

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – How Shall We Wait? – 17-23 Sep 2016

Christ would have us wait in active gospel work. “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Romans 12:11-13).

We study 2 Peter 3 to wait in the knowledge therein. 1. To whom was the second epistle of Peter addressed? “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). 2. Why was it written? “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” (2 Peter 3:1).

3. Of what does the apostle wish us to be mindful? “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” (verse 2). 4. What purpose does prophecy serve? “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19). 5. Upon what is special light given by the prophecy? “When it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11, last part). “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these” (Daniel 2:28). 6. Read prophecies foretelling Christ’s final glory, give the substance of each (Psalm 50:1-3; Habakkuk 3:3-6; Isaiah 63:1-6). 7. What must we look for just before the end? “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts” (2 Peter 3:3). “But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 17-18).

8. Mention some other places in the writings of the apostles where this is foretold (1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 4:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10). 9. Of what do these scoffers profess to be ignorant? “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” (2 Peter 3:4). 10. Is there any excuse for such ignorance? “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”(verse 5). 11. What notable event recorded in Scripture show that all things have *not* continued as they were from the beginning of the creation? “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. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (verses 5-6). 12. How did the earth come into existence? “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 8-9). 13. In what condition was the earth at first? “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2).

14. What division was first made in this watery mass? “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so” (verses 6-7). 15. What was done with the waters that were beneath the firmament? “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so” (verse 9). “He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap; he layeth up the depth in storehouses” (Psalm 33:7). 16. When, by the word of the Lord, the flood destroyed the earth, how did the waters that were stored up in the earth contribute to that result? “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis 7:11). 17. What fate, by the same authority, now awaits the earth? “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” (2 Peter 3:7).

18. Where has the word of the Lord declared this? Deuteronomy 32:22; Nahum 1:7; Isaiah 34:8-10. 19. What positive assurance have we that this will be done? – *We have the word of Him who spoke the earth into existence, and who caused the water that constituted a portion of the earth, to contribute to its destruction* (see 2 Peter 3:5-7). 20. Show the analogy between the destruction of the earth by water, and its destruction by fire. See note on verses 5-7.

The phrase, “the earth standing out of the water and in the water,” does not at all express the idea of the original. The Greek word which in the King James Version is rendered “standing,” should, to express the original, be rendered “consisting” – as in Colossians 1:17 where it says, “by him all things *consist*.” The earth in its formless state was simply a watery mass, as indicated by Genesis 1:2: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the *deep*. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the *waters*.”

“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perish.” When God gathered the waters together into one place, and made the dry land appear, He evidently stored large quantities of water in the interior of the earth. This is indicated in the second commandment by the phrase, “the water under the earth,” and also indicated by Psalm 136:6: “To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters,” and Psalm 33:7; 24:1-2. In the flood which destroyed the earth in the days of Noah, the waters in the interior of the earth united with the rain from heaven, as the record says: “The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis 7:11). The idea of the text in Peter’s epistle is that one of the very elements from which the earth was formed, was made to contribute to its destruction. Having disproved the assertion that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, the apostle draws a parallel thus:

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word [the word of God, see verse 5] are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7). Instead of, “are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment,” a better translation would be, “stored with fire, reserved unto the day of Judgment.” Now the comparison is at once apparent. By the word of God, the earth, in the beginning, was formed from the watery mass which God had spoken into existence. Part of this water was stored up in the earth, and by the word of God was afterward caused to overflow the earth, and contribute to its destruction. The same word of God, which performed this, has stored the interior of this present earth with fire, and is keeping it till the day of Judgment, when, as in the case of the waters of the flood, the fire within the earth, uniting with that which comes down from God out of Heaven (Revelation 20:9) will destroy it.

Particular attention should be given to the word “kept.” Instead of all things continuing as they were from the beginning of the creation, the earth has within it the elements of its destruction, and it is only the power of God that stays the catastrophe from erupting.

Some have fancied that this third chapter of Peter’s second epistle teaches that the earth will be annihilated at the Judgment day. This is a mistake. This earth will be destroyed in the same sense that the original earth “perished” by the waters of the earth. It was all broken up, and the face of it was changed, so that the earth after the flood had no resemblance to the earth before the flood. This was the last and greatest curse caused by sin, and completed the desolation of the earth. But the matter which composed the earth was not destroyed. So by the fires of the last day “the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” but they will not be annihilated. From those melted elements, “new heavens and a new earth” will be formed which will have no more resemblance to this sin-cursed earth than this earth does to Eden, the garden of God. The people that shall dwell in it will all be righteous (Isaiah 60:21); and “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God” (Isaiah 35:1-2). So, how shall we wait?