

2 Peter 3:1-9

“God’s Not Slack; He’s Sovereign”

2nd Peter has been such a rich and powerful epistle. Peter has shared so much insight into practical Christian living, the fruitful and forward progression of faith, the facts concerning the gospel, his personal eye witness account of the glory of Christ and the more sure word of prophecy. He’s warned us to beware of deceitful teachers and destructive doctrine exhorting us as unto our responsibility to know God’s word so as to discern the legit from the lie.

But before he “puts his pen down” Peter has one more primary word of encouragement for us and that is this; don’t grow weary in waiting for the Lord’s return because Christ is coming back and we want to be found by Him in holiness, prepared for His coming for us. There is such danger in growing “comfortable” as a Christian. That is, feeling as though we’ve got time before Jesus returns, it has a tendency to promote an attitude of complacency and compromise; and Jesus was careful to warn us accordingly. He said, *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* Matt 24:45-51 You see, the mentality that there was time to spare, that the Master wouldn’t be back any time soon, that His coming again was delayed promoted an attitude of complacency and compromise. Consequently the Masters return came upon him and he was unprepared. The point here in Peter’s passage is this; the Lord is not slow, He’s sovereign. He’s not bound by our sense of time, or what we consider to be slow, He’s sovereign and His will, will be done His way and in His time which is always right on time. Meanwhile we’re to wait patiently and serve Him whole heartedly that we might be found “so doing” when He comes.

The return of Christ is a central theme found throughout the scriptures. Over 1800 times (1845 was the figure I read) the bible mentions the 2nd coming of the Messiah. 318 times in the NT which means that approximately 1 in every 30 Vs there is a reference to the 2nd coming and/or the end of the age. 7 out of every 10 Ch’s in the NT deal with the issue in some way; over and over again it’s brought to our attention throughout the pages of the scripture, why? Because God wants us to lead our lives like we could see Christ, today! Would to God that He would keep it constantly on the forefront of our minds because I’ll guarantee you we’d lead our lives differently if that were a cognizant reality...

Ch 3 of 2nd Peter divides into 2 basic sections, the 1st 9 Vs “The *delay* of the Lord” Vs 10-18 “The *day* of the Lord.”

Vs1-2

It has not been uncommon at all for Peter to share *with us* and stress the importance *to us* of being *reminded* of certain principles and practicalities of the word of God. Over and over again we’ve read of his reminders, that though we *know* these things he’s still going to remind us *of* these things again and again.

Why? Because he likes to waste our time telling us things we already know? No, but because as believers it’s critical that we keep these things right in front of us, always influencing us that we not grow weary in doing well and that we be prepared to see the Lord face to face should He come *for us* or call us to meet *with Him* should He take us home. The Lord doesn’t want us to be “derailed” by the circumstances that surround us.

So he says here, “I’m writing these things so as to *stir you up*.” The word stir speaks of an *arousing*, you might say it’s a “wake up call” it means to *call attention to* or *render active*. Like stirring up coals in a fire so that they *ignite* and begin to burn again. The Holy Spirit wants to *stir you up* that you might be on fire for Jesus Christ once again, living for Him *not* in a *routine* kind of a way, but a *radical* kind of a way. It’s a common thread that’s woven throughout the tapestry of scripture; warnings and exhortations against falling asleep spiritually. Now, when something is dealt with in multiple places, repeated in various ways throughout the Word the indication is that it can be a problem. Paul, writing of the 2nd coming of the Lord to the Romans said, “*And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*” Rom 13:11-12 In like manner here Peter writing of the coming again of Christ says, “Hey guys, wake up! Now’s not the time to be sleeping spiritually.”

Now, he mentions a couple things here that I want to draw your attention to; he mentions both the *agent* that he wants to use to stimulate your mind and your spiritual alertness, and its *effect*. The *agent* and the *effect*; the agent? Vs 2, “The words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandments of the apostles” (btw notice that Peter somehow sensed that what he was writing and what the other apostles were writing was not their opinion or a general rule of thumb for you and I to consider). Peter knew that when he wrote, when Paul wrote, when Matthew wrote it was the inspired word of God equivalent to the scriptures given by the holy prophets. Do you remember when Jesus said to His disciples, “*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*” John 16:12-13

Many people wonder what those things were that Jesus wanted to tell them but didn't. Well, wonder no more; it's called the NT; the epistles that the NT writers gave to us were the inspired word of God given by the Holy Spirit of God through Christ to you and me. Peter realized that and he states that right here.

