

## SCOFFERS SCOFF—BUT GOD HAS THE FINAL WORD!

Please take your Bibles and turn once again to II Peter 3. As we get started here this morning, I want to remind you again what this **book is about**—and **why** we are studying it. The **theme** of II Peter—what the whole book is about—I believe is captured fairly accurately in this sentence:

“Pursue spiritual growth to protect yourself from error—and to be prepared for Christ’s return.”

And based on this theme, I **entitled the series**: “II Peter in Three Words: Working, Warning, and Watching.”

We’ve finished chapter 1 which emphasizes the need to **work on our spiritual growth**—and chapter 2, which **warns us** about false teachers. Although chapter 3 **begins with** another warning about false teachers, the chapter as a whole is primarily about **watching for the return of Christ**. Please follow along as I read 1-7.

Last week, we focused on vs 4 where we noted that scoffers scoff at the idea **that Jesus is coming back**. Why do they scoff? Because—according to them—**nothing has changed** since the creation of the world!

But to say **nothing has changed** since the beginning of the creation is to deny **the sin of Satan**...and the **fall of man**...and the **coming of Christ** the first time. And to deny those things **robs us of the proper lens** in which to view life! How does **our view of these things** help us make sense of what often doesn’t make sense? --By understanding what the Bible says about **the sin of Satan**, we know that **Satan brought sin and death** into the world—**not God!** That means **Satan should be blamed** for the heartache and tragedies of life—**not God!** --And by understanding what the Bible says about **the fall of man**, we know **why** we sin against ourselves...and others...and God.

Although an understanding of the sin of Satan and the fall of man **helps us make sense** of what is going on in our world, knowing those truths certainly **don’t give us** any hope or joy or peace, do they?

**Hope and joy and peace** can only be obtained by understanding why Jesus came to earth the 1<sup>st</sup> time! **Why**—according to the Bible—did Jesus leave heaven and come to earth?

To take upon Himself the punishment **for our sin**—and to **offer unto us His righteousness**, meaning His perfectness! Notice again a verse from last week: **II Corinthians 5:21** “For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [might have] the righteousness of God in Him [Jesus].”

So—“Big Picture”—we are currently born into a “cycle” where there is **a spiritual battle** that takes place over our soul while we are alive on earth! After we **die physically**, our soul leaves our body and goes to **one of two places**—heaven, or hell! How do we know that? Because that is what **Jesus said and taught!**

Jesus said in **Mt 25:46** “And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into **life eternal**.” **Two different** eternal destinies; not one—or a **temporary third!**

Does this cycle of people being born—and having a battle over their soul while they live on earth—then physically dying and having their soul go to either heaven or hell—ever end?

It sure does! Look at vs 13. But something has to happen before the **new heavens and new earth** come about? What has to happen? The current heavens and earth **have to pass away!**

How—and when—will that take place? Look at verse 10. We’ll spend more time on what is meant by “the day of the Lord” in the weeks ahead, but for now we need to understand this—it is all tied in with the **promise of Jesus that He is coming again!**

Does everyone believe that? No; they don’t! **God’s children do**—or at least should—but scoffers do not! Scoffers will scoff—Peter warns us of that—but God has the final word! And because God’s Word **will come to pass**, we need to make sure we are ready for Jesus’ return!

**1. The people Peter is writing to (vs 1)** **Who** is Peter writing to? **Believers!** How do we know?

Because in the **very first verse of the letter**—chapter 1, verse 1—he refers to the recipients as “them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” Here in this verse, he calls them “beloved”—which comes from same Greek word “agapaytos”—that **God used of Jesus** in Mt 3:17 when He said, “This is my **beloved Son**...”

So Peter is writing to people who are loved **by him**—and loved **by God!**

We also know they are believers because he says at the end of the verse that they have “pure” minds. The word is a combination of two Greek words and literally means “judged by sunlight.” It doesn’t mean they were perfect, but it carries the idea of “proven because well-examined” and “certified as being sincere.”

In other words, their minds were free from wickedness and they stood in the full light of God’s approval. Stated yet another way, they were **not fleshly and living for the world**—they were godly.

Let’s not miss this—Peter is writing to **godly** believers. **Why** did he write to them?

