

## **XIX. The Day of the LORD**

May 24/26/27, 2021

2 Peter 3:1-10

**Aim:** To affirm the doctrine of the triumphal return of Christ in glory and power at the end of the age to consummate creation, judge the wicked, and usher in the eternal state for believers.

### **A. The Truth of Christ's Return (2 Peter 3:1-7)**

*Moo:* After warning his readers about 'false teachers among you' (2:1), the author devotes the rest of that chapter to these false teachers, describing their many theological and especially moral errors and uttering God's verdict of condemnation over them. Throughout chapter 2, Peter speaks in the third person plural: '*they...*'. All that changes in chapter 3, where Peter addresses his readers directly again as his *dear friends* (vv. 1, 8, 14, 17) and turns from denunciation to exhortation. To be sure, he does not lose sight of the false teachers, for he talks about their misunderstanding of eschatology and again condemns them in verses 4-7. But the bulk of the chapter contains teaching and exhortation for believers, which bear a close resemblance, in both form and content to the end of chapter 1. Note the verbal parallels (the Greek is almost identical in both cases: 1:13 – 'to refresh your memory' [with] 3:1 – 'as reminders to stimulate you;' 1:20 – 'above all, you must understand' [with] 3:3 – 'first of all, you must understand.' By using the same constructions here in chapter 3, Peter signals to the attentive reader that he is coming back to the earlier context and emphasis. More important are the similarities in content. As he did in chapter 1, Peter emphasizes the importance of memory (see 3:1-2, 5, 8). Furthermore, his topic is again eschatology.

*Gardner:* Since 2:3 Peter has not directly addressed his audience. Rather, he has described in detail the false teaching of the heretics and referred to 'these men' and 'they.' Of course the description has all been part of his warning to the faithful Christians in the church, but as he moves back to address them in a more personal way as he did in the first chapter, he speaks again of 'you' and of 'us' and 'we.'

#### **1. Saints Remember the Truth (3:1-2)**

##### *a) Saints Reminded (3:1)*

<sup>1</sup>*This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder...*

##### (1) Second Letter (3:1a)

<sup>1</sup>*This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.*

##### *(a) Beloved*

*Moo:* The NIV's *dear friends* takes away something of the strength and Christian flavor of the original: *agapetoi*, 'beloved ones.' This word connotes the loving fellowship among believers secured by the sacrifice of God's own 'beloved one,' the Lord Jesus ('whom I love' in 1:17 translates this same word). After the harsh indictment of the false teachers in chapter 2, Peter wants to reassure his readers that he has confidence in their own Christian status and dedication.

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*Gardner:* *Dear friends* marks this change to a war-hearted and passionate appeal to the faithful in the church. It also reminds us of the warmth of Peter's approach to these people in his first letter (1 Pe. 2:11; 4:12). This form of address is used in verses 8, 14, and 17 and might better be translated as 'well-loved people' or 'beloved.'

*MacArthur:* The apostle's pastoral heart and genuine concern for his readers is expressed in the term *beloved* (cp. 3:8), used so frequently by the apostles Paul and John in their New Testament writings.

*Helm:* I must confess, finding *beloved* in the opening verse of chapter 3 brings a measure of comfort. At long last Peter has come back to the *beloved*. Gone, for the moment at least, are the belligerent preachers of the last chapter. Harsh words recede, and we appear to be planted on more pleasant ground.

### (b) Letter

*Moo:* The reminder Peter now gives his readers is not the first one. He has already written to them an earlier letter that covered many of the same points. What is this earlier letter. Most commentators think naturally that it is 1 Peter, and they may be right. But we should remember that Peter undoubtedly wrote more letters than the two that we have in the canon of the New Testament.... We should not immediately assume, therefore, that just because we have only these two letters of Peter in the New Testament, the one must refer to the other. In fact, Peter's description of the purpose he has in these two letters—stimulating his readers to *wholesome thinking*—does not describe the contents of 1 Peter particularly well. Moreover, while Peter seems to know the readers of 2 Peter pretty well, we do not get the same impression from 1 Peter. It is for these reasons that [some] commentators...think that Peter is referring her to a letter unknown to us rather than to 1 Peter. Still, neither of these points is decisive. Peter's description is vague enough that it *could* apply to 1 Peter, and neither letter says much about the degree of Peter's acquaintance with them. So we should probably leave the identification of this earlier letter undecided.

*Gardner:* *My second letter to you* need not refer back to what we now have as 1 Peter. There may have been another letter between 1 and 2 Peter. Or, indeed, it is possible that the destinations of what we know as 1 and 2 Peter were different. In either case, Peter would then be referring to a letter which has not come down to us.

*MacArthur:* Peter's opening words of this section, *This is now, beloved, the second letter*, indicate that the apostle also wrote another letter to this same audience. In fact, this expression is probably an implicit reference to 1 Peter, his other canonical letter.

### (2) Stirring Up (3:1b)

*In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder...*

*Moo:* Through his reminder, Peter wants to *stimulate you to wholesome thinking*. *Thinking* translates a noun (*dianoia*) frequently used by some of the Greek philosophers. Plato, for instance uses the exact Greek phrase, *eilikrine dianoia* ('wholesome thinking'), that Peter has here. Peter may again, then be appropriating a phrase current in the world of Greek philosophy and religion for application to Christian truth. For Peter, 'thinking' is more than a purely mental process. It includes the ability to discern spiritual truth and apply it.

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*MacArthur*: Peter wrote both of his inspired letters in part to remind his readers of certain basic doctrinal and spiritual truths (1:12-15; 1 Pe. 1:13-16, 22-25). The expression *stirring up* indicates his effort to disturb any complacency and make clear the spiritual urgency with which he warned his audience about false teachers. The apostle actively and aggressively opposed the heretics, hoping to protect his flock from menacing wolves. To do that, he had to alert the sensibilities of those to whom he wrote, revealing the truth to their *sincere mind by way of reminder*.

*Helm*: We have seen the word translated *reminder* before—way back in the opening chapter. There Peter used it three times in the space of four short verses (vv. 12-15). So Peter accomplishes two things in his opening lines of chapter 3. He returns to God's *beloved* and in doing so returns our attention to the *beginning*.

### b) *Saints Remember (3:2)*

<sup>2</sup>...*that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles...*

*Moo*: Peter's focus on the idea of *reminder* in verse 1 naturally raises the question: reminder of what? This question Peter answers in verse 2m where he mentions two specific sources for the teaching that he wants his readers to recall and put into action.

*Gardner*: In the opening two verses of this chapter, Peter indicates to the reader that he is once again picking up themes he had mentioned in the first chapter. He stresses the need to 'recall' (v. 2; cp. 1:12-13) and to 'understand' (v. 3; cp. 1:20).

*Helm*: By taking on his accusers in this way, Peter weaves a rope of immense power and strength. In short, his personal belief in the final judgment is the result of three factors: 1) the holy prophets' predictions; 2) Jesus Christ's commands; 3) the apostles' public preaching.

### (1) Old Testament (3:2a)

<sup>2</sup>...*that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets...*

*Moo*: First is *the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets* (cp. 1:16-21), where Peter cited 'the words of the prophets' as reliable testimony to the Parousia). As in the earlier passage, this reference is almost certainly to Old Testament prophets rather than, for instance, to New Testament prophets. *Spoken in the past* can refer to the teaching of the apostles (see the rough parallel in Jude 17). But it can also refer to the Old Testament (see, e.g., Acts 1:16; Rom. 9:29; Heb. 4:7), and the general notion is usually associated with the Old Testament (see Heb. 1:1). The important thing is that while the act of speaking is past, the message once spoken and then written down in Scripture continues to have force and relevance (cp. 1:21).

*Gardner*: Understanding what the Bible says, that is, what the *holy prophets* has spoken, and what *our Lord and Savior* Himself has said, will be the only full-proof way of combatting heresy.... Of course, the particular *words spoken in the past* that Peter wishes them to remember are those relating to the final day of salvation, the 'day of the Lord.' Peter himself clearly lives by the principle he is enunciating. He looks to Scripture and to apostolic teaching, including his own, as finally authoritative in all matters.

*MacArthur*: Peter's first reminder concerns the truth of Old Testament Scripture, *the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets* (cp. 1:20-21). (Peter's use of the adjective *holy* provided a sharp contrast between the unrighteousness of the false prophets and the

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righteousness of the true ones [cp. Jude 14-15]). Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets continually predict God's eschatological judgment (e.g., Is. 66:15-16; 13:10; 24:19-23; 34:1-4; 51:6; Mal. 4:1-3; Ez. 30:3; Joel 2:31; Mi. 1:3-4; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:8; Mal. 4:5).

*Sproul:* Peter has written these letters to focus his readers' minds, not on new ideas but on the word they had already heard, in the first instance, from the Old Testament prophets, whom he describes here as *holy prophets*. Throughout this epistle Peter has been warning against destructive heresies, and now he is reminding his readers to keep their eyes on the words that came through the holy prophets. Earlier Peter said that the writings of the Old Testament prophets were not of their own initiative but from God Himself.

