

## The Second Epistle of Peter

2 Peter 3:1-18

May 21, 2007

**Intro:** We come to the last class of this school year, and we are down to the third and last chapter of 2 Peter.

Rather than just finish part of this chapter, and wait until the Fall to finish the rest of it, I am going to try, with the Lord's help and blessing, to expound the whole chapter in our class hour today. I won't be able to expand on many thoughts which the Apostle Peter has given us in this chapter, but perhaps we can get the main emphasis, or emphases, which are to be found in this sobering, and yet encouraging, chapter.

Let me remind you of the outline I have given you of the entire epistle, and then give you the divisions of this chapter, and then pick up some of the detail in the chapter in the time that we have.

First of all, the outline.

I have pointed out that in chapter 1 the Apostle Peter was pointing out the present need, the spiritual need, of the people to whom he wrote this epistle. And I am sure that before we got very far into chapter 1 all of us began to feel that their need was our need, too. Just the other day I was looking at the website of Hillcrest Chapel and I came across an eight-message series by Pastor Gary Custis on 2 Peter 1:4-7 on "Adding to Your Faith. I have just listened to the first message, but I intend to listen to all of them. You might find them very profitable also. We all have this present and continuing need – to add to our faith.

Then in chapter 2 the Apostle Peter took a look at past, OT history, citing examples of God's judgment upon the wicked, and giving an extended description of the damaging and damning influence of false teachers and their false teaching.

In chapter 3 we are looking at the future and answering the scoffers who ridicule the teaching of Scripture which has to do with the return of Christ.

In the first two verses Peter stated again his purpose in writing this epistle.

In verses 3 and 4 Peter mentioned again that there will be scoffers who will ridicule the promise of the Lord's return.

In verses 5 through 10 Peter answered the scoffers, explaining why the Lord had not (and we can say, "has not) come, be confidently declaring that He will come, and that His coming will certainly bring in a judgment which the put an end to the heavens and the earth as we know them now.\

Then from verse 11 on to the end of the chapter Peter wrote specifically to the people of God as to how all of this should affect their lives. And we need to make the application to our lives. Believing in the return of Christ always is meant to be a strong encouragement for us to be holy and to be at peace. The chapter closes with an even stronger appeal for the Lord's people to beware of how the attitude of false teachers and scoffers can affect them away from God, and what is the best way to assure that they will fail in their evil purposes.

2 Peter 3 is a very, very important chapter. It is one that we should come back to (along with chapters 1 and 2) frequently in the days ahead.

In the outline I have given you I have divided chapter 3 into two major points in the outline:

**IV. Assurance regarding the future (2 Peter 3:1-16).** And then in the last two verses,

V. **The Conclusion (2 Peter 3:17-18).** But you will notice that he just not say, “Good by,” but he gives them to concluding exhortations: the first, a warning; the second, a positive exhortation.

But now following the divisions that I have just given you for this chapter, let’s start with the first two verses where we have:

**Verses 1 and 2:** A restatement of his original purpose in the epistle. He wanted to *stir them up* – to “*stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.*” See the word “remembrance” in 2 Peter 1:12, 13, 15. In 1:13 we also have the words, “stir you up.” This is why he was writing to them, not to tell them new things, but to stir them up to remember what he had told them before. To stir up a person is what you do when you wake up your children or your spouse from a sleep. It is what we do when we remind someone of something very important which we have told them before, but which they have forgotten. This is a common fault among us as believers. We are inclined to be “asleep at the switch,” as the saying goes.

What did he want them to remember? He wanted them to remember what the OT prophets said about the coming of the Lord, and what the NT apostles said about the coming of the Lord. For us today it means for us to wake up to what the Bible teaches about the coming of the Lord. We may be taken with what the world is trying to do, to repair itself, but it is never going to happen, especially when they ignore the only way that people are ever going to be changed.

We need to ask ourselves if we are really awake, or are we sleeping as others do. Cf. what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

1 Thess 5:6

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

**Verses 3 and 4:** What was Peter concerned about? Well, after chapter 2 there should be no question in our minds: “scoffers.” This is just another word describing false prophets or false teachers. A scoffer is one who mocks the Word of God, and who belittles those who believe it. Notice that they are not motivated by a desire to know the truth, but by “their lusts.”

What in particular were they attacking? The promise of God. And while it is true even today, that the Lord has not yet returned, the scoffers were dead wrong when they said, “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” The truth is that nothing continued the same very long after the creation of man. But what did Peter point out in the verses that follow?

**Verses 5 through 10:** Don’t you like that expression, “willingly ignorant,” in verse 5. With all of the evidence that is given to us in Scripture, and even with the evidence in our hearts that there is a God, people believe the most ridiculous things because they deliberately choose to be ignorant. So that is true about the scoffer who says that everything continues as it has been since the beginning of creation. The truth is that everything changes. The Bible tells us how the world came into existence. It was “by the Word of God.” “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:9). Expositors differ about what it means “the standing out of the water and in the water” means, but it seems that Peter was saying that the Lord brought the earth out of the water, and then He destroyed all of the people on the earth by covering the earth by water again in the days of Noah and the flood. That is the meaning of the sixth verse when he said that “the world . . . perished.” God did not destroy the world then, but he destroyed the people who were living on the earth.

And just as all of that (creation and the flood) took place by God’s Word, so it is by that same all-powerful

word, “the same word” that created the heavens and the earth, and which destroyed all people on the earth in the days of Noah, it is by that “same word, according to verse 7, that the universe is “kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” The final judgment on the universe as we know it today, will not be a judgment of water (we have God’s promise that there will never again be a flood that will cover the earth), but it will be a judgment of fire, and it will mark perdition, eternal judgment, for all of the ungodly of the world.

