

THE FIRST THING TO KNOW: SCOFFERS WILL COME 2 PETER 03:01–07

Introduction

The coming again of Jesus Christ and the end of the world — this is the subject of this final section of the book of Second Peter. This is a subject that literally fascinates tens of thousands of people. But note: fascination is not what God is after in discussing the return of His Son and the end of the world. What God is after is *preparation* — for man to prepare himself to receive God’s Son. Man must be ready for the return of Christ or else he will be doomed. This first passage covers a critical subject: *the first thing to know — scoffers will come.*

- I. Arouse your minds to be pure, wholesome thinking; so you can remember (vv. 1-2).
- II. They come in the last days, in our day and time (v. 3).
- III. They walk after passion (v. 3).
- IV. They scoff and ridicule the return of Christ (v. 4).
- V. They deliberately forget (vv. 5-7).

I. 2 Peter 03:01–02 Pure Wholesome Thinking

Arouse your pure mind; arouse it so that you can remember. If a person is to know and understand the return of the Lord, his mind has to be aroused. The mind cannot be lazy or wandering about. It has to be watchful, alert, focused, concentrated and actively engaged upon two things.

First, the mind must remember the words spoken by the prophets. They had much to say about the return of Christ to earth.

Second, the mind must remember the commandments of the Lord that have been preached and taught by the apostles. Jesus Christ taught much about His return. The apostles in turn shared His teachings with their people.

The importance of the mind being aroused cannot be overstressed. Note how Peter drives the point home:

=> “Stimulate ...wholesome thinking” (v. 1)

=> “Recall” (v. 2)

=> “First of all” (v. 3)

=> “Do not forget this one thing” (v. 8)

The phrase “wholesome thinking” (eilikrine dianoian) means to have a clear, pure, unmixed, uncontaminated, focused and concentrating mind. It is the picture of thoughts being sifted just like wheat is sifted in order to be separated from the chaff. Thoughts are

to be sifted in order to separate the true and pure from the untrue and impure. There is always so much false teaching about the end time that the mind must be pure, wholesome in order to sift the true teaching from the false. The picture of a pure, wholesome mind is this: the mind must be exposed to the light of the sun and be found flawless. The mind must be pure and clear from wandering and impure thoughts if it is to study the Word of God and learn its great teachings. The mind must be pure and clear if it is to grasp the great truth of the return of Jesus Christ to earth

Note one other fact in these first two verses: the unity of Scripture. The prophets of the Old Testament and the words of Jesus Christ and the preaching and teaching of the apostles are all tied together and put on an equal footing — at least by the time the letter of Second Peter was written. They were all considered to be authoritative, to be the Word of God. Note that Paul's writings were also considered to be Scripture by Peter when he was writing this letter (v. 15-16). Paul's writings were already considered to be the very Word of God to men.

Thought 1. The stress is upon the mind — a pure, wholesome mind that thinks, a mind that is focused and learning and remembering what it has been taught. But note this: before a person can remember something, he first has to study and learn the facts. This stresses the utter necessity for him to study the Scriptures, to learn all he can about the return of Christ to earth. There is no place in the Christian life for lazy, lethargic, unfocused and wandering minds. Christ demands total dedication from a person, the total commitment of a person's mind and life to His teaching. This requires intense and diligent study of the Word of God.

This also speaks directly to preachers and teachers. The early apostles studied the prophets and the words of Jesus. They studied the Scripture; therefore they knew all about the return of Christ to earth. Consequently, they were able to offer great hope to their people, the great hope of the second coming of Christ to earth.

II. 2 Peter 03:03 *The Coming of Scoffers*

Know that in the last days scoffers will come. The first coming of Jesus Christ to earth was the pivotal point of human history.

=> Jesus Christ came when “the time had fully come” (Gal. 4:4).

=> Jesus Christ came “in these last times for you” (1 Pet. 1:20).

=> God has “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:2).

=> John the Apostle says, “it is the last hour” (1 Jn. 2:18).

Since Jesus Christ first came to earth, history is in its last stage. Right now, the time between Christ's first coming and His second coming, is called the age of grace — the age when God's mercy and grace are flowing out to the world through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The thing to remember is that this period of history is called...

- “these last times” (1 Pet. 1:20).
- “these last days” (Heb. 1:2).
- “the last times” (Jude 18).
- “the last days” (2 Pet. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:1).
- “the last hour” (1 Jn. 2:18).

