

# Jesus is Coming Back

## (2 Peter 3:1-13)

Expository Lessons from the Second Letter of Peter

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### I. Review from Previous Lessons

- a. The tone of this letter is that of a Farewell Address. Peter says he anticipates dying soon and wants to leave the Christians with some final warnings and admonitions.
- b. The primary focus of Peter's message has been warning about false teachers, very corrupt people who will be coming into the church.
- c. He admonishes us to pay close attention to the Scriptures, as to a light shining in a dark place. They were written by holy men of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- d. Peter now closes this letter by talking about the fact that Jesus will return.
  - i. While it may appear to be delayed, it will happen at the right time.
  - ii. We need to be prepared for that.

### II. Jesus Will Return, on the Day of Judgment

- a. Read **2 Peter 3:1-9**.
- b. Peter believes that the Second Coming of Jesus will occur sometime *after Peter is dead*. Therefore, before he dies, he is warning those who will remain of what is to come. Prior to the Second Coming of Jesus:
  - i. Many scoffers will come, doubting that Jesus actually will be returning.
  - ii. These people will be driven by their lusts to abandon living a godly life.
  - iii. They will say, "Everything is continuing just as it has been since the beginning."
    - 1. Sun comes up, goes down.
    - 2. People get married, have children, grow up, work and die; and this cycle seems to repeat endlessly.
  - iv. Peter points to the example of the Flood of Noah as being similar to what it will be like on the Day of Judgment.

1. This is the *third time* in his two letters that Peter has referenced Noah and the Great Flood story.
  - a. In **1 Peter 3:19-21**.
    - i. God waited while the ark was being prepared, being long-suffering with the sins of men before the time was right to bring Judgment.
    - ii. Only a few (eight in all) were saved “through water”, an antitype that foreshadowed Christian baptism, “which now saves us”.
  - b. In **2 Peter 2:4-5**.
    - i. God saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness but brought a flood on the ungodly world.
    - ii. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly while punishing the unrighteous.
  - c. Here, in **2 Peter 3:5-7**.
    - i. The ungodly “willfully forget” the lessons we should have learned from the story of Noah.
    - ii. God can judge the world suddenly and dramatically, delivering the righteous few and destroying all the ungodly.
2. **Question:** Why did Peter make *so many references* to the story of Noah and the Flood?
  - a. Maybe because he was a fisherman who had spent much of his life in boats on the sea?
  - b. More likely (in my opinion): the student became just like his Teacher, Jesus. (**Luke 6:40**)
  - c. Consider how Jesus used this story to prepare people for the Final Judgment. Read **Matthew 24:36-44**.
    - i. Jesus used the Noah story as an example of what it would be like at the end, for us.
    - ii. It will come by surprise, at a time we do not expect.
    - iii. Therefore, we must be prepared for it at all times.

- d. This also reminds me of another teaching of Jesus. Read **Luke 13:22-30**.
  - i. This teaching has some parallels with the story of Noah and the Flood.
  - ii. There was *one door* into the ark (**Genesis 6:16**). God waited until the ark was finished.
    - 1. As a civil engineer, one of the rules we have in design is to never design an enclosed space with only one means of egress. Wherever possible, you always want to have two or more ways to get out of any enclosed space for safety reasons. However, the Lord told Noah to design and build the ark with *just one door*.
    - 2. *Some of all kinds* (of animals) were brought into the ark, twos of some kinds and more (seven) of others.
    - 3. Noah, whom God called “righteous before me in this generation”, entered with his family.
    - 4. After all, who would be saved had entered the ark, the Lord “shut him (Noah) in the ark” (**Genesis 7:16**).
    - 5. Once the door of the ark was shut by the Lord and the rain began to fall, it was too late for anyone else to enter. Even though Noah had preached in their streets as Jesus did (**2 Peter 2:5, Luke 13:26**), those who had heard him missed their opportunity.
- c. Peter teaches that God’s perspective on time is different from ours.
  - i. “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.” (**2 Peter 3:8, NKJV**)
  - ii. **Question:** When Peter says, “don’t forget...”, is he referring to something they already knew that he was just reminding them of? Was he referring to something that Jesus taught? Or was he referring to something from the Old Testament?

