

# He Is Coming Back

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week we finished looking at 2 Peter chapter 2.

! We started with the last half of verse 10 and went all the way to the end of the chapter! Which is verse 22. If you remember Peter detailed several characteristics of false teachers.

! Let's look at a couple of verses from that passage. Just for review. Verses 12 and 13 said this, But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, also will be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.

We talked about how the comparison between false teachers and irrational animals is dramatic. The false teachers and prophets don't have spiritual understanding.

They don't understand the will of the Lord for His people, the place of angels, or the need for behavior that is godly. We also talked about how they ridicule divine truth and heavenly authority, including things they don't even understand.

[ 1 : 14 ] As God's enemies, they intentionally distort the message of His word, and they will all face eternal punishment in the lake of fire unless they repent. Verse 17 described the false teachers as waterless springs and mist driven by a storm.

And the false teachers then are springs without water. They offer the spiritually thirsty nothing more than false hopes of relief. They're also mist driven by a storm because they produce no significant rainfall.

So the land is left dry and parched and the inhabitants are left disappointed. So like those waterless springs and mist, the false teachers are without substance and provide no life-changing refreshment.

Despite the fact that they have no spiritual substance to offer, the false teachers invariably claim great wisdom and knowledge. They fool their followers into believing that they possess deep theological scholarship, profound spiritual insight, and even direct revelations from God.

And as we start chapter 3 tonight, Peter is going to take on one of the false teachers' main claims. Having spent a lot of time showing that the false teachers lack knowledge, he's now ready to debunk one of their main arguments.

[ 2 : 27 ] So let's look at 2 Peter chapter 3, verses 1 through 10. Peter wrote, He says,

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and works that are done on it will be exposed.

We'll only cover through verse 10 tonight, but here's an overview of what we'll see through verses 1 through 16. You'll notice that chapter 3 begins with a recap of the teaching that Peter most wants his audience to take to heart.

It partly summarizes his concern with false teachers, but it also firmly sets the church in the context of the last days. And in doing this, Peter brings encouragement as well as warning.

[ 4 : 30 ] And the encouragement lies in remembering what the prophets and the Lord himself spoke about, the time in which they are now living. And it also lies in recalling the nature of God himself, because we'll see his creative word, his eternity, his sovereign rule even over evil, his patience, and his faithfulness in keeping his promises.

We'll also see his desire that people repent. And encouragement also is found in remembering that the day that brings judgment for the unbeliever and the false teacher brings for the believer a new

heaven and a new earth, which will be the home of righteousness.

And all of this should still provide further encouragement not to follow the false teachers, but to seek to live a life in holiness that's rooted in growth and grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In verses 1 through 10 that we'll see tonight, Peter takes on a particular argument put forward by the false teachers. And Peter is very clear what that argument is.

We'll break tonight's verses into three sections, starting with the first four verses. And in those verses, Peter lists the falsehood. So the falsehood is the first thing that we'll see tonight.

[ 5 : 45 ] Listen to the first four verses one more time. Peter said, And we see that falsehood.

In verse four, that falsehood is that the teachers say, Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. And Peter will take on that falsehood directly in verses five through seven. But first he reminds his readers of a few things. And we can see from verse one that Peter has reminded his readers of these things before.

Because that's where Peter said, This is now the second letter that I am writing to you. And in both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder. The other letter that Peter most likely has in mind is the one we know as first Peter.

So flip backward in your Bible a few pages. And we'll look at a few verses in first Peter that reference Jesus's return. So here are first Peter one verses three through seven.

[ 7 : 20 ] Again, these are verses three through seven of chapter one of first Peter. Peter said, And when Peter talks about the revelation of Jesus Christ, that's a reference to Jesus's second coming.

So he's already taking on the argument in first Peter that they say Jesus is not coming again. And skip down to first Peter one verse 13.

We see the same phrase there about the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter said, Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

If you go over a few chapters now and go to first Peter chapter four, we'll look at verses 12 and 13. Peter brings up the same topic again. Again, these are first Peter four verses 12 and 13.

And Peter wrote, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

[ 9 : 14 ] And in the first three verses of first Peter chapter five, Peter urged the elders to be faithful shepherds. And he wrote these words in verse four.

He said, And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. So you can tell from these first Peter verses that Peter consistently taught about the second coming of Christ.

And he reminds his readers of his consistent teaching in verse one of tonight's text. Then in verse two of tonight's text, he reminds them that others have taught the same thing.

Second Peter chapter three, verse two is where Peter wrote that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. So let's look at a few examples of how the prophets talked about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first one will be Isaiah 66 verses 15 and 16. I realize this is a little bit of a Bible drill here. That's why we have all the verses in your handouts.

[ 10 : 21 ] But this is Isaiah 66 verses 15 and 16. It says, Malachi is another one of the prophets who talked about the coming of the Lord.