Note John’s term for the end time: “the last hour” (*eschate hora*). The Greek really means the last hour, the midnight hour when the world is to end. But note this: the end time does not mean annihilation; it does not mean that everything will cease to exist. As William Barclay describes so well:

“In biblical thought the last time is the end of one age and the beginning of another. It is not only a time of ending; it is a time of new beginning. It is not only a time of destruction; it is a time of recreation. It is last in the sense that things as they are pass away; but leads not to world obliteration, but world recreation. In other words, the last hour and the last days lead not to extinction, but to consummation” (The Letters of John and Jude. “The Daily Study Bible.” Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1958, p. 71).

The final chapter of human history is now being written. Soon Jesus Christ will return to earth and time will be no more. When? Jesus Christ said that no man knows nor can know. Only God knows. And we must always keep in mind what verse eight says, “that a thousand years is as one day” with the Lord. Therefore, we must not be projecting dates. What we must do is obey the Lord’s exhortation to watch and be ready. We are to look for His return every day and be prepared for His return any moment. And when He returns, not only will the earth and the heavens be destroyed, but He is going to recreate the whole universe, both the heavens and the earth. The new universe will be the home of all those who have followed Jesus Christ.

Thought 1. This then is the message that we must heed: it is the *last days*. What are we going to do about it? Are we going to attach ourselves to the world and be destroyed with it or attach ourselves to Jesus Christ and enter into the glory of the new world that is soon coming? The choice is ours. We either follow the world that is doomed to destruction or else we follow Jesus Christ and enter the new world promised by Him. The end time, the destruction of the world that is coming, is not a message of gloom; it is the most glorious message of hope — the hope of a new world. There is a new world coming that will be gloriously perfected: no corruption, evil, sin or death — only glory and splendour, health and life; and it will last forever and ever, world without end.

But note the point: there are scoffers in these last days, people who scoff at the idea of Christ returning to earth and recreating the universe. Three significant facts are said about the scoffers. The next three notes discuss these facts.

Acts 17:18 *A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He*

seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

2 Pet 3:3 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

Jude 1:18-19 *They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.*

Psa. 73:11 *They say, “How would God know? Does the Most High know everything?”*

Isa 5:19 *To those who say, “Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it.”*

Jer. 17:15 *They keep saying to me, “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it now be fulfilled.”*

III. 2 Peter 03:03 Life Style of the Scoffers

Know that scoffers follow their own evil desires. They live like they want and do their own thing. They want the possessions and pleasures of this world.

=> They want the right to seek and keep as much as they can of money, houses, lands, furnishings, recognition, popularity, honour, position, authority, power, fame, recreation, comfort.

=> They want the right to enjoy all the pleasure they feel safe doing such as partying, drinking, eating and engaging in suggestive immoralities and sexual relationships.

These are the mockers, people who follow their own evil desires. They have to mock and reject the second coming of Christ. If they accepted it, they would have to change their lives; they would have to repent and turn to Christ or else live under the terrible fear of eternal judgment. They are unwilling to change their lives; therefore, they reject Jesus Christ and His return to earth in judgment.

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Eph 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

Col 3:5-6 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

1 Th 4:4-5 *That each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.*

James 4:1-2 *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

1 John 2:16 *For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

IV. 2 Peter 03:04 Scoffers Ridicule the Return of Jesus Christ

Know that scoffers ridicule the return of Jesus Christ. They scoff for two reasons.

1. They scoff because it has been thousands of years since Jesus Christ came to earth the first time. They scoffingly ask:

“Where is the promise of Christ's return? What has happened to His promise? It has been thousands of years since He first came, and Christians have always been proclaiming that He was coming soon. Even today you are declaring that He is coming soon, declaring that His coming is just around the corner, declaring that everyone must expect His return today. What has happened? Where is He? If He was coming back to earth. He would have surely returned by now.”

Some mockers even argue this:

“There is so much suffering and evil in the world, Christ would have certainly returned by now if He was going to. He would have returned and brought the peace and abundance of life that Christians proclaim.”

Note: the first argument of the scoffers is based upon the teaching that the second coming is false. They feel that Christ would have returned long ago if the teaching were true. The fact that He has not yet returned proves that the teaching of the second coming is false. Christ is not returning to earth. A person can, therefore, forget the doctrine and go ahead and live like he wishes.

Mat 24:27, 36 *“For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”... “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

Luke 21:27 *“At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”*

Acts 1:11 *“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

2. They scoff because the world continues on just as it always has. They argue:

“There has never been a change in the way the world operates; there has not been a change since creation itself, not a convulsive event that would shake the world like the return of Jesus Christ to earth in a worldwide judgment.”

