



## DELAY IN CHRIST'S COMING 2 PETER 3

### Introduction

With language strong enough to jar them out of their composure, but gentle enough to comfort and encourage, Peter has given his readers a reminder of their need to grow in the knowledge of the Savior and stand firm against those who know the truth but deliberately teach lies for their own selfish reasons. In closing his letter, he again gives a reminder of what the prophets and the apostles have taught. Even though scoffers will come and deny it all, a day of judgment and destruction is surely coming upon the ungodly. "The darkness grows thicker around us, and godly servants of the Most High become rarer and more rare. Impiety and licentiousness are rampant throughout the world, and we live like pigs, wild beasts, devoid of reason. But a voice will soon be heard thundering forth: 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh!' God will not be able to bear this wicked world much longer, but will come, with the dreadful day, and chastise the scorers of His Word." (Martin Luther, sixteenth century, as quoted in With The Word Bible Commentary, Warren W. Wiersbe.) Peter writes that the day of the Lord is coming at a time when no one expects, but Christians can rest assured that it will come, despite the mockery of some. In the meantime, we may be thankful for God's patience in delay, knowing that He desires none whom He has chosen to perish!

### OUTLINE OF 2 PETER 3

- I. **The Coming of Scoffers - 2 Peter 3:1-7**
- II. **The Coming of Christ - 2 Peter 3:8-10**
- III. **The Christian's Response - 2 Peter 3:11-18**

#### I. The Coming of Scoffers - 2 Peter 3:1-7

This is the second epistle Peter has written. Most probably the prior letter was 1 Peter, but it may have been another letter which has been lost to us. If Peter is referring here to 1 Peter, then we know that the first recipients of this letter are also Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor (as in 1 Peter 1:1). He also states here that his purpose in both letters is the same.

##### A. Reminder of the truth - 2 Peter 3:1-7

1. To stir up your pure minds by way of reminder - 2 Peter 3:1

Peter did not want his readers to be forgetful of the

truth. His desire was to stir up their memory so that their minds would remain pure. The Greek "elekrines," translated as "pure" literally means "separated, sifted" or "unmixed." The idea is sifting out the chaff in order to preserve the pure grain. Is your mind filled with the pure knowledge of God or are there erroneous beliefs which need to be sifted out? That is one of the purposes of this Bible study — to stir up and purify your mind so that it is filled with only pure unmixed truth. When you allow God to illumine and purify your mind, there is no reason that you should be carried away by the false teachings of the ungodly.

2. That you may be mindful of the words of the prophets and apostles - 3:2

There is a continuity of witness of the prophets and apostles. The words of the prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit as they looked forward to the coming of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12 and 2 Peter 1:20-21). The apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-2 and 2 Peter 1:16) and were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The prophets and apostles, whose words are recorded in the Bible, are the source of truth and the standard by which all teaching is to be judged.

3. For the last days - 3:3a

The reason for knowing the truth is that scoffers (mockers) will come in the last days. These may be the false teachers referred to in chapter two who deny Christ (2 Peter 2:1) and thus would also deny His return (2 Peter 3:4). Or the scoffers may refer to many people who will turn from the truth and abandon hope. Above all, Peter wants his readers to be forewarned about the scoffers!

##### B. Description of the scoffers - 2 Peter 3:3b-7

1. They walk according to their own lusts - 3:3b

The scoffers show open contempt for Christ's coming by living lives of self-indulgence.

2. They ridicule Christ's coming - 3:4

They point to the fact that things have not changed since the creation of the world and that the prophets are dead and gone and their prophecies have not been fulfilled. Since things have not changed since the beginning of the world, why expect Christ to return now?

3. They willfully forget the power of God's word - 3:5-6

These scoffers do not want to know the truth. They are willfully blind to God's powerful work in the past. God made and God controls all natural processes. It was God's word which brought the earth in all its fullness into being, dividing the waters and bringing the heavens and the dry land into being (Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24; Psalm 33:6-7; Hebrews 11:3). It is that same word which intervened in judgment, bringing the waters which God had divided (Genesis 1:6-7) back to cover the earth (Genesis 7) with the flood (2 Peter 2:5). The waters of the earth are obedient to God! Both God's creative word and God's judging word are authoritative.

4. They are doomed to perdition - 3:7

The judgment of the scoffers is certain. God's word is all-powerful, as seen in the creation (2 Peter 3:5), in the flood (3:6) and in the continued existence of this natural world (3:7). The mighty power of His word will again be demonstrated for all to see on the day of judgment. Peter describes that day as a day of fire when the ungodly will be utterly destroyed.

It may be noted that both the Old and New Testaments prophesy judgment by fire. See Deuteronomy 32:22; Isaiah 66:15-16; Malachi 4:1; Matthew 3:12; 1 Corinthians 3:13; and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.

## II. The Coming of Christ - 2 Peter 3:8-10

Peter encourages his readers by stating that Christ will come again, and it will be at exactly the right time.

- A. Christ's coming will be in God's time - 2 Peter 3:8-9

God's time is different than man's time. "As human beings, our viewpoint is limited because we live within the linear process of time. However, God is sovereign over time and views it from the perspective of eternity. All things past, present and future, are ever before Him" (Matthew Henry, The Matthew Henry Commentary). Therefore, just because God's promise seems to us to be delayed, (probably due to our own impatience!) we should not conclude that it will fail!

What men see as slackness is really longsuffering, or patience, toward us. God delays His judgment for the sake of His own because He is not willing that any should perish (John 6:39-40). He is giving time for all those He has called (2 Peter 1:3) to respond. He is giving us more time to grow in virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Peter 1:5-7), more time to make our calling and election sure (1:10), and more time to become established in

the truth (1:12). Are you making the best use of your time in the light of God's patience toward you?