### (2) New Testament (3:2b)

*...and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles...*

*Moo:* The second source Peter wants his readers to recall is *the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles*. The words *given* and *through* in the NIV represent an interpretive paraphrase. A literal translation of the Greek is, 'the command of your apostles, of the Lord and Savior.' The main problem is to figure out the relationship between the two 'of' phrases.... The interpretation suggested by the NIV and by almost all other modern English translations is probably the best. Peter wants to attribute the command to both the Lord Jesus and to the apostles, but in different senses. The Lord is the originator of the command, the apostles its transmitters. What is this command? Because of the context (vv. 3-4), many commentators think that the *command* refers to the promised return of Christ in glory. But the word *command* (Greek *entolē*) is certainly not a natural one to use to refer to a prediction of this kind. In all its other approximately sixty New Testament occurrences, the word almost always refers to some kind of demand or requirement. And Peter has used this word just a few verses earlier with this sense (see 2:21). Almost certainly, then, Peter is describing the moral requirements that are placed on believers. Peter uses the singular form of the word because he is thinking not so much as a series of 'dos and don'ts' but of the basic demand that believers conform to the image of Christ, becoming holy even as the God who called them is holy (see 1 Pe. 1:15-16). This central demand of the gospel was first laid down by Jesus Himself (see Mt. 5:48). And this same basic demand was passed on and fleshed out by the apostles to Christians all over the world. It was precisely this need for Christians to strive for conformity to the will of God taught by Christ and handed down by the apostles that the false teachers were willfully ignoring. In other words, Peter's concern is that his readers will not fall prey to this false teaching by neglecting the life of holiness.

*Gardner:* It is assumed that it is *through* [the] *apostles* that we can know exactly and reliably what Jesus had spoken and commanded.... Peter's mention of the *command* given by Christ reminds us of 2:21. As we saw there it refers to the whole gospel of Jesus as passed on to the New Testament churches by the apostles. But here Peter is specially interested in the teaching of Jesus related to ethics and behavior in the context of the last days. The heretics 'scoff' (v. 3) at such teachings.

*MacArthur:* *The commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by the apostles* refers to the New Testament (cp. a similar use of *entolē* [commandment] in 1 Tim. 6:14) and its subject, Jesus Christ. (Peter calls them *your apostles* in order to denote the special relationship they had with the church.) ... In the two hundred and sixty chapters of the New Testament, there are about three hundred instances in which Christ's apostles make reference to His second coming.

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*Sproul:* With the same sweep of the pen he mentions the commandments that come from him and the rest of the apostles. It is clear that by the time the New Testament was written, the teachings of the Apostles were considered on par with the teaching of the prophets, so that together the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Apostles make up the foundation of the church. Both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Apostles were agents of divine revelation, so that whatever they taught carries with it the authority of the God who inspired them.

### 2. Scoffers Ridicule the Truth (3:3-4)

*Moo:* Having reminded his readers of the requirements of Christ and the apostles who first preached the gospel to them, Peter goes on in verses 3-4 to suggest why such a reminder is so urgently needed. The false teachers are mocking the idea of Christ's return in glory. Peter finally brings together two of the most important issues in the letter: the false teacher's skepticism about the return of Christ in glory (see 1:16-21) and their disdain for holiness (ch. 2).

*MacArthur:* In their brazen rejection of Christ's return, the false teachers of Peter's day began by denying the Word of God. Although they recognized *the promise of His coming*, they simply discounted it as false. Instead of submitting to God's self-revelation, the false teachers flatly rejected the reality of Jesus' second coming—simultaneously, and to their own sinful satisfaction, disregarding any thought of future accountability. As a result, they ridiculed those who were righteous, flaunted their own immorality, and foolishly clung to a uniformitarian worldview.

#### a) Scoffers Are Coming (3:3)

<sup>3</sup>...*knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.*

#### (1) Scoffers (3:3a)

<sup>3</sup>...*knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing ...*

*Moo:* Peter wants his readers to understand *first of all* that the appearance of people like this is not a surprise. As he did in 2:1-4, he again uses the future tense to describe these irreverent mockers: *scoffers will come*.... Peter...uses the future tense...because he is indirectly quoting the prediction of Jesus Himself. He almost surely has in mind texts such as Matthew 24:5: 'Many will come in My name, claiming, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many.' Jesus warned there and elsewhere that the end times would be characterized by apostasy and false teaching.... Thus Peter here finds the scoffers of his day to be one manifestation of those deceitful apostates whom Jesus claimed would arise to plague the Christian community. His readers, who are perhaps being tempted and are certainly being disturbed by these scoffers, need to realize that the appearance of these people is no surprise. The church of Christ can always expect to find in its midst such scoffers.

*Gardner:* The *last days* are those days between the first coming of Christ and the second.... *first of all you must understand*... As these Christians confront a world and even church leaders who are scoffing at the notion of a holy life and even at the idea that Christ will return, Peter wants God's people to understand *first* from Scripture that all this was prophesied. The prophets had warned of scoffers, and the apostles and even Jesus Himself had warned believers that false teachers and *scoffers will come* (e.g., see Ps. 73:7-11; Is. 5:18-19; Jer. 17:15; Hab. 1:5, quoted in

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Acts 13:41; 1 Pe. 4:13-15; also Jesus' warnings against false teachers, e.g., Mt. 5:11; Mk. 13:21-23). These prophecies were now coming true in the church to which Peter was writing, but, more than that, scoffing at such teaching was to become a hallmark for Christians of life in the last days.

*MacArthur*: The phrase *first of all* is not speaking about chronological sequence, but rather about first priority. Before developing his counterarguments, Peter's primary goal was to warn his readers about the false teachers' tactics—namely, that they were purposefully denying the return of Christ in order to indulge their own sinful exploits without facing consequences.... The apostle continued with the common New Testament expression *in the last days*, a phrase that refers to the entire time between Christ's first and second comings. All throughout that long period *mockers will come*, seeking to undermine the church's confidence in Christ's return. Although Peter used the future tense form of *erchomai* (*will come*), he was not limiting the mockers' activities to some far off future day. Instead, he was indicating the certainty of their presence within the church. There have always been those who mocked the promise of judgment or deliverance (cp. Is. 5:18-19; Jer. 17:15; Ez. 12:21-24; Mal. 2:17). And such blasphemies will continue until the end of redemptive history (cp. Jude 18-19).

### (2) Scoffing (3:3a)

*...with scoffing...*

*Moo*: The *scoffer* or 'mockers' is certainly not a new phenomenon in the history of God's people. The psalmist pronounced a blessing on the person of God who does not 'sit in the seat of mockers' (Ps. 1:1). And three times Proverbs presents the mocker as someone whose ways are to be avoided by the righteous (Pr. 1:22; 9:7-8; 13:1). Mocking is one all-too-typical response to the truth of God's revelation. Mockers do not so much reason against the truth of God as they disdain and belittle it.

*MacArthur*: To further emphasize his point, Peter used the repetitive expression *mockers will come with their mocking*. By their senseless ridicule, false teachers—even today—attack Christ's promise and any who believe it. Their argument is neither sound nor logical; rather it is a vicious form of intimidation that derides hope-filled Christians as silly and uninformed.

### (3) Sinful Desires (3:3b)

*...following their own sinful desires.*

*Moo*: Rather than standing under God's Word, mockers, as Peter points out, follow *their own evil desires*. *Evil desires* translates a single Greek word (*epithymia*) that Peter uses to encapsulate the ungodly orientation of such people (see 1:4; 2:10, 18). These scoffers, Peter says, insist on 'going' their own way rather than following the will of God. (The NIV *following* translates a Greek verb that means simply 'going'—*poreuomenoi*.)

*Gardner*: *Following their own evil desires* raises again the issue that Peter has addressed throughout the letter. It is perhaps inevitable that those who should mock the Word of God and deny the return of Christ...will also take no notice of the command for holiness, choosing rather to follow their evil desires. The Greek word translated here as *evil desires* is the word Peter used to summarize the behavior of the false teachers (1:4; 2:10, 18).

*MacArthur*: Whether or not they admit it, immorality is the real reason that false teachers deny the second coming. The word rendered *following after* is a form of the verb *poreuomai*, which

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literally means ‘travel’ or ‘go.’ It denotes a course of conduct or long-term behavior (cp. Lk. 1:6; Acts 9:31; 14:16). For false teachers, their lifestyles focus on *their own lusts* and sensuality (cp. 2:10, 13-14, 18). Thus, they deny Christ’s return because they had the thought of divine retribution (cp. Rom. 1:18). They want the freedom to pursue all kinds of lustful pleasures without any fear of future punishment.

*Helm:* The mounting evidence for the scoffers’ rejection of the return of Christ conveys one overriding truth: preachers and people alike reject the doctrine of the Second Coming because they desire to live in a universe without moral accountability.

### b) *Scoffing At His Coming (3:4)*

<sup>4</sup>*They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”*

#### (1) Derision (3:4a)

<sup>4</sup>*They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming?*

*Moo:* Mockery is a general response to the truth of God. But the mockers or scoffers that Peter is particularly concerned about were not, apparently, mocking the faith generally. Indeed, they claimed to be following the faith (see, e.g., 2:18-22). Rather, they were scoffing at one particular teaching of the faith: the belief that Christ will return in glory at the end of history. *Where is this ‘coming’ He promised?* They kept asking. By putting ‘coming’ in quotation marks and adding the word ‘this,’ the NIV rightly suggests that the word has a special reference here. The Greek word is *Parousia*, used throughout the New Testament as a technical term referring to the ‘coming’ of Christ in the last day. Peter makes clear that this question is not an innocent request for information about the time or the nature of Christ’s return. The form of the question itself suggests otherwise, for it imitates a form found in the Old Testament to express unbelief and mockery (cp. e.g., Mal. 2:17; see also Jer. 17:15)... In asking where this coming was, the false teachers were implying that it was past due and that it was therefore not going to happen at all.