And in Malachi chapter four, verses one through three, here's what Malachi had to say. He said, For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble.

The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall, and you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

We could look at several other cross references from the prophets, but here's just one more. And it's Zephaniah chapter one, verses 14 through 18.

[11:46] Zephaniah chapter one, verses 14 through 18, say this. The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast. The sound of the day of the Lord is bitter.

The mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring distress on mankind so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood shall be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed. For a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Peter also writes about how the teaching of Jesus and the other apostles talk about the end times. 23 of the 27 books in the New Testament explicitly refer to the Lord's return.

[12:59] And there are 260 chapters in the New Testament. And in those chapters there are about 300 instances in which Christ's apostles make reference to his second coming. And in proclaiming their great hope, the apostles were merely reflecting the promise of their Savior.

And we could look at all 300 of the apostles' mentions of the second coming, plus a few teachings of Jesus, but instead we'll look at just a few of those. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 16, 27. He said, For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. And for a sampling of what the apostles said, here's a verse from the apostle Paul.

It's 1 Corinthians 4, 5. And in 1 Corinthians 4, 5, Paul wrote, Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

Then each one will receive his condemnation from God. Then John also wrote about the second coming in Revelation. And here are Revelation 19, verses 11 through 16.

[14:19] John wrote, Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the Word of God.

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with the rod of iron.

He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of the God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

So from Matthew to Revelation, Jesus' return is reiterated time and time again in the New Testament. And Peter understood the weight of this inspired apostolic testimony, and he confirmed the second coming with unwavering confidence.

[15:28] And like I said, I know we've done somewhat of a Bible drill here in this section to remind ourselves of the fact that Peter's argument for the second coming is consistent with all of Scripture. And in our text tonight, 2 Peter 3, verses 3 and 4, Peter tells us why it's so important that we understand the teaching of the second coming.

In verses 3 and 4, Peter wrote, When Peter talks about knowing this first of all, first means the preeminent matter.

His priority in this section of the letter is to warn Christians about how the false teachers would try to deny that judgment is coming and that the return of Christ was coming, and that would steal the hope of believers.

And most people in Peter's day and in our day follow false teachers and consider biblical beliefs, especially beliefs in the second coming, to be foolish. And when Peter's talking about in the last days, he refers to all the days between the first coming of the Messiah and the second.

Characteristic of that time frame, however long it's going to be, is the fact that people will make fun of the doctrine of the second coming. And we see that when it talks about scoffing because scoffing literally means to make fun of someone.

[17:02] And it describes the characteristic attitude of the day toward the second coming. False teachers argue that the promise of the second coming had been delayed so long that we could safely conclude that it will never happen.

And as far as they could see, the world was going on just as it always had. People lived and died, but nothing else really changed. And they concluded then that God's promises were unreliable and that the universe was a stable, unchanging system where events like the second coming just don't happen.

Why would false teachers want to make the argument that the second coming will never happen? So they would lose hope is definitely one of them.

And the end of verse 3 also provides another answer to that question. If Jesus is never coming back, the false teachers can follow their own sinful desires without any fear of the consequences. Their argument is convincing to some people, but in reality, it was a smokescreen for the pursuit of their evil desires. And the false teachers are cynical about life and people in general, and they're preoccupied with themselves and their own needs.

[18:16] And these kinds of people with these attitudes, though, are the ones that the Bible encourages us to love as we await the second coming of Jesus Christ, because you never know, we might be able to reach some of those people.

So in verse 4, we already looked at the specific falsehood that Peter takes on in this section of Scripture. So let's go ahead and jump right in to the next section of tonight's passage. Peter debunks the falsehood by reminding us of the fact.

So the fact is your second blank there. We see the fact in verses 5 and 6. Peter said, For they deliberately overlooked this fact that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

And then going on to verse 7, he said, But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Peter says straight out that the false teachers are wrong, that God has never intervened. God, in fact, intervenes in his creation whenever he desires, and that's evidenced numerous times in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[19:39] Peter here cites two obvious occasions of God's intervention, namely when God acted at creation to form the earth out of water and through water, and also when he acted decisively in history, destroying the earth by the means of the flood in the days of Noah.

So God's word does more than just provide us with the doctrine of creation that can be sidestepped. God's word actually is what creates. Remember, God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And of course, that comes from Genesis 1-3. And so it's word, God's word, is a word that is brought into being and a word that always fulfills the promises it makes.

So to say we believe and trust God's word must also directly involve a commitment to the power of that word to bring to pass whatever it promises. The words formed out of water and through water look back to the first chapter of Genesis as well, especially verses 6, 9, and 10.

And in those verses, we read that in dividing the waters, God created the earth. And this is not a scientific explanation of how it all took place. Peter simply reminds us that water had a part to play in the way that God brought the earth into being.

