

A STUDY OF 2 PETER

The Day of the Lord Will Come (2 Peter 3:1-13)

Peter has just finished an entire chapter on the destructiveness, danger, and destiny of false teachers. His words were strong and biting. There should be no doubt that ignorant, immoral, and abusive teachers will emerge in the church and will with greed work to deceive and entice those who are weak or easily misled. Peter provides Old Testament descriptions of God's judgement on the immoral and ungodly of the past who serve as examples of the coming punishment reserved for these false teachers.

In chapter three Peter moves to further remind and warn Christians of the approaching destruction of the earth and final judgment. These warnings give us strong clues as to the nature of the false teaching that had entered the church.

Peter indicates that this is his second letter to his original readers. We can assume that his previous letter was 1 Peter, but it is possible that he wrote other letters that no longer exist, and that he has one of these letters in mind.

Peter's strong affection for God's people is evident as he writes to those he calls "*beloved*." His purpose in writing is remind them to think sincerely or with purity. He reminds the church of the words of prophecy and Christ which was taught to them by the apostles. Therefore they should be prepared when scoffers come.

1. What is a scoffer?

2. When will scoffers come?

3. What was the topic of the scoffers in verse 4?

4. Why is scoffing linked with sinful desires?

The Last Days

The phrase "last days" sounds mysterious, but simply means the last age of history or the Christian age. The last days began after the coming of Christ, his resurrection, and the beginning of the church (see Hebrews 1:2; Acts 2:17; James 5:3).

The mockery of the scoffers surrounding the Second Coming was designed to ridicule the faith of Christians who believed the prophecies of Scripture. The scoffers did not account for any activity of God in the world since the creation. Peter counters that God has been active in the past and will act again in the future. While the content of 21st century scoffers may differ in approach, those who ridicule Christians still start with doubts about the creation itself.

The most fundamental fact of Scripture is that God is Creator and that is where Peter begins with his defense of the faith. The scoffers "*deliberately overlook*" the fact that God created by the spoken word forming the earth "*out of water and through water*" (see Genesis 1:2-8).



God's willingness destroy the earth is evident from the global flood in the days of Noah. God brought about the flood and with a word he can and will destroy the current heavens and earth by fire. "The teaching that the world will be destroyed by fire is taught only here in the New Testament. The final order will not come to an end through natural disaster or man-made holocaust"¹ (See Malachi 4:1).

God has promised to destroy the present world by fire and there is nothing we can do to alter this truth. Those who forget God's fulfillment of past prophecies and their denial of future prophecies do so at their own peril.

5. What will be destroyed along with the heavens and earth?

6. How does God's reckoning of time differ from man? (See also Psalm 90:4)

7. Why has God waited to destroy the earth?

8. Describe the desire of God's heart for all mankind. (vs. 9)

Verse 10 is emphatic: "the day of the Lord **will** come." God will bring about the destruction of this world and judgment will take place. It may be tomorrow or it may not be for hundreds of years into the future. All we can say with certainty is that God will act in his time. His patience allows time for men and women to repent. His coming will be unexpected like a thief.

The day of the Lord will bring destruction of the heavens with a roar with the noise most likely coming from the fire itself. Peter refers to the same event described in Isaiah 34:4, "All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree." ^{NIV}

The heavens in verse 10 are most likely the sky or atmosphere while the *heavenly bodies* (ESV) or *elements* (NASB, NIV) probably refers to the sun, moon, and stars which will be burned up and dissolved. The Greek word for elements is *stoicheia* which are the very building blocks of nature. Not only will physical destruction take

The Day of the Lord

The day of the Lord was often used by Old Testament prophets to warn of coming judgment upon sinners and salvation for the people of God (Isaiah 13:9; 58:13; Jeremiah 46:10; Joel 1:15). In the New Testament the day of the Lord refers to the Second Coming and coming judgment (Acts 2:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:2).

¹ Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com, 2010. p. 160.

place on the day of the Lord, but the works of man will be exposed (1 Cor 3:10-14) to reveal those things that are pure and those that are not.

9. How should the coming destruction of the world affect Christians? (v. 11)

10. What does it mean to “wait for and hasten the coming day of the Lord?”

The destruction of the heavens and the earth that Peter describes is probably one of refinement and purging of all impurities rather than complete annihilation and an *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) creation like the original. Remember that in verse 6, Peter says that the world once perished in the flood, yet we know that the earth that remained was the same sphere which we inhabit now. The earth was completely cleansed, greatly changed, and made new. Likewise, it is possible that the new earth will be the same sphere that we now inhabit, but it will be completely cleansed, greatly changed, and made new after it is refined thoroughly by fire.

Whether the earth is completely annihilated and a new earth created or if the present earth is refined of all impurities and made new, it will be a place free of sin, disease, pain, and death and it will be a place where the righteous dwell for eternity.