You also might note that Peter saw the importance of taking in the "whole counsel" of the word of God, both that which was *spoken before* (aka the O.T.) and the commandment of *us the apostles* (aka the N.T.).

Ok, the agent and the effect; the agent is the word of God (the words spoken by the prophets and the apostles). The effect is that of *purifying* your mind, he wants to stir up your pure minds by means of the word of God. Now specifically you should know that Peter is referencing a mind that free from the defiling work/words of the deceitful teachers that he's been speaking of in Ch 2. Your mind is pure, that is, it's sincere toward Christ. But with regard to an application God's word will have a purifying effect on your mind.

When I was reading over this I thought of the power of oxi-clean; remember that stuff? "Billy Mayes here with the power of oxi-clean!" He would take that tank of water, presumably filled with dye or some sort of coloring, dump the oxi-clean in it, *stir it up* and the pollution seemed to vanish, what was left was like pure water. That's the word of God in your heart, in your mind, as it gets poured in and stirred up it cleans out the contaminates, it purifies the pollution. If you're anything like me (and I know you are because you're human) than you can use all the purifying you can get because your mind has plenty of pollution in it. Get God's word in your heart, meditate upon the word in your mind, be mindful of the word of God, it has a purifying effect upon you.

Peter wanted to wake us up to the return of Jesus Christ it's easy for us to get "accustomed" to the word, and the teaching of it. But rather than lull us to sleep it should stir us to an alertness, it should ignite us and set us fresh on fire for Christ that we lead our lives in a manner that eagerly awaits His return.

Now; there's something that Peter wanted to remind us of and encourage us with regarding the 2nd coming of Christ; something that he felt like we should know. What's that?
Notice

Vs3-4

“Hey man, my grandma’s grandma believed that stuff, it didn’t happen then, it won’t happen now. People have hung their hopes on that absurd notion for 2,000 yrs; it never *has* happened, it never *will* happen.” We’ve all ran into that guy, that gal; Peter says here that it shouldn’t surprise you. As a matter of fact he says that in reality it should undergird your position because they’re fulfilling prophecy in saying it. Peter says that before Christ comes again, scoffers (mockers) will come and ridicule the idea; it’s simply a sign that we’re living in the last days and that the day of His return is getting closer and closer.

What are some of the biblical fingerprints that we’re living in the last days? 1st and foremost the fact that Jesus came the 1st time signals that the days to which we’ve been called are the “last days.” The writer of Hebrews said, “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,*” Heb 1:1-2 So the 1st coming of Christ signaled to humanity that God was sending out His last rodeo roundup, that these are the last days in which we live. The final “segment” of human history launched at the 1st coming of Christ. 2^{ndly} Jesus spoke of false Christ’s on the upsurge, Peter mentioned false teachers on the rise, I think we would all agree that there’s no shortage of options out there to be led astray by. From obvious cults and “isms” of religion to subtle uprisings like the emerging church with its intertwining of eastern mysticism.

Paul gave us an entire laundry list of things that would be symptomatic of the last days. He said, “*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*” 2 Tim 3:1-4 Sounds like an excerpt out “pop culture in America” doesn’t it?

In Matt 24 Jesus spoke of an increase of wars, of famines, plagues, sporadic natural disasters, earthquakes.

He said that there would be a lawlessness that would abound because of which the love of many would grow cold and that there would be a callused-ness in man that would be significantly more prevalent than in generations previously. The bible speaks of perversity increasing, “*...as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*” Matt 24:37 We read of the days of Noah in Genesis Ch 6 where it says, “*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” Gen 6:5

Here Peter gives us another sign that indicates we're in the last days; scoffers on the scene walking according to their own lusts (again there's a perversity there). Mockers who will make you out to be a joke, a religious nut who doesn't live in reality, you're out there in never, never land somewhere and need to get back to planet earth. One of the things they'll do to try and make you look stupid and consider abandoning the faith is point out to you that people have believed what you believe for a long time; over 2,000yrs... "Christ hasn't come back yet, God hasn't dropped the hammer of judgment yet, how much time does He need? Why don't you just face the fact that you believe in a fairy tale; there is no God? Jesus isn't coming back, that stuff is for people who can't cope with reality; or those who don't have much intellect obviously." You see they try and pass it off as an intellectual problem; the Holy Spirit through Peter uncovers their smoke screen and points it out in reality as a moral problem. "Walking according to their own lusts."

