

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 26, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

WHAT TO KNOW TO ...



A STUDY IN 2 PETER

MOCKERS AND THE COMING JUDGMENT

2 Peter 3:1-7, Psalm 1

¹Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ²that 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, ³knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and 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." ⁵For 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, ⁶by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷But 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." – 2 Peter 3:1-7

¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."-Psalm 1 (ESV)

PREDICTIONS AND CLAIMS FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Predicted Date	Claimant	Description
1874	Charles Taze Russell (Jehovah's Witness Founder)	The first president of what is now the Watchtower Society of the Jehovah's Witnesses. calculated 1874 to be the year of Christ's Second Coming. and until his death taught that Christ was invisibly present. and ruling from the heavens from that date prophesied. Russell proclaimed Christ's

		invisible return in 1874, the resurrection of the saints in 1875, and predicted the end of the "harvest" and a rapture of the saints to heaven for 1878, and the final end of "the day of wrath" in 1914. 1874 was considered the end of 6,000 years of human history and the beginning of judgment by Christ.
1891	Joseph Smith (Mormonism Founder)	In the <i>History of the Church Volume 2</i> , page 182, an eyewitness account of Joseph Smith's prophecy in 1835 is recorded as: "President Smith then stated that the meeting had been called, because God had commanded it; and it was made known to him by vision and by the Holy Spirit. He then gave a relation of some of the circumstances attending us while journeying to Zion--our trials, sufferings; and said God had not designed all this for nothing, but He had it in remembrance yet; and it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh--even fifty-six years should wind up the scene." Though this was not a prediction from Joseph Smith, he stated, "I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time" (D&C 130:14-17). According to FairMormon, an organization that responds to criticism of Mormons, Smith believed no one knew the hour of the Second Coming. (see D&C 49:7, given May 1831)
1914	Jehovah's Witnesses	The "Second Coming" is important in the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses, although they do not use this term. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ's visible (to humans) return will be at Armageddon. They believe that 1914 marked the beginning of Christ's invisible presence (Matt. 24:3 or "parousia") as the King of God's Kingdom (Psalm 110; Revelation 12:10), and the beginning of the last days of the human ruled system of society. They believe the signs Christ revealed about his return in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 began to occur starting in 1914. In a parallel Biblical account at Revelation 6, they believe the ride of the symbolic four horsemen began in the same year, and that the first rider on the white horse depicts the Christ. He goes forth to complete his conquest of the earth, while the rule by human leaders continues for a short while until they meet their end at Armageddon by the power of the Christ (Revelation 19:11-21).
1917-1930	Rev. Sun Myung Moon (The Unification Church founder)	The followers of Reverend Sun Myung Moon consider Reverend Moon to be the Lord of the Second Advent called by Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday at the age of 15 on a Korean mountainside (see Divine Principle).
1935, 1943, 1972, 1975	Herbert W. Armstrong (Worldwide Church of God)	Armstrong, Pastor-General and self-proclaimed "Apostle" of the Radio Church of God, and then the Worldwide Church of God, felt the return of Jesus Christ might be in 1975. Of particular note was the book <i>1975 in Prophecy!</i> written by Armstrong and published by the Radio Church of God in 1956. Though, never explicitly stating a date in the booklet, the title led people to believe the date was the second coming. It was actively preached in sermons in the 1960s by all of his ministers that his church would "flee" to Petra, Jordan in 1972 and Christ would return 3 1/2 years later. After the failure to flee in 1972 (and a defection of his ministry) Armstrong was careful not to set specific dates but claimed that Christ would return before he died. He died 16 January 1986. Armstrong had previously predicted in a 1934 edition of <i>The Plain Truth</i> magazine that Christ would return in 1936. After that prediction failed, he stated in a 1940 edition of <i>The Plain Truth</i> that "Christ will come after 3 1/2 years of tribulation in October 43. After those failed predictions and loss of members he moved his operation from Oregon to Pasadena, California. After Armstrong's death in 1986, his Worldwide Church of God and the empire he created

