

Is He Really Coming? 2 Peter 3:1-13

2 Peter 3:1-13 Introduction

- History has seen its share of predictions regarding the end of the world.
- Just in recent memory we've had a failed prediction of the Rapture (or two) and a cancelled Mayan Apocalypse.
- Can we really blame people for becoming skeptical regarding such wrong-headed takes on prophecy?

- Still, the Bible does actually – and repeatedly – predict the return of Jesus Christ.
- The Old Testament looked forward to the coming Day of the Lord.
- Jesus repeatedly predicted his own return.
- The New Testament makes it a basic and essential point of Christian doctrine.
- We can't really ignore it.

- One of the primary targets that the false teachers of Peter's day attacked was the idea of Christ's return.
- Not believing in His Second Coming allowed them to ignore the final judgment.
- And ignoring the final judgment allowed them to go a lot more lightly on sin.
- Peter disagreed and gives us a completely different perspective.

Yes He is really coming. Hasten the day.

2 Peter 3:1-13 Outline

- I. Remember the prophecies. 3:1-2
- II. Expect lots of scoffers. 3:3-4
- III. God has not changed. 3:5-7
- IV. He has always been patient. 3:8-9
- V. That day will come suddenly. 3:10
- VI. Work diligently toward it. 3:11-13

Remember the prophecies. 3:1-2

- 3:1 Beloved = *agapētoi* (also in 3:8, 14, 17)
- In a letter as full of warnings and judgment as this one, Peter balances it with repeated reminders that God loves us.
- Some see the love of God as inconsistent with all the warnings and judgment – as if they contradict one another.
- In fact they complement one another with an exactness that is easy to miss.

- 3:1 D. A. Carson explains: “[The love of God] has transformed us, so that we in turn perceive the sheer rightness of the first commandment – to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength. As that is the first and greatest commandment, so the first and greatest sin is not to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength. For this there is no remedy, save what God himself has provided – in love.”

- 3:2 Peter affirms the authority of both the Old and New Testaments.
- The Old Testament prophets spoke of the Day of the Lord – a time of ultimate final judgment leading to a new and glorious future kingdom.
- The apostles consistently teach us about the return of Jesus Christ – and His ultimate right to judge and rule on an eternal throne.
- 3:2 Should we really believe all of this?
- Peter’s answer is YES.
- But he knows in the daily grind of life, surrounded by unbelievers, our hope can begin to fade.
- Therefore he keeps reminding us of the object of our faith – a Savior who loves us, died for us, rose again and will one day return.

Expect lots of scoffers. 3:3-4

- 3:3 first = “above all”
- It should never surprise us that people question the reality of Christ’s return or an ultimate judgment before the throne of God.
- Peter sees clearly what is at stake.
- When our lifestyle contradicts the Scriptures, it’s tempting to ditch the Bible rather than giving up the inconsistent elements in our own lives.
- 3:3-4 Lucas & Green reveal the falseness: *“Although these people may present themselves as sophisticated and knowledgeable, having delicate qualms and posing courageous questions about the more difficult elements of Christian teaching, they are in reality driven by their greed and disobedience. It is sin, not sophistication, which is in the driving-seat, and the false teachers are merely following.”*
- 3:3-4 This is an old problem. Jeremiah, for example, dealt with it centuries before Peter.
 - See Jeremiah 17:15.
- Peter’s audience faced the issue of the apostolic generation dying off.
- Many expected Jesus to return before this.
- We may feel it all the more pointedly.
- After 2000 years, really, are will still going to believe that stuff?

God has not changed. 3:5-7

- 3:5-6 Superficially, the world can seem like a pretty stable place.
- Imagining that it’s all going come to a climactic end may sound kind of extreme.
- Peter’s gives the scoffers a two-part reply:
- The world we live in has not existed eternally. God created it. It had a beginning.
- Since then, it has not been consistently stable. The flood is one example of that.
- 3:7 The world has changed since it first came into being, but God has not.
- In fact, it is only by God’s word that the world even holds together.
- The Lord spoke in the past – and a flood brought total destruction. Jesus makes a relevant comparison in Matthew 24:37-39.
- God has declared that the next destruction will be by fire. We should expect it.

- 3:7 There was a time when “doomsday prophets” had to be religiously motivated.
- Now environmentalists, scientists, political and military strategists – not to mention filmmakers in Hollywood – can easily see the world coming to a terrible, tragic end.
- If God doesn’t get around to it, we humans might easily destroy ourselves.
- *“Clearly, these are terrifying ideas; but we must not find them so threatening and distasteful that we refuse to believe them, for that is the error of the false teachers ... False teachers should realize that the same word that guarantees the stable world they delight in also guarantees the judgment they mock.”*
 - Lucas & Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude: The Promise of His Coming.*

Yes He is really coming. Hasten the day.