You see they're looking to get the attention off themselves and somehow justify sin in their own lives by making you look like a loon, they're comforting themselves with a sense of false security. If they can convince themselves there's no God, or that even if there is He doesn't interfere with the affairs of man then they can do what they want and not be accountable for their actions and the intent of their heart. But the fact is that God has created us in His image and we will stand accountable before Him for who we are and what we've done with Jesus Christ Have we accepted Him, or have we rejected Him? No amount of intellectual mumbo jumbo will eradicate that fact.

Vs5-6

Peter points out that their rationalization is off base, that they're employing faulty logic. This idea of all things being as they were and that's the way they'll be is known as "uniformitarianism" it's a big \$3 word. There never *has been* supernatural intervention historically, and there never *will be* supernatural intervention be it presently nor futuristically. Peter blows buckshot through that premise, how's that? #1 Creation itself testifies to the fact that God has intervened historically.

God spoke and there was radical intervention concerning "world history." By His word the heavens were of old, the earth standing out of water and in the water. "God said...and there was." Yet people willfully forget this stuff, that is, they purpose to put it out of their mind; but listen *ignorance* is not *innocence*. Forcing yourself to forget something, putting it out of your mind does not subtract it from reality. You can choose to believe it or choose to not believe it, it won't change the reality of it. You can mock it, you can scoff at it, do whatever you want.

There was another generation that sought to utilize that approach, Peter points them out here; they all perished in a flood. That's the 2nd illustration of Divine intervention that Peter points out concerning world history.

Things haven't always gone in such a way whereby God never intervened into the affairs of man. He judged the earth in righteousness in a global flood. For 120 yrs they mocked Noah as he sought to preach to them and warn them of the coming judgment. "Flood! Water from the sky! Are you kidding me; Noah you've lost your mind! Things have always *been* like this, and they'll always *be* like this!"

But Peter is pointing out here that the earth was different when God created it and it was different again after the flood, so don't think that God won't intervene again just as He has said He will do and things will be different even again.

Often times people like to pit science against the bible saying that it has to be one or the other. In reality the bible and science are completely compatible. People scoff at the idea of a global flood. Creation scientist Ken Ham finds himself saying all the time that, if there was a global flood you would expect to find "billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water over most of the earth." What does science find? *Billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water over most of the earth!* We call them "fossils." It's an established fact.

God has demonstrated emphatically through the flood that this is a moral universe and that sin will not go forever unpunished. The argument here is obvious: the same God who created the world by His own word can intervene at any time He should so choose and do whatever it is that He wants to do! It's by His word that all things were created and it's by His word that all things are held together. But the same world that was judged by a flood the 1st time will be judged by fire the next time. Notice...

Vs7

Noted Greek Scholar Kenneth Wuest makes some interesting observations about this Vs. Allow me to quote from him (forgive me for the fact that it seems a little heady). "Kept in store" [preserved] is *thesaurizō* (θησαυρίζω), "to gather and lay up, store up." We have what is called a periphrastic perfect participle speaking of a past storing up completed, with a present state of being stored with that which has been gathered and laid up. "Fire" is in the instrumental case, showing the thing which was instrumental in completing the action in the verb. The present heavens and earth have been stored with fire with the present result that the deposit of fire with which they were stored resides in them as a permanent deposit.¹

¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (2 Pe 3:7). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

“What does that mean?” You’ve heard of the atom? What happened when the atom was split? I’m speaking on incredibly laymen’s terms here (more on my level) but the end of the story is the atom bomb right? Nuclear fission, incredible amounts of energy released in the form of an explosion/fire. Now nothing exists that’s not made up of atoms, the interesting this is that the nucleus of the atom contains positively charged protons and neutrons which are neutral. What happens when 2 like charges come near one another? They repel right? So the atom “by nature” is seeking to blow itself apart, what holds it together? It’s not what...it’s Who. In the book of Colossian Paul wrote of Christ saying, “*And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*” Col 1:17 If you read that in the NIV, perhaps American Standard or a couple of other translations it’ll read more like this, “*He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*” Col 1:17 What Peter is saying here is that inherently, intrinsically with in the makeup of everything that exists (including the air you breath) is the potential for what we might call “spontaneous combustion” on a nuclear level.