*Gardner:* Christ has not yet returned. We now live 2000 years on from Christ’s first coming and still He has not come. Perhaps it should not surprise us that the teaching of Christ’s return is mocked in our day and age.

*MacArthur:* The taunting question ‘*Where is the promise of His coming?*’ introduced a denial of the Lord’s return based on a revisionist view of history.

#### (2) Denial (3:4b)

*For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”*

### (a) *The Fathers*

*Moo:* Scholars who claim that an unknown Christian wrote 2 Peter after Peter’s death have one of their strongest bits of evidence in this verse... The false teachers appear to be arguing, ‘The Parousia was promised before the death of the fathers. Well, the fathers have died and *still* nothing happens.’ The assumption here is that *fathers* refers to the first generation of Christians—a generation that, of course, included Peter and the other apostles, who must therefore be dead by now. This reading of the text is certainly a possible one, but it is not the only one. *Fathers* in the New Testament only rarely refers to an immediate ancestor (‘my father

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was a policeman’). It usually has a spiritual sense, referring to the ‘ancestors’ of the Jewish nation, and especially to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as in the hymn, ‘Faith of our Fathers’). This meaning of the word also makes good sense in this verse. For these false teachers have been at pains to deny, and Peter to affirm, that the promise of eschatological judgment is rooted in the Old Testament itself. We can very well imagine them arguing that ever since God began His work of creating a people for His name—ever since the time of ‘the fathers’ of the biblical people of God—things have gone on much the same.

*Gardner:* Whereas *the fathers* is a common way of referring to the Old Testament leaders and prophets, it is not (as far as I can discover) used elsewhere in first century or even early second century literature of the apostolic generation.... Given that *the fathers* was a common way to refer to the people of the Old Testament (see for example Jn. 6:31 and 1 Cor. 10:1), it is at least possible that this was what the heretics had in mind. The fathers (in the Old Testament) had prophesied the ‘day of the Lord,’ the ‘coming’ that would bring judgment. Indeed, it seems that there had been such talk since the start of the world but it had never happened, so they mock. This...view, that *the fathers* looks back to the prophets and leaders of the Old Testament, is given some support from the second part of verse 4, in which the scoffers take us right back to creation and argue that everything is going on just as it always has.

*MacArthur:* To support their misguided view, the false teachers claimed that, ‘*ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.*’ Although *the fathers* could refer to the fathers of the Christian faith or to first-generation believers who had died, neither one of those meanings is likely. Rather, in keeping with other New Testament reference (e.g. Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:1), it is probably a reference to the Old Testament patriarchs (cp. Gen. 25:8-10; 35:28-29; 49:33). *Fell asleep* is a New Testament euphemism for death (Jn. 11:11, 13; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:51).

*Sproul:* We cannot rule out that Peter’s reference to the fathers who fell asleep is to the Old Testament patriarchs, but that would not much sense for this particular issue. More likely, Peter was reference the early church fathers who walked with Jesus, the early martyrs, some of whom had already died. Many had died by the time Peter wrote this epistle, and they had died without seeing the promises fulfilled.

### (b) Uniformitarianism

*Moo:* They based this rejection of the coming of Christ on a general belief in the unchanging nature of the world.... The false teachers, then, were apparently scoffing at the idea of Christ’s return at the end of history because they could not imagine the kind of change in the world and in the human situation that the church’s teaching about the Parousia assumed.... Perhaps...they held to a milder form of historical continuity, denying the possibility of any event that would materially change the nature of the world. The Parousia would not, then, fit into their scheme of things because it involved a transformation of both the world and of human beings. If this was their view, it also explains why Peter has chosen the examples of God’s intervention in history that he has in verses 5-7.

*MacArthur:* The heretics argument was simple. If everything *continues just as it was from the beginning of creation* (meaning that the universe is a divinely created but closed, naturalistic system of cause and effect), then divine intervention—including the return of Christ—must be ruled out *a priori*. In modern times, that view is known as uniformitarianism. Contending that the present is the key to the past, uniformitarianism asserts that the only natural processes that

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have ever operated in the past are the same processes at work today. It categorically denies divine intervention throughout world history, most notably opposing both six-day creation and the global Flood.

*MacArthur:* The rise of modern uniformitarianism occurred largely because of the efforts of the nineteenth-century British lawyer and geologist Charles Lyell. His book *Principles of Geology* had a profound impact on the scientific community of his day. In fact, Lyell's uniformitarianism was a primary pillar on which Charles Darwin established his theory of evolution.... As a result of Lyell's hypothesis, catastrophism—which had previously been the dominant view among geologists—was largely abandoned for more than a century. In recent decades, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in catastrophism among secular geologists. It became apparent that there is far too much evidence of catastrophism in the earth's geologic features to support Lyell's tranquil, uniformitarian view. But instead of embracing the biblical account of a catastrophic six-day creation and another worldwide catastrophe—namely, Noah's Flood—the 'new' catastrophists opt for countless smaller catastrophes.

*MacArthur:* To be sure, there is an element of general uniformity in the universe; it is a manifestation of God's providential care for His creation. After all if the natural laws and universal processes did not normally function in a consistent manner chaos would ensue. A biblical view of the universe then, sees creation as an *open* system—in which God has ordained a uniform operation of natural causes, but also a universe in which He has intervened and still does intervene. Those who go beyond this, advocating a uniformitarianism so rigid as to preclude God's involvement in history, have foolishly deceived themselves. Like the false teachers of Peter's day, they deny the promises of Scripture (including Christ's return) on the basis of their conveniently devised worldview.

### 3. Scoffers Reject the Truth (3:5-7)

*Moo:* the general meaning of verses 5-7 is clear enough. Peter shows his readers why the false teachers are wrong in thinking that 'everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' On the contrary, Peter notes God has intervened spectacularly in the course of human history.... But if the basic argument of the paragraph is easy enough to figure out, many of the detailed points that Peter makes along the way are not.

#### a) Creation (3:5)

<sup>5</sup>*For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God...*

#### (1) Forgetfulness (3:5a)

<sup>5</sup>*For they deliberately overlook this fact...*

*Moo:* The scoffers, Peter suggests, are not ignorant or naïve, but willfully disobedient, maintaining a view of the continuity of human history that blatantly flies in the face of the Old Testament. The Scripture shows that the world is not eternal; it came into existence at a certain point in time.

*Gardner:* Peter contrasts the way true believers should 'remember' God's word (v. 2) and the fact that the heretics *forget* that word. However, simply to 'forget' the word might imply a degree of failure but not of false teaching and heretical belief. Peter argues that these scoffing

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teachers know the word and have *deliberately* forgotten bits that they don't like or think are irrelevant.

*MacArthur*: When the false teachers maintained their uniformitarian view of history, they ignored historical facts. The word translated *escapes their notice* (*lanthanō*) actually carries a more negative connotation expressed better by the King James rendering 'willingly are ignorant of.' The facts did not merely elude such mockers. Rather, those individuals had purposefully shut their eyes to the truth. They willfully ignored the historical evidence, choosing to disregard the biblical accounts of divine retribution.

*Sproul*: People tend to have selective memories. They remember what they want to remember but forget what they want to forget. It is not simply the words of the prophets and the Apostles that the scoffers forget but the power of God over creation. Pagans despise intelligent design more than any other concept because it challenges their autonomy. They cannot bear the idea that this world and everything in it were brought into being not just by some vague, amorphous, intelligent design but by the eternal, immutable God Himself.

*Helm*: Did you see the emphasis in Peter's opening phrase? *They deliberately overlook...* In essence, he accuses them of intentionally blinding themselves from the activity of God in history.... They intentionally *ignore* the facts of God's Word and the data from history. They don't desire a true *knowledge* of God—the very thing Peter is trying hard to cultivate in his final years (1:2, 3, 8; 2:20; 3:17, 18).

### (2) Formation (3:5b)

*...that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God...*

#### (a) Heaven and Earth

*Moo*: The NIV has two parallel clauses, the first having *the heavens* as its subject and the second *the earth*. The REB, on the other hand, makes 'heavens and earth' the subject of the entire sentence. Choosing between these two renderings is difficult; each has its strengths and weaknesses.... In this case, I think the second rendering has the fewest problems. Two points combine to make it likely that Peter is treating 'heavens and earth' as a pair rather than separating them in different clauses. 1) Peter is obviously alluding to the story of creation as it is found in Genesis 1. As we all know, that story begins with the words, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.; 2) Peter goes on to describe in verse 7 how the 'present heavens and earth' will also be destroyed. The continuity of his argument suggests that, as 'heavens and earth' go together as a unit there, so do they also in verse 5. What Peter is reminding these false teachers about, then, is the creation of the entire universe. Both the world we experience through our senses ('the earth') and the unseen spiritual realm ('heavens' or better, 'heaven') were brought into being *by God's word*. (The NIV translates literally, since the Greek word here is plural—*ouranoi*. But the word is plural because the Hebrew word for heaven is a 'stylistic' plural; the idea is singular.)