[20:57] And that very naturally leads into Peter's next point. He said that God's word that is created has also destroyed. So we really need to see the importance of what Peter is saying here.

The false teachers are deliberately forgetting the creating word of God. And by doing that, they're also forgetting or attempting to deliberately hide the destroying and judging word of God.

You may have noticed that I said that the scoffers deliberately forget the creating word of God so that they can attempt to hide the destroying word of God. Peter tells us that intentional forgiveness is part of what they do.

And he told us that in the part of verse 5 that we skipped earlier. Peter says that the scoffers deliberately overlook the fact that God has been and of course still is active in his creation.

So the false teachers purposely shut their eyes to the truth. They willfully ignored the historical evidence choosing to disregard the biblical accounts of divine retribution.

[22:00] And they did that because they loved their sin and they wanted to live as they pleased. So they made a conscious decision to ignore the final consequences.

And of course, we have a lot of people today in our world that make a conscious decision to deliberately ignore the possible consequences of not following God.

But despite the false teachers attempt to deny it, God's creating word is still true and so is his destroying word. He's proven his power and his faithfulness to his promises time and time again throughout history.

So we can see that ominous consequences are ahead for those who try to ignore those facts. Look again at verse 7. Verse 7 says, So just as the abundant presence of water facilitated the flood, the pervasiveness of fire makes a future inferno credible.

For example, we already know that the galaxies consist of billions of burning stars and even the Earth's core contains a huge volume of molten rock that may be as hot as 12,400 degrees Fahrenheit.

[ 23 : 22 ] And only a 10-mile thick crust separates humanity from Earth's blazing interior. And more significantly, the entire creation because of its basic atomic structure is a potential nuclear bomb.

And the devastating power of nuclear weapons demonstrates the destructive force that God has placed within just the atom. And when he's ready, God will use that kind of nuclear energy in an atomic holocaust that will disintegrate the universe.

And the future destruction of the world was inseparable in Peter's mind from judgment. And that day, recalling the day of the Lord in the Old Testament, will be the day of judgment.

And it also will involve the day of destruction for the ungodly. The false teachers, unless they repented, would realize too late that the judgment was no myth and that God does intervene in the world.

We have difficulty seeing it from the English translation, but even Peter's original wording shows that God is involved in this world. Verse 7 says that the heavens and the earth are being kept until the day of judgment.

[ 24 : 32 ] The concept of being kept carries the idea of being guarded or being under the watchful eye of another. So God is not just sitting back and watching things go along.

He's actually actively guarding and watching what's happening so he can be ready. We've seen Peter talk about the falsehood and the fact. And in our last section for tonight, Peter will bring up one more fact as he talks about the future.

And the future is our third lesson heading. Building upon what he introduced in the previous verses, the future is Peter's topic in verses 8 through 10.

Here are those verses again. Peter wrote, But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

[ 25 : 41 ] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

The Greek word translated overlooked in verse 8 or overlooked is the same word used in verse 5 when it referred to the false teachers deliberately overlooking something.

So the false teachers deliberately overlooked an important fact. Peter now warns his readers to avoid overlooking another important fact. There have been a lot written about what Peter means when he says with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

But here's a one sentence summary and that simply is that God understands time much differently from man. So God understands time much differently from man.

In other words, God is unbound by time. And listen to four points from Charles Spurgeon that explain that summary in more detail. First is that all time is equally present with God.

[ 26 : 55 ] When we know that an event is to transpire today it seems very near to us. But when we know that something won't occur until a thousand years have elapsed we don't think anything about it.

We feel that we shall have gone to our graves long before that happens so we don't bother worrying about it. So the event doesn't strike us as having any connection with ourselves but that's not the case with God.

All things are equally near and present to his view so the distance of a thousand years before the occurrence of an event is no more to him than would be the interval of a day. So that's what

Spurgeon meant when he said that all time is equally present with God.

Secondly, all time is equally powerless with God to affect him. A day doesn't make any change in us that we can notice but just as a day seems to make no change with us a thousand years and even more than that make no change with God.

Ages roll on but he's still the same no matter what happens. So that's why we can say that all time is equally powerless equally powerless with God to affect him. Thirdly, all time is insignificant to God.

[ 28 : 07 ] The fact is it's only because he is infinite that he can even observe our existence. And when we think of the infinite nature of God we need to think of it in being able to marshal all the stars and govern all the things that we see day and night but we also should take it as great a wonder that he should even know what we do.

He knows that we are in existence and that he knows every hair on our heads and nothing of those falls to the ground without him giving it permission. And that should probably strike us with more wonder than the fact that he knows how many stars are in the heavens.