But when we come to verse 8, the Apostle Peter deals with the question of *time*. The world says that if the destruction of the world has not taken place after all of the time that has passed since creation, then it is not going to happen. That is one reason why the people in our generation feel so smug and so free to go on living their lives to please themselves instead of living lives to please God (which is the idea in the word “godly”).

Peter accused the scoffers of being “willingly ignorant” in verse 5; here he informed believers that God dwells in a timeless eternity. A thousand years to God are like a day to us. So from heaven’s timing, it is only two days since the Lord Jesus left, *and there is no reason to be concerned about the fulfillment of a promise that is only two days old!*

But as Peter went on in verse 10, he went back on man’s point-of-view regarding time. And he said that “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise,” that is, His promise to return and every other promise that He has given us in His Word. “Nor slack” means that He hasn’t forgotten that He made this promise, nor did something come up which made forget that He made it. And this applies to all of God’s promises. He doesn’t need a secretary to remind Him of what He needs to do today. God doesn’t even need an appointment book or a Palm Pilot (to be up-to-date) to remind Him of what He has promised to do. And when Peter said that the Lord is “not slack,” he meant that the Lord is *never* slack! He is always on time every time. Now it doesn’t always seem that way to us, but we need to understand this about God. You see, the mistake that scoffers and all people who don’t know the Lord, make when they think about God, is that they think that the Lord is like they are. They don’t know that God is GOD, a sovereign God, Who is in charge and control of all things so that time does not rule Him like it rules us, but He controls all things. There is nothing in all the universe that is not under His control.

But is the real explanation that the Lord Jesus Christ has not returned? It is because He is “longsuffering.” This is one of the Greek verbs for patience. Paul said that this is a characteristics of God’s love. “Love suffereth long . . .” This is one of the most amazing of God’s attributes. But Peter said that “the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward,” as the KJV translates it. We would say today, *the Lord is longsuffering toward us.*” But to whom was he speaking? Well, when we go back to verse 8, we see that Peter was speaking to the “beloved,” the Lord’s people. What did he say about them? That God was not willing that any of them should perish! Who are the “them”?

If you go back to chapter 1, and verse 10, you will see that he exhorted his readers “to make their calling and election sure.” Calling to what? Election to what? *Peter was speaking of their calling and election to salvation.* You see, the people of the world know nothing about this. They do not know that before creation God made a choice of all who would ever be saved. And He has not destroyed this universe by fire yet because not all of His elect have been saved. You see, the salvation of certain sinners is the most important thing that is going on in the world today. It is the one most important thing that has ever gone on. And when that last one has been saved, then what is described in verse 10 will take place. He is waiting for “all” of them “to come to repentance.” And they are the ones He is calling to Himself.

What does verse 10 tell us? “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” We don’t know what a thief will strike us, nor do we know when the Lord will eventually come. And when He comes, what will

happen? (Read the rest of verse 10.) Peter is not concerned here with the order of events which will take place in the last days, but He is thinking of that which will ultimately lead up to the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. In the book of The Revelation, this takes place between chapters 20 and 21.

But now we come to the last part of this epistle.

**Verses 11 through 18:** Verses 17 and 18 form the conclusion of the epistle, but they give us two extremely important exhortations.

The Apostle Peter has answered the scoffers. Now at this point he turned again to his readers, the people of God in his day, and we know that it has to do with us as it has had to do with all believers since the day that Peter wrote this epistle.

Do you remember that in our study of 1 John, when the Apostle John was speaking of the world, he made this statement in chapter 2, verse 17: “And the world passeth away [is passing away], but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” In the light of all that the Apostle Peter had been saying here in 2Peter 2, this is what we need to hear and obey: “Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved . . .” (Read verses 11-13.) Note carefully the words at the end of verse 11, “in all holy conduct and godliness.”

Our world today is characterized by wickedness and ungodliness. What will it be like to be in a new order where sin is a thing of the past, and everybody is primarily concerned about pleasing God. The word that Peter used here suggests both that which never existed before as well as that which is better than before. And we know it will be infinitely better, and so implied also in the expression is that which has such newness will bring a new note of praise such as we have never uttered before.

Now look at verse 14. Here is another practical exhortation. Since this is what we look for, and since the time between now and then may be very difficult, we need to seek from God His peace, and strive by God’s grace to be ‘without spot, and blameless.’ These words suggest Christ-likeness. Remember the longsuffering of God, and why we still wait. It is all for salvation. And Paul brings the Apostle Paul in as his co-witness to our present need and the glorious prospect that awaits us all. Cf. verses 15 and 16.

**Verses 17 and 18:** These give us a very special conclusion to this epistle.

Verse 17 gives us a warning. Knowledge of God’s Word gives us a greater responsibility to “beware” lest we be led astray by the false teachers, and “fall from your own steadfastness.” Those who are the strongest in the Lord need to carefully beware lest they be turned aside. But what is the best way to maintain our strength in the Lord? Verse 18 tells us.

There is no more important verse for every Christian to know and to act upon, that 2 Peter 3:18. It applies to the most mature saint, and it applies to a babe in Christ, and to everyone in between. How do we do this? By God’s grace, and by our knowledge and fellowship with “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We need to feed daily upon God’s Word. We need to seek the Lord in prayer. We need to seek God’s grace in being obedient to His will, and yielded to Him.

See Peter’s concluding prayer to his first epistle in 1 Peter 5:10-11.