*Gardner*: Peter points out now that the very word of God that they choose deliberately to forget is God's *active* word. God's word cannot be treated as purely theoretical. It is not simply to be reduced to a set of doctrines that can be accepted or deliberately ignored. It was by His word that *the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water*. God's word doesn't just provide us with a doctrine of creation that can be side-stepped, but it actually *creates*.

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*MacArthur:* As a result of their self-induced blindness, the false teachers discounted two monumental events in history that disprove their uniformitarian views. The first is the creation when, *by the word of God*, the Lord instantly brought the universe or *heavens* into being. Although God has always existed, creation marked the beginning of the universe in space and time. Scripture, most notably Genesis 1-2, supports a relatively recent creation and a young earth—one specially created out of nothing in six consecutive, twenty-four hour days. The phrase *existed long ago* does not imply a creation of billions of years. Several thousand years would certainly have been sufficient for Peter’s use of that phrase.

### (b) *Water*

*Moo:* Perhaps even more difficult are Peter’s references to water as the element ‘out of which’ (*ek*) and ‘through which’ (*dia*) the heavens and the earth were formed.... Peter is again thinking of the story of creation in Genesis 1, where water plays a significant role. In verse 2, before God begins to organize the chaos that He has brought into being, we read about the Spirit ‘hovering over the waters.’ These waters, which are apparently viewed as covering the entire globe, are then separated as God makes the ‘sky’ (Greek *ouranos*, ‘heaven’) (vv. 6-8). And God makes the dry land by gathering the water together (v. 9). On the basis of the Genesis account, then, Peter’s assertion that God created the heavens and the earth *out of water* does not seem far-fetched. But what are we to do with the second phrase, *by water?* ... We prefer to think that Peter simply expands here on his first phrase, *out of water*. As the verses we cited from Genesis 1 show, God used water as an instrument in His creation of the sky. And we must also allow for Peter’s rhetorical purpose here. One of the main reasons he introduces the idea of the world as being created *by water* is to prepare for the parallel he will make in verse 6, where God destroys the world ‘by water.’ ... We should note again that Peter’s general point in verse 5 is clear: God brought the universe into existence, and he did so by His own creative word and through the use of water. Therefore, the false teachers’ assumption of an unchanging universe is without warrant. The very universe they are talking about has not always been here.

*Gardner:* The words *formed out of water and by water* look back to the first chapter of Genesis as well, specially verses 6 and 9-10. We read that in dividing the waters God created the earth. This is not a scientific explanation of how it all took place, but simply reminds us that water had a part to play in the way God brought the earth into being. And that leads very naturally into Peter’s next point.

*MacArthur:* As God created the heavens, *the earth was* divinely *formed out of water and by water*. God shaped the earth between two areas of watery mass (Gen. 1:6-9; cp. Pr. 8:27-29). On the second day of creation, He collected the upper waters into something like a vapor canopy around the entire earth, and the lower waters into underground reservoirs, rivers, lakes, and seas. Then on the third day, He separated the land from the water, allowing dry earth to appear (Gen. 1:10).

*Sproul:* He brought the universe into being by His word. God said, ‘Let there be...,’ which is a divine imperative. God is the only being who has the ability to bring something out of nothing by the sheer power of His command. Peter says they had forgotten that. By the word of God the waters were separated from dry land.

### b) *Catastrophe (3:6)*

*and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.*

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*Moo:* Peter's second point is in some ways even more to the point. That same world that God created He also *destroyed*, and He did it in the same way that He created the world: by 'water and the word of God.' ... The reference here is, of course, to the flood of Noah, which Peter has already used as an example of God's judgment (2:5). In that verse, as we argued, God's not sparing 'the ancient world' referred to the destruction of ungodly people. Here again Peter refers to the destruction of the world.... Peter's shift from the language of 'heavens and earth' (v. 5) to 'world' (v. 6) may be significant. The latter often means the 'world of human beings,' the inhabited and organized human dimension of the universe. I think it probably has that meaning here. Peter is affirming the destruction, through the waters of the Flood, of the ungodly human beings of Noah's day. The example is a particularly apt one, because the false teachers are especially denying the judgment associated with the Parousia. This becomes clearer in verse 7.

*Gardner:* The word that has created is also a world that has destroyed. It is vital that we see the importance of what Peter is saying here: deliberately forgetting the *creating* word of God is part and parcel of their attempt to hide the *destroying* (judging) word of God.... Just as water had been used in craton at the order of God, so it was used in the destruction of the earth in Noah's day (see 2:5). God's word is so active and powerful that He spoke and the world was destroyed through the great flood (Gen. 6:7; 7:4, 23).

*MacArthur:* Peter's reference to *world* is not primarily to the physical earth, because the planet itself was not obliterated, but rather to the sinful world order. The term *flooded* (*kataklyzō*, from which the English word *cataclysm* derives, means 'to flood,' or 'inundate,' implying complete, destructive overflow.... The false teachers of Peter's time refused to view world history properly. Due to their self-centered hedonism, they provided a classic example of willful ignorance. Like today's revisionist historians, the false teachers deliberately denied both the creation story and the Flood—the two catastrophic events that easily disprove their uniformitarian views.

*Sproul:* By the word of God it rained forty days and forty nights. The created order was subject to a deluge sent by God because He would no longer strive with human evil, because everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes. By God's word the worlds were made, by His word the world was covered with water, and by His word the heavens and the earth are being preserved.

### c) Consummation (3:7)

<sup>7</sup>*But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

#### (1) Heavens and Earth (3:7a)

<sup>7</sup>*But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire...*

*Moo:* The connecting link between verses 6 and 7, on the view we have defended above, is 'the word of God': through God's utterance the world of Noah's day was destroyed, and through *the same word* it will be destroyed again. This time, however, God will use fire rather than water to bring about the destruction. Thus, in response to the false teachers, who view the world as going on in the same way forever, Peter makes clear that God has destined it for a sudden and definite end. *The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire*; the universe that now exists is under sentence of condemnation. It is being *kept* for the day when God will judge the world and sentence ungodly people to *destruction* (*apoleia*).

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*Gardner:* In verse 7, Peter drives home for the believers the quite devastating message that the heretics who deny Christ's coming will be judged when He comes.... Just as in the past God's word had been seen to create the world and then bring about the destruction of ungodly people (2:5), so now God's word stands that He will destroy the heavens and earth by fire. God will judge. God has spoken. It has not yet happened, but Peter wants his readers to know that God's word is as sure now as it has been in the past. God always brings about His spoken will and He does so *by the spoken word*.

*MacArthur:* In Genesis 9:11, 15, God promises to never again destroy the earth by means of a universal flood. But that does *not* mean that He will never again enact global judgment. On the contrary, *by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire*. While the pre-Flood world system was drowned by water, the present world system will be consumed by flames (Job 21:30; Ps. 9:7; 96:13; Mt. 13:40-42; 25:32; Rom. 2:5; Heb. 9:27; 10:27). That future judgment, as with the Flood, will come by the power and authority of *His word*.

### (2) Fire (3:7a)

*...are stored up for fire...*

*Moo:* This verse has sparked considerable theological controversy. Only here in the entire Bible (and possibly 3:10) do we find a clear reference to the destruction of the world by fire.... We must certainly entertain the possibility that Peter's language about the heavens and the earth being reserved for ultimate fiery destruction is metaphorical.... Peter may simply be describing God's judgment on human beings in this verse. And, to be sure, God's judgment is often pictured in the Bible in terms of *fire* (Is. 30:30; 66:15-16; Nah. 1:6; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8).... While some Christians doubt it, it seems clear that 'fire' in these verses (as well as the many where it is applied to judgment in the New Testament) is not literal, but metaphorical.... The biblical writers choose one of the most spectacular and painful of human disasters to convey some notion of the terrible nature of God's judgment. In other words, it is certainly possible that Peter uses *Fire* in this verse simply as a metaphor for human judgment. But two points in the passage make this interpretation questionable. 1) Peter's main point in verses 5-7 has to do with the continuity of the universe as a whole. He cites creation and the Flood—which, while directed against human sin, certainly affected the physical world. A reference to the judgment of humans only in verse 7 would be out of place. 2) Peter's use of the phrase 'heavens and earth' seems deliberately chosen to refer to the physical universe (see v. 5). We incline, then, with most commentators, to find in the verse a prediction of the ultimate destruction of the world by fire.

*Gardner:* *...reserved for fire...* But has God spoken of destruction by fire up to this point in history? Remember that back in verse 2 Peter was drawing attention to words spoken in the past in the prophets and by Jesus Himself that have come down to us through the apostles. As we look back through the prophets we find many references to judgment by fire. In some instances it seems limited to a refining type of judgment for the people of God, but in other places it is far more general, and even universal in application (e.g., Is. 66:15-24; Mal. 4:1; Zeph. 1:18).

*MacArthur:* Scripture often associates *fire* with the final judgment (e.g., Is. 66:15-16; cp. Dan 7:9-10; Mic. 1:4; Mal. 4:1; 2 Th. 1:6-8; Mt. 3:10-12).

