

Session 6 The Forerunner Message in 2 Peter 2-3

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Jude has many similarities to 2 Peter 2. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, “*Of all the chapters in the Bible, 2 Peter 2 is among the most terrible—for threatening, for warning, for destruction—there is nowhere in the Holy Writ which surpasses this chapter. The New Testament picture of life includes a mighty spiritual struggle and conflict. There is no easy optimism found in New Testament.*”
- B. In 2 Peter 3, Peter addresses the cynicism of scoffers who mock the biblical narrative related to Jesus’ return. He provides 4 arguments that answer the cynical accusations of those who mock.
- C. **Outline of 2 Peter 2**
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| 2:1-3 | False teachers will arise |
| 2:4-9 | Jesus will judge the ungodly and rescue the godly |
| 2:10-19 | The ungodly character of false teachers |
| 2:20-22 | The terrible fate of those who fall away |
- D. **Outline of 2 Peter 3**
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| 3:1-2 | Peter’s purpose for writing his second letter |
| 3:3-7 | Refuting people who mock the reality of Jesus’ return |
| 3:8-9 | How the Lord views the timing of His end-time promises |
| 3:10-13 | Essential elements in the Lord’s end-time plan |
| 3:14-18 | How to respond to Peter’s teaching on the end times |

II. FALSE TEACHERS WILL ARISE (2 PET. 2:1-3)

- A. Peter warned of false teachers (2:1-3). He described false teachers in his day who were active in the church as they drifted away from the foundational truths of the gospel (2:1-2, 13, 15, 18-22).
¹...there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord...²Many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words... (2 Pet. 2:1-3)
- B. ***Secretly bring in heresies***: They will secretly or subtly bring in destructive heresies that cause people to join them eventually in denying foundational truths about Jesus.
- C. ***Many will follow false teachers*** (2:2): There will be many more false teachers in the end times. Jesus prophesied that *many* false teachers and prophets would arise to deceive *many* people, and some will do mighty miracles (Mt. 24:5, 11, 24). Paul also prophesied false teachers in the end times (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:13; 4:3-4). False teachers can undermine the faith of others by what they *neglect* to say more than by only emphasizing how to receive more blessings.
- D. ***Exploited by covetousness*** (2:3): False teachers manipulate by appealing people’s love of money.
- E. ***Summary***: False teachers are skilled in alluring people with covetousness and immorality (2:14).

III. JESUS WILL JUDGE THE UNGODLY AND RESCUE THE GODLY (2 PET. 2:4-9)

- A. Peter gave three examples of God judging those who persist in ungodliness and rescuing the godly. He highlighted judgment on the angels who sinned (2:4), on the ungodly in the days of Noah (2:5), and on Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6). He emphasized that God knows how to rescue the godly (2:9).
⁴For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell [Tartarus] and delivered them into chains...⁵and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people...bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes...making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷and delivered righteous Lot...⁹The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment... (2 Pet. 2:4-9)
- B. ***The angels who sinned:*** God judged angels who sinned long before He created humans. Therefore, judgment is sure because God's character never changes. Jude referred to this angelic rebellion (Jude 6). Tartarus is a holding place for these fallen angels until they are cast into the lake of fire.
- C. ***Judgment of the ungodly in the days of Noah:*** God did not spare the ungodly in the ancient world. We look back to the Lord's historic judgments as proof of His future judgements in the end times.
- D. ***Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6):*** God sent supernatural fire on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is an example of what He will do in the end times (see the first 3 trumpet judgments; Rev. 8). Judgment is sure because God *did not spare* the angels, the ungodly in Noah's day, nor Sodom.

