

KNOWING JESUS

2 Peter 3

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you 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 Savior, knowing this first: that 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. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

This 2nd letter of the Apostle Peter's was written, it is estimated, at a time around AD 66. It is for certain, based on other early

ecclesiastical and historical documents (Tacitus, Clement, Hippolytus, Jerome) as well as what Peter himself says in this letter, that he (Peter) was soon to be martyred for Christ. Peter says in **1:14**, "knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me." In what was to Peter, his very last of days, he writes this letter to the saints. So then, it would certainly seem to be for Peter a necessity to emphasize what was most important to him in this letter; or what could be said to be of grave importance. If you knew that you only had just so many days left on this earth, what would you be most concerned with? What would your message be to others? Many people in this world wouldn't maybe have a message to others but would have what is called a bucket list, or things they would want to do before they die. Perhaps skydiving, traveling to Europe or elsewhere, seeing the Grand Canyon, or maybe just living in self-indulgences until the very end (like eating and drinking one's self into oblivion). Others though being less self-serving, might think of what they'd offer as advice to their close friends and family, maybe even make a video that could be played at their funeral. Yet here we have Peter, knowing he hasn't much time left. Peter first opens his letter with a greeting saying, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to **life and godliness**, through the **knowledge of Him** who called us by **glory and virtue**, by which have been given to us exceedingly **great and precious promises**, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (**1 Peter 1:2-4**) Anytime something is repeated by a writer of the Holy Scriptures it is certainly something to take an extra hard, long look at in what they are saying. Peter, in that opening statement mentions the importance of knowing God and Jesus, twice. He then mentions knowledge twice more in the next 4 verses. Then, in the closing of Peter's letter he says, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." That's where Peter is going with His message, and that is where we're going-in knowing Jesus!

In our passage of Scripture in chapter three Peter gives the reason for his epistle. "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you 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 Savior." What he seems to be saying here is, "listen, I know you already know this stuff, but this is a friendly reminder. God loves you and so do I and I just don't want any of you to get off the right path." Two things are basically being pointed out by Peter. There is the Word of God (which includes the commandments and words of the apostles and prophets) and then there's our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those two things, brothers and sisters are most important to us as Peter mentions. Knowing God and our Lord and Savior Jesus, and

His Word. You may be thinking that I, and maybe even Peter, are leaving out a whole lot of other stuff that is important like loving others and holiness and doing and being all that we are supposed to be. If we know Jesus and we know His Word all other things will naturally fall into place. Guaranteed! The saying "knowledge is king" is really only a half truth though. The fullness of that statement in Truth is this, "knowing **Jesus** is King!" The king of what? He is the King of kings, He is the Lord of Lords, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, He is the Great I AM, and He is the author and finisher of our faith. His name is Jesus, glory to His name! Jesus is also the Word of God.

"In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (**John 1:1-5**) " And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (**John 1:14**) He was God incarnate, that is God in the flesh. "Philip said to Him [Jesus], "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." (**John 14:8-10**) Throughout the book of John Jesus is recorded by John to give I AM statements which to the discerning Jewish leaders and rulers Jesus was claiming to be God. Jesus said, "I AM the bread of life", "I AM the Light of the world", "I AM the Door of the sheep", "I AM the Good Shepherd", "I AM the Resurrection and the Life", "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life", and the "I AM the True Vine." It's rather unusual that many of the other religions, that are false religions, point to Jesus being a prophet but then Jesus Himself gives credence to no other prophet as being a way to God and eternal life but Jesus boldly claimed, "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**)

I've said in the past that our goal is JESUS and that our reward is eternal life. I'll have to change that. Our goal is JESUS and our reward is JESUS, but eternal life and inheriting all of God's kingdom by being joint heirs with Jesus are just a byproduct of our reward. If we are in Christ, we will be joint-heirs with Jesus! Perhaps that distinction may seem trivial, which it did to me at first, but then I was reminded that to know JESUS is to love Him and by love Him you just get to where you want nothing but more of Him. The more you know Jesus the more you love Him and the more you want Him. The people of the Old Testament had not had it revealed to them that Jesus was to

be the Christ. But they knew that God was to be their Savior. They were told to cling to Him for He is their life. (**Deu. 30:20**) They were to live by faith in God that He would save them, that He would deliver them. In the book of **Hebrews, chapter 11**, the writer mentions of those in times past who lived in the faith of God, that He was their God, their Lord and Savior and then in **Hebrews 12:1-2** the writer continues, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The writer of Hebrews is not saying to keep looking up at the sky towards where we consider heaven to be, to where Jesus is sitting on His throne, it is in looking unto Jesus as actively working in us with His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and with His Holy Word. It is truly in our personal relationship with Jesus as not only our Savior but also as our Great Shepherd who saves us and then leads us all the way to the finish line. As the Apostle Paul used the analogy of being in a race he said, "I press toward **the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**" (**Philippians 3:14**)

It all starts then for us with Jesus, the Word of God, and the Word became flesh. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**) Knowing Jesus is first knowing that God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, who was with God from the beginning, to come to this earth to shed His blood for us, to die on a cross for us, and to then be raised from the dead, conquering death, so that we too can have life eternal in Christ Jesus, to all who will believe on Him and receive Him. This is the initial stage of Jesus becoming personal to us. **John 1:12** says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." When we recognize that we have sinned against God, "for all have sinned [against God] and fall short of the glory of God," and then that the penalty of God for our sinning against Him is death, we also are given the good news of all that in the full verse in **Romans 6:23** that says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life **in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" If we just stop at that we could conclude that our goal then is eternal life, to say, "thanks Jesus" and to then rejoice in our eternal fate. After the Holy Spirit reveals to us that we are a sinner and that we need Jesus to save us, that is just the beginning, in Christ. If we read that verse again we see him saying "the gift of God is **eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"