### (3) Judgment (3:7b)

*...being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

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*Moo:* The words ‘destroy’ and ‘destruction,’ when applied in the New Testament to the judgment of human beings, must not be taken literally in the sense of annihilation.... *Destruction* refers to the cessation of existence in this world and to the final and terrible separation from God involved in condemnation. Earlier, Peter cited Old Testament examples of the condemnation of ‘ungodly people’ (2 Pe. 2:5-6). His application there was to the false teachers, and we are certainly right to suppose he has them in view here also. The false teachers, who sneer at any idea of judgment to come, will themselves experience its full fury.

*Gardner:* While true believers are being rescued by the Lord, these unbelievers are *being kept for the day of judgment*. This is the day of Christ’s return which will see the *destruction of ungodly men* (look at 2:9). There is no doubt that these false teachers Peter addressed had the word of God on the matter of sin such as theirs and their eventual end. But they scoffed at such ideas.

*MacArthur:* Peter’s warning, then, is clear: God has *kept* the universe *for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men*. Just as in Noah’s time, that final day of judgment will be for *ungodly men* and not for believers (cp. Mt. 25:41; Lk. 3:17; Jn. 5:29). The Lord will deliver His own out of the world before He unleashes His final wrath (cp. Mal. 3:16-18).

### B. The Timing of Christ’s Return (3:8-10)

*Moo:* The false teachers, Peter makes clear, were guilty of a deliberate ‘forgetting.’ They turned their backs on a truth that was self-evident and were therefore guilty of willful disobedience. But there is another kind of ‘forgetting’ that is not so sinful. Even faithful Christians can fail to maintain a truly biblical worldview, inadvertently picking up ideas from the surrounding culture that do not square with God’s truth. They can also be disturbed by questions and issues raised by false teachers. Consequently, Peter realizes that the true saints also may require reassurance about Christ’s return to wrap up human history.

#### 1. Divine Perspective (3:8)

<sup>8</sup>*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

##### a) One Fact (3:8a)

<sup>8</sup>*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved...*

*Moo:* On of the points on which Peter’s audience needed reassurance was the issue of timing. Excited about the new faith they had embraced, often experiencing severe persecution, many early Christians looked eagerly for Christ to return and take them to glory. Jesus had warned His followers to be prepared for His coming, which could take place at any time (e.g., Mt. 24:36-25:30). Peter himself encouraged believers to recognize that ‘the end of all things is near’ (1 Pe. 4:7). It is easy to see how such an emphasis could lead to disappointment when Christ did not return as soon as some believers hoped. Was God unfaithful to His promise? Peter understands that some of his readers may be bothered by this question. Thus he makes two points in response to this problem of the apparent ‘delay’ of the Parousia.

*Gardner:* As Peter continues to speak to the believers, his *dear friends*, he asks them to remember (see vv. 1-2) another important point that will help them address the problem raised by the heretics. The delay in the return of the Lord does not mean that it will not happen.... Peter has argued that God’s word guarantees the return but, even so, the delay was as perplexing for

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believers then as it is today. And so Peter tackles the issue head on, asking us to bear in mind two points.

*MacArthur:* Peter's paraphrase from [Psalm 90:4] encouraged his readers to *not let this one fact escape their notice*—that God's perspective on time is much different from humanity's. The amount of earthly time that passes is of no consequence from God's timeless perspective. A moment is no different than an eon, and eons pass like moments to the eternal God.

### b) *One Day (3:8b)*

*...that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

*Moo:* 1) Christians must realize that our perception of time is not the same as God's: *with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* The words are an adaptation of Psalm 90:4: 'For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.' The point of this verse in Psalms is that God, being eternal, does not experience time as we do. What seem like long ages to us is a mere blip in time for Him. Many Jewish and early Christian interpreters used this verse to predict the course of world history. History, they thought, would imitate creation and last for seven 'days,' the last of which—the Sabbath—would be the messianic age ('the day of the Lord').... This line of argument helped lead to the doctrine of 'chiliasm,' or what we would not call premillennialism—the teaching that Christ's return would usher in a thousand-year period of earthly bliss (see Rev. 20:4-6). But all this is far from Peter's intention. Peter does not say that God's day equals a thousand years; he says that in God's perspective, a day is 'like' (*hos*) a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day. God views the passing of time from a different perspective than we do. We are impatient, getting disturbed and upset by even a short delay; God is patient, willing to let centuries and even millennia go by as He works out His purposes. Peter is not telling his readers that they are wrong to believe that Christ's return is 'imminent.' What he is telling them is that they are wrong to be impatient when it does not come as quickly as they might like or hope.

*Gardner: God's timing.* This point is simple. We should not simply look at time from our point of view. We need to remember just who this eternal God is before we jump to conclusions about describing the delay as a 'long time.' ... *With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day* recalls the words of Psalm 90:4.... Of course Peter is not arguing, as some have suggested, that wherever we read 'day' in the Bible we can substitute 'a thousand years.' We cannot, for example suggest that the six days of creation are in fact to be understood as 6000 years! Peter's point is actually much simpler than that. He is asking his readers to recognize that God is God and we are human beings for whom seventy years is a life-time! ... We need to be careful that Peter is not saying that God is somehow 'beyond' or 'outside' time, as if 'time' means nothing to Him. Peter is biblical and not Greek in his thinking. He is not describing God as 'timeless and spaceless' as if we simply have to live with that. Peter's point is that God Himself does not make plans that have to be fulfilled in a life-time, for He lives forever. Rather, they will be fulfilled, and they will be fulfilled in history in time, but God views that time differently from us for whom it rushes by in a few short years.

*MacArthur:* What may seem like a long time to believers, *like a thousand years*, is actually short, *like a day*, in God's sight. In context, Peter is contending that while Christ's return may seem far off to human beings, it is imminent from God's perspective. Finite people must not confine an

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infinite God to their time schedule. The Lord Jesus Christ will return at the *exact* moment determined by God in eternity past.

*Helm:* Peter is arguing here that God's perception of time is vastly different from our own. For us, this present age of waiting seems interminably long—so long, in fact, that we find ourselves tempted to doubt that Jesus will ever come at all. Peter helps us by showing the contrast between our temporal existence and God's eternal nature. In essence, he reminds us that our perspective on time is different than God's.... Interestingly, Peter's argument is not his own—he pulls it from God's Word in an effort to reclaim readers who have grown discontent with Christ's delay. The words of verse 8 came first from the lips of Moses, the great prophet (cp. Ps. 90:4).

### 2. Divine Patience (3:9)

<sup>9</sup>*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

#### a) *The Lord Is Not Slow (3:9a)*

<sup>9</sup>*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness...*

*Moo:* Peter's second response to the problem of the apparent delay in Christ's coming has to do with God's purpose in delaying the return. This argument comes at the end of verse 9. The beginning of verse 9 is a transition between the first argument (v. 8) and the second.... *His promise* refers to the promise of Christ's return in glory (see v. 4). *Some*, Peter suggests, interpret what they think to be God's *slowness* in fulfilling this promise to be an indication that the whole idea should be rejected. These *some* may be Christians who have been disturbed by the false teachers. Peter is then exhorting these believers not to fall into the heresy of the false teachers. But the word *some* has a polemical edge. It is more likely that Peter is thinking of the false teachers themselves. They view the delay in the fulfillment of God's promise as a sign of God's weakness or involvement with history. God is not really concerned with what is happening here on earth, they may have argued, so that any idea of a real end of the world or of judgment is foolish. This being the case, people might as well do whatever they want, for no accounting for actions before a just God is to come.

*Gardner: God's purposes.* We need to remember that God's purposes for the future do not simply concern judgment and salvation on the last day, but also concern people's salvation being worked out right now. It that all takes time, then we can put it down to God's patience with sinful people as He desires their repentance.... *The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness,* This is the issue. God has promised a 'coming' (v. 4). Will He keep His word? Time and again Peter has returned to the issue of God and His word. It is active and powerful. What God says, happens.... Pete draws upon the Old Testament to make his point by alluding to Habakkuk 2:3—'For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.' The fact that these promises may seem slow in coming to fruition has been interpreted by some to mean that they will not come to pass, that God is not really interested and has stood back. Such people should heed the words of the prophets and of Jesus (see next verse) and now of the apostle Peter.

*MacArthur:* Despite the ridiculing of the scoffers, *the Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness.* *Slow (bradunō)* means 'delayed,' or 'late,' implying the idea of loitering. None of that applies to God; His seeming slowness is not due to lack of ability, forgetfulness, or

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apathy. In fulfilling *His promise*, God is working everything precisely according to His perfect plan and schedule. That same principle applied to Christ's first coming (cp. Gal, 4:4).

### b) *The Lord Is Patient (3:9b)*

*...but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

*Moo:* Peter directly counters this heretical skepticism: rather than being a sign of God's lack of concern, His delay in sending Christ in judgment is a sign of His deep concern for human beings. For in God's infinite patience, He is waiting for people to repent before it is too late. He does not want *anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*. Peter's main idea is clear enough, an idea echoed throughout the New Testament (e.g., Rom. 2:3-5; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Pe. 3:20). But what is hotly debated are the implications of this teaching. If it is God's will that *everyone* should repent, why is it that many do not?