- B. Christ's coming will be unexpected - 2 Peter 3:10a

The day of the Lord will be a time of divine intervention and judgment. It will be the time of Christ's second coming (1 Corinthians 1:8). That day will come as a thief in the night. It will come suddenly and unexpectedly. 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and Revelation 3:3 and 16:15 also speak of Christ coming as a thief in the night.

- C. Christ's coming will be fiery - 2 Peter 3:10b

Peter pictures a fiery destruction of this world. The present heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements of which the material world is composed will melt with the intense heat. Both the earth and all that is in it will be burned up.

## III. The Christian's Response - 2 Peter 3:11-18

It is obvious that Christ's second coming will be very different from His first, and those who are wise will be prepared. Matthew Henry admonishes, "Give diligence therefore to be found in Christ, that it may be a time of refreshment and day of redemption to you" (The Matthew Henry Commentary). Peter explains how to be prepared for the day of the Lord.

- A. Holy conduct and godliness - 2 Peter 3:11

Knowing that this present world is doomed to destruction should be a motivation for holy conduct and godliness. In a similar manner, the apostle Paul also calls his readers to, *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works* (Titus 2:12-14).

- B. Looking for the day - 2 Peter 3:12 -13

What Peter previously called the day of the Lord, he now calls the day of God. It is the day when Christ, victorious over all His enemies, will present His kingdom to His Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Believers are to look for and hasten that day. Here Peter again speaks of the fiery judgment of that day but also adds that it is the day God's promise of new heavens and a new earth will be fulfilled.

1. Hasten the day - 3:12

Holy conduct and godliness not only encourage us to look forward to the day of God, they also hasten its

coming. As you live a godly life, share the good news of Jesus Christ, support missions, and diligently pray *Thy kingdom come* (Luke 11:2 NASB), the gospel is spread throughout the world and sinners are brought to repentance.

## 2. New heavens and new earth - 3:13

God's promise of the new heavens and new earth is found in Isaiah 65:17; 66:22 and Revelation 21:1. Believers do not look forward to the destruction of the old so much as they look forward to the new. The glory of the new is that it is the dwelling place of righteousness. God Himself will dwell there (Revelation 21:3), along with those who have a part in the inheritance of God (1 Peter 1:4 and Revelation 21:7). *But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death* (Revelation 21:8).

### C. Inwardly renewed- 2 Peter 3:14-15a

John Calvin observes that, "Anyone who hopes for the new heavens will begin renewal within himself" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries). This we will do as we remember that God's patience with us is working for our salvation.

#### 1. Be found in peace - 3:14

Christ Himself is the *Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6). *He Himself is our peace* (Ephesians 2:14), and His peace is to rule in the hearts of all believers (Colossians 3:15).

#### 2. Be without spot and blameless - 3:14

Christ is the precious lamb of God, *without blemish and without spot* (1 Peter 1:19). False teachers, on the other hand, are *spots and blemishes* (2 Peter 2:13). It is clear whose steps we are to follow. *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was guile found in His mouth'* (1 Peter 2:21 and Isaiah 53:9).

### D. Steadfast - 2 Peter 3:15-17

The danger is that believers may fall into error because there are untaught and unstable men who take the difficult passages of Scripture and twist them. The word twist (2 Peter 3:16), means "to torture or dislocate the limbs on a rack." It is a graphic word which describes violence being done to the Scriptures. Just because some passages are difficult to understand, as in Paul's letters (3:15-16), there is no excuse for twisting the meaning and using it to fit one's own preconceived personal views. That is the error of the wicked (3:17).

Beware the error of the wicked. Remain steadfast in the truth!

Peter cautions his beloved readers to beware. He has given instruction in the truth and also in the dangers of listening to false teachers. Advance knowledge gives an advantage. The phrase *you know these things beforehand* is the Greek "proginoskontes" from which our English word "prognosis" is derived. When one knows the prognosis, he is able to adjust his attitude, lifestyle and habits. That is what believers need to do in light of what Peter has taught, in order to remain established and not fall from the truth into the error of the wicked.

### E. Grow in grace and knowledge - 2 Peter 3:18a

Believers are to be continually growing in the sphere of God's grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. This sums up the theme of Peter's letter — know and grow. Are you growing in your knowledge of Christ through your study of the Scriptures? How has your mind become purified (2 Peter 3:1-2) through the knowledge you have gained in the study of Peter's epistles? Are you growing in grace as you apply the Scriptures to your own life and strive to conform in all ways to the will of God and to the image of His Son? How has your everyday life become more Christlike since you began the study of 2 Peter? In what areas do you still need to work and pray to *Be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure* (2 Peter 1:10)? Would you describe your Christian walk as being more stumbling or steadfast? What will you do to guarantee that you will not fall from your own steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17)? John Calvin notes that Peter is encouraging us to advance, because the only way of persevering is to continually go forward and not stop and sit down in the middle of the journey. He feels it is as though Peter were saying, "Those who put their minds to making daily progress will be safe" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries).

### F. Give Christ the glory - 2 Peter 3:18b

The last sentence of Peter's second epistle is a doxology of praise to our Lord who is also our Savior, Jesus Christ. The glory which belongs only to God is also Christ's (2 Peter 1:17). It is:

the glory of redemption,  
the glory of grace,  
the glory of the truth of the gospel,  
the glory of His coming again,  
and the glory is both now and forever!  
So be it!

### Application

In what ways is the glory of God shining forth in your life?