

2 Peter 3

Overview

- Numerous false teachers had infiltrated the Church and were teaching dangerous, false doctrines; the key message in 2 Peter is that the best way to defend against spiritual error is to know the truth
- As Peter ends his letter, he addresses the topic of the end times and the judgment to come
- Peter wanted persecuted believers to understand that the “Day of the Lord” was certain and sure; even though delayed & false teachers were scoffing at such a doctrine, Christ would come back and conclude human history. In light of that, he called for the sanctification of God’s people.

2 Peter 3:1-2 All Believers Should Know These Things and Think On Them

- *v1 Pure minds/wholesome thinking*--uncontaminated by the seductive influences of the world
 - *Reminders*--effective preaching/teaching repeats & expounds on what is already known
 - Repetition implants firmly while the accompanying discussion expands understanding
 - Such revisiting of truths stimulates seeing new meanings & connections with other truths
- *v2 Holy prophets*--the Old Testament prophets serve as a contrast to the false teachers
 - *Prophets/apostles*--NT & OT provide a unified Scripture with Christ as the focus

2 Peter 3:3-10 The Day of the Lord is Coming

- *v3 Last days*--the entire time period from Christ’s first coming until His second advent
 - *Scoffers*--false teachers that ridiculed the teaching of the return of Christ
- *v4 Where is the promise*--form of Hebrew expression which implied that the thing asked about did not exist at all; the heretics of Peter's day were denying that Jesus Christ would ever come again
 - Argued that the promise had been so long delayed that it was likely it would never be fulfilled
 - Also, their fathers had died & the world was going on precisely as it always did; so this was a stable universe & convulsive upheavals like the 2nd Coming did not happen in such a universe
 - *Since the beginning*--the theory of uniformitarianism said God is absent from the affairs of the world; there will be no cataclysmic judgments since nature has always operated in a uniform, predictable & orderly fashion
- *v5-7 Peter's first response*: this is not a stable universe, that once it was destroyed by water in the time of the Flood and that a second destruction, this time by fire, is on the way
 - *v5 Deliberately forget*—by doing so they can deny to themselves that they must face judgment
 - *v5 Formed out of water and by water*--in the creation, God collected the upper waters into an atmospheric “canopy” and the lower waters into underground reservoirs, rivers, lakes, and seas
 - The world was not only created out of water, but life is sustained by water
 - *v6 The world of that time*--the pre-flood world order, including the aforementioned ‘canopy’
 - *v7 Reserved for fire*—The OT points to a fiery “Day of the Lord” in many passages, including:
 - **Joel 2:30-31** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
 - **Isaiah 66:15-16** “For behold, the Lord will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶For by fire will the Lord enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the Lord shall be many.

- **Malachi 4:1** “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.”
- v8-9 Peter’s second response cites God’s view of time and His mercy
 - v8 God’s perception of time is wholly different than ours
 - **Psalm 90:4** A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.
 - v9 *Patient* in most translations; I like the *longsuffering* used in the KJV
 - *All*--refers to all those who will come to Christ to make up the full number of God’s people
 - This does not mean God will save everybody; He gave us free will & will judge
 - **John 3:18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.
 - Each day is a gift of mercy--an opportunity to develop, render service & take a step nearer to God
 - **Ezekiel 18:23** Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?
- v10 *The Day of the Lord* is a conception which runs all through the prophetic books of the OT
 - Jews saw two ages: 1) the present age, which is wholly bad & past remedy; 2) the age to come--the golden age of God, which would come about by the direct intervention of God
 - Peter & other NT writers identified the OT “Day of the Lord” with Jesus’ second coming
 - *Roar*--Greek word used for the whirring of a bird’s wings or crackle of flames in a forest fire
 - **MacArthur:**¹ *The Day of the Lord*: This is a technical term pointing to the special interventions of God in human history for judgment. It ultimately refers to the future time of judgment whereby God judges the wicked on earth and ends this world system in its present form. The Old Testament prophets saw the final Day of the Lord as unequaled darkness and damnation, a day when the Lord would act in a climactic way to vindicate His name, destroy His enemies, reveal His glory, establish His kingdom and destroy the world (Isa 2:10-21; 13:6-22; Ezek 13:30; Joel 1-2; Zech 14; Thess 1:7; 2:2). It will occur at the time of the Tribulation on earth (Rev 6:17) and again 1,000 years later at the end of the millennial kingdom before the creation of the new heavens & new earth.

