

Ministry of Grace Church

2 Peter 3:1-7 - Speaker Notes



Background

Here's a brief overview of this 3rd chapter of Peter's second letter to the churches in the Roman province of Asia. Both letters were sent to remind these Christians of things previously revealed to them in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. He reminds them, and us, that in the last days there will be mockers denying good doctrinal teaching because there is no evidence of the truth of these teachings that they can see. The reason they can't see the evidence is because they don't want to see it. Peter reminds us that in the past there was a judgment by a flood, but these mockers don't want to believe in the flood, so they don't. He also says that there is a future judgment coming, a judgment by fire, which the mockers also don't believe.

Peter points out that God is not bound by time like we are (we'll get more into this next time). His reason for what we perceive as delay in the coming judgment is so that all will have sufficient chance to repent and be saved. We are told in this letter that the Day of Judgment will come "[as a thief in the night](#)." In other words, it will come without warning when people are least expecting it. In the final judgment of this earth, all physical things will melt with great heat (nuclear fission) as all the elements are "let loose."

In light of these facts, how should we spend our lives? Based on Jesus's promise of a new heavens and a new earth, we ought to be living our lives here for Him and not for ourselves. Therefore, be diligent, be spotless, and be ready for His return when He will reward His faithful ones.

Peter also refers to the teaching of the Apostle Paul who taught these same truths and he cautions us that since we know these things beforehand, we should not be led astray by the lawless ones. Instead, we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom is the glory and the power until eternity. That's an overview of the chapter. Now, let's get into the details.

2 Peter 3:1-2

This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles, Let's start out by looking at the word translated "sincere" (translated "pure" in some translations) It is the Greek word *eilikrinēs*, which is made up of *eile*, meaning "the shining or splendor of the sun" and *krinō*, meaning "to judge, discern, or examine." So, as explained in The Complete Word Study Dictionary, *eilikrinēs* means "Sincere, pure, unsullied, free from spot or blemish to such a degree as to bear examination in the full splendor of the sun."

One of the reasons that I like the translation "sincere," rather than "pure," is that this English word is derived from the Latin "*sine cera*," which literally means "without wax." According to oral history, dishonest sculptors in Greece and Rome would cover flaws in their work by using wax. If the sculpture was chipped, cracked or damaged the dishonest sculptors would melt wax into the marble dust, using it to conceal the flaw or imperfection. Therefore, when an honest sculptor presented their work to the patron, they would make the statement that the sculpture was "Sine Cera" or "Without Wax." The way to test the work was to view it in direct sunlight where the wax would be very apparent. Now – Peter, in this letter, says that it was the people's minds that were sincere. The word **mind** is translated from *dianoia*, which is made up of *dia*, which means "through" and a form of *noeō* meaning "the mind" Thus, *dianoia* refers to the faculty, or organ, by which we thoroughly think through something.

So, Peter starts off this third section of his letter with an explanation of why he is writing. He says this is the second letter that he has written to these people and that the reason for writing both letters is so that these letters might be, as he said, "reminders to stimulate you to sincere, or wholesome, thinking."

In other words, he is reminding these people that they have thoroughly thought about the previous truths taught to them by him and others. They have taken the words of Scripture and have given them careful examination under the most illuminating conditions. They have not just accepted teachings on face value, especially those teachings of the Old Testament and of Christ himself. They have thoroughly examined them and thought about them extensively.

If you recall, in the last chapter we said that the false teachers had "full knowledge" of the way of righteousness, but they turned away from it. So how is that different from these people who Peter says have thoroughly examined the words of scripture? The false teachers possessed a "full knowledge" of salvation. However, they tried to intellectualize their way into Christianity instead of believing their way in. The act of salvation is not an act of our intellect; it is an act of our will. It means a submission of our will to His, first of all in accepting the fact that we are sinners who need salvation, then in accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as complete payment for our sins. To understand it intellectually and to believe it are two distinctly different things. What Peter is talking about here is the thorough investigation of the teachings of the prophets and apostles, **after salvation has taken place.**

Peter stated that he has written this second letter in order to stir up the memories of those to whom he is writing. He wants them to remember things that they have thoroughly investigated and have learned but which they are likely to forget if they are not occasionally reminded of them. This is one of the reasons that it is important for us to be reading and studying our Bibles day after day,

going over things we have learned previously to remind us of what God is trying to teach us. He now gets a little more specific.

He wants his readers to remember “the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets.” Clearly, he is referring to the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament (which to his first century readers was the only testament). Peter is not asking Christians to throw out the Jewish Scriptures, as some churches teach; rather, he is encouraging us to continue to read and study the Jewish Scriptures as well as “the command given by our Lord and Savior.”

