

THE BEST IS YET TO COME / Sunday School- November 29, 2009

Unifying Topic: A HOPEFUL PEOPLE

Lesson Text

I. Beware Of The Scoffers (2Peter 3:1-4)

II. The Word of The Lord (2Peter 3:5-7)

III. Salvation For All (2Peter 3:8-13)

The Main Thought: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2Pt.3:9, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Even in the toughest situation, an encouraging word from a friend can make all the difference in how we respond to challenges that confront us. How, then can we encourage others to keep persevering when barriers seem insurmountable? Peter taught people to live as they awaited Christ's return, and Paul and Barnabas taught people to hold fast to their faith.

Lesson Aim: To teach that God keeps His promise of salvation and eternal life.

Life aim: To teach how God wants all human beings to be saved and that Christians are to live holy lives as they wait eagerly for the return of Jesus and new life in heaven.

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- 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
3:2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:
3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.
3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:
3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.
3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.
3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.
3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,
3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?
3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

HISTORY:

Chapter 2 of 2nd Peter (False Teachers)

- The destructiveness of false teachers (1-3)
- The doom of false teachers (4-9)
- The depravity of false teachers (10-17)
- The deceptions of false teachers (18-22)

If the world ever needed a warning, it needs to be warned against false teachers. Why? Because false teachers lead a person to doom himself quicker than any other single thing. Too many people are too quick to believe a lie. Why? So they can go ahead and live like they want. False teachers and false prophets have always existed.

In this first chapter, these false teachers do not communicate new revelation from God; rather they seek to deny and distort the Scriptures which have once for all been revealed. Peter first describes the destructiveness of false teachers. Denying the Lord who bought them, they will secretly introduce destructive heresies. Many will follow them, and the way of truth will be blasphemed. But they will

bring swift destruction on themselves (1-3).

Illustrating the doom of false teachers, Peter reminds his readers of what happened to the angels who sinned, the ancient world destroyed by the flood, and the fiery end of Sodom and Gomorrah. Surely God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of punishment, and the example of Lot shows that He also knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations (4-9).

Peter then discusses the depravity of false teachers. In verse 14 Peter refers to them as an “accursed brood.” These are men who live and move under the curse of God. God has declared that they are evil, and detestable. God has determined to punish them for their despicable evil. In arrogance they revile against authority, all the while reveling in pleasure and lusts as they circulate among the Christians they seek to influence. And Peter has nothing complimentary to say. Like the prophet Balaam, they are motivated by the wages of unrighteousness and have forsaken the right way. Empty of true substance, they are like wells without water, clouds tossed by a tempest (10-17).

Finally, Peter describes the deceptions of false teachers. In both their methods and promises they seek to deceive those who like them had once escaped the pollutions of the world. But the false teachers are once again enslaved by such pollutions and their last end is worse than the beginning. In other words, at the end of the day what do you have. Peter's conclusion is that you have nothing. The men and their message are both empty bubbles. You go after them seeking to have your spiritual thirst quenched but the spring is all dried up. According to their pretense, they claim to have been saved. However they have returned to the most despicable sin. This would be: like a dog eating his own vomit, or a pig which have been washed going back to wallow in the mire. (18-22).

But "false teachers" are not our only concern, we must be careful not to be deterred in our spiritual pilgrimage by "scoffers" along the way.

LESSON:

2Peter 3:1-4: Beware Of The Scoffers

The coming again of Jesus Christ and the end of the world—this is the subject of this final section of the book of Second Peter. What God is after is preparation—for man to prepare himself to receive God's Son. Man must be ready for the return of Christ or else he will be doomed. This first passage covers a critical subject: the first thing to know—scoffers shall come. **First**, he addresses them as “beloved.” He reminds them that they are the dear friends of God and of Peter's. **Second**, he reminds them of their blessed condition. He mentions their *sincere* or *pure mind*. Does this mean they were uncontaminated by sin? Not at all! The phrase “*pure minds*” (eilikrine dianoian) means to have a clear, pure, unmixed, uncontaminated, focused, and concentrating mind. It is the picture of thoughts being sifted just like wheat is sifted in order to be separated from the chaff. Thoughts are to be sifted in order to separate the true and pure from the untrue and impure. If a person is to know and understand the return of the Lord, his mind had to be aroused, stirred. The mind cannot be lazy or wandering about. It has to be watchful, alert, focused, concentrated, and **actively engaged upon two things**.

1. The mind must remember the words spoken by the prophets*. They had much to say about the return of Christ to earth.
2. The mind must remember the commandments of the Lord that have been preached and taught by the apostles*. Jesus Christ taught much about His return. The apostles in turn shared His teachings with their people.

