

Living in light of Jesus' Return - 2 Peter 3

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Date: 13 August 2017

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[0 : 0 0] from 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 to 14. I don't have a page number from the church Bible.

Was it? 1, 2, 2, 3. Thank you. So 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 to 14. Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

They will say, where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. But they deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed is coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody.

[2 : 5 3] Good afternoon, everybody.

God's word and promises, particularly Jesus' promised return. But in direct contrast, the believer must remember and hold fast to these promises, spending every day looking forward to and getting ready for Jesus' return. So in the churches in Asia Minor, which is modern-day western Turkey, these scoffers had been denying Jesus' return as a load of hype.

Peter firstly describes their thinking, secondly, their motivation, and thirdly, why they are so badly mistaken, showing the basis for believing Jesus will return as he has promised.

Then, finally, he talks about what's going to happen on the day that Jesus returns. And he instructs the believers as to how this day makes a difference every day of their lives.

So that's where God's word is taking us today. And before we begin, let's just take a moment to pray. We need God's help as we go forward.

[4 : 3 1] Father God, we can't go any further without your help. We need your spirit here to be speaking into our hearts through your word.

And Lord, we realize that we're in a battle today. Your enemy, the devil, he does not like what's going on here. He does not want your word to be planted deep in our hearts.

But, Jesus, we thank you that you're stronger. We pray that by your spirit, through your word today, you would correct us, you'd rebuke us, instruct us, and that we would not leave this service today without being changed.

Lord, be with us by your spirit and in your power today. And make us open to you. Amen. So, RTE, that's the Irish National Broadcaster, has a YouTube channel on which they post up the best and most popular moments of Irish television.

If I asked you what has been their most popular YouTube video over the last two years, I wonder what you'd get. Maybe Ireland being the All Blacks.

[6 : 02] Maybe it would be Theresa Manion, Don't Make Unnecessary Journeys. Would it be the Late Late Toy Show? Well, this might surprise you.

But coming in at over 7 million views, a two-minute snippet of an interview with Stephen Fry from February 2015 is the most popular.

And maybe this rings a bell for some of you guys. In this interview, Gay Byrne asked the actor and comedian about his beliefs in God, to which he began to label God as being utterly evil, capricious, selfish, and monstrous, if he even were to exist, among many other things.

Now, I personally don't love and serve the God that he was talking about in that interview, and the God that we know from the Bible.

However, the video went viral, and people from all over Ireland were captivated and intrigued by this man's tarad on live television. Now, while we find such comments upsetting, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that this video was so popular.

[7 : 21] When we think about how many people around us in Ireland today actually think the exact same. maybe Stephen Fry was just being a little bit more bold and outward about it.

I mean, and what do we do with such comments? Well, we find the answer in today's passage. These comments are perhaps a more outward and bold example of what the Bible calls scoffing. So, scoffers mock, ridicule, and jeer at the beliefs of another. And Peter, in our passage today, tells us that they will jeer at Christ's second coming and they will deliberately overlook God's role in creating the world.

They do this in order to justify their own sinful behavior. So, after spending much of his letter reminding the believers of the reliability of the gospel and warning them of false teachers, Peter now turns to warn God's elective scoffers and the danger of joining them in their thinking.

So, he exhorts them always to remember and live in the light of God's commands and coming judgment. Today, we're going to see these two things contrasted in our text all the way through.

[8 : 36] The choice of each person to either deliberately forget God's word or deliberately remember and live in the light of it. And it starts in verse 1 and 2.

Have a look. And I read from, I read it now. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Okay, so, here we go. Straight away, Peter is trying to stir up the believer's memory of the prophecies and commands in God's word. He does this because the scoffers in the community are in many ways doing the opposite.

They're questioning what is being prophesied. So these two verses, they set up the rest of the following section in which Peter begins to deal with scoffers and, number one, their thinking.

Two, their motivation for thinking that way. And then, thirdly, Peter's response to their thinking. So firstly, Peter begins to show us how scoffers think.