		slowly disintegrated, abandoning his beliefs and philosophies and eventually the name. His three college campuses and the majority of his Pasadena headquarter properties were closed and sold. His successors changed the name to Grace Communion International in 2009.
March 21, 2011 October 21, 2011	Harold Camping	<i>Main article: 2011 end times prediction</i> Camping claimed that the rapture would be on 21 May 2011 followed by the end of the world on 21 October of the same year. Camping wrote "Adam when?" and claimed the Biblical calendar meshes with the secular and is accurate from 11,013 BC–AD 2011.
September 29, 2011 May 27, 2012 May 18, 2013	Ronald Weinland	Weinland predicted Jesus would return on 29 September 2011. When his prediction failed to come true, he moved the date of Jesus' return to 27 May 2012. When that prediction failed, he then moved the date to 18 May 2013, claiming that "a day with God is as a year," giving himself another year for his prophecy to take place. Weinland was convicted of tax evasion in 2012 and sentenced to 3 1/2 years in federal prison.
2012	Jack Van Impe	Televangelist who has, over the years, predicted many specific years and dates for the Second Coming of Jesus, but has continued to move his prediction later. Many of these dates have already passed, and he recently pointed to 2012 as a possible date for the second coming. Van Impe no longer claims to know the exact date of the Second Coming, but quotes verses which imply that mankind should know when the Second Coming is near.
September 28, 2015	Mark Blitz	Starting in 2008, Mark Blitz began teaching that Christ's return would correspond with the 28 September 2015 lunar eclipse. His idea, known as the Blood Moon Prophecy, attracted attention from pastor John Hagee (who stopped short of claiming Christ would return on that precise date) and mainstream media such as <i>USA Today</i> .
2020	Jeane Dixon	The alleged psychic claimed that Armageddon would take place in 2020 and Jesus would return to defeat the unholy Trinity of the Antichrist, Satan and the False prophet between 2020 and 2037.
2021	F. Kenton Beshore	Beshore bases his prediction on the prior suggestion that Jesus could return in 1988, i.e., within one Biblical generation (40 years) of the founding of Israel in 1948. Beshore argues that the prediction was correct, but that the definition of a Biblical generation was incorrect and was actually 70–80 years, placing the Second Coming of Jesus between 2018 and 2028 and the Rapture by 2021 at the latest.

Some things to remember about the Second Coming of Christ and His coming judgement:

(1) **No one know the day and the time so we must always be alert and watching – Matthew 24:36-44,** ³⁶ *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

This passage is paralleled in the Gospel of Mark in Mark 13:32 and the Gospel of Luke in Luke 10:22.

(2) **Many Biblical writers were expecting Christ’s return in their life time –**

- **Paul – Philippians 4:5 & 1 Corinthians 7:29** That why he wrote to the church at Corinth, *“But this I say, brethren, the time is short...”* in 1 Corinthians 7:29 And to the Philippian Christians, *“... the Lord is at hand”* in **Philippians 4:5**. Paul believed the second coming was very near during his day.
- **The Writer of Hebrews – Hebrews 10:37** The writer of Hebrews also expressed his expectation of Christ return in **Hebrews 10:37**, *“For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”*
- **James – James 5:8** James, likewise, viewed the coming of the Lord as very near when he said in **James 5:8**, *“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”*

*Note: They were not “predicting” or “prophesying” the exact date or time of Christ’s return, but were expecting, watching and alert for His coming even in their day, and if they were watching for Him in their day how much more ought we to be watching for Him today.