*Gardner:* Peter is prepared to admit that there is a delay, but it must be understood altogether differently, he argues. It all has to do with God's grace and love for people. *He is patient with you...* This is how the delay should be viewed, from the perspective of God's patience as He provides still further time for repentance.

*MacArthur:* Peter's support for the second coming culminated in an appeal to the character of God. The thrust of his argument is this: the reason Christ's return is not immediate is because God is patient with sinners. Any waiting is attributable only to God's gracious longsuffering. It is not that He is indifferent, powerless, or distracted. Instead, it is just the opposite. Because He is merciful and forbearing He delays so that elect sinners might come to repentance.... *Patient* translates a form of the verb *makrothumeō*. It is a compound word combining 'large' with 'great anger.' Peter used it here to show that God has a vast capacity for storing up anger and wrath before it spills over in judgment. While that judgment is inescapable and deadly, God's merciful patience beforehand gives the chosen the opportunity for reconciliation and salvation (see 3:14). His wrath toward the individual sinner is immediately appeased whenever that person repents and believes the gospel.... Those who *perish*—'utterly destroyed' in eternal hell—suffer damnation because they are dead in their sins and refuse God's offer of salvation in Christ. At the same time, it is clear from Scripture that the Father takes no delight in the death of the lost (Ez. 18:32).

*Sproul:* The fact that all these things have not yet come to pass is not because God is slack. It is not because His word has become of no effect. It is not because He is a God of false promises. Rather, God is longsuffering toward us. The kingdom had not been fully realized when these words were written because God is unwilling that any should perish.

*Helm:* The second reason Peter puts forward to explain why the Lord has not yet returned is found in verse 9.... God is not only so unlike us, He is incredibly patient toward us. The fact that Christ has not returned is evidence of God's abundant mercy toward us.

### c) *The Lord is Sovereign (3:9b)*

*...but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

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### (1) God's Will

*Moo:* The answer to this problem depends on how one understands the biblical doctrine of election. By making election dependent on (foreseen) human faith, Arminians maintain that God genuinely and fully wills that all people come to repentance and faith. The reason that all people do not is because God gives people the freedom to decide either for or against Him. Obviously, Arminians have found in this verse very important support for their view that the only reason human beings fail to experience God's salvation is because of their own choice. For this reason, of course, this verse is troublesome to Calvinists, who believe that God has chosen only some people to be saved. Most Calvinists have explained the verse along the lines laid down by Calvin himself.... We must distinguish between two 'wills' in God: His 'desiderative' will (what God desires to happen) and His 'effective' will. God desires and commands that all people repent, but He effectually makes it possible for only the elect to repent.

*Gardner:* It is possible that Peter was here referring to God's desire to see all people everywhere in the world repent. This is what Paul refers to in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 when he urges prayer for everyone and specially rulers because 'This is good and please our God and Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.' The fact that *not* all are saved or come to a knowledge of the truth indicates that we are not here dealing with a *decree* of God nor even a promise, for He always carries out that type of *will*. Rather Paul is summarizing the *desire* of God. It is His desire to see all people obey the command to repent, but He has not decreed that all should do this. But is this really what Peter has in mind here in verse 9?

*MacArthur:* Scripture clearly states that God thoroughly hates sin and therefore its potential consequence for every person, including eternal punishment in hell. Yet, in order to display His own glory in wrath, God chose to save some and not to save others.

*Sproul:* When Peter says that God is not willing that any should perish, there are two ambiguities to consider. First is with respect to the meaning of the term *willing*. In the New Testament there are two distinct Greek words that can be translated by the English word *willing*. It would be helpful to be able to discern the meaning simply by looking at the Greek and seeing which word is used, but it is not that easy, because each of the words has several nuances. The Bible uses the term *will* with respect to God in several ways. Of the three most frequent ways, the first is what we call His 'sovereign will' or 'decretive will'; that is, whatever God wills must necessarily come to pass. When God willed this universe into creation, He did not wish it; He sovereignly decreed it, and it had to come into being.

*Sproul:* The second way in which the Bible speaks of the will of God is in a perceptive sense, that is, in what God commands His followers to do. It is God's will that you have no other gods before Him. That is His perceptive will, His law. It is not a sovereign will that must necessarily come to pass, because every human being by nature breaks that will. We can violate the perceptive word of God, and we do violate it every time we sin.

*Sproul:* The third use of the term *will* in the New Testament has to do with the basic disposition of God toward fallen humanity. We can call this the 'will of disposition.' The Bible tells us, for example, that God does not delight in the death of the wicked or in the punishment of evildoers. He still decrees their punishment, but His doing so is almost like a just judge sentencing his son to prison. He would not do so with glee or delight.

*Sproul:* Of these three major usages of the term *will*, we have to ask which one is in view in Peter's text. I think at face value the text is teaching something about God's sovereign,

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efficacious, decretive will. We have to read this to mean that God sovereignly, efficaciously is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The critics of election say that we cannot hold that God sovereignly wills to save some and not others since the text says that He sovereignly wills to save everybody. This does pose some ambiguity as to what the term ‘willing’ refers to here.

### (2) God’s People

*Moo*: In this verse, the statement about God wanting *everyone to come to repentance* is preceded and governed by the statement that ‘He [the Lord] is patient with *you*.’ In other words, it is God’s patience *toward the believers* to whom Peter writes that is the main idea here. We should perhaps, then, qualify the *everyone* at the end of the verse in terms of this leading idea: God is patient with you, wanting everyone *of you* to respond before the end comes. False teachers have arisen in the Christian community. They have begun to infect others with their dangerous views. Rather than bringing judgment on them instantly, God withholds His wrath, patiently waiting for His people to repent and to get right with Him again before it is too late.

*Gardner*: While it is possible Peter is thinking along these lines, it does not quite do justice to what he actually writes. Peter specifically addresses *you*. He says, ‘He is patient with *you*.’ God is being patient while the believers come to repentance. Now some commentators draw attention to this and suggest that Peter is thus explaining the delay in terms of God’s grace to these believers who have perhaps followed the heretics and now need to repent. God is giving them time to do so before He comes in judgment. The *everyone* therefore refers to all who are believers in *that church*. Personally, I do not find this argument altogether convincing though it does do justice to the words of this verse. The problem with this interpretation is that it doesn’t actually provide an answer to those who scoff. They are arguing that the delay has gone on since the beginning! ... Another alternative seems to make sense of the whole passage and take account of the specific wording of verse 9 that is addressed to *you*. These people have come to repentance. God doesn’t want them to perish and He is giving them time. He is patient with *you*, that is, with all who believe but also all who *will* believe. The whole purpose of this patience is that *all* God’s people will come to repentance. Peter is addressing a particular group of God’s people who have been given time and are being given time. Some have repented, some will repent and escape judgment, because they will listen to Peter’s letter and, as the delay continues, so still more of God’s people will come to repentance and find salvation... Peter may have been addressing a particular group of people, but what he said was ultimately the answer to the question of delay for all generations of believers. *He is patient with you* (His people), graciously waiting for your repentance. How good is our God!

*MacArthur*: *You* refers both to Peter’s immediate readers and any who will ever come to faith in Jesus Christ (cp. Jn. 10:16. Some have argued that *you* implies the salvation of all people. But the immediate context and comments about ‘the destruction of ungodly men’ (v. 7) clearly limits the *you* to believers. The letter is addressed to ‘those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ (1:1b). The *you* of 3:1 are ‘beloved.’ The words of verse 8. ‘do not let this one fact escape *your* notice beloved’ (emphasis added), again link this *you* to the beloved. The *you* with whom the Lord is patient are therefore the same beloved ones He waits to bring to repentance... The context indicates that *any* and *all* are limited to the elect—namely *all* those whom the Lord has chosen and will call to Himself. Put another way, Christ will not come back until every person whom God has chosen is saved.

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By using the term *you* (a reference to Peter’s believing readers), the apostle limits *any* and *all* to the realm of elect human beings.

*Sproul*: The real question concerns the word *any*—‘God is not willing that *any* should perish.’ The assumption that people read into the text is that *any* refers to everyone or any person. If that is the case, then Peter would be saying that God sovereignly is not willing that any should perish. Sometimes when an objection is raised to a position, the argument brought forth proves more than the objectors want it to prove. The Arminian objection to the Reformed view of this text is that if God is not willing that anyone should perish, then it proves universalism. It would prove that everyone is saved and that no one perishes, but how can that be squared with everything else the Bible teaches on the contrary? If we are going to understand this text in its context, we have to consider the antecedent of the word *any*. There is no mystery in that; it is abundantly clear in the text itself. God is ‘longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish’—the antecedent of *any* is *us*. The only question left to answer is the identity of *us*. That, again, is not difficult. Peter is clearly distinguishing the believer from the unbeliever, the scoffer, and the false prophet. In order to correctly grasp the context of *us* in 1 and 2 Peter, we need only look to whom these epistles are addressed—Peter is writing to the elect. Therefore, the *any* and the *us* are the elect. No passage in all Scripture more strongly defends unconditional election than this one. God sovereignly decrees that none of His elect will perish and that all whom He has chosen will come to Him. They will repent. They will come to faith in Him, because election is not in the abstract. Election is unto faith, repentance, and salvation.