[9 : 51] So let's pay attention here so that we know how to recognize it. Looking at verse 3 and 4. Above all, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

They will say, where is this coming he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it always has since the beginning of creation. Now, I don't know about you, but I find this really interesting.

The rationale is, well, this world has just kept going on as it always has. No sign of stopping. No reason to believe it will stop.

You know, I read this, sorry, I read this and think not much has changed in the way the people think over 2,000 years. This is common perception in Ireland 2017, is it not?

The majority of people you know will say, yeah, I believe God exists. But if you asked him, do you believe God when he says he's coming back in judgment on this world and your life, well, they'll probably start to get a little bit uneasy at that stage and say something along these lines?

[11 : 12] Well, it doesn't really look like he's coming, does it? I mean, he said that, what, 2,000 years ago and it still hasn't happened.

I mean, it's taking forever. So, clearly he isn't coming and I'm just going to live my life in the way that I truly think is best. What's the key part in that thought process?

It's taking forever, so obviously he's not coming. Like two friends who are standing at the bus stop down in Fountainstown and after half an hour of standing around, one of them cries out in desperation, it's taking forever, forget the bus, it's not coming, come on, let's find another way back to Kerrigaline.

You know, that's exactly what's going on here with these scoffers. Well, Peter's response to this kind of thinking is swift and he has a list of reasons as to why that's no justification whatsoever for believing he will not return.

Number one, this is Peter's number one response, he says, if God made the world, then he's surely able to end it. And we find this in verse five, have a look. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word, the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

[12:45] These scoffers, they deliberately overlook or forget the fact that the world is made by God. They don't want to acknowledge that it had a start point because if God started this earth, then he's well able to end it.

And this is Peter's point in the next two verses of Luke 6 and 7. By these waters also, the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. So Peter's saying, look, if God can make the world, and more than that, if God can partially destroy the world by means of a flood, then he can absolutely fully destroy the world when he calls an end to it.

So scoffers don't want to think about how God made it. They would rather conveniently push that out of their day-to-day memory. And in verse 3, we find out why they want to push that out of their memory.

Look at verse 3. It says, In the last days, scoffers will come scoffing and following their own evil desires. The reason why they're denying God will come back and judge this world and their lives as this.

[14:11] They want to follow their own evil desires. Let me put it another way. They want to live the way that's best in their own eyes and not God's. And believing that there's no judgment allows them to do that.

Now, can we just pause here a second? We can begin to say, Oh, those old scoffers at it again. Why can't they all just be as good and obedient to God's word as I am?

You know what? Before you or I begin to think that way, think about this. How many times do we even as self-professed followers of Jesus get up to the very same thing?

We push the truths of God conveniently out of our minds so that we can continue to justify different things that we want to do. Like that particular hateful attitude towards our work colleague.

Or that habit of watching pornography. Or those indulgent shopping trips that we know we don't really need. Scoffers deliberately forget God's word and his promises.

[15:20] And Peter says in verse 1 and verse 2 believers must deliberately remember them. Let's not join scoffers in their deliberate forgetfulness. Let us instead hold fast to God's word.

And here comes the question. Are you in it every day? How are you getting God's word into your life every day? You're responsible for this. As am I.

Not my parents. Not my spouse. It's me that has to make sure that I'm getting God's word into my life every single day. It's the same for you. And if you're not getting God's word you're going to start living like these scoffers in a way that's right in your own eyes but not God's.

These days we have multiple means of feeding ourselves regularly with God's word. We have Bible apps audio Bibles such an array of translations. Look you and I don't have any excuse.

Especially when we consider that in many other countries of this world it's illegal to even own a Bible. You know God blessed Elena and I with both the time and the money to carry Bibles into Laos and Vietnam a couple of weeks ago.

[16:29] Some of you guys were following along the emails. Well back in February when we made the big decision to buy those flights and it was a good bit of money I can tell you. When we committed to it it began to hit home but if we're willing to pay all this money to travel halfway across the world to transport Bibles across communist borders then how do we even value the word of God in our own lives at home?

Well that was a challenge. You know we have over ten Bibles at home. I actually went around on Tuesday counting them and walked around my house. Honestly we actually need to offload a few if anyone is interested.

