

Peter Looks to the Future, and to the Return of the Lord

2 Peter 3:1-9

2 Peter 3:1-9 - *“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² that 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,³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”*

Background Notes

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle” (v1). Obviously, the first epistle was 1 Peter. In both epistles, Peter’s purpose was to stir up the minds of believers by reminding them of the great truths of the Christian faith. This was especially important, in view of the opposition and heresies of the false teachers. And remember - 2 Peter was not written for believers in the 1st century only. It’s the Word of God to believers today.

The great truths of the faith are to be remembered (v2). All these great truths are contained in the Bible - in the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures and in the New Testament apostolic writings. Most of the New Testament books were written and were in circulation by the time 2 Peter was written in about AD 67.

It’s very interesting to notice how Peter spoke of the letters of the apostle Paul (v16). Peter said that the early Christians already considered Paul’s writings to be **Scripture**.

Peter wanted his readers to know that the Scriptures, in both Old and New Testaments, clearly taught that unbelief would increase in the last days (v3). It shouldn’t surprise us that false teaching is rampant today, because false teaching and unbelief were already on the rise in Peter’s day. Verses 3-4 certainly describe conditions today.

We are living in the “last days.” Skeptics and critics of the Bible abound. Immorality goes unjudged, even in the church. Hardly anyone believes in a coming day of judgment. Skeptics and unbelievers ridicule us for talking about a coming judgment day and the judgment of hell for unbelievers in the future.

Skeptics complacently believe that everything will continue just as it always has. From their point of view, everything will continue indefinitely without any interruption from any God of the Bible. And by the way - when they mention “from the

beginning of creation” (v4), today’s skeptics mean “from the time of the Big Bang” (or cosmological “accident”) – not the biblical account of creation.

That position of the skeptic and the unbeliever was on the rise in Peter’s day, and it’s certainly the position of the skeptic and unbeliever today. They’re in for an awful surprise, as the rest of the chapter indicates.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Bible teaches that there was a worldwide Flood.

Verses 5-7: *“For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 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.”*

These verses teach that there are three cosmologies, or “heavens and earth systems.”

a. First, there was a “heavens and earth system” that God created. The earth was brought forth out of water, and by water: *“That by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water”* (v5). In the Genesis account, on Day 2 of creation God separated “the waters above” from “the waters below” by a firmament, or an expanse. Then on Day 3 of creation, God brought the dry land out of “the waters below.” Did you know that all the elements needed to form the crustal rocks of the earth are found in seawater? (I can’t wait to watch the historical video of Day 3 of Creation Week when I get to Heaven!)

b. Second, the present “heavens and earth system” has existed since the time of the Flood of Noah’s day. Most likely, the “waters that were above the firmament” were precipitated at the time of the great Flood, and thus the former heaven and earth system was flooded by water and was completely destroyed. *“By which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water”* (v6). Noah and his family came out of the ark into a new world - the present “heavens and earth system.”

But this present “heavens and earth system” will be destroyed by fire in the future (v7). At that time, the ungodly will be judged and condemned. Skeptics and mockers of God’s Word will then realize and experience the consequences of their unbelief.

c. Third, then will come a third and permanent “heavens and earth system,” the new heavens and the new earth.

This third cosmology is mentioned in verse 13: *“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and*

a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” This is the new heavens and new earth that are described in Revelation 21:1, “*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no more sea.*”

Notice from these verses in 2 Peter 3 that Peter clearly believed in a **worldwide or global Flood**. Some Christians don't believe that the flood of Noah's day was worldwide. They believe it is more acceptable and “politically correct” to think of the Genesis Flood as a smaller and localized flood. But do we dare to believe less than the apostle Peter – the **inspired** writer?

A Christian once asked me to prove that the Bible taught a global, worldwide Flood at the time of Noah. He was convinced the Bible allowed you to believe that it was a localized flood in the Mesopotamian Valley. He believed the “universal” description in Genesis (that all the high hills were covered and all life perished) referred only to the known world at that time! Well, in our discussion I didn't refer him to Genesis - I went to this passage in 2 Peter.

The **inspired** author, the apostle Peter, certainly believed in a great worldwide Flood - and that's exactly what he intended to teach in 2 Peter 3. Clearly there were, are and will be the three “heavens and earth cosmologies” Peter mentioned - and **all three were and are worldwide**. Peter believed in a global Flood - and he clearly taught that in this passage.

You will not be taught about a worldwide biblical Flood in your high school or college geology textbooks, but the Bible teaches that there was a worldwide flood.

2. The Bible does not teach that a day is a thousand years.

Verses 8-9: “*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*”⁹ *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*”

Notice that verse 8 does not say that a day **is** a thousand years - or a thousand years **is** a day. The verse says that to the Lord, one day is **as** a thousand years, and a thousand years **as** one day. Some Christians take this verse out of its context and use it to justify their theory that the days of creation in Genesis 1 were actually geologic ages. That is **bad hermeneutics!** That's a terrible interpretation of the biblical text!

2 Peter 3:8 is **not an equation**. 2 Peter does not teach that we can go through the Bible, and anywhere the word “day” is mentioned we are free to change “day” to mean a “geologic age” or a “thousand-year period”! **No**. We must interpret Scripture based on what the author intended to teach in that Scripture. Equating days and years was **not** Peter's point! In

the context of verse 8, Peter was answering the question as to why God has delayed His judgment of the ungodly. Why is God taking so long to judge the rampant evil and unbelief in this world? It certainly seems that God doesn't care that unbelief is ruling the day. What is the answer? The answer is two-fold.

a. **God is longsuffering.** Verse 9: *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us."* God is patiently waiting for as many people as possible to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, because He doesn't want anyone to perish.

b. **God is not bound by time.** We are bound by time – but God is not! That's what verse 8 is all about. What seems like a long time to us is not a long time to God, because God exists outside of time. That's the point that Peter was making in verse 8.

Psalms 90:4 makes the same point: *"For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night."*

Again, 2 Peter 3:8 not an equation. Peter's point in these verses is that God is not bound by time as we are. The Bible does **not** teach that a day **is** a thousand years!

Practical Application

Don't test God's patience!

One reason why God delays His judgment of the ungodly is that He is longsuffering and patient, because He does not want anyone to perish. Verse 9: *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*

Is it possible that you are not yet saved? Maybe you've been going to church and listening to sermons for years - but you've never, by an act of your will, trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. If you haven't trusted Jesus, you remain under the judgment of God (John 3:18).

But God does not want you to perish! God loves you, and He's longsuffering and patient. He longs for you to come to repentance! Why delay? Why not take that step of faith in Jesus Christ today?

God is patient - but there is a limit to God's patience. There will come a time in your life when it will be too late. Don't test God's patience!