IV. THE UNGODLY CHARACTER OF FALSE TEACHERS (2 PET. 2:10-19)

- A. Peter described the private lives of many false teachers to demonstrate why their judgment is sure and inevitable. Instead of hiding their immorality, they shamelessly engage in it in the daylight (2:13), with eyes full of adultery (2:14) that pursue immorality, even with those who are married.
¹⁰...walk...in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries [fallen angels], ¹¹whereas angels, who are greater in power...do not bring a reviling accusation against them...¹²But these, like natural brute beasts ...¹³count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime...in their deceptions while they feast with you, ¹⁴having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices...¹⁵They have forsaken the right way...following the way of Balaam...¹⁷These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest...¹⁸For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure [seduce] through the lusts ...through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption [in their private lives]... (2 Pet. 2:10-19)
- B. Peter describes the terrible fate of those who fall away (2:20-22) in order to warn others concerning the seriousness of following their heresies or teachings (2:1) and their ways or lifestyle (2:2).
²⁰For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled...and overcome, the latter end is worse... ²¹For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." (2 Pet. 2:20-21)

V. PETER'S PURPOSE FOR WRITING HIS SECOND LETTER (2 PET. 3:1-2)

- A. The purpose of the second epistle was to remind them (3:1-2) of foundational biblical truths about salvation, kingdom life, and God's end-time plans so that they would not embrace false teachings.
- ¹Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle...I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder,
²that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior... (2 Pet. 3:1-2)*
- B. In 2 Peter 3, God's people are called to be godly and diligent in seeking and serving God (3:11-17).
- ¹¹Therefore...what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...
¹⁴looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless...¹⁷beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness... (2 Pet. 3:11-17)*

VI. REFUTING PEOPLE WHO MOCK THE REALITY OF JESUS' RETURN (2 PET. 3:3-7)

- A. Peter prophesied that scoffers would come; then he dismantled their arguments that assert there will not be dramatic changes in the end times to fulfill God's Word. He addressed their arguments in 4 ways—morally (3:4), historically (3:5-7), theologically (3:8-9), and prophetically (3:10-13).
- ³Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,
⁴and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Pet. 3:3-4)*
- B. **Knowing this first:** Of *first* or primary importance is to be braced for scoffers who will speak against those who have a sense of urgency in expecting and preparing spiritually for Jesus' return.
- C. **Scoffers will come:** A scoffer treats lightly what Scripture presents as weighty and serious. Here, the scoffers that Peter warned about are those who mock what the Bible says Jesus' return.
1. They mock the truth about God's judgments and the dramatic changes to occur in the world.
 2. The Lord allows scoffers to strengthen the Church by challenging what the Word says about the Lord's return—this gives the Church opportunity to reinforce its biblical convictions about the end times. Mockers help the body to refine, clarify, and deepen their understanding.
- D. **In the last days:** This speaks of the years leading up to the return of Jesus.
- E. **Walking according to their lusts:** *Moral argument*—their lust creates a prejudice in their view (3:4). The scoffers do not walk according to biblical truth or facts about the end times but according to their *lust-driven* prejudices and agendas for more money, comfort, approval of man, etc. Their perspective is formed in part by lustful desires. Their mindset of intellectual superiority and disdain for biblical truth will lead some to indulge in immorality. Many in compromise mock holy living.
- F. **Where is the promise of His coming?** (3:4): Some scoffers say things like, "Every generation has said that Jesus will come back soon" (3:4)—or, "From the creation of the world everything has remained the same." They assume that God will not intervene in the world in dramatic ways. They appeal to the stability of the created order and the lack of God's dramatic interventions.

G. *Historical argument*—they misunderstand history (3:5-6). He mentioned two events to demonstrate that things have not always been as they are (3:4). They are events that cannot be explained by natural means—both being caused by God’s word—the creation of the world and the flood in the days of Noah. Mockers do not understand the power of God’s word nor the place of cataclysmic events in God’s plan. Cataclysmic judgment events have been in His plans from the beginning.

