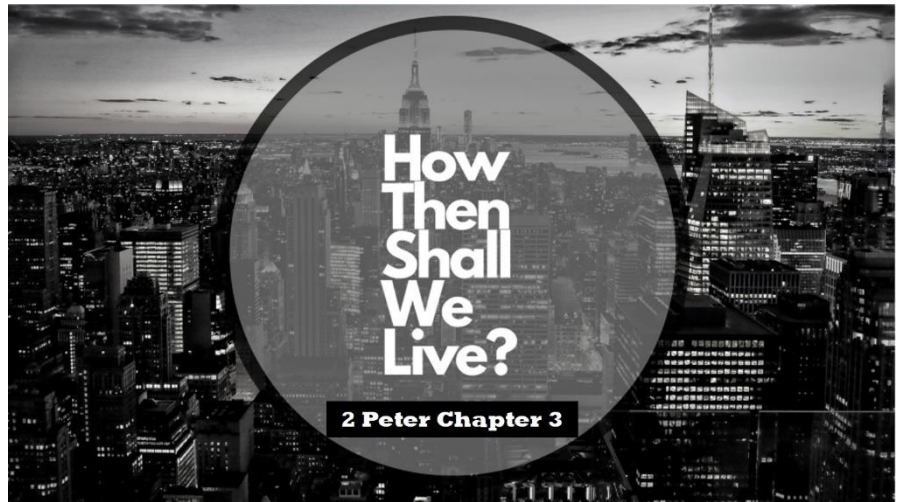


# “How Then Shall We Live?”

2 Peter 3

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in **Menomonie, Wisc**  
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**2 Peter 3 :** *1 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." 5 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. 8 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. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*

Peter spent the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of this, his last letter, warning us of the dangers of false teachers, false prophets, and wolves in God’s house. Now, in our chapter 3...*his final shot in this life*, he turns to yet another warning, one of a very specific nature. While chapter two warned us to be aware of the multiplicity of back door attacks of Satan and his followers, chapter 3 warns us about a very distinct and singular offensive: the ***distorting of the facts concerning Christ’s second coming***, and ***even the rejection that such an event will even occur***.

But even beyond that obvious exhortation, it seems that Peter was reaching even deeper. For ultimately his warning seems to moreover address even our response...our lifestyle, in the light of such lies, heresies, attacks and falling away. He is asking us, through it all...*because of it all*, **how then should we live?**

The beginning of chapter three deals with the imminent return of Christ and the end of the world. That specific issue of course, has been the target of centuries of attacks, and intellectualized abuse. Despite such, the rapture and the second coming of Christ is still a topic that is sure to draw a crowd. Mankind seems to be fascinated about such prophetic events. It seems we are inexplicably drawn to any possible enlightenment concerning our future. We see that reality through the prolific explosion of Tarot Cards, fortune tellers, and 1-900 psychic lines. Mankind has always had a deep-seated need to know what's up ahead. Not so much to change the course of history, but simply to dodge the bullet when it comes!

It is a sad reality that humanity seems to consistently require reiteration in order to not forget something. Paul, Timothy, Peter and other writers of the New Testament, have often written to remind us of some already established and previously given truth. We may have a sincere heart and mind, but sadly we often also have a very poor memory!

Much of this reality is because of what seems to be an unrelenting barrage of propaganda and programs of misinformation that is being fed to us by the world. A world that seems to be blind to the cultural skew and lives in a creational denial

despite what they redily see around them. It is a constant and consistent program of distraction and "slight of hand." Certainly Pilate's words now echo down through the millennia... "Truth? What is truth?" Not only is the world constantly bombarding us with its *own* brand of the truth, no one is really sure just what the truth *is* any more and further if there really is such a thing anyway! The fact is, unless we are committed to actually hearing and yes, regularly *rehearing* the truth of God, we are apt to slowly slide away from the Rock and out into the shifting sands of this world.

Our text tells us that Peter longs to stir up our *pure minds*. This speaks of the mind that is clear, uncontaminated, and focused. Because of the extreme proliferation of false doctrine, especially concerning the Lord's return, we stand in constant danger of being misled. Unless we are firmly and repeatedly grounded in the truth, we are in danger of falling to the ruse of the enemy through what may appear to be so-called science or the secret deep and hidden meanings found in the shadows of the Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

Certainly the new believer is the primary target for these false teachers, yet those of us who are older believers must not think ourselves safe and become lazy in our diligent commitment to scriptural truth and doctrine.