We've got small ones big ones study ones even a flowery ones not in content in appearance. We have it so easy you and I.

We can definitely take it for granted. But it's God's word. It's a fountain of life. It's a feast of everything that's good and instructive in our lives. It's our guidebook on how to live God's perfect way he intended for humanity.

Now how can we miss out on such an incredible gift that's in our own language? So you need to figure out and I need to figure out what's the best way for us to feast on God's word each day and have your fill.

[17 : 55] Now I know someone who gets up early gets in their car and drives to work extra early in order to beat the cork traffic and they sit in their car in the car park and they've half an hour there to read God's word and spend time with him.

That works for them. I actually have another friend who's a teacher and he meets the Lord for a short time in the morning but then once school is over right listen to this he locks himself in the storeroom of his classroom for ten minutes straight after school and he has another time to just get God's word into his life.

He's being strategic about it and you know what we also need to be strategic about it. What's the best part of our day that we can give to God where we're most alert and we're most able to take in his word?

Maybe coming away from today you need to think up a new strategy in terms of that. It's vital. So far we've established that scoffers question Jesus coming and deliberately forget God's word in order to justify their own lifestyle.

So after Peter has addressed their theories by saying well if God can make the world he can also end it he then moves on to confront their theory of it's taking forever so obviously it's not happening.

[19 : 18] So let's look at verse 8 and 9 and see Peter's response to this. Verse 8 But do not forget this one thing dear friends with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day.

Now here we get an incredible glimpse into the grandeur and majesty of God. Think about it. What is two thousand years to God? A snap of the fingers. God is not limited within the constraints of time.

He's the maker of time. He's beyond it. Peter continues in verse 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness.

Instead he is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. So why is it taking forever in our minds for Jesus to return?

Well here's the reason. the love patience kindness and mercy of God. You know how ironic how ironic that those who scoff at God's so-called delay in fulfilling his promise are actually scoffing at God's gracious act of mercy towards them and giving them time to repent.

[20 : 44] But what does this verse mean for those who have already come to repentance? And this hit me hard during the week. And this is how I was working it out in my head.

If Jesus comes later today after the fellowship lunch to take me home, so be it. I will be with him in glory. If he doesn't come today, then that's one more day I get to share his saving gospel with those who haven't yet believed and stand condemned before a holy God.

See, now we see why Jesus hasn't returned yet. There are so many more precious souls he's waiting for to run into his forgiveness and eternal life before it's too late and they spend eternity without him in hell.

So, now that Peter has shown up the scoffer's way of thinking and motivation, he now turns his attention to the day of Jesus' return, which he calls the day of the Lord.

And he gives us some very important insights into what is going to happen on that day. So, let's pay big attention here. It's in verse 10 we're going to read for now.

[21 : 57] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

So, firstly, it's going to be as predictable as a robber coming to steal from your house. Now, that caught me by surprise when I was 10 years old.

Arriving back to my house with my family on St. Stephen's Day. Why is our house so cold? Mum, why is the kitchen window jarred open?

Dad, why is my money box empty in my room? That thief took us purely by surprise on that night. Likewise, no one will see it coming when Jesus returns to this earth.

And what else do we learn here? Everything will be destroyed. Not by water this time, by fire. The stars and planets will also be no more.

[23 : 12] But, you know, that's not where the story ends. Peter says in verse 13, but in keeping with this promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

Now, this is a huge comfort for us. God doesn't stop at destroying the world. He promises a new heaven and a new earth, but the last three words here are the most important. world. It says, where righteousness dwells.

All hurting, pain, evil, and sin will be no more. There is a hope for a new heaven and a new earth without the taint of sin. And what an incredible reality it is for us to look forward to.

So now we come to the last part of this passage in our message today, in which Peter asks the million dollar question for those of us who claim to be followers of Jesus.

Look at it in verse 11. since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people are you to be? There is the question.

[24 : 27] I think Peter asks this question right after verse 10 for a purpose. He just told them, the believers, that everything in this world is going to burn, literally.