You see, Jesus Christ brought in a new dispensation with new revelation about the person and work of God and His desire for a personal relationship through faith. Peter is tying that in with all the previous revelation about God contained in what we now call the Old Testament.

We can learn a lot about how God wants us to relate to Him by studying the lives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob along with other spiritual giants of the Old Testament like Noah, Moses, Elijah and David. It’s not just a book of Jewish history, it’s filled with examples of faith and obedience that we New Testament believers can learn from and grow from. For instance, we are taught about the basics of salvation by grace through faith in Genesis chapter 15.

After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.” And Abram said, “O Lord Yahweh, what will You give me, as I go on being childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Since You have given no seed to me, behold, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, “This one will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” And He brought him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your seed be.” Then he believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6)

Furthermore, the Old Testament contains numerous prophecies about the birth of Christ, the life of Christ, the death of Christ, and the return of Christ in His triumphal glory. Without the Old Testament, we cannot have a thorough understanding of God and His plan for mankind.

2 Peter 3:3-4

knowing this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

The word translated “first of all” is *proton*, an adverb that denotes “preeminence in importance or location.” In this case Peter is not saying that this is the first in a series of things to know, rather he is saying that this is the most important thing to know. The most important thing he wants his readers to remember is “... in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts.” These mockers will be constantly under the servitude of their own physical desires according to Peter. Instead of living a victorious life by the power of the Spirit of God, these false teachers live their lives controlled by their overpowering desires (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life). Jude, in his short letter, says something very similar:

But you, beloved, must remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” (Jude 1:17-18)

Today there are many people in the world who mock Christianity and who portray Christians as mindless buffoons sitting in church pews droning on, “Bringing in the sheaves, bringing in the sheaves ...” These same people who make a mockery of what we hold dear and sacred are controlled by their own lusts. In fact, they are so enslaved to them that they can’t possibly understand how anyone in their right mind could give up control of his or her life to God, -- because they don’t know God. In fact, they don’t even believe He is real.

Peter now tells us what the subject of their mockery is. They scoff at the notion that Christ is coming back. In effect, they’re saying,

“Look, since the apostles started preaching, you have been saying that Jesus is coming back soon. The prophets have predicted a conquering Messiah for thousands of years. Nonetheless, things just continue on as they always have.”

And today it’s even worse! They say:

“Look, even the apostles believed that Christ was coming back in their lifetime, and they have been dead for thousands of years. You religious fanatics are a bunch of radicals with antiquated ideas. Come on, join the 21st century and get out of the dark ages!”

You may not consider yourself to be a religious fanatic, but I’m sure that you catch my drift. The more loudly we proclaim the message of a lifestyle committed to the precepts taught in the Bible, the louder the opposition will proclaim us to be crazy. The more we proclaim His soon return, the more they will ridicule us. And they will do all they can to separate us from the rest of society because they think that we are bad for them.

The world system today rejects the notion of a living God who is active in the affairs of mankind. Instead, their god is uniformitarianism, the belief that all existing natural processes we can observe today have been at work in the same manner ever since the beginning, which they believe was the “Big Bang.” Everything is explained in terms of these existing processes and evolution. Most people today believe these ideas so strongly that they refuse to believe even obvious evidence that points to a catastrophic world-wide flood.

Because of their faith in evolution and in uniformitarianism, they are blind to the truth of the Gospel and all the Biblical references to the soon coming of our Lord in judgment. There are many references to His return in the New Testament including [John 14:1-3](#); [Acts 1:11](#); [1Corinthians 15:23](#); [2Corinthians 1:14](#); [Philippians 1:6](#); [1Thessalonians 3:13](#); [1Thessalonians 4:14-18](#); [2Thessalonians 1:10](#); [2Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1Timothy 6:14](#); [2Timothy 4:8](#); [Titus 2:13](#); [Hebrews 9:28](#); and [James 5:7](#).

2 Peter 3:5-7

For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being deluged with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

“Maintain” is translated from a form of *thelō*, which means “to wish or to will.” But it implies more than simple desire because it carries an intention with it. Hence, it is often translated as “to determine.”

“Destroyed” is translated from *apollumi*. This is made up of *apo*, meaning “off” or “away” but used here as an intensifier, and a form of *olethros*, meaning “ruin” or “destruction.” *Apollumi* refers to “complete ruin” or “absolute destruction.” The word is expressed here in the middle voice indicating action done by the subject (the world) to itself. Therefore, the end of this verse could be translated, “the world of that time destroyed itself being inundated with water.