Often false teachers can seem very sincere and reasonable in their presentation. They actually may not even know they are being used by Satan! Because we at times do not understand what God is doing, or why He did it, we can force a doctrinal position in an effort to find conclusion and closer on an issue. Instead of accepting the reality that God is bigger than us and that "*His ways are not our ways...and His ways are (often) beyond our finding out,*" we can force a *singular* position when scripture teaches 2 or more, and then mandate strict adherence to that singular position for everyone.

As for the teaching of the return of Jesus Christ, the topic did not *begin* with the apostles. Our Lord Himself taught of His second coming, as did even the Old Testament prophets. We find such teaching throughout scripture, not just once, but many times. Apparently this is so we might be firmly **grounded** in that understanding!

Peter speaks of something he refers to as the "last days." It would be hard to not understand these "last days" as any time period other than the one in which we are presently living in. Yet in its greatest sense, the "last days" began with the first coming of Christ, and will culminate with His second and final appearance.

Little do such scoffers know that their very attacks and rejections are only further proving the truth of the Word of God that predicted such actions in these last days! It seems that from the beginning of time man has scoffed at such dire predictions. They laughed at Noah and his ark and refused to move out of Sodom. Mankind has always tended to live in denial. "*There is no God, and if there is I'm not so bad in His eyes. The world was not created in 6 days, and there is no hell or judgement, and again, if there is, I'll be OK because I'm better than my neighbor. I've been born again, but I dont need to be a disciple too.*" Etc...Etc...right on through these passages before us. It's just all so unbelievable and even ludicrous.

We must note that as verse 5 points out, to hold such positions is to be *willingly* ignorant. Not just ignorant of scripture, but of simple abject reality! For we are told in Romans chapter one that all that is known of God is clearly shown round about us, and we are all therefore without excuse.

The Bible gives a vivid account of the events leading up to the flood, saying that despite Noah's warnings the people "ate, drank, married, and were given in marriage." And they did so right up until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:27) The world was indeed flooded and destroyed, and all the scoffers died in their self-righteous pride and hardened hearts, just as they will once again in the final chapter of this world.

God says that He intends to destroy this present world. All that we see and all that we have, with fires of judgment against the sins of mankind. The Word, in its entirety, surely speaks of the absolute of God's promises, so we can "take it to the bank."

As man progresses in knowledge, we ourselves have discovered the awesome power that is wrapped up in the simple atom. Scientist tell us that there is enough power in a glass of water to run an ocean liner. Further, man is mystified as to what keeps an atom together with negative and positive elements revolving around each other. Yet such an enigma is no mystery

to the Creator. There will come a day, when He will cease to hold the elements together, and this world will know a firestorm like no other.

It all is indeed hard to grasp, and often harder yet to believe. For our days and years pass in the linear timeframe of man, yet God does not exist in such a realm. He lives in a timeless realm and promises that we, His children, will one day join Him there. Therefore God does not experience the passing of human time as we do, only the completion of His prophetic plan. We have a past, a present, and hopefully some kind of future. But God is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. That reality is beyond our grasp...and instead of acknowledging that simple fact, we reject it all on the premise that if we can't grasp it or explain it then it's not a fact. Despite our arrogance, we are told that even now He waits, "not willing that any perish." His desire, through His awesome love, is that *all* people should repent and come to Him.

If you do not know Him as of yet, He is waiting for *you*. He understands like no other, the absolute completeness of His plan. Yet when He closes the door to His grace and salvation, it will be for all of eternity, and we will be without an excuse. It is His deep love for His creation that keeps Him waiting. He waits one more human day, for one more human being. How many of us would have been lost forever if He had returned 10 years ago? Five years? One year? He waited because He loves us. Despite man's hard heart, wicked lives, and hatred toward Him, our Father continues to wait and continues to *love*.

However, we cannot ignore the beginning of verse 10: "***But...***" That's a crucial start to these words "*But the day of the Lord will come...*" His day *is* coming! If He is real and if He's out there, He *is* returning. His coming will be like a 'thief in the night.' Sudden and unexpected by those who are not waiting and watching. According to scripture, everything that man has ever built will be destroyed in an instant. Everything that you have built...everything that you own, will be lost.

*"Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—"* (Mark 13:35).

*"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."* (Matthew 24:27)

*"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."* (Matthew 24:36)

*"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."* (Matthew 24:44)

*"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."* (Matthew 25:10-13)

*"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night."* (1 Thes. 5:2)

*"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."* (Rev. 3:3)

*"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."* (Rev. 16:15)

The fact that all we have will in a moment be burned out of existence, should certainly change a man's perspective. Thus Peter asks the next natural question: "*How then should we live?*" If all of this is true, and the Word of God explicitly says it is, then what would be, *should be*, our way of life? If it's all going to be lost, then how should we look at the world, our material possessions, and our path through life in general?