It's like this. Think of that house of yours that you may have been working 30 years to pay off. If Jesus returns tomorrow, you'll be standing before your maker and your house will be gone.

It's the same with your car. There's no highway to heaven. There's not even a highway to hell. You can't bring it with you. You know, coming back from visiting Asia, God has challenged me that I need to watch the importance that I place and things that I own.

As if they are what gives me satisfaction and life. No. God's word tells us here they don't matter for eternity. Nothing here is eternal apart from your soul and the soul of every person you see around you.

And that's why Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6 verse 19, you needn't turn there, I'll read it for you. Do not store up for yourselves treasure in earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

[25 : 52] But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, they your heart will be also.

So what treasure are you and I building up in heaven? The world doesn't think that it's treasure. Caring for an older relative who may never say thank you.

Showing patience to a boss who definitely doesn't deserve it. Quietly slipping your brother in need a check when you know you could have used that money for your own pleasure.

Laying down your life for your spouse and your kids even when you think no one's looking. But someone is the only person that matters your father in heaven.

Brothers and sisters, keep building up treasure up there, not here, because everything that you see down here, it's all going to be burning if Jesus returns tomorrow and you can't take it with you.

[27 : 02] So let's go back to Peter's answer to his own question. In verse 11, since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

So, there are two consequences of Jesus' return for the life of believer here. Number one, verse 12, we need to look forward to Jesus' return. And number two, verse 11, we need to live holy and godly lives in preparation for his return.

Now, to illustrate these two things more clearly, I'd like to share with you an experience from my own life. So, my wife went away for a few days this week. She went with her mom and sister.

It has kind of become an annual tradition, and as long as it doesn't get too wild, I'm happy for it to continue. So, there I was, I guess. I was there on my own for three days at home.

I was preparing this sermon, doing some jobs, getting awfully distracted. I was eating some quality takeaways with Rob and the boys. But, Elena is a wonderful wife, and as you can probably imagine, as the days went on, I really began to miss my best friend.

[28 : 20] I began to look forward to her return. Now, men in the room who are married, and even children in the room who have mothers, I have a question for you.

Your wife or your mom is away for a few days. What's the number one thing that you have got to do before they come back to the house? You don't have to be a genius to figure this one out.

You clean it, of course. Even the dogs in the street know that. You have to get your house ready for her by the time she comes back, or it will mean her distinct disappointment when she arrives home to three days worth of dishes piled up and socked all over the floor.

It just makes sense. Clean the house. So there's two things I did this week. Number one, I was looking forward to my wife's return, and number two, I was getting ready for my wife's return.

You know, isn't that kind of the same with Jesus followers and his return, as we see in this passage? Instead of a wife or a mother returning, it's our Savior, our King, Jesus Christ.

[29 : 34] He's the one who's ransomed us and taken the blame for our rebellion on the cross. He's our closest friend, and he promises us, I am coming back. Now, what's your attitude towards your Savior's return?

Scoppers will bend over backwards to deny it. A lot of Christians, including Sam Ross, forget about it, and they don't think of it from one day to the next.

Now, Peter implores us to remember that we will stand before Christ when he returns. In fact, three times in three verses, he tells us to look forward to it.

Verses 12, 13, and 14. So it has to be important to be said three times, right? Let's listen up here.

But some will ask, some people in this world will ask, you know, what difference does it make in the grand scheme of things if I'm not looking forward to my Savior coming back?

What difference does it even make? Let's go back to that illustration. My heart of longing and anticipation for my wife's return demonstrates my love for her, right? And so also, if there's a desire for Christ in our lives, we should be longing for his return, for him to put right everything that is wrong.

[31 : 01] But even more than that, just have him, to be with him physically in all his glory forever. And this is why Paul says in Philippians chapter 1, verses 23 to 24, I am torn between the two.

I desire to be with Christ, which is far better indeed, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Did you hear that there?

Paul just wanted Christ. For him, Christ was the reward of Christianity. Now, is that good enough for you and for me?

Is it good enough for us to get Christ on the last day and for eternity? If not, then I don't think we understand what a treasure God is. If not, we don't understand that we are made to love him and enjoy him forever and that nothing could ever satisfy us like he can for eternity.