### 3. Divine Parousia (3:10)

<sup>10</sup>*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

a) *The Lord Will Come (3:10a)*

<sup>10</sup>*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief...*

(1) Day of the Lord (3:10a)

*Moo*: With verse 10, Peter moves from argument to assertion. God may be delaying the Parousia for His own beneficent purposes, but *the day of the Lord will come like a thief*. The *day of the Lord...* was a popular phrase of the Old Testament prophets, which indicated the time of God’s decisive and final intervention in history to judge His enemies and to save His own people. The rest of the verse suggests that the idea of judgment is dominant here.

*Gardner*: Patience with His people is one thing, but Peter wants his readers to be sure that, no matter how long the delay, such patience is not forever. God’s people must repent and prepare themselves. Drawing directly upon the teaching of Jesus Himself, Peter emphatically insists that *the day of the Lord* (the final judgment day and return of Christ) *will come*.

*MacArthur*: In Scripture *the day of the Lord* signifies the extraordinary, miraculous interventions of God in human history for the purpose of judgment, culminating in His final judgment of the wicked on earth and the destruction of the present universe. The Old Testament prophets viewed the final day of the Lord as a day of unparalleled judgment, darkness, and damnation, a day in which the Lord would completely destroy His enemies, vindicate His name, reveal His glory, and establish His kingdom (Is. 2:10-21; 13:6-22; Joel 1-2; Amos 5; Ob. 15; Zeph. 1:7-19; Zech.

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14; Mal. 4). The New Testament writers also foresaw that day as an awesome and fearful event (2 Th. 2:2; cp. Mt. 24:29-31).

*Sproul:* There seems to have been an unfolding progression of understanding throughout the Old Testament about the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord would be the day when the brilliance of His glory would shine so intensely that the entire world would see His majesty and God would vindicate Himself in victory and vindicate His people.... Increasingly, the concept of the day of the Lord became identified with God's final judgment, which would be a time of supreme blessedness for the faithful but of uttermost doom for those who resist Him and His kingdom. Closely linked to this idea of the day of the Lord was the concept of the 'day of divine visitation.' There were two sides to the day of divine visitation. One side of the day was good news, when God would visit His people and bring redemption. The other side, the dark side, involved judgment. The Greek word most commonly used in the New Testament for 'judgment' is *krisis*, from which we get the English word *crisis*.... To this point in history, the supreme day of visitation was that of the birth of Jesus, but the birth of Jesus brought a crisis that hangs over the world until the final manifestation of the day of the Lord. As Paul warned the people in Athens, God has established a day in which He will judge the world, that the day has already been set on God's calendar (Acts 17:31). We do not know what that day is, but God has established it, and He will come to bring His final judgment on the world.

### (2) Like a Thief (3:10a)

*Moo:* Peter's addition of the phrase *like a thief* to his promise of the coming of the day of the Lord is significant. Jesus (Mt. 24:43; Lk. 12:39) and Paul (1 Th. 5:2) also used the analogy of the coming of the thief to explain that the coming of the Lord would be unexpected. Peter clearly opposes those Christians who insisted that Christ had to return within a certain short period of time after His resurrection. But he by no means opposed the idea of imminence itself. For him, as for Jesus, Paul, and the rest of the New Testament writers, the time of Christ's coming cannot be calculated. Like a thief, He can appear at any time.

*Gardner:* The temptation for all Christians over the centuries is to live as if the world will simply go on and on as it has since the beginning. They many not deny the 'Coming' as the false teachers do, but their lives do not reflect a belief that Christ will return. So Peter insists that the coming will be *like a thief*. He had used the prophet Habakkuk to explain the delay, now he draws upon the teaching of Jesus to warn that, delay or not, the outcome is certain (see Mt. 24:43-44; cp. 1 Th. 5:1-2).

*MacArthur:* Peter described the day of the Lord as arriving *like a thief*, meaning that it will be unexpected, without warning, and disastrous for the unprepared. The apostle Paul used the same comparison (1 Th. 5:2).

*Sproul:* Peter says that this day of the Lord will come *as a thief in the night*. The metaphor of the thief who breaks in was also used by Jesus and Paul. The point of this metaphor is that the day of the Lord will come when we least expect it. The thrust of this portion of the text was a call to the first-century church to be vigilant and to be ready. ... The New Testament tells us that this day will come like a thief comes—unannounced and unexpected. The church is called to be vigilant, always ready for the consummation of the kingdom of God.

*Helm:* Having given his reason for the delay of Christ's return, Peter warns us not to make light of His grace. The Lord may have refrained from coming because He is not like us. And He may

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have kept back the Day of Judgment until now because He is patient toward us. But make no mistake, the day *is* coming. It is fast approaching. And according to verse 10, the Lord's coming will be a surprise to us.... Borrowing from the words of Jesus, Peter likens the return of Christ to a thief coming in the night. A thief, you see, comes suddenly, unexpectedly, when you are unaware.... By way of analogy, so it will be when Christ returns. The world has been told that He is coming back. But when it actually occurs, He will catch us unawares.

### b) *The Heavens Will Pass Away (3:10b)*

...and then the heavens will pass away with a roar...

*Moo:* As in verse 7, Peter here portrays the coming of Christ with cosmic imagery.... The *heavens* (as in vv. 5, 7) denote that part of creation that is unseen—the spiritual realm. And, as in verse 7, Peter suggests that the day of the Lord will bring destruction to these heavens themselves. The problem in this clause is the word that the NIV has translated ‘with a roar.’ The word usually refers to a whistling or whizzing sound; it is used of the sound made by an arrow passing through the air.... But since fire is so prominent in this context, the word is best taken to refer to the ‘crackling roar’ made by a huge fire. In this case, the NIV rendering is apt.

*Gardner:* When Christ returns, *the heavens will disappear* (Greek ‘pass away’) with a roar. Peter has been drawing on Jesus’ words in Matthew 24 and they we also read in verse 35 that ‘heaven and earth will pass away.’ The *roar* vividly depicts the consuming fire to which Peter now returns (see comments on v. 7).

*MacArthur:* With the culmination of the final phase of the day of the Lord, *the heavens will pass away with a roar*—a universal upheaval that Jesus Himself predicted in the Olivet Discourse: ‘Heaven and earth will pass away’ (Mt. 24:35). *Heavens* refers to the visible, physical universe of interstellar and intergalactic space. Like Christ, Peter foresaw the disintegration of the entire universe in an instant ‘uncreation,’ not by any naturalistic scenario, but solely by God’s omnipotent intervention. The term *roar* (*rhoizēdon*) is an onomatopoeia—a word that sounds like what it means. It speaks of ‘a rushing sound,’ or ‘a loud noise,’ and also connotes the whizzing, crackling sounds that objects emit as fire consumes them. On that future day, the noise from the disintegrating atoms of the universe will be deafening, unlike anything mortals have ever heard before.

### c) *The Elements Will Burn Up (3:10c)*

...and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved...

*Moo:* The second clause poses the difficulty of how to translate the Greek word *stoicheia*. The NIV takes a literal but ambiguous approach, rendering it simply *elements*. But what are these ‘elements’? We have three possibilities. 1) They may be the basic elements of the physical universe: according to most ancients, fire, water, air, and earth. 2) They may be the heavenly bodies: sun, moon, stars, planets (see TEV, ‘the heavenly bodies’). 3) They may be spiritual beings. The last of these options is unlikely.... A reference to spiritual beings [does not] fit the context here in 2 Peter, which focuses on the physical universe. But either of the first two options fits this emphasis well, and either also fits with Peter’s use of the same word in verse 12.... Although we cannot be sure, we think that *elements* refers to the basic building blocks of the earth. In verse 7, Peter announced that the totality of God’s creation—‘heavens and earth’—were ‘reserved for fire.’ Now he moves one step further, claiming that the elements of the earth will actually be destroyed by fire.

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*Gardner:* *The elements will be destroyed by fire* is clear in its general meaning that everything will be destroyed, but what specifically does Peter mean by using the word we translate as ‘elements’? He may have in mind the old idea of the elements of earth, wind, and fire, or else the stars, planets, and other objects in the universe. Given that he has specifically referred here to *the heavens* disappearing, we can reasonably assume that the *elements* that *will be destroyed* consist of all that we might describe as ‘out there’ in space.

*MacArthur:* The word *elements* (*stoicheia*) literally means ‘ones in a row,’ as in letters of the alphabet or numbers. When used in reference to the physical world, it describes the basic atomic components that make up the universe.

### d) *The Earth Will Be Exposed (3:10d)*

*...and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

*Moo:* The third clause in verse 10 presents the greatest difficulty, as the following representative translations suggest. NIV: ‘the earth and everything in it *will be laid bare* (see also NRSV); NASB: ‘the earth and its works *will be burned up*’ (see also KJV; NJB); TEV: ‘the earth with everything in it *will vanish*. The main problem is the verb at the end of the verse. For one thing, the Greek text has several textual variants.... Editors of the Greek New Testament cannot therefore be absolutely certain about which word Peter himself actually wrote. (The NASB rendering assumes the reading *katakaesetai*, found in the uncial A and several other manuscripts. The TEV translation is based on the word *aphanisthesetai*, read by one manuscript.) ... The editors of the Greek New Testament that most scholars use today have...decided that Peter probably wrote the word *heurethesetai*. (In addition to being ‘the most difficult reading’ this word also has the strongest manuscript support, being found in two of the most important uncials and in several other manuscripts.) A literal rendering of this word is ‘will be found’ and many scholars do not think Peter could possibly have written this because it makes no sense. But the word can have the connotation ‘be manifest,’ and the passive form of the verb probably has the nuance here of ‘be manifest before God.’ That is, the earth and *all its works* will be manifest, disclosed in their fullness to God, at the time of judgment. While we cannot be certain, this seems to be the best alternative.