2 Peter 3:11-14 The Moral Dynamic

- v11 *What kind*--one must live a life of piety & holiness, conforming to God’s holy standards
 - *Speed its coming*—by prayer (“Thy Kingdom come”); by preaching, by penitence & obedience
 - **Matthew 24:14** And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
 - Rabbis had two sayings: "It is the sins of the people which prevent the coming of the Messiah. If the Jews would genuinely repent for one day, the Messiah would come." And: "If Israel would perfectly keep the law for one day, the Messiah would come."
- v12-13 *Look forward*--eagerly desiring God’s will, we are not to fear the end but to hope for it
 - *Day of God*--this is different from “the Day of the Lord” and refers to the eternal state under which there will be “new heavens and a new earth”
- v14--one must seek with all mind, heart, soul & strength to be fit to be a dweller in the new world
 - **Barclay:**² If there is nothing in the nature of a Second Coming, nothing in the nature of a goal to which the whole creation moves, then life is going nowhere. That, in fact, was the heathen position. If

¹ John MacArthur: *1 & 2 Peter; Courage in Times of Trouble*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 2007; page 96

² William Barclay: *The Letters of James and Peter*, Revised Edition; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976; page 345

there is no goal, either for the world or for the individual life, other than extinction, certain attitudes to life become well-nigh inevitable. These attitudes lead to heathen epitaphs:

- If there is nothing to come, one may well decide to “eat, drink, and be merry”
- If there is nothing to live for, one may well be utterly indifferent to anything in the world
- If there is nothing to live for but extinction one can enter into life a kind of lostness
- **MacArthur:**³ The theme of Christ’s second coming permeates the New Testament and is the great anticipatory reality of Christian living. The Lord’s return will be as real and as historical an event as His first coming. Believers look back to the moment of saving faith in Christ, when their souls were redeemed. They look forward to the return of Christ, when their bodies will be redeemed and they will enter into the promised fullness of salvation. In that day Satan will be defeated, the curse lifted, Christ worshipped, the creation liberated and restored, sin and death conquered, and the saints glorified.

2 Peter 3:15-16 God is Patient

- *Patience/longsuffering*--we should utilize this time of God’s patience for evangelism
 - *Paul... has written*--God inspired Paul’s writings; Peter rated them with “the other Scriptures”
 - Testifies that some of Paul’s letters are currently known and used throughout the church
 - *Hard to understand*--used of the utterance of an oracle, which were often ambiguous
 - *Twist/distort*--likely those that twisted the *doctrine of grace* into a license to sin; *doctrine of faith* into an argument that Christian action was unimportant
 - Both Peter & Paul wrote of God wanting our repentance and His forbearance for sinners
 - **Romans 2:4** Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?
 - **Romans 3:25** God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—
 - **Romans 9:22** What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?

2 Peter 3:17-18 A Firm Foundation and Continual Growth

- *v17 Forewarned*--we have been warned about the false teachers & thus should be on our guard
 - To be forewarned is to be forearmed, but to be forewarned is also a grave responsibility
 - We cannot plead ignorance of coming trials and the snares of false teachers
 - One whom knows the right and does the wrong is under a double condemnation
 - The Christian is one with a basis for life that should be rooted and founded in the faith
- *v18 Grow*--we all must strive to continually grow in relationship to Jesus
 - **Barclay:**⁴ The Christian must daily experience the wonder of grace, and daily grow in the gifts which grace can bring; and he must daily enter more and more deeply into the wonder which is in Jesus Christ. It is only on a firm foundation that a great building can tower into the air; and it is only because it has a deep root that a great tree can reach out to the sky with its branches. The Christian life is at once a life with a firm foundation and with an ever outward and upward growth.

³ John MacArthur: *1 & 2 Peter; Courage in Times of Trouble*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 2007; page 101.

⁴ William Barclay: *The Letters of James and Peter*, Revised Edition; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976; page 350