

The Promises of God

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Every other month we have the privilege of attending a local retirement home and conducting a worship service with the residents. This past Sunday was our allotted day and we considered with those present the promises of God as they relate to II Peter 3:1-13. Let us consider that lesson in our bulletin this week.

II Peter 3:1-4

¶This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

3 ¶Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

Peter writes this epistle to brethren of like faith (1:1) and he wants to remind them of some of the promises of God given through both the prophets and the apostles. Peter knew this would both encourage the brethren and exhort them to continue to be faithful.

He tells them that there would be those who would “scoff” at God’s promises. Since (over what they would deem a long period of time) God has chosen to delay his coming, they would doubt God and “make light” of His promises. We see many today who take lightly the promises of God, even scoffing at them. What do we know about God’s promises?

We know His promises are SURE. Hebrews 10:23 tells us **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)”** In Titus 1:2 we find **“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”** We know God cannot lie and we know he is faithful to keep His word. II Peter 1:4 says **“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”** God’s promises are SURE, they are GREAT and they are PRECIOUS. We even see why - **“that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature”**. Because of God’s promises, we have hope of obtaining a final dwelling place with God.

Verses 5-7

¶5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Peter tells us that those who scoff at God’s word willingly ignore the fact that God promised once before He was going to destroy the world (Gen. 6:7). Noah preached while he built the ark, (2 Pet. 2:5) and yet many scoffed at God’s promise. Noah possibly preached some 120 years (Gen 6:3) and yet only Noah and seven others listened to the

promises of God and built their hope and trust upon them. Peter tells us that just as God destroyed the earth in the days of Noah, he promises to again destroy the earth, but next time it will be with fire (vs.7).

Verses 8-13

8 ¶But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 ¶The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 ¶Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

In verses 8 and 9 Peter reminds us God is not bound by the constraints of time as we are. The Lord is not “slack” in keeping His word but rather is longsuffering for the sake of mankind.

As we are reminded of God’s promises to man, we recognize that some promises are UNCONDITIONAL meaning regardless of circumstance, they will come to pass. They are unavoidable. Notice what Peter wrote “...**the day of the Lord WILL come...**”- the day of the Lord is a certainty- ...”**as a thief in the night...**” it will be unexpected- “...**heavens shall pass away...elements shall melt...the earth and the works...therein shall be burned up**” God will destroy the earth with fire. In verse 13 Peter references an unconditional promise of God given through the pen of Isaiah. Isaiah 65:17 **¶For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.** We are promised unconditionally in Mat.25:13,31 that Jesus will return again one day. In John 5:28-29 we find ALL the dead will be raised again and be rewarded according to their works.

Peter wanted to remind his brethren of the certainty of God’s unconditional promise of a coming judgment day, but in doing so he alludes to God’s CONDITIONAL promises he has made to mankind. In verse 11 Peter reminded them that since the day of the Lord is coming, they should live in “**holy conversation and godliness**”. You see, Peter knew that inheriting the “new heaven and earth” spoken of by Isaiah is CONDITIONAL. In other words, we are not guaranteed this promise unless we meet the requirements set forth by God.

In I John 1:6-7 we find “**If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: BUT IF we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**” We notice the words “but if”. They are followed by the conditions of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus from all sin. We must walk in the light.

Matthew 10:22 “...but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” The condition of “enduring to the end” is stipulated in this verse to be saved.

Matthew 11:28-30 “**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**” Again we see the requirements of the announced reward- “Come unto me all ye that labor”-the invitation is to those who work for Him – “Take my yoke upon you”-We must pick up the work of Christ to find rest for our souls. Failure to meet the prescribed requirements will invalidate the promised reward!

Revelation 2:10 “...**be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**” In order to receive the crown of life, the church at Smyrna had to “be faithful unto death” and so must we.

We have but scratched the surface of the wonderful study of the promises of God, but we KNOW we can take comfort in His promises IF we are faithful to His word. God’s promises are SURE, they are GREAT, and they are PRECIOUS! Faithful Christians should look forward to the promise of the coming day of the Lord but let us not forget the promise of II Cor. 5:10 to keep us motivated in our service to our LORD.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”