I have seen so many folks run off to every prophecy conference they can find and anxiously mark their Bibles, making note of current prophetic events, charting their graphs and scouring their daily newspapers. But does it all actually change the way we live? And does it change it *offensively* or just *defensively*? Do we serve the kingdom pursuits with greater zeal and passion...fully aware of the ever present "game clock?" Or do we hunker down...build a bomb shelter and stock up on can

goods? Or do we just do our best to put it out of mind and hope that it will not happen in our personal lifetime? Just 'kick the can on down the road' and let the next generation worry about it? After all, it's every man for himself right?

Or do we instead "reply" to God's loving patience and seek to live our lives ...every moment that remains, in a concerted effort to glorify God and advance His work on earth? After all, what good is the warning without action...without a righteous and even radical response? The *result* is what counts. For me, it is enough to know that He *is* returning, that He is returning *quickly*, and that I personally have a very limited time to pursue His holiness and service to the kingdom.

Are we *looking* for Him? Many of us, even believers, are factually just 'eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage.' We block it all out. **Our** end as well as **THE** end. After all, the world has just carried on the same way since the beginning of time. Surely it will just continue the same way. I wish I could say that the greater 'Christian' population is doing better in this than the world at large, but truth be told, we really aren't! If we are looking for anything at all, it seems we are waiting more for the Anti-Christ and the spectacular events of the tribulation rather than the actual return of Jesus Christ and His taking us away from here.

The truth is simple. If we are indeed looking for *HIM*, then our lives will show it. The way we live will tell the story and speaks volumes as to what we truly believe. After all, what we believe to be the truth is always manifested in our action. Our lives *prove* our position and our anticipation! The way we serve, the way we share our faith, the way we seek to know *Him* and His Word! The way we spend our money, the choices we make, the priorities of our day to day living.

*Hasten* in verse 12 means to move diligently and passionately toward that coming day. For God a day indeed may be a thousand years, but for us, the time is ticking away, and "the darkness is coming when no man shall work" (John 9:4). There is truly precious little time to get it together.

I wonder if today our hearts are truly looking forward to being with Him in His new creation? It is so easy for this beautiful truth to get lost in the noise and clutter of life. That is certainly Satan's intention. Peter, as well as the Lord Himself, is calling us to a simple life focused upon Him and furthering the Kingdom. A life of purpose and commitment. A life of holiness. A life of looking up and not out. Yet what is the motivation of your living today? Who or what is honestly calling the shots for your tomorrow? Is it school and your degree? Is it your job, your career? Is it your family...kids and spouse, or your drive to get one? That's just idolatry you know. It appears righteous in our 'family first' generation, but it's just a demonic ruse to get you to put Christ further down in priority.

Verse 14 says "...*seeing that ye look for such things.*" Or..."*seeing that you are looking forward to these things.*" So I have to ask...what **are** you looking for? If we are really looking for His coming, we will be diligent and radical in a "Jesus first" lifestyle. And the irony of such a life is that "seeking first the kingdom of God" ***all these things will be added unto you.*** This means literally "to labor and endeavor, to push forward," and He will bless us. Does this describe your life in Christ?

In verse 17, Peter calls us "beloved" for the fourth time in this chapter. It is clear that he speaks out of compassion and love, not correction and rebuke. I hope you hear that same voice in me today. Often we can feel that the writers of the New Testament letters are just beating us up with their relentless exhortations, but let us take note of Peter's heart toward the reader.

Peter is calling us to be on constant guard against the enemy and his subtle teachings, his *twisted truths*. Peter makes it clear that we can indeed be led away into false beliefs and thereby fall. Such a truth is not measured in years of faithfulness. Even those who have walked with Christ for many years are able to stumble unless they are steadfast in their commitment, service, attentiveness, fellowship, and learning. We have seen such in our midst. There can never be a place for spiritual "vacation."

Peter's last words of the letter, his last word to us before a martyr's death, is that we must *grow*! We must *keep* growing in His grace and growing in the knowledge of Christ. So let us end this great letter with that call turned inward to each of us. *Are we growing?* If we are not moving continuously forward, then it is a guarantee that we will quickly be moving back. Peter departed this world giving glory to Jesus Christ. He "finished well." May it also be true for each of us!