You know, there are three words in verse 12 that could easily slip by without notice. I don't know if you noticed them. They can be a little bit puzzling to some people. And we need to just address them.

[32 : 21] Have a look. It says, you ought to live holy and godly lives, verse 12, as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. Now, you might be asking, how could we possibly speed Jesus coming?

Here's my very brief take on it. God's heart is that every nation under the earth will hear that Jesus died to make them right with God. Now, Jesus said that himself in Matthew 24, verse 14.

And I could. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come. Okay?

So, Jesus won't return. He said this. He won't return until every people group in the world has a witness for the gospel speaking and living among them.

So, by fulfilling Jesus' commission to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, you know what? We are, in effect, speeding his coming. So, we need to really consider how we each individually and how our church is fulfilling our God-given mission to bring his gospel to every people group, both in Ireland and abroad.

[33 : 38] So, Peter's first instruction was to look forward to Christ's return. And secondly, and this is my last point, we need to be ready for him.

We need to get ready for him. And it's not a house that we're getting ready here, guys. It's our lives. So, let's look at Peter's instructions as to how we can get ourselves ready for Christ's return.

They're in verses 11, 12, and 14. You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. And then it's 14.

It says, So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. So, the essence of both these verses, I think, is this. make every effort to become more like Christ. He's the one who lived the perfect example of a holy and godly life, as it speaks about in this verse.

[34 : 42] He lived a spotless, blameless life at peace with God. So, we also need to remember we can't, and we won't ever imitate him perfectly this side of heaven, because our sinful nature still gets in the way of that.

But, we are to still make every effort. We are to still strive to be like him, Peter says. And the only way to become more like Jesus is to spend time with him, is to walk in his spirit, is to marvel at him as revealed in his word and to follow his commands.

But you know what, there's just one caution here. We're not striving, to earn our salvation. We're not obeying God to make God love us any more than he already does.

We have to be careful here. We're obeying him because we love him. And because we want to make him proud when he returns. And we find the basis for this in Jesus' parable of the talents, which you can find later on in Matthew 25.

But briefly, it says, the brief gist of it was that to each servant, the master gave differing amounts of money before leaving on a journey. And on his return, he found two servants had worked hard and used the money he gave them wisely.

[36 : 07] To those servants he said, well done, good and faithful servants. But to the last servant, who had buried his money, and he had made no effort to use it for good, the master gave him a severe rebuke.

You know what, in the same way, Christ has saved me and given me everything that I have in this life. He's blessed me with my freedom, my family, my money, etc. But he's also commanded me to use these things for his glory, to follow him and become more like him.

Now I want my life to be ready for Christ, my master, when he returns. Every day we need to bow the knee to our king, to obey him, and submit to his loving rule over our lives.

And yes, we should want to make our master proud on the day that he meets us. I pray that all of us here will be able to hear him say on that last day, well done, good and faithful servant.

To finish, where does this leave us today? Firstly, we heard Peter's call to remember God's words and promises, not conveniently forget them like the scoffers.

[37 : 32] So are we feasting at God's word every day? Secondly, we need to remember the fate of this world and everything in it. We learn from God's word that it's all going to burn on the last day.

So, we need to invest our lives in the things that last for eternity. Loving God and loving others. And lastly, we need to look forward to and get ready for Christ's return.

Because he has saved us and now he has commanded us to live holy and godly lives. And we don't want to be ashamed on that day when we meet him by the way we have used the lives that he's given us.

Let's commit all this to God in prayer. Jesus, we thank you that you're coming again.

Thank you for all the songs we've sung today which have reminded us of this. You're coming to put us right everything that's gone wrong.

[38 : 50] And Lord Jesus, you call us to look forward to your return and not only that but to be ready for your return. And I pray for myself and for each person here that we would take heed of your word and this week that we would make steps to look forward to and to be ready for you on your return.

We ask your help in this. We need your help. In Jesus' name. Amen. So just bringing all of this to our minds, I would like us to start with this.

Let's start with this. Let's start with this.