

Dear Friends,

Throughout Scripture, especially in the New Testament, we seldom read focused teaching regarding the Second Coming that doesn't include equally focused admonitions for the Lord's people to live a "Resurrection ethic" lifestyle of faith, fruitful faith, as Peter defined it in 2 Peter 1:5-9. Even as Peter refutes contemporary "scoffers" in our study verses, he turns the lesson to powerful reminders of the importance of a godly life of faith, Biblical faith and Biblical lifestyle. He will bracket his teaching of the Second Coming with this same admonition. (2 Peter 3:11-14 KJV) If we truly believe in the Lord's certain return and our literal bodily resurrection, we must embrace and practice this "Resurrection ethic" lifestyle that strives to sanctify and use our whole life, our physical body included, (1 Corinthians 6:14-20 KJV) The Second Coming and our literal bodily resurrection to glory and to live with Him for eternity, according to Scripture, is the most powerful incentive to urge us to godly, Biblical-faith-living today.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

Third Movement in Peter's Spiritual Symphony: The Faithful Promise of His Coming

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye 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 Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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 the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:1-9 KJV 1900)

We now come to the third movement in Peter's inspired "Symphony" of truth, an example of false teachers and their persuasive errors, along with the obvious truth of the Second Coming. God's purpose cannot be thwarted or defeated by scoffers or false teachers.

Scripture regularly reminds believers that we live in a hostile-to-our-faith world. Scripture always teaches us that the Lord is faithful to His promises, especially the chief promise of His victorious return to raise the dead, glorify His people, judge the wicked, and begin eternity for His people, "...**and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**" (1 Thessalonians 4:17b KJV) What happens to your faith if you lose that hope? Defeat is certain. I suggest that Peter begins this chapter, primarily devoted to a strong

reminder and encouragement to his readers of the Lord's return, with an example of one class of false teachers. We steel our faith against any false teacher by keeping the words of Scripture fresh in our minds. As Peter's reference to scoffers links with his teaching in the second chapter, his admonition to be "mindful" of the words of Scripture nudges us to reflect on the first chapter, those writings which we have because "...**holy men of God spake (In their writings) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**" (2 Peter 1:21b KJV) The longer I live the more I realize the invaluable treasure we have in Scripture, and the more I fear that too many of the Lord's people ignore or take those writings lightly. The sad result, precisely as Peter wrote in this letter, appears in the confusion and self-promotion which false teachers practice "...**after their own lusts,**" their ego. When professing believers walk away from regularly refreshing and enlarging their knowledge of godliness in the Scriptures, they become defenseless against the onslaught of false teachers, "scoffers."

Peter describes these people as "**scoffers, walking after their own lusts.**" Though they may scoff at any Biblical truth, in Peter's example, they belittle your belief in the Lord's final return and resurrection of the dead. In Peter's example, they attempt to be intellectual by offering what they think is concrete evidence that refutes the faith.

...**for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.** Since humans existed, nothing has ever changed, or so they reason. People are born, people die, for how many centuries? And there is no Second Coming and no resurrection. Scoff, scoff. As intellectual as they may sound, Peter reminds us that they ignore two historical facts, facts that refute their claim.

1. **For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.** This physical world is not eternal. It had a beginning. God created it and started it on its path.
2. **Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.** The same God who created this universe intervened some 1500 years later and destroyed a wicked civilization with a flood. No, everything has not continued since the beginning in a uniform manner. God created it and ordered its amazing arrangement to declare His glory. And when many of His own people, "**sons of God,**" (Genesis 6:1-3 KV) compromised their faith and fell into wickedness with the world around them, God sent His judgment of water to destroy that wicked world.

Further, ...**the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.** Peter started this chapter with the admonition to keep in fresh remembrance the words of God's Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, Scripture. The God who created this world shall, in His time and way, end it. A cute memory comes to mind. A dear, dear man in our church grew up in a large family of boys. Their

poor mother had to be strong. Once when he was being testy with her, his mother looked him squarely in the face and growled, "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out of it." He didn't challenge her. Peter reminds us, as he reminded the scoffers. God created this world, He has visited His judgment on it in ways that disrupted its claimed uniformity, and He shall end it.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Peter reminds us that God created time for His creation and creatures in it. He is not subject to it. One day or a thousand years, or fifty thousand years, it makes no difference to Him.

What is Peter's point with this unusual idea of God's timelessness? He directly answers and refutes the false claim of the scoffers who used the long time lapse (Measured by their godless measure, "...since the fathers fell asleep." As long as humanity has existed). The scoffers challenged Christian faith by pointing to growing cemeteries and a uniform world that has never changed, so why think it will change or end by resurrection? They indirectly imagined that God, if they even believed He exists, is as much subject to time as themselves. In their minds, if there is a God, and if He intended to insert Himself into His creation by appearing and raising the dead, surely, He would have done so by now, after so long a time.

Scripture often uses the number one thousand to represent an enormous number, perhaps so large as to be unmeasured and unmeasurable. One example.

**For every beast of the forest is mine,
and the cattle upon a thousand hills.** (Psalm 50:10 KJV)

By David's reference to God's owning "the cattle upon a thousand hills," are we to think that He does not own the cattle on two thousand hills? No, the point is obvious. God created this world, so He owns it. It is His. He has graciously given us a small portion of it as stewards of His property. David made that point in the context of this verse.