- (3) **Just because it hasn’t happened yet doesn’t mean it won’t happen** – Peter, himself, write down in verse 10 in **2 Peter 3:10**, *“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.”* Upon Jesus ascension back into heaven the angel spoke to Jesus waiting and watching disciple in **Acts 1:11**, *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* Paul wrote to the Christian in Thessalonica in **1 Thessalonians 4:16**, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God...”* And Jesus, Himself, even told us in an oft quoted passage in **John 14:3**, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*
- (4) **Scripture promises that He will come again** – This is affirmed in all of the Gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, John 14-17) as well as the other New Testament writers, plus the most extensive treatment of His return in Scripture in the Book of Revelation.
- (5) **All essentials Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled for His imminent return at any time** – This is the is the basic Christian teaching/doctrine that is called “the imminent return of Christ.” The word *imminent* means “likely to happen at any moment; impending.” When we speak of the imminence of Christ’s return, we mean that He could come back at any moment. There is nothing more in biblical prophecy that needs to happen before Jesus comes again. The imminence of Christ’s return is generally taught among evangelicals, with some disagreement according to one’s view of dispensationalism and whether one holds a pre-, mid-, or post-tribulational view of the rapture. Jesus spoke of His return repeatedly during His ministry, which naturally prompted questions from His disciples. One of their questions was, “When will these things happen?” (Mark 13:4). Again, Jesus responded, *“Of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come”* (verses 32-33). It is important to remember in any discussion of eschatology that God does not intend for us to fully understand the timing of His plans. However, the Bible says that Jesus’ return is near, and we are to wait eagerly for it (Romans 8:19-25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 4:5; Jude 21). James encourages us to *“be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near”* (James 5:8). Revelation 1:3 and 22:10 also say that “the time is near.” Jesus taught His disciples to watch for His return. “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will

come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Luke 12:40). The command to “be ready” implies imminence. Throughout the New Testament, the church is told to be ready (Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:6). If the disciples and the early church were to expect the coming of the Lord at any time, how much more should we be waiting in keen expectation? At this point, it is good to distinguish between the second coming of Christ, proper, and the rapture of the church. The second coming of Christ, when He defeats His enemies and sets up His kingdom, will not occur until after certain other end-times events take place, including the tribulation (Matthew 24:15-30; Revelation chapters 6–18). Therefore, the second coming is not imminent. However, according to the pre-tribulational view, the rapture will take place before the tribulation. The rapture could occur at any moment (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54) and can rightly be called “imminent.” Our salvation is “ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). Jesus could return for His own at any moment, and that event will set in motion the series of events detailed in Revelation 6-18. Like the five wise virgins in Jesus’ parable (Matthew 25:1-13), we must be ready. “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour” (Matthew 25:13).

A lot of people scoff at God and the warning of His coming judgment like that fisherman scoffed at the IRS. They somehow think that either it will never happen because it hasn’t happened yet or that if it ever does happen, they’ll be okay. And while few are so bold as openly to scoff at God and the judgment, many do so practically by living as if they will never stand before Him to give an account. The idea of facing Him in judgment is so far from their minds that it never affects how they live.

Just before the apostle Peter’s death, some false teachers were plaguing the early church by scoffing at the idea that Christ would return to judge the world. At the root of their mocking, as we will see, was the fact that they were living for their own lusts. As Peter said, they had eyes full of adultery (2:14) and they enticed others by fleshly desires and sensuality (2:18). When people who profess to know Christ decide to pursue their own lusts, they have to invent some doctrinal loopholes to justify their sins and pacify their consciences. These false teachers scoffed at the idea that Jesus Christ would return in power and glory to judge the world.

They were clever operators, as all false teachers are. They mixed their errors with some truth, so that the unsuspecting would swallow the whole package.

- They professed to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (2:20).
- For a while they gave the appearance of knowing the way of righteousness (2:21).
- They joined in the church life as if they were in full agreement with everything (2:13).
- But they were not living in submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ. They were following their lusts, claiming to be free in Christ.
- But in reality, they were slaves of corruption (2:19), living for sensual pleasure and greed.
- Peter describes them as dogs returning to their own vomit or as pigs going back to wallowing in the mire (2:22).

After exposing these false teachers for what they really were (chapter 2), Peter as a shepherd now urges the church not to follow these mockers/scoffers who are heading for judgment. He

addresses his readers as “beloved” four times in this chapter (3:1, 8, 14, 17). He wants them to know that he cares for them. He also assures them that they have sincere (“pure” or “unmixed”) minds (3:1). But he wants to stir them up by way of reminder (as he did in 1:12-15), so that they would stand firmly upon God’s Word and not be deceived by the mockers. His message is that...

In spite of mockers who scoff at the prospect of Christ’s coming, God’s Word promises that He will come in judgment of the whole world.

Throughout these verses, Peter’s emphasis is on God’s Word. He mentions it in verse 2 as the authoritative message that we must remember. He refers to it in verses 5 and 6 as the means by which God created the world and brought the judgment of the flood on all the wicked. He refers to it again in verse 7 as the basis on which we know that there is a terrifying day of judgment to come.