## **2. The purpose in writing (vs 1b-2)**

Middle of vs 1 “...in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” One of several things that has really stood out to me while going through this book is that Peter is not afraid **to remind believers** of things they already know!

--Flip back a page and look at chapter 1, verse 12. “...always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them.” --Vs 13. “...as long as I am in this tabernacle”—as long as I’m alive—I’m going to “stir you up” (same word used in 3:1)

--Vs 15. “After my decease to have these things **always in remembrance.**”

--Back to chapter 3:1. **What** is Peter stirring them up to remember?

That his **birthday was coming** and to have the cake ready? That **he was coming** to visit so get the house ready? Neither one, right? He wants them to remember “**The words which were spoken before** by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:”

--Does that mean they were to remember **everything** written in the OT—and what was currently being written **now by** the apostles? Most likely **not!** More than likely, it refers to what was written about mockers and scoffers. **Jude 1:17-18** “But, beloved, **remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles** of our Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>18</sup>How that they told you there should be **mockers in the last time**, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.” Sounds a lot like what Peter says, doesn’t it?

Two thoughts in the **way of application**:

1) They were not to be enamored with—or fooled by—“new truths.” They were to depend on what was **previously written and spoken**. The Word of God also referred to in verse 5—and again in verse 7.

2) A second application is this: To be “mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets” and apostles, you need to **hear** them—and **read** them—over and over again! I’m fairly certain that **none of us can recite** the Bible from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. And since that is true, we need to be **daily exposing** our minds to God’s Word in order **to remember it!** Am I wrong in saying that? I don’t think so!

## **3. The pronouncement regarding scoffers (vs 3)**

**What** is the pronouncement? Vs 3 “Knowing this first, that there **shall come** in the last days scoffers...”

--Come to know, perceive, recognize, understand that there **shall come** scoffers—not maybe or might—**shall!**

--The OT prophets—and apostles—didn’t **predict** scoffers would come—they **proclaimed** they would come!

--Important difference, right? **Mankind predicts**—meaning “guesses”; **God declares**, pronounces, proclaims.

--One interesting thing missing from some of the English translations is the **doubling up** of the Greek word for “scoffing.” In the Greek, it reads “scoffing scoffers”—or “scoffers scoffing”—take your pick.

Jesus did something similar in Luke 22:15 where we can see the “doubling up” in English: “And He said unto them, **With desire I have desired** to eat this passover with you before I suffer:”

Not only does Peter remind them that the OT—and apostles—pronounced that scoffers would come, he reminds them that scoffers would be characterized by: “walking after their own lusts.”

**Jude 1:18**—a verse I gave you earlier—says nearly the same thing: “walk after their own ungodly lusts.”

What does that mean? They live a life **controlled by the lusts of their flesh and their sin nature**—and not controlled by the Spirit of God! They were the **opposite of being godly**. Instead of having “pure minds,” they had minds that were **impure**; their understanding was “darkened.”

**Here’s a reminder** of some of the **descriptions Peter gives** of false teachers in chapter 2.

--Vs 3. Through covetousness—through greed—they make merchandise of you

--Vs 14. Their eyes are full of adultery—literally “the adulteress”—so they looked longingly at **all** women

--End of vs 15. They love the wages of unrighteousness—meaning they would gladly do wrong for money  
--Mid of vs 18. They allure—they beguile and entice people—to follow their selfish, sinful desires because that is what they themselves do!

**4. The promise they scoffed at (vs 4)** What did the scoffers scoff at? The “promise of **His** coming.” **Whose** coming are they mocking? The coming of **Jesus**, right? **Why** is Jesus coming? We’ll get into this more in the future, but there are **two** what I call “phases” of Christ’s return. **Phase 1** is the Rapture when Jesus comes to get His “bride,” the church—meaning all true believers—and bring us to heaven!

Many of us—me included—did not grow up in a **Bible-preaching church**. Even though I went to both Sunday School and church quite regularly growing up, I don’t remember ever being taught anything about **end times events and/or the return of Jesus**. Hopefully she won’t be too embarrassed, but I remember Alyse telling me she had gone to a funeral conducted by a Baptist pastor and heard about **the Rapture** for the very first time. If I remember right, she told me she thought at the time the pastor was “crazy”—or something to that effect!