He has always been patient. 3:8-9

- Peter brings us back to Psalm 90:4.
- It’s not that God is unable to act. He simply chooses not to do so at present.
- First of all, being eternal, God doesn’t view time the way we do. He’s not in any hurry.
- Secondly, God is patient – and it’s a good thing for all of us that He is.
- God is “slow to anger.” *Patience, longsuffering or forbearance* is one of the basic attributes of God.
- Bauckham describes this *forbearance*: *“It is that quality by which God bears with sinners, holds back his wrath, refrains from intervening in judgment as soon as the sinner’s deeds deserve it, though not indefinitely ... God’s forbearance creates an interval, a period of respite, while judgment is deferred and a last opportunity for repentance is allowed.”*
- The New Testament frequently reminds us to keep looking forward to Christ’s return despite the apparent delay. Peter tells us why He is waiting.
- God is allowing time for people to turn to Him.
- *“The delay of Christ’s second coming to salvation is not, after all, the failure of God’s plan, but rather the condition of its success.”*
 - Peter Lewis in *The Glory of Christ*
- A small tangent related to the Millennium:
- Peter’s (and Moses’) point in 3:8, is that since God is eternal, 1000 years is no big deal to him.
- It might as well be just a day.
- Peter is not saying that the timeframe of 1000 years should not be taken literally just because we read it in the Bible.
- Thus, when Rev. 20 repeatedly speaks of “1000 years,” Peter’s point does not undermine that.

That day will come suddenly. 3:10

- Teachers know exactly what this is like.
- Year after year, semesters end. Deadlines for assignments, exams and projects come due.
- Nonetheless, every semester, there are students that don’t quite get this.
- Work is left undone and failing grades are disappointingly handed out.
- The Day of the Lord is a much bigger deal than a bad grade.

- The day of the Lord describes end-time events that begin after the Rapture and end with the commencing of eternity.
- The elements (*stoicheia*) can refer to either the stars or the material elements of which the universe is made – or possibly both.
 - See Isaiah 34:4
- Prior to the beginning of the eternal state, this old order will be done away with.
- After that will come the final judgment at the great white throne – also described in Rev. 20.
- That will be an awful – and awfully revealing – day for those who have placed all their hope in this world and in this life.
- When sinners stand before the throne of God, they will have nothing to point to as evidence of their greatness. It will all be gone.

Work diligently toward it. 3:11-13

- 3:13 new heavens and a new earth
- Peter is using terminology that goes back to the prophet Isaiah.
 - Check out Isaiah 65:17.
- John also writes of them extensively in Revelation 21:1–22:5, but that passage is a bit long to read right now.
- Christians often mistakenly take an interest in end-times prophecy only in order to speculate as to how or when this or that is going to be fulfilled.
- This is not really God’s intent.
- The reality that God is moving His plan forward should earnestly motivate us toward practical holiness and godly activity.
- The same God who determines the end also determines the means to that end.
- We have a part in those means.
- Our assignment is not to speculate but to serve – and to encourage others to put their faith in Christ and live in such a way as to hasten the Lord’s return.
 - See Peter’s sermon in Acts 3:18-21.

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2 Peter 3:1-13 Conclusions

- Let’s take a look at all of our main points one last time:
- Remember the prophecies.
- Expect lots of scoffers.
- God has not changed.
- He has always been patient.
- That day will come suddenly.
- Work diligently toward it.
- Is Jesus really coming?
- The answer Peter gives us is YES.

- So while the scoffers and skeptics criticize the very notion of Christ's coming again – and any kind of final judgment – our business is to “hasten the coming of the day of God,” as Peter said it.
- So how can we actively do that?
- There are several interconnected ways.
- **First of all, through repentance:**
 - If God is delaying his coming because of our sin (3:8–9), then we encourage him to come by our obedience.
 - Obedience is the essence of real discipleship.
 - And repentance now will save us a lot of grief and embarrassment on that day.
- **Secondly, through prayer.**
 - Whenever we pray, “Your kingdom come” we are asking God to act in that final climactic way – the way the scoffers don't believe will ever happen.
 - Also implied in that prayer, however, is the dual declaration that Jesus is our King and that we are committed to live as his subjects.
- **Finally, we hasten the day by our verbal testimony to Jesus:**
 - If God desires people to repent rather than perish, then the means to that end entail the active preaching of the gospel.
 - Any activity such as evangelism or missions that directly makes Christ known to non-believers gives people the opportunity to repent and put their faith in Him.

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