*Moo:* If we adopt this general translation, two possible interpretations remain to us. 1) Peter may be referring to the judgment of human beings, with their ‘works.’ ... Peter’s language may be describing God’s searching assessment of the motives and thoughts of every person. They will all be ‘laid bare’ before Him. 2) Peter may be referring to the judgment of the physical earth, with all its works (e.g., buildings, etc.). The former has much to be said for it, but Peter’s language and the context support the latter. ‘Heavens’ and ‘earth’ refer to the physical universe throughout this passage (see also vv. 5 and 7). And the continuation of Peter’s thought in verse 11 also suggests that physical dissolution has been his point in verse 10.

*Gardner:* Together with that destruction of our whole universe, Peter continues, *the earth and everything in it will be laid bare*. (There is widespread debate among scholars concerning the original word used in the Greek. There are a number of textual variants. The one the NIV opts for is reasonably likely and literally means ‘will be found.’) All that men and women have struggled to build and create over the years will simply be exposed to God’s searing judgment.

*MacArthur:* God’s power will consume everything in the material realm—the entire physical earth—with its civilizations, eco-systems, and natural resources—and the surrounding celestial

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universe. Yet even in the midst of that mind-boggling destruction, the Lord will protect His sheep.

### *e) Application*

*Gardner:* Peter does not accept the mechanistic view of the universe put forward by the false teachers and so prevalent today. From a Christian perspective, the world simply does not go on for every the same. God is at work in this world. He created it and will bring it to an end. It has not simply come into being by chance nor will it simply disappear by chance or even by the will of a human being, say, through releasing a nuclear bomb and starting a war that affects the whole world. Such a world view is ultimately fatalistic. Many believers have, at least emotionally, bought into that fatalism. Peter urges us to remember God's activity. He is in sovereign control of all that goes and will, in His own time, cause the world to come to an end, and create a new heaven and a new earth for forgiven sinners to enjoy.

[DSB Note: I work in the energy industry for a company, Shell, that corporately believes in the concept of 'man-made global warming' and is committed to leading the 'Energy Transition' to a carbon-neutral future in which we actively work to prevent the further rise of global temperatures in order to 'save the planet.' While I am not against the concept of the Energy Transition and am willing to work in this industry and support the efforts in these areas, I do not believe, as many do in my organization, that global warming is the greatest threat to mankind. I do not believe that human beings are capable of 'destroying the planet,' at least not physically. I have been asked by my colleagues why I don't hold that belief. The answer lies in this passage of Scripture, amongst others. Global warming alarmists hold that humanity may destroy the planet slowly, over decades or even centuries, by uncontrolled greenhouse gas emissions due to increasing industrialization, that result in slow and minute changes in average global temperature (on the order of a few degrees C) over many years. That is contrary to what the Bible teaches. God created this world by His word and water; he destroyed the earth once by His word and water; and in the future, when Christ comes again in judgment, He will again destroy the world by His word, but this time with fire. Notice: 1) It is God who comes and destroys the planet, not humanity (at least not directly/physically); 2) it is the judgment of God against man's sinfulness that ends the world, not man's industrialization; and 3) the end of the world is sudden and unexpected (it comes like a thief in the night), not slow and painstakingly gradually by degrees (Celsius!). I think it is human hubris to believe that mankind can destroy the earth; it is something that only God can do. Nonetheless, humanity is called to be good stewards of the creation, and so, reducing carbon emissions, providing more and cleaner energy, and supporting the work of the Energy Transition is not contrary to Scriptural revelation. But the belief system behind it, a man-made religion concerning global warming, is certainly anti-Scriptural, and that is why I deny it.]

For next time: Read 2 Peter 3:11-18.

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### Lesson Summary

#### XIX. The Day of the LORD (2 Peter 3:1-10)

**Aim:** To affirm the doctrine of the triumphal return of Christ in glory and power at the end of the age to consummate creation, judge the wicked, and usher in the eternal state for believers.

##### A. The Truth of Christ's Return (3:1-7)

Peter addresses the false teachers denial of the return of Christ, calling them scoffers who reject this doctrine because they don't like the idea of Christ judging their immoral lifestyle. But Peter reaffirms the doctrine and demonstrates that scoffers' position deliberately ignores the intervention of God in history at creation, in the Flood, and in the consummation of history by fire at the *Parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

##### 1. Saints Remember the Truth (3:1-2)

- Peter's focus shifts from false teachers ('they') of ch. 2 to the 'beloved,' *agapetoi*
- Second letter; first could be 1 Peter; *in both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder*; we always need to be reminded to live the Christian life
- We are to remember the teachings of both Old and New Testaments; *the predictions of the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles*; saints remember and know the truth

##### 2. Scoffers Ridicule the Truth (3:3-4)

- Scoffers are coming (cp. Mt. 24:5); they scoff at or ridicule the truth
- Scoffers follow *their own sinful desires (epithymia)*; e.g., false teachers (see ch. 2)
- These scoffers scoff at *the promise of His coming (Parousia of Christ)*
- They reason, *for ever since the fathers* (i.e., the patriarchs) *(fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation)*; theory of uniformitarianism vs. catastrophism
- The scoffers deny the Parousia because they want to be free to live their sinful lives without fear of judgment

##### 3. Scoffers Reject the Truth (3:5-7)

- However, *they deliberately overlook* (or forget, *lanthanō*) that the world has not always been uniform, but has been shaped by 'catastrophe'; scoffers reject the truth
- The heavens and the earth were created by the Word of God by/through water; the universe has not always existed but was brought forth out of chaos by God
- God also used His Word and water to destroy the world (the evil human system) in the cataclysm (*katakluzō*) of Noah's Flood
- *The heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire*; on the *day of judgment*, God's Word will unleash fire (cp. Is. 66:15-16) to consume the creation and destroy the ungodly

##### B. The Timing of Christ's Return (3:8-10)

Peter addresses the apparent delay in the *Parousia*. It is not because He has broken His promise; rather, it is because God had a different perspective on time than humanity, and that He is waiting patiently for the entirety of the elect to be redeemed. When that happens the consummation will surely come, unexpectedly like a thief, but with devastating consequence for unbelievers.

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### 1. Divine Perspective (3:8)

- Unlike the scoffers, who deliberately overlook the truth, Peter wants the *beloved* not to overlook one fact (Peter wants to encourage believers who are discouraged by the delay of the *Parousia*, which the early church believed would happen in the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.)
- *With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (cp. Ps. 90:4); the divine perspective on time is very different than ours; therefore, we are not to be impatient as we eagerly and expectantly wait

### 2. Divine Patience (3:9)

- Furthermore, *the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness* (cp. Hab. 2:3); God has not forgotten His promise; His ‘delay’ has a reason
- *God is patient (makrothumeō) toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*; God is patiently waiting for all the elect to come in
- The *you, any, and all* refer to the elect, not to all humanity; God is sovereign

### 3. Divine Parousia (3:10)

- Despite the apparent delay, the *Parousia* is certain; *the day of the Lord will come like a thief* (cp. Mt. 24:43; Lk. 12:39; 1 Th. 5:2); i.e., unexpectedly
- *And then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed*; the *Parousia* results in the dissolution of creation – new heavens & earth

In 2 Peter 3:1-10, Peter addresses head on the major theological issue in which the false teachers are challenging orthodoxy: the return of Christ in judgment. In verses 1-7, Peter addresses the truth of Christ’s return. He urges his *beloved* to remember the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, which guide them in all truth and how to live in light of that truth. Christians are to remember the truth, because the false teachers are scoffers who all too conveniently forget truths that seem offensive to them. In this case, they deliberately overlook the return of Christ in judgment, because it threatens their hedonistic lifestyle. Instead, they scoff and deride the return of Christ, claiming that the world continues on now as it has always, and it will not change. Peter reminds them (and us) that this uniformitarian view of things is false. God created the heavens and the earth by the power of His word through water; His word used water to destroy the world in Noah’s flood; and in the same way, His word will destroy the heavens and the earth at the consummation of all things, not by water but by fire, when Christ returns to judge the ungodly.

In verses 8-10, Peter addresses the apparent ‘delay’ in the Lord’s coming, which has given rise to the scoffing of these false teachers. Peter reminds His readers that God’s sense of time is very different than ours; the divine perspective is not one of delay at all. Therefore, we should patiently await His coming. Furthermore, God is not in a hurry to end things; His patience extends to ensure that entirety of the elect are gathered in to the kingdom of God. God sovereignly wills that all His elect will be saved. But don’t misunderstand, the end is coming. The day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief. At that time, the heavens will be dissolved with a roar, the elements of the universe will be burned up, and the earth and all its works will be exposed. The false teachers may deny a future day of judgment, but it is coming nonetheless, and in it they and all their works will be exposed and condemned to eternal destruction.