

An Exposition of the 2nd Epistle of Peter

“The Perception of God’s Delay”

2 Peter 3:1-7

Theme: To some, God’s delay is an inducement to faithful service; to others, it is an excuse for sensual living.

I. THE ATTITUDE OF SENSUALITY – 3:1-4

A. The Details of Their Conduct – vv. 1-3

1. 2 Peter has attempted to show the contrast between those who are godly and those who were false teachers – cp. **1:8-9; 2:1-3; 2:9**
2. He has tried to stabilize the church by *“stirring them up” in their awareness of the truths they had received* – *“This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder”* – cp. **1:12-13**
3. He is insisting that what unfolds is the fulfillment of what the prophets have anticipated – *“... that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.”* – cp. **Jude 17**
4. The specific warning is that they should *“know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking ...”*
 - a) *“first of all”* – refers to a matter of priority, not a chronological reference – the tactics of false teachers is to mock the truth
 - b) *“the last days”* – refers to the entire time between the ascension of Christ to glory and His return at the 2nd Coming.
 - c) *“mockers”* [ἐμπαίκτης] – refers to those who ridicule or scorn those who embrace the truth of the 2nd Coming.
5. In contrast to believers are those who were self-indulgent in their “faith” – permitting sensuality to prevail in their practice – cp. **1:3-4; 2:2, 10, 13-14, 18**
6. These false teachers ridiculed anyone who sought to be found pure by the Lord upon His return – cp. **1 John 3:3; Romans 14:12.**
7. Instead, they were *“following after their own lusts.”*

B. The Denial of Authority – v. 4a

1. Their denial of the coming of the Lord is inevitable – who could allow himself to go into moral excess if he believed that the Lord is ready to return at any time?

2. They were *“saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’”*
3. All moral laxity must have and always has the necessary doctrinal enabling – even if it is perverted in its reasoning.
4. Instead of coming face-to-face with the reality of the truth of God, the rationalized away the clearly revealed truths of God’s Word, boasting great things – cp. **2:18**
5. They asserted that the *“promise of His coming”* was an empty threat and therefore an irrelevancy.

II. **THE ASSUMPTION OF SENSUALITY – 3:4-6**

A. **The Insistence on Uniformitarianism – v. 4**

1. Here we see the incredible way by which these errant ones are selective in their approach to truth – *“For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”*
2. First, they claim that for thousands of years, babies have been born, lived, and died without such a threat having been accomplished - why should we think it ever will?
3. They assert that any who believe in the Second Coming are living under a ruse – since all has continued to date unaltered, it will continue unaltered..
4. This concept of uniformitarianism ignores the fact of divine intervention.

B. **The Irrelevance of History – vv. 5-6**

1. Peter points out how incredibly myopic this is of these false teachers – they have willingly shut their eyes to facts of history while appealing to history – *“For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.”*
2. This passage teaches that it *“escapes their notice”* [λανθάνω] which literally means that they “willingly ignore” (KJV) – choosing to ignore the facts.
3. *“... the earth was formed out of water and by water ...”* – describes the Genesis account whereby God separated two bodies of water: one covering the earth and the other forming a canopy above the earth; He then separated the dry land from the water.
4. God created the world through His word, and then He chose to destroy it in the *days of Noah* through His Word – a concept known as “catastrophism”

5. These clear interventions by God into the “normal” course of the world are willingly unnoticed or even denied by these foolish and sensual people.
6. The basic issue is that acknowledgement of God’s involvement in our lives means that He remains relevant after life is over – we must be accountable.

III. THE ASSESSMENT OF SENSUALITY – 3:7

A. The Delay Is Deliberate – v. 7a

1. In the same way as these cataclysms have occurred by the Word of God, the preservation of the current cosmos is likewise only by His Word – *“But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire ...”*
2. They are deliberately *“reserved”* [θησαυρίζω] for the end of judgment in order for repentance to be fulfilled – cp. v. 9
3. This term refers to keeping something “safe by storing it” – keeping it in tact for a future event of judgment.
4. They completely mistake the grace of God in sustaining creation and permitting their ungodliness as their “getting away with it.”
5. But, Scripture teaches that at the proper time, God will unleash His wrath and retribution upon every man.

B. The Destruction Is Determined – v. 7b

1. They are *“kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*
2. *“kept”* [τηρέω] – refers to the act of “retaining in custody” – they’ve been arrested by God, but not yet executed – this has been a constant theme: cp. 2:4, 9, 17.
3. For these ones who prefer to live sensual lives, all things are focused on the final event of their judgment – when they will be destroyed.
4. The basis of this destruction and judgment is their ungodliness [ἀσεβείας] – lack of conformity to the righteousness of God – their constant violation of the norms required for a proper relation to God.
5. His point is that what has happened in the past with the judgment by God using water is a sign of what will happen in the future using fire – God will judge the ungodly.