Knowing Jesus is in knowing that God's Word reveals to us that it truly is with each of us a personal love and calling from God to receive His gift of Grace in Christ Jesus. Jesus took on the punishment that was due us for sinning against a perfect and holy God. The prophet Isaiah said this, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed." (**Isaiah 53:5**) As **Hebrews 9:22** points out, "without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]." The Holy Spirit reveals that to us. God is calling you into His eternal kingdom in Christ Jesus. When we believe on Jesus we then are born again as Jesus called it, meaning we are "born of the Spirit" as Jesus also explained. (**John 3:3,5**) That is where we receive Him, that is we receive the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit into our hearts "who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (**2 Corinthians 1:22**) That is where we begin to experience the Holy Spirit working in us. As the Apostle Paul explained, "But of [God] Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**) The Holy Spirit begins working in us, His Wisdom, His Righteousness, His Sanctification, and His Redemption, and we become extensions of God's glory. As the Holy Spirit begins working in us we begin bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22**) To know Jesus is to know that we are His vessel of God's love, and goodness, grace, and glory.

The most important thing on Jesus' mind and heart before He was crucified can be found in His prayer to God the Father in John 17. He prayed, "I do not pray for these alone [the disciples], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." When we receive Christ, we are called into resting in Him, trusting in Him, loving Him as He loves us—in knowing, He is working in us His perfection and holiness and glory, not that we glory in ourselves but we glory in the Lord. How is God's glory manifested in us? "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (**John 15:8**)

Getting to our passage of Scripture for today, Peter was warning the saints that there would be scoffers. There will be questions arise, "where is this Jesus that you keep talking about?" Peter and the other Apostles believed as we are told to believe that Jesus can come at any time, that we are to be ready. But really, we are not really

just preparing ourselves for Jesus to come back, He's already here, in each of us who have believed and received Him. I used to say practically daily, Lord please take us out of here. The world around us seems to be swirling the toilet bowl. Listen again to what Peter says, "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." Jesus keeps calling, to each of us. In God's perfect time Jesus will come back. Meanwhile there's a whole lot of folks that haven't got right with Jesus yet. In sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others it's important to say that He's not just calling us unto eternal life, where we just get to run wild in heaven satisfying our every desire. God is calling us into His very character, in His Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption, in His perfect love, joy, peace, and glory. God is perfect in all His ways, and He wants us to have what He has. But He alone is God Almighty, He alone deserves our praise and honor, and let him/her who glories, glory in the Lord!

Peter says, "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." Yes, longsuffering is what Jesus had to operate in and it is a fruit of the Spirit which gets us through all of the insanity in this world as well. There were plenty of times Jesus must have just shook His head, and sighed. At one point Jesus lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" With each of us we could insert our name in what Jesus said.

We can certainly look forward to His coming back or when we enter into His eternal glory but we can in the here and now experience the many great blessings of God. As Peter said, "looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless." How is that possible? I know on my own, or you on your own can't be blameless or spotless. We couldn't do it before we are saved and there's no way, within our own selves we can be blameless or spotless, but in CHRIST WE CAN! We are to be IN CHRIST! That's where we know we need to be. If we are anywhere else, it isn't going to work. That's where Paul proclaimed, " I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (**Galatians 2:20**) That's not just for the super spiritual folks. You want freedom and victory in your life? It is IN CHRIST JESUS. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (**John 8:36**) We are purposed in Christ Jesus! The world will laugh and mock at that and say, "oh those silly, brain-washed Christians." But as Jesus said, "If you

abide in My word [essentially saying, abide in Me], you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (**John 8:32**) As we know Jesus (He is the Truth), He works in us to assure us that we are free indeed. Yet, Jesus did not come as a conquering warrior. When He comes again, He will. But He came as a suffering servant. We are told that the Holy Spirit that is working in us is telling us to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (**Philippians 2:5-11**)

Not one of us here is guaranteed another day past today. When we are called into Christ, we are meant to remain in Him. Many times, the church hasn't quite got it right. In the history of the church, there have been shameful times of where the church was operating as the Conquering Christ and not operating in the humility of Christ as the Word tells us to be. Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." To know Christ, as He works His Spirit in us, is to know of His great love for us, that He shed His blood for us, took our sins upon Himself, so that we can be reconciled with the Father, for us ALL to be one in Christ, and to have eternal life in Christ; but also to have the fullness of Christ working in us—His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, and His fruit of the Spirit and also the glory of God. Wow! But, Christ who is working in us is humble, and gentle, and lowly, not trying to gain glory for ourselves but for Him to work in us to the glory of God! Also, if we are in Christ, we don't suddenly tell Jesus that we don't need Him while we accomplish all that is on our bucket list. As we abide in Christ, having fellowship with Him in prayer, and in His Word, and in fellowship with His saints, we will continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The end-all of what we are called to is what the Apostle John said, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (**1 John 1:3**) And hopefully, you'll find that the only place you want to be is in Him, that nothing in this world will satisfy you, be it the flesh or the spirit, like Jesus does. "To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

Heavenly Father,
I confess that I have sinned against You.
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,
and live in the newness of life,
being led by Your Holy Spirit,
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!