GOD’S WORD IS OUR SURE FOUNDATION (2 Peter 3:1-2)

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² 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.”-2 Peter 3:1-2

When mockers attack the faith, God’s Word is our sure foundation. Peter says (3:1), *“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder)...”* Scholars spill a lot of ink debating what the first letter was and whether Peter really wrote this second letter or whether a man posing as Peter wrote it in the middle of the second century. It is possible that the first letter is one that we no longer possess, just as some of Paul’s letters were not included in the New Testament (1 Cor. 5:9; Col. 4:16). **But I don’t see any convincing reasons why the first letter isn’t First Peter or why Peter didn’t write Second Peter** (as he claims, 1:1). Like every effective teacher, Peter knew that repetition is a key to learning. So he wrote his two letters to stir up the minds of believers to be ready for the return of Jesus Christ (see, also, 1 Pet. 1:13). Note three things:

3 Things Peter is Reminding Believers Of:

1. Even the godly must be stirred up to remember the sure foundation of God’s Word -

The implication of verses 1 & 2 is that we do not need “new” truths, but rather we need to be reminded of and remember the old truths that we already possess, but tend to forget. It’s easy for our thinking to become distorted through the godless culture around us and by those who deliberately attack the truthfulness and reliability of God’s Word. For example, the world assumes as fact that everything on earth evolved by chance over hundreds of millions of years from pond scum into the forms of life that we now see around us. The world mocks those of us who believe the biblical account of creation, as if we somehow haven’t progressed in brain power much beyond our ancestral monkeys! When you’re constantly bombarded by this mindset, it’s easy to get lulled into believing at least some of it. So we need to be stirred up (the word is used of awakening Jesus when He was asleep in the boat, Luke 8:24) to remember what God’s Word says.

John Calvin pointed out (*Calvin’s Commentaries* [Baker], on 2 Pet. 3:1, pp. 412-413) that **“Even the godly, who have some degree of biblical learning, will become dim and mentally rusty if they do not receive these constant reminders and warnings.”** And so the church needs faithful teachers to impress the truth on the memory of their hearers, just as Peter is doing here.

Remember what Scripture says about itself in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

5 Things Scripture Tells Us About It’s Self and that Scripture Does for Us:

- (1) **Teaches the Truth - Doctrine** = The divine instruction or doctrinal content of both the Old and New Testaments. The Scripture provides the comprehensive and complete body of divine truth necessary for life and godliness.
- (2) **Points out Error - Reproof** = Rebuke for wrong behavior or wrong belief. The Scripture exposes sin that can then be dealt with through correction and repentance.
- (3) **Provides the Correction to Error** - Correction = The restoration of something to its proper condition. The word appears only here in the New Testament, but was used in extra biblical Greek of righting a fallen object, or helping back to their feet those who had stumbled. Scripture not only rebukes wrong behavior, but also points the way back to godly living.
- (4) **Disciples/Trains** - Instruction in Righteousness = Scripture provides positive training (“instruction” originally referred to training a child) in godly behavior, not merely rebuke and correction of wrong behavior.
- (5) **Grounds** - Thoroughly equipped = Enabled to meet all the demands of godly and righteous living. The Word accomplishes this in the life of all of those who are grounded in it. The word “complete” means capable of doing everything one called to do.

2. **The godly should remember the word of the Old Testament prophets** – Notice verses 1-2 of our passage in 2 Peter 3 again, *“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² 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.”* When Peter tells us to “remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets,” he is referring to the Old Testament prophets. As you know, the prophets are full of warnings about impending judgment both on Israel and on the surrounding nations if they do not repent and obey God. Peter says that we need to be stirred up to remember these repeated warnings about judgment. You know, sometimes today you will hear Christians say, “Well, I don’t really like the Old Testament, and I don’t think we really need it. We just need the New Testament because that is where Jesus is and it speaks of the new covenant under Jesus. The Old Testament doesn’t apply any more.” I’ve heard that before from believers. I have to tell you that is wrong.