Peter uses the term “*pure mind*” to accomplish **three purposes** at least. **First**, it explains that the majority, although troubled (shaken) by the situation, are still true in terms of their adherence to the apostolic faith. They still believed the gospel. Their minds had not been given over to the lusts and heresy swirling around them. **Second**, Peter intended the phrase to encourage these believers to remain loyal to the gospel and to those who had taught it to them. **Third**, this term is also an evidence of God's preserving mercies. Preservation in true faith is always a testimony to the grace, power, and faithfulness of God.

In **v2** Peter mentions messengers – *holy prophets and apostles*—their messages – *words spoken and the commandment*.

NOTE:

The **Prophets**,* of course, were the messengers of divine truth in the Old Testament. **Apostles*** mentioned in the New Testament are the Twelve—the men called and commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself. These are the men who had the authority to interpret the Old Testament testimony concerning Jesus. The prophets and apostles were both God's messengers communicating truth to the people. The prophets and apostles spoke with one voice. And the subject of that singular voice was the Redeemer – the Lord Jesus. Prophets foreshadowed Christian truth. The apostles interpreted Christian truth. But we must remember that it is the strategy of false teachers to cast doubt upon, to belittle the prophets and apostles particular points of doctrine which condemn them.

POINT:

The stress is upon the mind—a pure mind, a mind that is focused and learning and remembering what it has been taught. But before a person can remember something, he first has to study and learn the facts. This stresses the utter necessity for him to study the scriptures, to learn all he can about the return of Christ to earth.

Peter is giving us what we sometimes call a “heads up” ... a warning in saying, **Verse 3**. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts (passions). Now what exactly is a scoffer? A scoffer is someone consumed by disdain for something or someone. A scoffer usually projects a certain intellectual arrogance and social snobbery. Indeed, a scoffer will not listen to or heed wise counsel or anything that resembles a rebuke. His “second coming”, is called the “age of grace”—the age when God's mercy and grace are flowing out to the world through His Son Jesus Christ. The thing to remember is that this period of history is called the following:

- “these last times” 1Pt.1:20
- “the last days” 2Pt.3:3; 2Tim.3:1
- “these last days” Heb.1: 2
- “the last time” 1Jh.2*:18; Jude

NOTE:

John's term for the end time: “the last time” (eschate hora)—the Greek really means the last hour, the midnight hour when the world is to end. But note this: the end time does not mean annihilation; it does not mean that everything will cease to

exist. William Barclay¹ describes it so well.

Know the scoffers walk after their own lusts. They live like they want to and do their own thing. They want the possessions and pleasures of this world. They have to mock and reject the second coming of Jesus Christ. If they accepted it, they would have to change their lives. They would have to repent and turn to Christ or else live under their terrible fear of eternal judgment. They **scoff for two reasons:**

1. Because it has been thousands of years since Jesus Christ came to earth the first time.
2. Because the world continues on just as it always has.

(V4) “Where is the promise of His coming?” Now mind you, they're not wanting to know where in the Bible Christ's second coming is promised. Mockingly they are asking, “Where is the fulfillment of the promise? And here's the support for their argument. “*Since the fathers fell asleep all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation*”. “*Fell asleep*” obviously refers to their deaths. Who are the fathers? It seems most natural to understand the fathers as the Old Testament patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2Peter 3:5-7: The Word of The Lord

“*For this,*” refers to the idea expressed in the previous verse – *that all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation* (3:4). God's creative Word is sure (3:5). God's judicial Word is sure (3:6). God's sustaining Word is sure (3:7). Because this is so we believe that God's redemptive Word is sure. Knowing all of this, **Scoffers are ignorant of three facts**, and note scripture says that they are “*willingly ignorant*”. They choose to ignore, to be unreasonable, and to reject the fact that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world.

1. Scripture declares that the world is not self-creating and self-sufficient (**v5**). It was not made by the laws of nature and it does not run and operate itself by the laws of nature. The heavens and earth were created by the Word of God—His speaking the world into existence. God created

¹ “In biblical thought the last time is the end of one age and the beginning of another. It is not only a time of ending; it is a time of beginning. It is not only a time of destruction; it is a time of recreation. It is last in the sense that things as they are pass away; but leads not to world obliteration, but world recreation. In other words, the last hour and the last days lead not to extinction, but to consummation.” (The Letters of John and Jude. ‘The Daily Study Bible’ Philadelphia, Pa: The Westminster Press, 1958, p.71).

the universe and the laws of nature.

The point is this: mockers willingly choose to ignore and reject God, to deny absolute intelligence and power.

2. Scripture declares that the world has not always continued on as it presently does (v6). The earth has perished before—God spoke the Word and judged the world. His Word destroyed the world with a flood and all life was destroyed except Noah and his family and two of every creature. God did not let people go on and on in their sin forever. God judged and punished sinners. God created it to be moral, and He expects man to live righteous and godly lives while here on the earth. If they refuse, then He speaks His Word and judges the earth.

