mockers, those who question what God has promised. And if believers are not cautious, these scoffers and mockers can cause God's people to doubt, to wander off, to give up. Certainly, you can get discouraged and even depressed at the state of the world that we live in. You can begin to wonder where God in all of this is.

II Peter 3:5 – 7

I do not believe that there is any contradiction between the Word of God and science – **IF** you have the right understanding of the rightly-divided Word of God and true scientific facts, not theories, assumptions or hypotheses. The Bible is not a scientific book, but where it speaks, it speaks accurately. When information and

knowledge is available, all ignorance is willing ignorance. Here, reference is made to the first heaven and earth.

Genesis 1:1,2

God created the heaven and the earth by His Word, then something catastrophic happened. The earth became without form and void (Hebrew *tohu va bohu*). That is not how it was created; it became that way. On your way back to II Peter, stop for a moment in Isaiah.

Isaiah 45:18

God intended the earth to be inhabited. So, after it became without form and void, He began to put things back into order by the same Word that had initially created it. If we had kept reading in Genesis 1, we would see repeatedly “And God said”. When God speaks, then you have His Word. He began to put things back into order and that is the heavens and earth which we have now, kept by the same Word.

II Peter 3:8,9

Because God is eternal, time and the passing of time are not a factor for God. Human beings, living sequentially, make the passing of time very important. But for God, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. I have often thought that the three days and nights that Jesus was in the heart of the earth must have seemed like three thousand years to God. But Pentecost (which happened about two thousand years ago) seems like it was just a couple of days ago.

So, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. In the context, this refers to the promise of his coming mentioned in verse 4. He is longsuffering, wanting all to come to repentance. Remember God’s will is that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

II Peter 3:10

In the Word of God, the day of the Lord is set in contrast to man’s day. Today, in every field of human endeavor and activity, there are blowhards and gasbags who think they are really something. But that will change when it is the day of the Lord. We can look at the first occurrence of this phrase to see that.

Isaiah 2:11 – 17

There are a lot of different events that will take place during this day of the Lord, but the main point here is that it will be the Lord alone who will be exalted in that day.

II Peter 3:10 – 12

This is the end of the heavens and earth that are now (verse 7). And of course, it is always important to remember that the Church will have been gathered together prior to this ending. You could call this ending of the heavens and earth which are now global warming on a catastrophic scale.

II Peter 3:13

This new heaven and earth wherein dwells righteousness is the heaven and earth of Revelation 21:1 and following.

II Peter 3:14 – 16

Seeing that we know these things, we stay diligent in our lives now. We account, or know, that this time of the longsuffering of the Lord is for salvation, but that time will have an end. And then Peter directs these believers to the epistles written by Paul. Some of the things that Paul taught were hard for these believers from Israel background to understand. For some of them it was even harder to accept. And even in those days, there were those who fought the Word of God to their own destruction.

II Peter 3:17, 18

Here again, we see that hope is an anchor to the soul. Knowing these things, that judgement and a new heaven and earth are coming, that there will be a time when everything is set right in this new heaven and earth, we stay steadfast in our lives now, growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.