The only thing that keeps it from going up in smoke is the word of God, the person of Jesus Christ who holds it all together. Yet the bible is clear (we’ll see it more clearly next time) that the day is coming when God will simply “let go” and this planet will incinerate in a cataclysmic fashion. You might say that the universe didn’t begin with a big bang, but it’ll certainly end with one...

Vs8-9

Now there in Vs 8 don’t think that Peter is there prescribing some form of prophetic formula. The idea parallels with Ps 90 which says, “*For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.*” Ps 90:4 The idea being that God is not bound by time, He doesn’t live in the linear time/space continuum that you and I do, He’s of a completely different order than you are and I am, God is eternal. with God all time is bound up in the “now” He’s the ever present “I am.” There’s no lapse of the ages, a thousand years, a day, it’s all the same to Him. This idea that Christ won’t come because it’s been too long only displays the ignorance of the one offering the argument, time is irrelevant to God. You might understand it to me that not only is God everywhere with regard to space, He’s everywhere with regard to time.

Well then, why does God take what seems to be so long from the perspective of man to wind everything down and wrap everything up? 2 Reasons, 1st of all because God is sovereign, He’s not bound to what we think needs to happen. He’s not slack (or slow) He’s sovereign, when it comes to time God perceives it totally different than you and I do, don’t forget that. Peter says, “Beloved don’t forget this one thing, time is irrelevant to God, He dwells in the eternal.” Scoffers forget that, believers shouldn’t.

You see not only do scoffers error as it pertains to what God has done in the past, they're also ignorant of who God is in His person, He's patient. The fact of the matter is that God will keep His promise and with out delay according to His sovereign plan, but because He loves humanity He's patient giving as many people as possible the opportunity to repent. The heart of God is that He doesn't want *any* to perish, but that all would come to repentance. How many of us are glad that God didn't return 19-20 yrs ago? Or for that matter 5-10 yrs ago, some of you may be stoked that He didn't come back 2 yrs or for that matter 2 weeks ago because then where would you be? What if He came back today? Where would you be? There is compassionate purpose in the timing of God. He waited patiently prior to the flood, He waited patiently prior to judging Sodom and Gomorrah, and He's waiting patiently to judge the earth at the coming of Christ. It's His heart to see people saved, that's why Christ came, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "*As I live, 'says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*" Ezek 33:11 God is always willing to save man, unfortunately man is not always willing to be saved by God...

Man won't always "repent" that is they won't change their mind about their sin, they won't turn *from* their sin and turn *to* the Lord...and it's tragic. But when you reach the end of you, you'll find that God has been there waiting for you all along, not willing that any should perish, but that all would turn *to* Him and trust *in* Him; if you're ready...He's willing.

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful for Your overwhelming patience with a people such as us. That You've taken the initiative in Christ to *reach out* to us and are so ready, so wanting to save us if we would just repent of our sin, and trust in You. Help us Lord that we not forget the facts concerning Your work on a global scale in times past, that we not forget that to You time is nothing that we not grow weary as we wait upon Your return. Help us that we be found serving You diligently, whole heartedly should we be called to give an account.

God if You're speaking to the hearts of others even in this place now, may You grant them the faith and the courage to turn from their sin and trust in You.

Listen, If God is dealing with you where you sit I want to encourage you not to put off till tomorrow what needs to take place today. If you know you need to turn from your sin, you need Christ to come into your heart and forgive you of your sin then do it today. Jesus shed His blood on behalf *of* you, He stood in the gap paying the penalty *for* you, and He longs to give eternal life *to* you. He wants to save you, the question is do you want Him to save you?