The point is this: the world was destroyed by God's Word once; it can therefore be destroyed by God's Word again.

3. Scripture declares that the heavens and earth are being kept, reserved, and stored up for destruction, fire (v7). How? By God's Word! God is controlling the heavens and the earth. They have not been destroyed because God has not yet spoken the Word. But note: He is keeping, reserving, and storing up the world for destruction by fire. Why? Because of ungodly men. As stated, this is a moral universe.

It is this that men and mockers have chosen to ignore and reject: they are accountable to a loving, holy, and just God. It is this that they refuse to study and know and submit to. Therefore, they continue on in their selfish and hoarding and unjust and immoral ways.

2Peter 3:8-13: Salvation For All

The promises of the return of Christ and the renewal of creation, stabilizes God's people and spur us on in the way of holiness. In v8 Peter turns his attention to the saints - those precious believers to whom he is writing; those whom he affectionately addresses as *beloved*. He says, *"But, beloved do not let this one fact escape your notice; be not ignorant of this one thing."* To stabilize, to settle, to comfort them Peter reminds them of two things. Both have to do with the attributes or perfections of God. The **first** is the perfection of the eternity of God. V8b he reminds them *"that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* This clause, taken from Psalm 90:4, does not represent a chronological calculation. But God is not limited by our perceptions of time. He exists outside of time. Why has Christ not yet returned? We must not be ignorant about:

1. The Lord does not measure time the same as man (v8).

The point is this: God may want a lot more to take place on earth before He sends Christ back to earth. Our task is not to question when he is returning, but to watch and be ready in case he returns before we depart this life and go to Him.

2. The Lord is not slow in sending Christ back to earth, but long suffering (v9).

The point is significant: God suffers along with us, and the intensity of His feeling is absolute (unlimited). The feelings of one day are so intense that it feels like a thousand years. Whereas we bear only the sufferings of our own personal experience; God bears the sufferings of all the experiences of all men. Therefore, to God the experience during just one day of an evil earth is as a thousand years to Him. However, God will not bear evil forever.

3. The Day of the Lord is coming (v10).

To stabilize, to settle, to comfort them Peter reminds them of a **second** perfection of God - His patience. Look at the second clause in v9: *[God] is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

To **"perish"** is a terrible thing. It means to utterly be lost and destroyed; lose eternal life and be cut off from life forever and ever; be spiritual destitute, completely empty of all good; to suffer the judgment, condemnation, and punishment of separation from God forever and ever; perish; to be in a state of suffering forever and ever apart from God. I've stressed this as much as I can.

The point is this: God does not want us perishing. He wants us to spend eternity with Him, not apart from Him.

"Repent"—change*, turn, change one's mind, turn one's life; turning away from sin and turning to God, forsaking sin; putting sin out of one's thoughts and behavior; resolving never to think or do a thing again.

NOTE:

*The change is turning away from lying, stealing, cheating, immorality, cursing, drunkenness, and the other so-called glaring sins of the flesh. But the change is also turning away from the silent sins of the spirit such as self-centeredness, selfishness, envy, bitterness, pride, covetousness, anger, evil thoughts, hopelessness, laziness, jealousy, and lust.

1. Repentance involves two turns:
 - a. The negative turn away from sin.
 - b. The positive turn toward God.
2. Repentance is more than sorrow.
 - a. a person may repent simply because he wills and acts to change.
 - b. a person may repent because he senses an agonizing sorrow within.

Repentance is both the change of mind and the actual turning of one's life away from sin and toward God, not the sense of feeling of sorrow.

Again Peter shows them that there is something about the person, the character of God that they need to understand—He keeps His promise, longsuffering, and wants none to perish. God is working during this window of grace. He is not idle. He is calling out His elect until such time as all elect souls are secure. Peter assures us that this moment in time *“will come like a thief in the night”* **v10**. In other words it will arrive suddenly and unexpectedly, but, precisely according to God's timetable. No thief tells a man ahead of time that he is going to strike his house. If a man knew, he would watch and prepare. This is the point: the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that He is coming back to earth. He has forewarned us, but He has not told us when. Why?

- Not knowing when Jesus is returning keeps us focused upon Him and His return. It keeps us looking and longing for Him. It keeps us watching, and it stirs us to live pure and holy lives.
- Not knowing when Jesus is returning serves as a warning to unbelievers. It warns them that they must repent now, today, for He could return today and catch them unprepared.

The believer must:

- not be careless: get tired of waiting up, get sleepy, be caught off guard, begin to disbelieve.
- watch, sit up, stay awake, listen, look, take notice of all noises and sights (signs).