7 Reason the Old Testament is Still Relevant Today:

- (1) **The Bible is incomplete without the Old Testament** – It’s all the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. Both the Old and New Testaments make up the Word of God. The New Testament was never given to replace the Old Testament but rather to complete its story. Genesis 3:14-19 records how a curse came upon humanity because of sin. Revelation 22:3 completes the story by recording how God, through the redemptive work of Jesus, has removed the curse. The theme of God’s redemptive work would be incomplete without both Testaments revealing the beginning and end of the curse.

- (2) **The Old Testament presents great truths about God and humanity** - In the first five books of the Bible (the Torah), God reaches out to humanity and introduces Himself. God introduces Himself as the Creator (Gen. 1-2), the Savior of His people (Exod. 13-14), the Holy One (Lev. 19:2), the God of wrath and judgment on sin (Num. 14), and a God of love (Deut. 7). It is in the Hebrew Bible that God reveals to Moses His attributes (Exod. 34:6-7). We would not know God as well as we do apart from the revelation of the Old Testament.
- (3) **The Old Testament provides the historical setting out of which Christianity and the New Testament emerged** - Christianity didn't emerge from a vacuum. God was moving among the people of Israel to bring forth the Messiah who would provide redemption from the judgment that came on humanity because of sin. The early New Testament preachers like Stephen (Acts 7) and Paul (Acts 13:16-41) made frequent use of the Hebrew Bible to declare God's plan for salvation. The story line of God's work in salvation begins in the Hebrew Bible and then continues its flow through the New Testament.
- (4) **The Old Testament instructs believers concerning the person and work of Jesus, the promised Messiah** - His birth, His death, His resurrection, His return and His kingdom are all revealed in the Hebrew Bible (Luke 24:44-46). If you want to get to know Jesus, the Lamb of God, you cannot neglect the prophecies found in the Old Testament.
- (5) **The Old Testament presents spiritual truths and lessons that are applicable for Christians** - Paul illustrates this in 1 Corinthians 10:6-10, where he recounts for the church at Corinth a number of incidents that took place during Israel's wilderness wanderings. Then he writes, *"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."* Paul clearly intended for the Corinthians to learn from the lessons taught in the Hebrew Bible (see also Rom. 15:4).
- (6) **The Old Testament lays the foundation for Biblical prophecy** - It is in the Hebrew Bible that we find the revelation about God's covenant promises. In the Abrahamic Covenant God promises a land, a nation, and blessing that will extend from Israel to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:2-3). In the Davidic Covenant God promises that David will have a descendant who will sit on his throne and rule and reign forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel reveal how the blessing promised to Abraham and his descendants will be further developed and ultimately realized through the person and work of Jesus (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:25-28).
- (7) **The Old Testament is "God-breathed and profitable"** - Paul declares that "all Scripture is *"God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness"* (2 Tim. 3:16). When he wrote these words he was referring to the Hebrew Bible. If Christians neglect the study of the Old Testament they won't be as proficient in the service of our Lord as they would otherwise be through a working knowledge and practical application of the Hebrew Bible.

As a matter of fact if you took all of the Old Testament reference and quotes from the New Testament we would have a large portion of the New Testament missing. The New Testament writers included approximately 250 express Old Testament quotations, and if one includes indirect or partial quotations, the number jumps to more than 1,000 (referring to every OT books except Obadiah) *NOTE: It is to be noted that the whole New Testament*

contains not even one explicit citation of any of the Old Testament Apocrypha which are considered as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church. This omission can scarcely be viewed as accidental.

So, I will again try to stir you up to read through the *entire* Bible, over and over again.

Psalm 119:160 declares, “*The sum of Your word is truth.*” We need all of God’s Word to give us balance. You wouldn’t hear professing Christians say inane things like, “I believe in a God of love, not in a God of judgment,” if they were reading and submitting to *all* of God’s Word.

- 3. The godly should remember the commandment of the Lord and Savior, spoken by the apostles** – Notice verses 1-2 once more with me, “*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² 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.*” Peter does not specify which commandment of the Lord that he is referring to, but he used the same word just a few verses before in 2 Peter 2:21 when he said that the false teachers had known the way of righteousness, but had then turned “*from the holy commandment handed on to them.*”

I think that Peter is talking about the ethical demands that stem from the gospel, which come to us through the apostles in the New Testament. Peter Davids puts it this way (*The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* [Eerdmans], p. 261), “*In Jesus the rule of God became manifest in this world, and this manifestation of the rule of God brings with it a demand that people turn from their way and submit to God’s way, that is, obey the good news and submit to the way of life that it proclaims.*” While often missing from contemporary preaching, this is the message of the New Testament.