It is quite possible that some of you are **thinking the same thing about me** right now! At any rate, **Phase 1** is a “meeting in the air” where **true believers**—those who have trusted Christ—and Christ only—for the forgiveness of their sins and have been genuinely born-again—are raptured/transformed **without dying** and are taken to heaven to “wait out” the 7-year Tribulation period that will take place here on earth. **Phase 2** of Jesus’ return is roughly 7 years later when He returns to earth in power and glory, defeats the antichrist and his armies during the battle of Armageddon, judges the nations for their treatment of the Jews during the Tribulation, then sits as king on David’s throne in the city of Jerusalem for 1000 years.

**Why** do scoffers scoff at the promise of Jesus’ coming?

--First, because they say nothing has changed. There is no evidence—**according to them**—that God has “intervened” in the world He created since the time He created it.

--A second reason—this one is implied rather than stated—is because the coming of Christ was foretold over **2000 years ago** and hasn’t happened yet! In their way of thinking, **a delay** means a broken promise. I believe there is **some sarcasm** in the question—“Where is the **promise** of His coming?”—implying that God doesn’t keep His promises!

--A third reason—again, I’m admittedly reading between the lines—is because they **love their sin!** Their thought-process would go something like this: ‘If Jesus **does** come back, He might come back to **judge sin**. If He comes back to judge, **my sin** will be judged, so maybe I should change my ways. But I don’t **want to** change my ways, so I’m going to **choose not to believe** that Jesus is coming back!’

You know how much sense that makes? It’s like a 2-1/2-year-old getting caught with his or her hand in the cookie jar. How do some of them react? They take their hands and **cover** their eyes. Why? Because they think if **they can’t see you, you can’t see them!** That obviously doesn’t work, does it?

In the same way, denying the return of Christ—making a **conscious choice** to not believe it and reject it—will not change the fact that **He will come**—and He will judge us!

More important than **why scoffers scoff**, is this question: **Why** does God use Peter to **warn His people**—even the godly ones—about the **attitude and teaching** of false teachers and scoffers?

Pretty safe to say it’s because **any of God’s children**—even the ones that are whole-heartedly **living a God-pleasing life**—can be lulled into living like Jesus **isn’t coming back!**

--In the parable of the sower, Jesus warned in Mark 4:18-19 “And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,<sup>19</sup> **And the cares of this world**, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, **choke the word**, and it becometh unfruitful.”

--Jesus—while teaching on end times—said this in Luke 21:34 “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with **surfeiting** [excesses; overindulgence], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.”

There are obviously more warnings, but here's the last one I want to bring up for now. The apostle John wrote in **1 John 2:28** "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and **not be ashamed** before Him at His coming."

Some "little children"—meaning believers—will be ashamed when Jesus returns. Why? Because they know they are **not living a life that is pleasing to God!** Andrew's Dad's Dad found out just this past week that he has cancer—and only has about 2 months to live! Imagine getting that kind of news! You have 60 days—make them count!

Would we spend the next 60 days **differently** if we knew they were **our last** 60 days? I'm thinking most of us would! And yet—some of you already know where I'm going with this—**not one of us is guaranteed** we have even tomorrow! **Today** could be our **very last day**, couldn't it? We believe that **in our heads**—we know **intellectually** that we could die today or that Jesus could come back—but very few of us **live like** we believe it!

No wonder Paul said in Romans 13:11 that "it is high time to wake out of sleep!"

### **5. The purposeful ignorance of scoffers (vs 5)**

Vs 5 "For this they willingly are ignorant of..." **What** is it that scoffers choose to ignore?

--We know from vs 4, they chose to deny that anything happened since creation—like the sin of Satan...and the fall of man...and the coming of Jesus the first time!

--We also know from vs 6, that they deny **that the flood** took place.

--But what did Peter mean when he said, "that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth **standing out** of the water and **in the water**"? More specifically, does the earth "standing out of and in the water" refer back **to creation** in vs 4—or the water covering the earth **during the flood** as mentioned in vs 6?