**If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:
for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.** (Psalm 50:12 KJV)

Likewise, Peter's reference to a thousand years should serve as a reminder that, regardless of the delay, the lapse of time from when Peter wrote this letter (Or from now) till the Lord returns, He made a faithful promise in His holy Words in His Book to His people that He shall return, He shall raise the dead, and He shall judge the wicked. He could come before sunset today, or He could come a thousand years from now, but He promised in His word that He shall come, and He is always faithful to His promises. The scoffers mocked Christians for believing in the Second Coming and a literal resurrection of the body based on their claim of a uniform history. If things have never changed, why think they shall change? But Peter refutes their claim by recalling both creation and the flood. He also used these truths to begin building a yet stronger affirmation of the Lord's presence and purpose in this world.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. I have long heard—and preached—that this verse refers to the regeneration or new birth of all the elect, that the Lord will not return till every chosen vessel of His mercy (Romans 9:23 KJV) has been born again into His spiritual family. While this is an indisputable truth of Scripture, the language of the last clause in the verse is not consistent with this view. With a “Loose grip,” I offer my present thoughts concerning this verse.

Before teaching one of Scripture's most memorable and encouraging lessons on the Second Coming, Peter started the chapter with a refutation of what was likely a troublesome idea proposed by “scoffers,” false teachers of the day. He rejected their idea of a uniform world history with two accepted-by-God-believers truths, 1) creation (Matter is not eternal) and 2) the flood. This door of error cannot be finally and fully closed in the minds of believers until Peter takes his lesson one more pivotal step. If there is a God (And both Old and New Testament worshippers believe in Him), if God created this material universe (And both Old and New Testament believers in God agree), and if God from the beginning established a moral government over His world (Both Old and New Testament believers affirm this truth), God's involvement in the lives of His people is not limited to these two epochal events. If God revealed and commanded His moral code onto humanity from the beginning, as Judge of His moral universe, He is regularly involved in His world. Scoffers and false teachers are not at liberty to believe and do as they wish without facing His judgment. Not only does this truth refute the scoffers, but it also teaches us. We may observe the chaos of false teachers and wonder why the Lord doesn't immediately step into the situation and take them out. Learn Peter's lesson regarding the scoffers. If the Lord teaches us in Scripture that He shall judge wickedness, including false teachers and scoffers, rest in His promise. He may on occasion judge quickly, but He may also delay His judgment, despite our hoping for immediate judgment. Rest in His promise. He knows every sin and every sinner, including false teachers and scoffers. And He shall judge them righteously in His time and way.

How does this truth impact you and me? As believers in God who strive to live according to His “Will,” how should we react to the appearance of sin, false teachers, and scoffers? When these things impact our faith and our church, we have Biblical instruction to stop the mouth of evil doers. Further, when we observe a brother or sister causing disruption or teaching error, we are to admonish them once or twice (Titus 3:9-10 KJV). If they refuse to repent, we are to mark and avoid them (Romans 16:17-18

KJV). At that point, our efforts prove that the person in error will not repent because of our effort. Pray for them, but let them go and trust the Lord, the moral and spiritual Governor of our world to judge and deal with them. Peter's lesson reminds us. He is not slack or oblivious to sin or error in His world, far more so in His "House." His will never—ever—condones, ignores, or causes such confusion. (1 Corinthians 14:33 KJV) His will for His people, His moral and spiritual will has ever been and remains that we should abstain from sin and devote our whole life to Him and His way and Word. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 KJV) By the Lord's will "...**that all should come to repentance,**" Peter refuted the scoffers and false teachers who thought themselves free to ignore or wrest God's word in Scripture to their own ideas. He reminded his faithful readers that, despite the delays in judgment, temporal or final and eternal, we should not be discouraged from faithfully pursuing Him and His way exclusively revealed in Scripture and affirmed by faithful preachers of the gospel in His "**Pillar and ground of the truth,**" His church. His will has not changed. He has no "Secret" will that contradicts His revealed-in-Scripture will.

With this last point, Peter fully refuted the scoffers' error. The God who created the world and sent judgment in the flood knows every person and every sin. He is ever present, not absent and aloof. He created a moral universe, and He shall judge those who ignore or scoff at His supreme rule and judgment.

And for the believer in Jesus, whether in the pulpit or in the pew, His "will" remains as it has ever been. He calls all His children to repentance. His will is never—ever—that we not "...**come to repentance.**" When we sin, we may imitate the scoffers and deny our sin, pretend God doesn't know, and rationalize our refusal to repent. However, the Lord knows our foolish and prideful attitude, and He shall judge and send chastening. What do we choose? The certain disapproval and chastening judgment of the Lord? Or the hopeful repentance which He commands? He promises in His word, Scripture, that His forgiveness is full and healing. Repentance is His will for us. When we confront our sins and repent, we are acting according to His "...**willing...that all** ("usward," His born-again children) **should come to repentance.**" Thereby we most glorify Our God and Savior and manifest our "...**lively hope**" in His glorious resurrection. (1 Peter 1:3 KJV)

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church

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Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday, 10:30 A. M.

Joseph Holder, Pastor