By the way, “*Lord and Savior*” in **verse 2** is governed by one definite article in Greek, showing that it refers to the same person, Jesus Christ (Thomas Schreiner, *The New American Commentary, 1, 2 Peter, Jude* [Broadman Publishers], p. 271). *You cannot separate Jesus as Savior from Jesus as Lord. If you truly trust in Him as your Savior, you must submit to Him as your Lord.*

So Peter’s opening comments in chapter 3 show us that when mockers attack the faith, God’s Word is our sure foundation. Folks, we can take from this no other truth than the one we have been saying for the past few week in our study of 2 Peter... Christians, must, must, must be grounded in the Word of God, the Bible.

GOD’S WORK IS CONSISTENT (2 Peter 3:3-6)

³ *Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to 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 creation.”* ⁵ *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,* ⁶ *by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”* – 2 Peter 3:3-6

When mockers scoff at the prospect of Christ's coming, it is because they willfully ignore that God created the universe and judged the wicked in the flood by His word (3:3-6).

2 Things 2 Peter 3:3-6 Tells Us About These Mockers/Scoffers:

1. **God's Word predicts that mockers will come in the last days, following their own lusts, denying the promise of Christ's coming (3:3-4)** - Peter says in verse 3, "*Know this first...*" meaning, of first importance. He wants us to be forewarned, "*...that scoffers will come in the last days...*" The entire age between the two advents of Christ is referred to as "the last days." During that time, we who know Christ as Savior and Lord should be living in the hope and expectancy of His bodily return in power and glory. But we also should not be surprised when mockers attack Biblical truth, including the truth of the second coming. The early church lived with the expectancy that Christ could return in their time (1 Thessalonians 4:15). *That is no wonder, since the 260 chapters of the New Testament have about 300 references to Christ's coming and only four books (Galatians, Philemon, 2 & 3 John) lack any specific reference to it (The MacArthur Study Bible [Nelson Bibles], ed. by John MacArthur, p. 1928; The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Peter & Jude [Moody Publishers], p. 117).*

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Note: those books are: Galatians, Philemon, and 2nd & 3rd John

But even by the mid to late AD 60's, when Peter wrote, skeptics were becoming disillusioned that Christ had not yet returned, and some were so bold as to attack openly the very idea that He ever would return.

But **John Calvin** rightly pointed out that you cannot take away the promise of Christ's return without destroying the very core of the gospel. He said (p. 415), "*...for when that is taken away, there is no gospel any longer, the power of Christ is brought to nothing, the whole of religion is gone. Then Satan aims directly at the throat of the Church, when he destroys faith in the coming of Christ. For why did Christ die and rise again, except that he may some time gather to himself the redeemed from death, and give them eternal life?*"

I stand with Calvin in saying that if we deny the promise of Christ's coming, we destroy the gospel itself. Briefly, note three things in verses 3-4...

3 things 2 Peter 3:3-4 is tell us about these mockers:

- (1) **The mockers' skepticism was rooted in their desire to live according to their lusts –** Notice verse 3 of our passage, "*Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.*" We saw this at length in chapter 2, and Peter's mention of it here indicates that he is referring to the same group. ***If you are living to pursue your own lusts, you do not want to believe in a future judgment!*** Why? You have to do something to ease your guilty conscience. So these men looked around, saw some who were wondering why the promises about Christ's return had not been fulfilled, and started proclaiming, "He's not coming. Everything is going on just as it has since the

beginning of creation.” As we’ve seen, sinful living always results in false doctrine, and vice versa.

- (2) **The mockers’ charge that God’s promise has failed was an attack against His honor (3:4)** - That is what Peter points out in verse 4 essentially...notice verse 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 creation.’*” To say that any of God’s promises has failed is to call God a liar. We may not understand why God does not seem to answer our prayers when they are in accord with His will and for His glory. If we do so with submissive hearts, I think it is legitimate to bring our complaints to the Lord when we wrestle with these problems, as the Psalmists often did. But we dare not charge God with unfaithfulness and assert that we’re right and He is wrong! Because they attacked God’s honor, these false teachers stood condemned.