Note; this second argument is based upon the stability of the universe and its laws, upon the fact that the laws of nature run the world and keep it stable and functioning. The laws of nature have kept the universe running on and on without any major convulsive event. Therefore they argue:

“Why then should people get excited and become concerned about the world ending? The laws of nature run the universe, not an imaginary God. Nothing has ever changed the world; the world has been going on for millions of years. In fact, it has been continuing on for thousands of years since Christ came. Why then get concerned about a change now? The laws of nature will continue to run the universe and keep it stable.”

Luke 12:19 *And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”*

1 Cor 10:12 *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!*

Isa 47:8-9 *“Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.’”*

Jer 5:12 *They have lied about the Lord; they said, “He will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine.”*

Oba 1:3 *“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who lives in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’”*

Prov 25:14 *Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.*

Prov 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Prov 27:1 *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.*

V. 2 Peter 03:05–07 The Return of Jesus Christ

The scoffers are ignorant of three facts, and note, Scripture says that they *deliberately forget*. They choose to ignore, to be unreasonable, and to reject the fact that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world. Note these facts.

1. Scripture declares that the world is not self-creating and self-sufficient (v. 5). It was not made by the laws of nature and it does not run and operate itself by the laws of

nature. The heavens and earth were created by *the Word of God*. It was God, His speaking the world into existence, who created the universe and the laws of nature. The heavens and earth were created by God simply speaking and bringing them into being. God is God, the Supreme Intelligence and Power; therefore, God can simply will and speak, and His Word creates whatever He wills.

The point is this: mockers willingly choose to ignore and reject God, to deny God's absolute intelligence and power. Therefore, they deliberately forget that God created the world and that He sustains it by the mere power of His Word. The world and its laws are existing today only because God keeps them existing today. The only reason Jesus Christ has not yet returned to earth is because it is not yet God's time. God is not yet ready for Christ to return. When God's day arrives, God will simply speak the Word and Christ will return. The final chapter of human history will then be closed.

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Neh 9:6 *You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

Job 26:7 *He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.*

Psa 102:25 *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

Acts 14:15 *“Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.”*

Heb 11:3 *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

2. Scripture declares that the world has not always continued on as it presently does (v. 6). The idea that worldwide convulsive events do not happen is totally false. The earth has perished before; God spoke the Word and judged the world. His Word destroyed the world with a flood and all life was destroyed except Noah and his family and two of every creature. God did not let people go on and on in their sin forever. God judged and punished sinners. The world is a moral universe. God created it to be moral, and He expects man to live righteous and godly lives while here on earth. If they refuse, then He speaks His Word and judges the earth.

Again, note that the mockers deliberately forget the facts about a flood that destroyed all of life. The bones and the imprint of the bones of sea life can be found all over the dry land of the earth, yet men continue to reject the evidence of a cataclysmic flood that destroyed life upon earth. They ignore and reject that this is a moral universe that is answerable to a loving and just God. They reject Him because they want to control their own lives and live as they wish (v. 3).

The point is this: the world was destroyed by God's Word once; it can therefore be destroyed by God's Word again. One cataclysmic destruction took place; therefore, another catastrophic destruction can occur. In fact, the only reason the world has not yet been destroyed is that it is not yet God's time. But Scripture is clear: God has spoken: Jesus Christ is going to return to the world and the world is going to be judged and destroyed again.

Mat 24:36-39 *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."*

1 Pet 3:20 *Who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.*

2 Pet 2:5 *If he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.*

Gen 6:5-7 *The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth — men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air — for I am grieved that I have made them."*

Gen 6:17 *I am going to bring flood-waters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.*

Gen 7:11 *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month — on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.*

Job 22:15-17 *Will you keep to the old path that evil men have trod? They were carried off before their time, their foundations washed away by a flood. They said to God, 'Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do to us?'*

Isa 54:9 *"To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again."*

3. Scripture declares that the heavens and earth are being kept, reserved and stored up for destruction by fire (v. 7). How? By God's Word. God is controlling the heavens and the earth. They have not yet been destroyed because God has not yet spoken the Word. But note: he is keeping, reserving and storing up the world for destruction by fire. Why? Because of ungodly men. As stated, this is a moral universe and God

expects men to live moral and pure lives. The day of judgment and destruction is coming because men have chosen to live ungodly lives. It is this that men and mockers have chosen to ignore and reject: they are accountable to a loving, holy and just God. It is this that they refuse to study and know and submit to. Therefore, they continue on in their selfish and hoarding and unjust and immoral ways. And they continue to scoff at the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the earth.

Mat 25:31-32 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

2 Pet 3:7 *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

Isa 59:3 *For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.*

Heb 12:14-15 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. ■*