*“The heavens and universe shall pass away; all elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein”*v10. If a person believes in God, then he knows that God can destroy the universe. How? By doing what He did when He created the world and when He destroyed the earth the first time that is, by simply speaking the Word. Man himself can cause an atomic explosion so severe that every element of the earth would melt with fervent heat. Why then doubt God? Why is God going to destroy both heaven and earth? There is one glorious reason and verse 13 tells us: so that He can create new heavens and a earth *where righteousness dwells*. Note: v10 says that *“the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”* By **“works”** is meant all the works of man's hands:

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|---------------|--------------|
| • buildings | • services |
| • offices | • evil works |
| • houses | • businesses |
| • religion | • murder |
| • governments | • wars |

Everything that man has done, all of his corruptible works, shall be burned up and destroyed by the fire of God's judgment. The whole universe will be destroyed by fire; a fiery explosion will take place and the fire will be so hot that every element will melt from the fervent heat.

Peter puts it like this in **v11**. *“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conversation (conduct) and godliness.”* Peter is not so much asking a question as stating a fact. You ought to be this way – holy and godly. **“Holy”** means that our behavior is sanctified, that is set apart unto God; separated from the world and given over to God; given over to live pure and righteous lives. **“Godliness”** means that we live like God and we seek to be a godly person; we live and do all things in the reverence and awe of God; we are so conscious of God's presence that we live like God would live if He were walking upon earth; Christlike.

He calls us to plain old diligence and growth in grace. There are two things that characterize Christians who live in the light of the return of Jesus Christ and the renewal of creation. One is anticipation. The other is activity. *“Looking for and hastening, the coming of the day of God”*v12. *“The day of God”* refers <http://pitwm.net/pitwn-sundayschool.html>

to the day when God shall dissolve and destroy the heavens and earth, the day when the universe "shall be set aflame by fire and shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (v12).

The word "**hastening**" (speudontas) can **mean two things**.

1. To hurry after; to earnestly desire; to rush toward (the day of God). Keeping his eyes upon that terrible day of judgment is to arouse him to live a holy and godly life. If he takes his eyes off that day, if he fails to direct his life toward the day of God, then he will most likely slip into unholiness and ungodliness.
2. To rush the coming of Christ; to cause the day of God to come sooner. The believer has a part in bringing about the eternal kingdom of God. How? By living more holy and godly lives so that more people will more readily be attracted to Christ. The more they see Christ in us—His presence and power carrying us through the trials and temptations of life, the more they are going to want Christ and His power in their lives. When people see these things, the things for which they long, they will be attracted to Christ much quicker. The result will be more souls for Christ. Therefore, the way we are to speed up the day of God is to live more dynamic lives for Christ.

Christians may anticipate all of this with great delight. "*But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*" v13. Why are we looking for new heavens and a new earth? Simply stated: so that the world will be perfect, and nothing but righteousness will exist therein; a world in which only righteous people will live; no more sin and evil, no more accidents, disease, suffering, murder, drunkenness, drugs, adultery, sexual perversion, war, or death.

For us, the return of Christ does not mark a dreaded end as it does for those who have rejected Him. Rather it marks the beginning of that new and eternal existence promised us in the Word of God (Is. 65:17, 66:22). You see the destruction described in v10 and 12 is not the elimination of creation but its glorious renewal.

SUMMARY:

Peter returns in this epistle to warn that the storm is coming. In fact it's already here. Peter exposes these mockers, along with the folly of their denials. He does so by reiterating his commitment to remind his readers of the truths of the scriptures as revealed through the Old Testament prophets, the Lord Jesus, and His apostles (3:1-2). Peter then describes the mockers of whom he warns his readers, both in terms of their lifestyle and their creed (3:3-4). Verses 5-7 he exposes the folly of their thinking, especially as it relates to the role of the Word of God in Old Testament history and in prophecy.

Peter then turns his attention to the saints in verses 8-13. While mockers deny the Scriptures, true saints base their hope and their conduct on the promises of the Word of God. In verses 8 and 9, Peter gives a divine perspective of time and presents a very different explanation for the apparent delay of the Lord's return. This he does by focusing on God's attributes: His eternity, His omnipotence, and His mercy.

Now he comforts the faithful that they have a safe place to stay. In verses 10-13, Peter explains why the nearness of the "*day of the Lord*" is not evident to unbelievers and how the Lord's return should impact the saints who look forward to the "new heavens and a new earth" where they in turn will dwell. God always has our best interest in mind and His purposed for our new beginning. As we live holy lives in anticipation of His return, we draw others, therefore keeping our minds stirred for His best is to come.

APPLICATION:

God has given His people precious and very great promises, so that if we hold them in front of us and trust them, we will have power to resist temptation and remain in the way of righteousness.