Commentators are **not in agreement**, but here's my take on it. Peter is answering—I believe—the scoffer's assertion that nothing has changed since the creation of the world, meaning **God has not been involved** and has been "missing in action." Peter is reminding them that according to Genesis 1:2, God started out by **creating the earth as a watery "blob"** (for lack of a better word). The earth was covered in water—and had some sort of water canopy suspended above it. In Genesis 1:6-8, God divided the waters from the waters and created what is called "heaven," but is what we call **the sky** because the birds flew there.

His argument, then, is this: 'You're saying God hasn't done anything to show Himself involved in the world since creation, but you're overlooking how much He intervened to make it "livable" in the first place!

Another possible meaning is simply this: **God used water** when He created the earth! Several translations say, "formed **out of** water and **by** water."

### **6. The perishing of the world "that then was" by the flood (vs 6)**

Although verse 5 may be a bit confusing, verse 6 **definitely is not**—the original world God made was destroyed by a flood! Notice vs 6: "Whereby the **world** that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"

I'm not sure **I would have picked up on** this if I hadn't seen it in a commentary but notice one of the **differences between** vs 5 and vs 6. Vs 5 refers to "the **heavens and the earth**;" vs 6 refers to the **world**. Why did Peter shift gears? Because God is **exact in what He says** and the heavens **weren't** destroyed by the flood—and neither was **the earth!** The earth most certainly got an "extreme makeover," but it wasn't totally destroyed!

"World," on the other hand, comes from the Greek word "kos-mos" which occurs 186 times in the Greek NT. It has several meanings, one of which is "the inhabitants of the world." And that is who was destroyed in the flood, isn't it?

And let's not forget that this is **not the first time** Peter refers to the flood!

Flip back a page to chapter 2, verse 5. "And spared not the old world"—there's our word "kos-mos" again—"but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, **bringing in the flood** upon the world ["kos-mos" once again] of the ungodly." Notice three important truths in this verse:

1) The flood was not a **natural disaster**—it was "brought in." By **whom?** God! How do we know?

Because God is the named subject—the one doing the action—in vs 4 and the subject doesn't change in vs 5.

In other words, God is the unnamed subject in vs 5—the One bringing the flood.

2) **Who** was the flood brought **upon**? Maybe I'm being a bit technical, but it doesn't say "the ungodly in the world"—it says the **world of the ungodly**. Why is that significant? Because there weren't "batches" or "pockets" of ungodly people destroyed by **a local flood**—the whole world was ungodly and required a **universal** flood!

That certainly corresponds with Genesis 6:5 "And God saw that the **wickedness of man** was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

**A third truth** is this: 3) God **saved** Noah! God did not destroy Noah with the **ungodly** in the flood—which obviously means that Noah was godly!

We're in chapter 2; look at vs 9 "The Lord knoweth how to deliver **the godly** out of temptations..."—meaning calamity and ruin. That means God **delivers the godly** from the destruction and judgment that is reserved for the ungodly.

a) **Who** were the godly in **Noah's** day? Those who believed what God said about the coming judgment—and "got into" what God provided to avoid judgment.

**What** did God provide for them to escape judgment? The ark!

b) **Who** are the godly now, in **our day**?

Those who believe what God says about the coming judgment **upon our sins** after we die—and who "get into" what God has provided to avoid that judgment.

**What** did God provide to escape judgment?

It's not a "what"—it's a **Who**—and His name is Jesus! **Jesus** is the One we need **to have**; He is the One we need to possess; He is the One we need to "climb into." We need to **have Jesus**—not just know about Him!

**I John 5:12** "He that hath the Son **hath life**; and he that hath not the Son of God **hath not life**."

How do we "**get**" the Son; how do we **possess** Him? We need to personally receive Him by faith!

John 1:12 "But as many as **received Him [Christ]**, to them gave He power [authority/right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:"

What about you? Has there been a time in your life that you "got in" Jesus by personally receiving Him by faith as your Savior? If not, why not do that today?

So, what is it that God wants **you to do** today? Here are a few things I believe God wants us to do:

1. If you are not saved, God wants you to be. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

2. Second—if you are a child of God—be honest with yourself—and more importantly, with God! Are you living a God-pleasing life? Are you living like you believe today could be your last day?

3. Third, are we burdened for the lost? Do we warn people of the judgment they face?