1. Read **Psalm 90** (designated **Psalm 89** in the LXX),
  - a. This psalm is unusual in that it is attributed to *Moses*.
  - b. This emphasizes the brevity of this life. The normal lifespan in the U.S. is currently between 70 and 80 years. Even today, reaching the age of 80 is doing better (in terms of living longer) than most.
    - i. We are like the grass of the field that dries up and is withered. (This was written long before the similar statement we find in **Isaiah 40**)
  - c. Moses says that 1,000 years in the sight of God is one day to us, “like yesterday, which passed”.
    - i. Keep in mind that Moses was the author of the **Five Books of the Law**, including **Genesis 1**, which gives the account of creation in seven days.
    - ii. Some early Christian writers saw in the seven-day creation account the idea that the world would come to an end after 6,000 years.
      1. (For more on this topic, see *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, articles on ‘Days of Creation’ and ‘Chronology’.)
    - iii. The span of our lives is very short. God, who is eternal, has a perspective that is much different from ours.
      1. While a delay of 2,000 years may seem like a long time for us (as we await the return of Jesus), keep in mind that to the Lord and in the light of eternity, it is still a very short time.
  - d. God is longsuffering with us.
    - i. “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.” (**2 Peter 3:9**, NKJV)
    - ii. This statement gives us a glimpse into one very important aspect of the character of God. Here we see that the Lord is suffering long, patiently waiting and enduring the sin of man in this world, until everything is ready for the Final Judgment.
      1. Patient endurance is in the character of God.

2. Let us all strive to have an accurate picture of the character of God, in order to have a healthy spiritual life.
  - a. I have found that some people who are living ungodly lives are completely confident that God loves them and that they will be saved on the Last Day, regardless of how they live.
  - b. On the other extreme, I have seen people who are sincerely striving to live godly lives, who are insecure regarding their salvation, wondering deep within if they have done enough and if God is pleased with them. They are tormented with the possibility that they might not be saved on the Last Day.
  - c. I believe that the antidote for both of these unfortunate conditions is to have a healthy, accurate and complete picture of the character of God. The text we are studying here is important in that regard.
- iii. We see God's heart and desire in this passage.
  1. He really does not want *ANYONE* to perish!
  2. While only a few *will be* saved (**Matthew 7:13-14, Luke 13:22-30**, etc.), God *really does* want all to be saved.
    - a. I have encountered some who have sort of a 'Calvinist light' idea that God has certain people he plans to save and others he plans to destroy. They can wonder, from time to time, which group they are in.
    - b. I see God as like the coach who is cheering on all his runners at the marathon, wanting all of them to finish the race successfully.
    - c. God is on our side, always pulling for us to persevere, to repent when we need to, to make it at the end.
    - d. Read **1 Timothy 2:1-4**
      - i. Paul says, "God... desires all men to be saved".
    - e. Jesus taught the same thing in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, in **Luke 15**.
    - f. Read **Ezekiel 18:21-32**.

- i. God's heart *always* has been merciful. He does not want anyone to perish. He does not desire the death of the unrighteous; rather, He wants them to repent and be saved.
  - ii. On the other hand, this passage also includes a warning to the righteous that if they turn away from God at the end of their lives and die in that condition, they will perish.
  - iii. God is like a coach who wants us to run our spiritual race to win. He is urging each of us to finish strong; and wants us to be victorious.
- g. Read **Wisdom of Solomon 1:12-16** and **2:23-24**.
  - i. God created life, loves us, and wants us to live with Him in eternity.
  - ii. God did not create death! It was Satan who brought sin and death into the world.
- iv. Let us see God's delay as an indication of his patience and longsuffering, and His desire to save as many as possible. He wants to get the ark filled before He closes the door and brings the Day of Judgment.
  - 1. Let us have a balanced and full view of the character of God.
    - a. Yes, He is a consuming fire, and we need to fear Him.
    - b. However, He also is a loving and merciful God who does not want anyone to perish.

