

2 Peter 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

Chapter 3, verse 5 - Comprehensive theological analysis. Peter continues his urgent apostolic warning about the dangers facing the church. This verse contributes crucial insights to understanding false teachers' characteristics, God's judgment patterns, and believers' proper response. The Greek terminology reveals theological precision in Peter's argument, emphasizing both divine sovereignty in salvation and human responsibility in sanctification.

The immediate context connects to Peter's broader argument about maintaining doctrinal purity and moral integrity while awaiting Christ's return. Greek word studies illuminate the specific nature of the threats Peter identifies and the resources God provides for perseverance. This passage resonates with Old Testament prophetic warnings, Jesus' teaching about false prophets, and Paul's pastoral instructions, demonstrating biblical theology's consistency across testaments and authors.

Christ-centered interpretation reveals how this verse ultimately points to Jesus as the standard for truth, the source of power for godly living, and the coming Judge who will vindicate the faithful and condemn the wicked. The eschatological dimension reminds believers that present struggles occur within the larger framework of redemptive history culminating in Christ's glorious return and the establishment of the new heavens and new earth.

Historical Context

The first-century church faced unique challenges from both pagan Greco-Roman culture and Jewish opposition, while also contending with internal threats from false teachers who distorted apostolic doctrine. Peter writes in the shadow of Nero's persecution (AD 64-68) and his own approaching martyrdom, making this letter his urgent final testament to the churches. Early Gnostic influences promoting secret knowledge, antinomian ethics, and denial of Christ's physical return created the specific heresies Peter addresses.

Understanding the social, religious, and philosophical context of the Roman Empire illuminates Peter's concerns and arguments. The delay of Christ's parousia created pastoral challenges as expectations of imminent return gave way to questions about timing and certainty. Jewish apocalyptic literature, Greco-Roman moral philosophy, and mystery religions all influenced how different groups understood salvation, ethics, and eschatology, requiring apostolic clarification to maintain orthodox Christianity.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge compromises you might be tempted to make for cultural acceptance or personal comfort?
2. What practices would help you grow in discernment to recognize and resist false teaching in its contemporary forms?
3. How should the certainty of Christ's return and judgment shape your priorities, relationships, and use of time and resources?

Interlinear Text

λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας ὅτι οὐρανοὶ¹
are ignorant of For they this willingly that the heavens
G2990 G1063 G846 G5124 G2309 G3754 G3772

ἥσαν ἔκπαλαι καὶ γῆ ἔξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος
were of old and the earth of the water and in the water
G2258 G1597 G2532 G1093 G1537 G5204 G2532 G1223 G5204

συνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ
standing out of God by the word
G4921 G3588 G2316 G3056

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:3 (Word): Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Genesis 1:9 (References God): 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.

Psalms 24:2 (Parallel theme): For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Genesis 1:6 (References God): And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

Psalms 136:6 (Parallel theme): To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 33:6 (Word): By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Romans 1:28 (References God): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