What would you say to a person who has been praying faithfully for the same thing for over five years and still hasn’t seen any change in the situation? How do you deal with this kind of disappointment? Does it reflect a lack of faith on the persons part? Some people say that God is sovereign and that you simply have to learn to accept His will. But if that’s the case, why pray at all?

Whether you realize it or not, you’ve put your finger on one of the thorniest theological problems and most challenging difficulties of the practical Christian life. Does prayer really change things? Can the Sovereign Lord, who knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end (see Isaiah 48:3), really be persuaded to change His mind or alter His long and deeply laid plans? If not, what’s the point of making our requests known to Him (Philippians 3:6) in the first place?

Both Scripture and experience teach us that prayer can and sometimes does make a very real difference in the course of human events. If you doubt this, consider Abraham’s intercessions on behalf of Sodom in Genesis 18:16-33, Hezekiah’s prayer for the extension of his life in Isaiah 38, or the church’s pleas for Peter’s release from prison in Acts 12:1-19. If you think about it, I’m sure you can probably come up with some examples from your own life.

But Scripture and experience also make it clear that there are occasions when our petitions seem to go unanswered. David’s prayer for the life of his and Bathsheba’s child (2 Samuel 12:15-23) is a case in point. Another example is Paul’s repeated request for release from his so-called “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Even the answered prayers often have a way of begging disturbing questions. Why was Peter set free while James, the brother of John, was executed (Acts 12:2)? Why was the infant Jesus allowed to escape while scores of other innocent children were slaughtered by Herod’s henchmen (Matthew 2:16)? Why were some of the biblical heroes of faith enabled to “subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, and stop the mouths of lions” (Hebrews 11:33) while others were “mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in two, tempted, and slain with the sword” (verses 36 and 37)?

The answer, of course, is that we simply don't know. That's because the power of prayer is a mystery. We can't explain it. Either we must embrace it by faith or simply leave it alone.

So why pray at all? The answer is that, in the final analysis, prayer is not about *results*. It's about relationship. God wants us to interact with Him, to wrestle with Him as Jacob wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:22-32), in order that we might know Him, trust Him, and remember Him in all our ways. He wants us to become involved and play an active role in the mystery of His plan for the universe. But He doesn't promise to be our personal butler or wish-fulfiller.

In the meantime, there's nothing wrong with being honest about your pain and frustration. David poured out his heart to God in the Psalms. Job expressed deep anguish in the midst of incredible grief and suffering. If you're confused and hurting, the Lord doesn't expect you to cover it up with a plastic smile. Tell Him what you're really thinking and feeling. He has promised never to leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5), and He hears your prayers even in the dark times when He seems removed and silent.

- (3) **The mockers' error was based on their assumption that God does not act in history (3:4)** – Notice **verse 4** again, *“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.’”* These mockers were basically deists (belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. The term is used chiefly of an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator on the basis of reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind), claiming that God created the world, but then He stepped back and has not been involved in the events of history.

Note that they used Christian terminology... they referred to the time when *“the fathers fell asleep.”* To refer to death as sleep was a New Testament way of saying that Jesus took the sting out of death, so that those who are in Him do not die, but merely fall asleep (1 Cor. 15:18; 1 Thess. 4:13-14). This does not mean that the soul sleeps until the resurrection. To be absent from the body is *“to be at home with the Lord”* (2 Cor. 5:8). But the point is, the false teachers used common Christian language to draw in the naïve and snare them with their deism. **Michael Green** notes (*The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* [Eerdmans], p. 128), *“Had they been alive today, they would have talked about the chain of cause and effect in a closed universe governed by natural laws, where miracles, almost by definition, cannot happen.”* Thus the idea of God breaking into history in judgment was not possible. And, a further implication of this was that the first coming of Jesus Christ was not an act of God.

But Peter hits them for failing to note that two cataclysmic events in past history point to the final cataclysmic judgment...