### III. What It Will Be Like on the Last Day

- a. Read **2 Peter 3:10-13**.
- b. There would be *two* advents (= comings) of the Christ.
  - i. First one: to suffer and die (as prophesied in the account of the Passover Lamb, **Isaiah 53**, **Psalms 22**, etc.)
  - ii. Second one: to judge and reign, coming on the clouds.
    - 1. Read **Daniel 7:13-14** and **Revelation 1:7**.
  - iii. Early Christian writers discuss the concept of there being two advents of Christ. This confused the Jews, who saw the Christ as a king who

would rule over an eternal kingdom. They missed the idea that there would be *two* comings of Christ.

1. For more on this, see *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, articles on 'Jesus Christ - Two Advents of Christ', and 'Second Coming of Christ'.

c. Other passages that speak of the Second Coming.

i. Read **Matthew 24:23-31**.

1. When Jesus comes the second time, He will be seen by all.
2. He will appear in heaven (in the sky), seen by all.
3. Like lightning, He will be seen everywhere, "coming from the east and flashing to the west ...".
  - a. Many early Christians believed, based on this statement of Jesus, that He would be coming from the east upon His return.
  - b. This was the basis for the ancient Christian custom of praying while *facing to the east*: awaiting the return of Jesus, which could happen at any time.
  - c. Likewise, Christian churches were built typically facing toward the east.

ii. Read **Acts 1:9-11**.

1. Jesus ascended to heaven, passing behind a cloud.
2. The angels said He would return in the same manner.

iii. Read **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

1. The return of Jesus will be accompanied by a shout, the voice of an archangel and the sound of a trumpet.
2. The dead will be raised at that time. After the dead are raised, then those who "are alive and remain shall be caught up together with [the dead] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air".

iv. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:3-10**.

- d. The Second Coming of Jesus and the associated Day of Judgment is foreshadowed by several Old Testament stories.

- i. The Flood of Noah (**Genesis 6-8**)
  1. Judgment on the whole world comes by surprise.
  2. A righteous few are saved through the water.
  3. Everyone else is destroyed.
- ii. The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 19**)
  1. Righteous few saved, with the help of angels.
  2. All the wicked destroyed.
  3. Happens suddenly by surprise.
  4. Some thought it was a joke, did not take warnings seriously.
  5. Destruction by fire.
- iii. The Passover (**Exodus 12-13**)
  1. Only those protected by the blood of the slain Passover Lamb are saved from death.
  2. Death comes to all the other households.
- iv. The Destruction of Jericho (**Joshua chapters 2 & 6**)
  1. Read **Joshua 6:1-23**.
    - a. Recall that Joshua was originally known as “Hoshea, son of Nun”. In **Numbers 13:16** his name was changed to Joshua (= Jesus in Greek, as seen in the LXX and in the Greek of **Hebrews 4:8**).
      - i. In an interlinear Greek New Testament, you can see that the ‘New Testament Jesus’ is referred to by the same name (in **Hebrews 4:14**) as the ‘Old Testament Jesus’ is, in the same discussion (in **Hebrews 4:8**).
      - ii. Joshua (the Old Testament ‘Jesus’) had visited Canaan once earlier, during the 40-day exploratory mission of **Numbers 13**. This is his second trip to Canaan, a trip of conquest that also is ‘the Second Coming of Jesus (Joshua)’.
    - b. Note all of the *sevens* associated with the end of Jericho. Seven is the number associated with completion. We



see this introduced in the **Genesis 1** account where creation of the physical universe is *completed* in *seven* days.

- i. *Seven* priests,
- ii. Holding *seven* trumpets,
- iii. Marching around the city for *seven* days
- iv. On the seventh day, they march around *seven* times,
- v. Then they shout and blow the trumpets, and the walls of the city collapse.
  1. Note the shout and trumpet also will accompany the return of Jesus in His Second Coming (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**).
- c. All the wicked people of the city are destroyed.
- d. Only those protected by the *scarlet* cord (which early Christian writers saw as foreshadowing the blood of Christ, similar to the blood of the lamb in the Passover story) are saved, even a Gentile former prostitute and her family.
- e. The destruction is by fire (only the metals remain).
2. Let us imitate Rahab. Faithful, fearing God rather than the king, following godly direction, and remaining under the protection offered by the blood of Christ.
- e. Consider what Peter said, as well as these Old Testament stories, and be prepared for Final Judgment!