This verse is a very difficult one to translate accurately as evidenced by the wide variety of translations that exist. A literal translation of the beginning of this verse could be, “for determining to be unaware of ...”

The thing that they are intentionally unaware of is explained in the following phrase: “that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water.” This, too, is a difficult phrase to translate, but it appears to mean that the heavens were created a long time ago by the word of God, the earth was once formed by the word of God out of water, and the earth currently exists having come through water.

The first of these is pretty easy to understand. “By the word of God the heavens existed long ago;” that is, they existed, or came into being, a long time ago, and the instrument which brought the heavens into being was the Word of God. The next phrase, “and the earth was formed out of water and by water,” is literally written “and land out of water and through water.” This is explained in the second verse of Genesis, “And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” In this verse from Genesis, the word translated “the deep” can be referring to “surging waves of water.” We can clearly see from **Genesis 1:2** that the earth was covered with water, and land was formed from the midst of it. And the phrase “through water” is a reference to the flood of Noah’s time which transformed the face of the earth.

What this is telling us is that these mockers have made a conscious decision not to believe reality because they don’t want to admit that God exists. They cannot understand the reality of God’s creation because they willingly ignore the truth. As a result, they have to make up theories that explain all that exists around us apart from a creator God.

This verse validates what we said previously regarding the meaning of the phrase, “and the earth was formed out of water and by water.” Not only did the word of God form the earth from the midst of water, but the word of God also condemned the antediluvian inhabitants of the world with a worldwide flood, saving only Noah and his family.

The mockers that Peter is talking about (like the humanists of today) claimed that things had always been just as they are now. Therefore, there could not have been a sudden cataclysmic whole earth flood because there isn’t enough water in the world today to cover all the existing mountains. They refuse to accept the fact that the high mountains of today could have been formed in the five or six thousand years since the flood because that would violate uniformitarianism.

Incidentally, it is these same scientists who claim that we have evolved from apes, even though in recorded history there is no observable example of any species evolving into another species – none, zip, zero, nada! Not to mention that evolution even violates their own precious second law of thermodynamics which states that everything moves from a state of order to a state of disorder, from a higher energy level to a lower energy level. But the secular, God denying scientists of today conveniently ignore these facts.

There are many today who are scoffing at Christians, especially at those of us who hold a literal interpretation of the Bible. But we shouldn't be surprised by this because the "world has always been that way" (tongue in cheek).

So What?

There are many foundational truths contained in the Old Testament that are of vital importance to our understanding of God. Christians need to have a firm grasp of God's teaching in both the Old and New Testaments. If you haven't already done so, commit today to reading through the entire Bible. Also, commit to studying the lives of Abraham, Moses, and David. The same God who loved them and blessed them for their faithfulness also loves you. He hasn't changed!

But – I also want you to see the two underlying foundational truths that are revealed in today's passage. The first is that we all need to be continually reminded of Biblical truths. Christians need to allow God to speak to them from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The other foundational truth that we see here is something that we Christians take for granted. However, it is something that we need to be constantly reminded of, the world system today chooses to ignore God. In fact, they do everything they can to convince themselves that God does not exist. Some day in the not to distant future, they will have to stand before the God who they believe doesn't exist and they will have to give account of themselves.

Our responsibility in the face of these mockers is to live lives worthy of the Name by which we are called. We may not silence them while they are on this earth, but at the Great White Throne when they stand before the one to whom we are submitted today, they will submit... and be committed... to the lake of fire. They will be eternally separated from the One that they are now mocking, and on that day, they will not think it so funny.

So... live your witness before **all** the world and don't be a chameleon even though some may mock you! Instead, let us boldly proclaim the word of salvation by grace through faith unto all we meet and let us proclaim His soon return! Sure, we will be ridiculed and attacked; so was our Savior! He died to save even those who attacked Him; the least we can do is to proclaim His message because He is alive, and He **is** coming back soon!

Just because all of our public schools teach that all matter spontaneously came into being at the Big Bang doesn't make it so. Just because they teach that life spontaneously came into being and evolved into all life-forms we see today, without God, that doesn't make it so. People don't have to believe these lies, but they choose to because they reject God. Do you choose to believe the Word of God or humanistic lies

Let us not be dissuaded by their big words and well orchestrated arguments. Let us, instead, hold fast to the Word of God. Let us not waiver. Let us carry the banner, that is, the message of salvation by grace through faith in the crucified and risen Christ, even in the face of mockers!

Let's pray.