

II Peter 3:3-9
MARKING TIME THIS NEW YEAR

Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 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 creation!"

For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water—by which the world that then existed perished being flooded with water.

But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved, for fire, until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance!

There are two ways to mark time: 1) Count the days since something happened. A widow may answer the question "How long has your husband been gone?" with "153 days." 2) Or a person can count the days until something happens. Students are known to answer "How long before school is out?" with a quick "56 days." As this world passes through time, as nations, cultures, and civilizations pass through time, the years are marked in one manner or another. Because it's impossible to count the years left, we count the years gone by. Today we enter calendar year 2023 A.D., increasing the number by one. The "A.D." is often assumed to mean "After Death," after the death of Christ. Not so. Too bad, because "B.C." means "Before Christ." "A.D." is the abbreviation for *Anno Domini*, Latin, meaning "In the Year of the Lord." We are at year 2023 in the year of our Lord's coming to earth.

The Apostle Peter speaks about correct and incorrect conclusions drawn from marking time. He is writing to scattered Christians living in Asia Minor—Turkey today. He had already written a first letter. This is his second. He reminds them of the great blessings they have in the crucified and risen Jesus—righteousness (instead of guilt), escape from this world of disappointment, and life forever in heaven. The ungodly, however, will perish. These truths were no fairy tale. Peter himself had seen Jesus in His divine glory on the mountain of transfiguration. He heard the Father say from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!" Jesus was the Savior.

But, as Peter says, there were and are plenty of ungodly, non-believers around, even false prophets, who twist the Word and Promises of God to suit their own desires, health, and wealth. *Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 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 creation!"* He calls these men "scoffers," men who make fun of God's message in Christ, holding no stock in it whatsoever. They have seen maybe twenty or thirty years go by since Christ rose from the dead and promised to return—as the Christians proclaimed—but saw no fulfillment of these words; and thus they scoffed. They applied their scoffing and disbelief to all the Old Testament words and promises of God as well. The scoffers stated, "Nothing ever changes; neither will this. Our fathers died, and people still die. Nothing changes, even from the beginning of creation until now." In other words, "We don't believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior who will return to raise the dead, judge the world, and take the believes to heaven and cast the unbelievers to hell."

In their marking years, they made the same mistake that many do today. They assumed that nothing ever changes, that things always proceed the way they always have. To them Christ would never return and the End would never come—just keep adding on years. Doesn't that sound like the theory of evolution today? The evolutionist says, "We can date rocks and fossils on the assumption that the processes of geology—rivers cutting down channels, deltas laying down silt, etc.—have always gone on at the same rate as they do now and always will." It is interesting—the scoffers back than believed in creation, but did not believe in a return of Christ, a resurrection from the grave, and an eternal rescue in heaven through Jesus. Today, there are those who deny creation, yet claim to hold to the rest of Christian truth and salvation in Jesus. I wonder how they deal with the thought of the sudden resurrection from the grave and the return to life of dead bodies when Christ returns? They ignore God's truth willfully—in order to make everything line up with their own thoughts and brainwaves.

Things have not always operated the same. God steps in. *For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.* Out of nothing God created the heavens and earth. That is hard to process and imagine, so hard that it's easiest just to quit thinking about it, and accept it by faith, or scoff and deny it. Imagine if I assembled a dining room hutch right here before your eyes. I said the word, and the pieces would fly in and fit together. Sounds a little far-fetched. What if I simply commanded

a finished hutch to appear—not by tele-transport from the furniture store, but a new and unique one just made just now? Impossible. How about if I made a living creature—a full grown cow. Un-imaginable! That is creation. God simply said it, and the heavens and the earth were there. He used six ordinary days. He could have used more or less. But the Bible says six. Peter talks about the earth “*standing out of the water and in the water.*” Upon the creation, Genesis says the Spirit hovered over the waters. On day three God separated the dry land from the seas--*By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.* God set boundaries for the water. He says in Job 38:4-10 *Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth . . . or who shut in the sea with doors. . . . when I fixed My limit for it, and set bars and doors; when I said, This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop?* Also, God’s creation was complete as made, with the appearance of age. The trees did not look only one day old, or the fish, or the bears, or Adam. God starts, stops, and changes nature’s processes at will.

God likewise changed the rate at which things happened with the water of the flood—*the world that then existed perished being flooded with water.* Consider the geologic tumult brought by the flood at Noah’s time. Things did not proceed the same. The floodgates of the heavens and the great fountains of the deep were opened. Great changes must have taken place. Because it doesn’t fit popular ideas and explanations, creation and the flood are willfully disregarded.

And God will interfere with the standard operation of things yet one more time, on a grand scale. *The heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved, for fire, until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* The END is coming, destruction by fire for this world as we know it, and for the unbelievers the fires of hell. Do you want to mark time properly? Be aware the End is drawing nearer. We can’t know the time. God does not reveal that to us. But it’s coming, for certain.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. God does not mark time like we do. It’s been 2023 years since the year of our Lord’s entrance into life on this earth. It seems like a long time to us. Satan tempts us to wonder, “Will He really ever come back? In our lifetime? In 500 years? In 3000 years?” It’s easiest just to ignore it and say it will never happen. But it will. From His vantage point, “time” doesn’t matter. One of our days is AS a thousand years to Him—“AS” not “IS.” And a thousand years of our time is AS one day to Him. He is timeless. We don’t know how much time until the End comes. But God does. Trust Him. Go by His timetable.

What is His timetable? *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance!* He is not slack, is not late, is not tardy, is not a procrastinator. The End will come at the right time. Why the delay? Why didn’t He end the world when Jesus rose from the grave? He has a purpose. He’s waiting for men, women, and children to be with Him in heaven; some are not yet born. The Lord is lovingly patient—longsuffering. He puts up with us and with this wicked world, in order that more be saved, that more come to repentance. In Jesus’ parable of the Weeds and the Wheat, the weeds were allowed to grow with the wheat until the wheat came to harvest, lest some the wheat be uprooted with the weeds.

God’s time table involves His desire that *that all should come to repentance.* And what does it mean “to repent?” “To repen”t means “to re-think” an issue. What does the Lord want us to re-think?

1) To re-think our actions, words, and thoughts. “Lord I have not done as You expect, desire, or demand. I admit, I have sinned.

2) To re-think our attitude about offending Him. “Father I am filled with sorrow--I am “sorry-- that I have offended and broken the commands You entrusted to me. It’s not just that I regret the negative consequences that follow, but I am sorry that I have disobeyed You.”

3) To re-think the “fix” to this problem. “Lord I can never make this right with you. Though I do it over again 1000 times and get it right each time, I still cannot make up for one failure. I ask for forgiveness and mercy in Your Son, who suffered as My Savior. Have mercy on me. Forgive me for Jesus’ sake.”

AND HE DOES. In Jesus your repentant heart is forgiven! Relief!

This is the Christian repentance (not worldly repentance which excludes Christ) that the Lord wants for everyone. He does not want any to perish. He has not programed some to go to hell no matter what. “God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth” (I Timothy 2:3-4). His marking of time is for salvation!

Let God in His love and forgiveness mark time, as 2023 comes, and as 2023 goes. He wants you and the world to come to repentance and be with Him forever!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---