⁵*For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing [was formed] out of water and in [by or through] the water, ⁶by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water...* (2 Pet. 3:5-6)

1. ***They willfully forget*** (3:5): They forget the historical fact that *by the word of God* the heavens and the earth were created and then destroyed in the flood (3:5-6). They also forget that God created the heavens and earth (land) out of water and later used flood waters to destroy them.
 - a. Believers who scoff at God’s plan to intervene dramatically forget that about 4,500 years ago (a couple of days ago to God) a dramatic flood occurred in the days of Noah.
 - b. He highlights that their view of history does not take into account both the creation and the flood. Their view of Jesus’ return agrees with their non-biblical worldview. Mockers are not qualified to accuse God’s plans since they lack insight into His past acts.

2. ***By the Word of God*** (3:5): The power of the Word created the heavens (the skies, stars, and solar system) and the earth. Jesus created them by His word (Col. 1:16). Peter’s argument is that the heavens and earth were created and judged by the intervention of the word of God.

3. ***The earth standing out of water***: Water was the active agent that formed the face of earth. The earth was standing (formed) out of water—the elements of the earth were originally held together in solution by water until land rose up out of the water (Gen. 1:9).

⁹*Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. ¹⁰*God called the dry land Earth...* (Gen. 1:9-10)*

4. The earth was originally covered with water—on its surface and in the sky (Gen. 1:6-7).

⁶*God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” ⁷Thus God made the firmament [*sky*], and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament...* (Gen. 1:6-7)

H. As the ancient world was destroyed because of ungodliness, so this present world that is filled with ungodliness is reserved for the time it is to be purged and cleansed by the fire of judgment (3:7). The Old Testament prophets spoke of the destruction of the earth by fire (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 97:3; Isa. 30:30; 34:4; 66:15-16; Ezek. 38:22; Amos 7:4; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8; Mal. 4:2).

⁷*But the heavens and the earth, which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Pet. 3:7)*

¹⁵*...the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots...[to] rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶For by fire...the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many. (Isa. 66:15-16)*

⁸*“...all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.” (Zeph. 3:8)*

⁷*...the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven...⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance... (2 Thes. 1:7-8)*

VII. HOW THE LORD VIEWS THE TIMING OF HIS END-TIME PROMISES (2 PET. 3:8-9)

- A. *Theological argument*—they misunderstand the reason for the delay of Jesus’ coming (3:8-9). Peter presented his case against scoffers related to the delay of Jesus’ return. It does not matter if God gave His promise one day ago or 1,000 years ago; He will fulfill each one. In 3:8-9, Peter gave perspective on the delay of the day of judgment (3:7) and the delay of Jesus’ return (3:4).
- ⁸...do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slack [slow] concerning His promise...but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.***
(2 Pet. 3:8-9)
- B. Here Peter answers the criticism that Jesus has delayed so long that people don’t believe He is coming back. In God’s experience of time it hasn’t been very long. God’s delay in fulfilling His promises is not like the delay of humans. A delayed promise from God is not a forgotten promise.
- C. In 3:9, he explains that God’s promise for Jesus to come (3:4) will be fulfilled in His perfect timing. God extended the time to give people the opportunity for repentance. From God’s perspective, His plan is short term. The delay gives multitudes more time to accept salvation (3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4).
- D. God does not rule in a timeless state. Time defines how the relationship of one event with other events is measured. The concept of a timeless existence is not biblical. Eternity is not timelessness; it is endless time. We are not qualified to criticize God’s plans since we do not know His timetable.
- E. ***One day is as a thousand years:*** The Lord can accomplish more in one day of His work than man can achieve in 1,000 years of work. In one day, He can judge the sins of many generations and/or accomplish the work of 1,000 years in one day. Peter’s point is that He is not bound by time.
- F. ***A thousand years as one day:*** Peter’s point is to offer another answer to the scoffers: that the passing of time has no bearing on God’s faithfulness to fulfill His promises of Jesus’ coming or His judgment of the wicked. Moses said 1,000 years in God’s sight was as yesterday (Ps. 90:4). Peter referenced Moses words and added to them by highlighting the greatness that God can accomplish in “one day.” Peter did not say that one day *is* 1,000 years but one day is *like* 1,000 years.
- G. ***The Lord is not slack concerning His promise:*** (3:9) He is not slow to keep His promises. Mockers are short-sighted in charging God with slowness. False teachers speak against God’s end-time plans, promises, and judgments, saying He has not come as He promised. We must not be cynical about the delay of Jesus’ return, knowing that a long delay in our mind is not the same in God’s mind. Thus, we must not evaluate Him by human standards as being slow in fulfilling His promises.
- H. ***The Lord is longsuffering:*** He suffers long in His love for people. God’s forbearance is not meant to give people confidence to continue sinning without fear of judgment (Eccl. 8:11; Rom. 2:4).
- I. ***He is not willing that any should perish*** but that all should come to repentance (3:9). God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 8:23, 32; 33:11; 1 Tim 2:4; cf. Acts 17:30).
- ¹¹“...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn [repent]...and live.”***
(Ezek. 33:11)

