

Studies in 2 Peter

How Can I Be Sure That Jesus is Coming Again?

Intro: It just happens that our lesson tonight falls on Memorial Day weekend. This particular holiday was designed to help us keep in memory those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. We need reminders for important things. Peter's second letter has a similar intention—to help God's people remember important things of the gospel.

Peter knows by revelation that his time on earth is drawing to a close. He wants to remind God's people of the truths that he has had a part in revealing to them so that after his departures they will remember them and remain faithful to the Lord.

Thus Peter once more here in chapter three expresses his intentions for writing:

“THIS is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.” (2 Peter 3:1–2, NASB)

Here we see a reiteration of the concepts Peter had stressed in chapter one, namely, that the people of God can know that they have the truth because they can see the correlation between the messages of God's holy prophets of the OT and their corroboration in the preaching of the apostles.

And so Peter's goal is to remind his readers of the truth that they have already known so that it does not slip away when the apostles like Peter are no longer alive.

Peter has already answered three fundamental questions God's people need to remember the answer to:

How can we be sure the gospel is true?

How can we be sure that we will enter the eternal kingdom?

How can we be sure that we will not be astray?

Now he adds a fourth:

How can we be sure that Jesus is coming again?

Peter wanted the brethren to be sure that all that God had promised for the future would indeed come true. He wanted them to be certain that Jesus was coming again and with His coming eternal judgment! This text focuses on that great promise which the false teachers denied. Tonight let's take a big picture view of our text.

THE SECOND COMING DENIED

“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of

His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3:3–4)

“Mockers will come with their mocking...”

Satan uses everything in his arsenal to defeat the word of God.

In chapter two we learned that He has false teachers who deny the truth.

In chapter three we see that He has mockers who ridicule the truth.

Perhaps Peter is referring to the unbelievers or false teachers of chapter two will deny that Jesus will come again and that final judgment will take place. They have reasons for wanting there not to be a final judgment.

“Following after their own lusts...”

Infidelity is not an intellectual problem; it is a moral one! Many reject the word because of a desire to sin.

Famous atheist Adolf Huxley once wrote: “I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently, assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do.... For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom (1966, 3:19, emp. added).”

People who do not believe often have motives for unbelief that are grounded in their own desires, just as Peter here shows.

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

Those who denied the second coming would do so based on the assumption that the history of the world is uniform and without catastrophe.

But Peter is prepared to respond to this notion:

THE SECOND COMING DEFENDED

For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:5–8)

Peter first affirms that denial of the second coming is built on a false premise: "All continues as it was from the beginning..." Peter first presents an argument from world history.

Peter affirms that the mocker fails to note that the creation itself came into being by a powerful God who brought it into existence out of water and by water. Likewise water was the agent of its destruction when God decreed the end of human life because of sin.

The premise of the mocker is false because he fails to acknowledge that destruction has come to the world before. The flood is proof of that.

The evidence of a universal flood is clear.

Bert Thompson wrote: "The account of the Genesis Flood hardly stands alone in human history. Researchers have described over 100 flood traditions from Europe, Asia, Australia, the East Indies, the Americas, East Africa, and many other places."

Professor Harold W. Clark, in his work, *Fossils, Flood and Fire*, discussed the important fact that flood stories abound in practically every known culture.

Preserved in the myths and legends of almost every people on the face of the globe is the memory of a great catastrophe.

Peter's point is that "all things have not continued from the beginning.

The God who made the world intervenes to destroy it by water. If destruction has come before, it can and will come again.

Second, Peter presents an argument from the nature of God.

"But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God does not live under the constraints of time like we do. God is not under the press of time to accomplish his purpose. He is not in a rush to complete His work! *"One day is as a thousand years..."*

God's purpose is not hindered by the long lengths of time involved. He is not forced to discontinue due to the fatigue we feel in long periods of time. *"A thousand years is as a day..."*

This is not some formula for prophetic interpretation but rather a statement of the folly of assuming that the long passing of time negates the fulfillment of God's promise.

In human terms God's delay may seem slow; but the vast lengths of time are nothing to God.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:8-9)

There is a reason for the delay! God wants as many people as possible to be saved. Only His delay can provide for this. Cf. v. 9, 15

Rather than ridicule God's delay, these sinners ought to be grateful for God's patience!

But let there be no doubt that the day of the Lord will come!

THE SECOND COMING DESCRIBED

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,” (2 Peter 3:10–14)

It will come like a thief

Peter borrows the words of Jesus from texts like Lk. 12:39-40.

It is foolish for people to think they can calculate the day. There have been many foolish failures to do that.

The answer is to be ready at all times. Let not false prognosticators lure us into a false sense of security! Nor, let us suppose that we can predict when God will say "Enough"!

It will bring total destruction to the whole creation!

A destruction not by water, but by fire!

A complete destruction of the outer cosmos. v. 7, 10

The earth and its works shall be included, v. 10

Here is good reason to not get to attached to anything earthly, especially man-made things.

It will inaugurate “the new heaven and earth” where only righteousness dwells! V. 13

The goal of redemption is to restore the world to that perfect fellowship that once existed between man and God without sin.

THE SECOND COMING'S DEMANDS

“Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness,” (2 Peter 3:14–17)

The second coming demands that we be:

Holy--separate from sin, v. 11

Godly--devotion and piety, v. 11

Diligent to be found in peace—prepared, v. 14

Spotless and blameless--sins forgiven, life in order, v. 14

Filled with anticipation! Looking for, and hastening the day of God, v.
12

Cf. Paul 1 Cor. 16:22.

Cf. John Rev. 22:20

On guard against the error of unprincipled men

Growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord

Conclusion: Likewise today we continue to hear people mock the promises of Jesus' coming and judgment; but Peter's arguments still respond to folly of those who seek to put off judgment. He will come like a thief and this world will come to an end.

But we must do more than belief that Jesus is coming again. We must prepare. Are you ready for Jesus' coming? It could be today. Would you be ready if the trumpet should sound today? Would it bring joyful surprise or terror to know that all opportunities for salvation were over? But even if he should tarry, you have another concern to think about, death. The world might go on; but you might not! Are you prepared for death?