2. **The mockers willfully ignore that by God's Word He created the universe and He judged the wicked in the flood** – Notice **verses 5-6** with me, *“^s 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,*⁶ *by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.*” Scholars are divided on the translation here of that first phrase in verse 5. The NKJV says, *“For this they willfully forget..”* The NASB translates, *“For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice”* The ESV puts it, *“For they deliberately overlook this fact, ...”* The phrase seems to mean that in their desire to do away with the future judgment, these men failed to see two huge interventions of God in past history, namely, the creation of the universe and the flood.

2 main interventions of God in past history and 1 reminder of what they mean for today:

(1) The mockers willfully ignore God’s authority as the Creator of the universe by His word – Verse 5 say, *“⁵ 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.”* Of course, he is referring to Genesis 1, which repeatedly states, *“and God said,”* as the effective power that brought the creation into existence. As Psalm 33:9 says in reference to the creation, *“For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”*

It is not totally clear what Peter means when he says that *“..and the earth standing out of water and in the water...”* He is referring to Genesis 1, where on the first day of creation, the earth was covered with water. *“Then,”* (on the second day, Gen. 1:6), *“God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’”* God then divided the waters on earth from the waters in the heavens, forming a sort of vapor canopy over the earth. Then on the third day (Gen. 1:9-10), God lifted up the land so that it was separated from the seas.

Peter’s point seems to be that water, the agent that God predominantly used in creation, is what He then used to judge the world in the flood. Peter is also making the point that the mockers were ignoring the implications of the doctrine of God as Creator. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the point that God created the world, including people. Therefore, He is the rightful Lord of His creation and the righteous Judge of those who do not submit to His lordship.

(2) The mockers willfully ignore the fact that by His word, God destroyed the world by the flood – Okay, look at verse 6, *“⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”* *“Which,”* (3:6) in Greek is a plural pronoun, referring to both God’s word and the water of the flood (Schreiner, p. 377). How could the false teachers claim that everything has continued on just as it was from the beginning of creation when God directly intervened in the most catastrophic judgment in history? The lesson of the flood was that God intervened in history to judge the wicked, and thus He will again intervene. All who follow their own lusts and do not repent and submit their lives to the Lord and Savior will face Him when He comes again in judgment.

(3) When mockers scoff at the promise of Christ’s coming, it is because they willfully ignore God’s word about the future judgment – Look at verse 7... Peter writes, *“⁷ 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.”* Again Peter emphasizes

God's Word... *"⁷ But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word..."* This is the only New Testament passage (except for 3:10, 12) that states explicitly that the future judgment will be by fire. But there are several Old and New Testament passages that allude to it. *Isaiah 66:15-16* states, *"For behold, the Lord will come in fire and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For the Lord will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the Lord will be many."* *Malachi 4:1* says, *"For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.'*" In the New Testament, John the Baptist predicts that Jesus will *"burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"* in *Matthew 3:12*. Paul pictures the second coming as *"when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire"* in *2 Thessalonians 1:7*, dealing out retribution to the wicked.

Peter's point is that the God who created the universe by His word and destroyed the wicked in the flood by His word has also warned by His word that He will judge the ungodly in the future by fire. Those who mock the second coming of Christ so that they can continue following their own lusts are fools!

CONCLUSION

I want to give you a few closing applications based on these verses for each of us to consider:

3 Closing Considerations:

1. **To move away from the truth that God created the world by His word of power is to move toward skepticism and licentious living** - In other words, creation was a miracle of God's power however and whenever He did it. If you minimize the miraculous, you move toward skepticism, which at some point undermines the authority of God's moral standards.
2. **To move away from the truth that Christ is coming again to judge the world is to move toward skepticism and licentious living** - Our tolerant culture that doesn't want to make any moral judgments has swayed many Christians to minimize the biblical truth of God's judgment. Some deny the eternity of hell. Others believe that God will ultimately save everyone. If you move in that direction, you move toward skepticism of God's Word and, eventually, toward moral relativism.
3. **If you are a Christian—a follower of Jesus—the bottom line has to be, "What does God's Word say?"** - It clearly says that God created the world by His word, judged the world at the flood by His word, and will judge the ungodly when Christ returns by His word. Thus we must stand firm on these truths and out of love warn everyone to flee the wrath to come.