VIII. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE LORD'S END-TIME PLAN (2 PET. 3:10-13)

- A. Peter's *prophetic argument*—the scoffers misunderstand what will happen in the future (3:10-13). The destruction of the earth and heavens will initiate the establishment of a new world order (3:10).
¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise [disappear with a roar; NIV], and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up [laid bare; NIV]. (2 Pet. 3:10)
- B. ***Day of the Lord***: This day begins when the Great Tribulation starts at the midpoint of the final seven years of this age, and it extends until the end of the Millennium.
- C. ***As a thief in the night***: Paul taught that the day of the Lord will come like a thief (1 Thes. 5:2), echoing Jesus' words (Mt. 24:42-44; Rev 3:3; 16:15). Two ideas associated with the day coming as a thief is that it will be *unexpected* and some will *suffer loss*. Unbelievers will not expect this day.
- D. ***The heavens will pass away***: Some translations say that the heavens will disappear (NIV) and the earth and its works will be *burned up* (NKJ), *laid bare* (NIV), or *exposed* (ESV)— suggesting that the earth and its works done by humans will be burned to expose them for what they really are. At that time, the sky will be rolled up like scroll or garment (Isa. 34:4; Heb. 1:10-12; Rev. 6:14). The signs of the Tribulation across the nations will be blood, fire, and smoke (Acts 2:19).
- E. Peter saw the cleansing and purging of this earth by fire resulting in a new earth. The millennial judgments and blessings are a foretaste of the eternal blessings of the new earth. The passing away of the natural heavens and the cleansing of the present heavens and earth by fire occurs ***in part*** at the beginning of the Millennium (Isa. 34:4) and ***in fullness*** at the end of it (Rev. 20:11; 21:1).
1. ***Partial***: This has been seen in history, in times referred to as a “lesser” day of the Lord.
 2. ***Substantial***: seen in the Tribulation, initiating the Day of the Lord, leading to the Millennium
 3. ***Ultimate***: seen after the Great White Throne judgments at the end of the Millennium
- F. Will the earth be *annihilated* or *renovated* to continue forever? I believe it will be renovated (Ps. 37:29; 78:69; 104:5; 105:10-11; 125:1-2; 1 Chr. 23:25; 28:8; Isa. 60:21; Ezek. 37:25; Joel 3:20).

IX. THE CALL TO GODLINESS (2 PET. 3:11-18)

- A. A proper understanding of the Lord's end-time plans motivates us to godliness (3:11-18).
¹¹Therefore...what manner of persons ought you to be in...godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening ...the day of God...¹³[we] look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore... looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless...¹⁷Since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness ...¹⁸but grow in the grace and knowledge of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:14-18)
- B. ***Hasten the day of the Lord***: The saints can hasten the day of the Lord by living godly lives, being faithful messengers, and by a lifestyle engaging in evangelism, making disciples, and prayer, etc.