And then lastly all time is equally obedient to God. Spurgeon wrote you and I are servants of time but God is its sovereign master. To him if the days were longer or if they were shorter it would be nothing.

He does not care for these. We do not understand him but let us adore him. We cannot comprehend him but let us admire him. This is wonderful that he is time's master and bids time to move slowly or rapidly and time is obedient to the behest of the eternal God.

Establishing that God views time differently than we do leads straight to Peter's conclusion in verse 9 and that's where he says the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.

[ 29 : 40 ] Let's cover the easy part of verse 9 first. Peter says that what the scoffers see as slowness really is patience.

Patient there translates a form of a compound word that combines large with great and he's talking about large and great anger. So Peter used it here to show that God has a vast capacity for storing up anger and wrath before it spills over into judgment.

While that judgment is inescapable and deadly God's merciful patience beforehand gives the opportunity for reconciliation and salvation. His wrath toward the individual sinner is immediately appeased whenever that person repents and believes the gospel.

We as Christians can sometimes get so caught up in debating the meaning of the last part of verse 9 that we neglect to rejoice in the verse's clear opening statement and that simply is that God is patient with us and we see that on a small level every day in our own lives when God chooses to let us live after we sin against him.

Instead we should rejoice in God's patience toward us who are already saved and rejoice in God's patience toward those whom we pray will be saved because every day that goes by they have another opportunity to repent and believe in him.

[ 31 : 01 ] So with that in mind let's cover the more controversial piece of verse 9. Peter says the Lord is not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.

Two possible views of this verse are well supported by scripture. The first is summarized well by John MacArthur and it centers on being clear about whom Peter means when he refers to you in the verse and here's what John MacArthur says about the antecedent of the word you in verse 9. He said you refers both to Peter's immediate readers and any who will ever come to faith in Jesus Christ. Some have argued that you implies the salvation of all people but the immediate context and comments about the destruction of the ungodly clearly limits the you to believers.

The letter is addressed to a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. He has granted to us his precious and very great promises so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.

So from then on in this letter the use of the word you is directed at believers and even in chapter 3 verse 1 the you are beloved and in the words of verse 8 we again see the link between you and beloved so the you with whom the Lord is patient are the same beloved ones that he wants to bring to repentance so the context indicates that any and all God's elect namely those whom the Lord has chosen and will call to himself put another way Christ won't come back until every person whom God has chosen is saved and by using the term you which is a reference to Peter's believing readers the apostle limits any and all to the realm of God's chosen people to me given a

straightforward reading of the text MacArthur's view seems the most logical Peter 5 9 like they see Ezekiel 18 32 listen to

[ 33 : 10 ] Ezekiel 18 32 it says for I have no pleasure in the death of anyone declares the Lord God so turn and live Ezekiel 18 32 refers to God's desire that everyone without exception be saved but we know that God has not ordained that all will be saved many are going to perish!

still God desires in one sense that all will be saved even if he hasn't ultimately decreed that all will be saved and the scriptures themselves if accepted as a whole compel us to make the distinctions we know that God is an infinite and complex being one who exceeds our understanding and this interpretation is an acknowledgement of the mystery and depth of God's revelation so regardless of how we interpret verse 9 verse 10 is clear Peter summarizes the future like this the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with the roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed!

verse 10 ties tonight's verses to the verses that we'll cover in our next second Peter study and so we'll cover verse 10 in detail then but Peter's teaching tonight is even more relevant to us today than it was to his original readers because we now live 2,000 years from Christ's first coming and still he hasn't come back so perhaps it shouldn't surprise us that today the teaching of Christ's return is mocked it's all too easy for a question like this to raise doubts in the minds of even the most sincere believer and when asked with passion by teachers like those whom Peter is confronting in this letter the criticism of traditional teaching can seem very strong and there's really only one way to provide an answer to those teachers and to protect ourselves from such scoffing and that way of course is to trust the promises of God in scripture and to understand that the scoffing will be inevitable as some people reject

God's promises we always need to remember that God is at work in this world he created it and one day he's going to bring it to an end Peter urges us to remember God's activity God is in sovereign control of all that goes on and in his own time he will cause the world to come to an end and he will create a new heaven and a new earth for forgiven sinners to enjoy so when we hear scoffers today remember the words of verse 9 it gives us a reason for rejoicing and a reason for evangelism God while demonstrating his patience will save every one of his chosen people and we get to play a part in that and of course verse 9 is where Peter said the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance with that let's close in prayer father we thank you for the reminder tonight that you are in control of what happens help us remember this will in our day mock the doctrine of the second coming and say that

Jesus is never coming back also help us be mindful that you have called us to take the gospel to those same scoffers and let us be willing to be used by you to reach some of those continue to be with us as we reach out to our community let us remember these verses when we do!

[ 36 : 57 ] In Jesus name we pray Amen