

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class: *"What Will the End of the World Be Like?"*

II. New Testament Passages

E. 2 Peter 3:1-13

Second Peter deals with God's grace in the trials of false teaching. The false teachers were promoting sinful lifestyles and questioned whether Jesus would return in judgment. A firm conviction concerning the gospel of God's grace is the greatest defense against false teaching.

The author of this letter claims to be Simon Peter and gives his eyewitness account of Jesus' transfiguration. 2 Peter was not as widely known or used in the early church in 1 Peter. Of the early church fathers, Origen (AD 185-253) was the first to attribute it to Peter. Eusebius (AD 265-340) placed it among the questioned books.

Modern critics doubt the genuineness of this letter due to differences in vocabulary and style with First Peter. Yet, this can be explained easily and simply. Peter says that he wrote the first letter with the help of Silas (1 Peter 5:12) while he would have been on his own with the second letter. It was written between AD 65-68 before Peter's execution under the Roman Emperor Nero.

Chapter Three:

Verses 1-2: "Dear friends" (agapatoi): Four times in this chapter Peter addresses his readers this way.

Why has Peter written both of his letters to these readers?

"to _____ you to _____ thinking"

What is the source of our pure, sincere and unmixed thinking?

"the _____ spoken in the past by the holy _____"; and

"the _____ given by our _____ and Savior through your _____."

Where do we find such words and command today? _____

The reminder given us here is to spend time reading our Bibles. We only can live a life that is based on God's Word, strengthened by God's Word and guided by God's Word when we are reading, hearing and studying that Word. The one solution to the complaint, "I don't know the Bible very well" is to open one up and start reading it.

"Savior" appears only 12 times in the New Testament (six times in Titus). To deny the second coming of Jesus is to deny Jesus as our Savior. "Your apostles": These are men sent by Jesus to pass on the truth of God. These are the ones the readers should trust. Peter says it this way because he is included in that group.

Verse 3: **What is the first topic that Peter addresses with his readers here?** _____

What will happen "in the last days"? _____

What two things will those "scoffers" do? (What does that word mean? _____)

"_____ and following their own _____"

Since the arrival of these scoffers was foretold well in advance, the fact that they have arrived actually can bring hope to the readers. God is in control of the world's situation. The mindset or attitude of ridiculing God's Word goes hand in hand with behavior that is contrary to what God's Word says.

Hedonism always mocks at the idea of ultimate standards and a final division between the saved and lost. For men who live in the world of the relative, the claim that the relative will

be ended by the absolute is nothing short of ludicrous. For men who nourish a belief in human self-determination and perfectibility, the very idea that we are accountable and dependent is a bitter pill to swallow. (Michael Green, 2 Peter and Jude, Eerdmans, 1984, page 127)

Verse 4: **What will these scoffers say?** _____

Unbelievers in the Old Testament used the same inquisitive word, “where?” to question the reliability of the one true God and His promises (Psalm 42:3, 10; 113:10; 115:2; Jeremiah 17:15; Malachi 2:17). Future scoffers will be impatient for the “coming” (parousia) of Christ. They will see no evidence of it taking place any time soon. Doubts arise as the first generation of believers has died. For them, past performance does guarantee future results. As they look back through time, they see one generation after another living and dying since life began with no change taking place. (“Fathers” here means Old Testament believers; “died” translates “fall asleep” the common way of describing death that implies an awakening, that is, an afterlife). Thus they have decided life will go on as such with no interruption by Christ’s second coming. They have decided that nature is not subject to divine intervention.

Peter now sets forth three points from the Bible to demonstrate that the Lord does intervene in history:

Verse 5: **But what have these scoffers deliberately forgotten?** _____

What did that word of God do long ago? _____

Notice that Peter focuses on water when it comes to creation. When sending probes to other planets, etc., what are the scientists hoping to find, evidence of water. Why? Only if water had been there or is there could there be some form of life having existed or still existing there.

Verse 6: **What did those same waters later do to the world?** _____

God caused the created order to revert to a state of chaos through the world wide flood. The Great Flood of Genesis is simply the second day of creation in reverse. Waters that had been separated at that time into above and below came back together to destroy all living things except for those kept safe on Noah’s Ark. In the first century AD a great deal was made of the flood as a warning to the wicked, and as a sign of the breaking in of the new age.

Verse 7: God’s Word created and preserves creation. That same Word of God still has work to do. It is the means by which God will bring about His creation’s destruction. “Heavens and earth” refer to what we are on and all that is above us.

What physical means will God use to destroy creation? _____

Fire is frequently used in the Old Testament as a symbol of God’s punishment and destructive wrath, sometimes in connection with His final judgment. Rather than the flood, the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah serves as the preview of what will happen to the ungodly. “The concept of fiery judgment is to be found throughout the Old Testament. God Himself is spoken of as a consuming fire who will in the last day consume what is wicked and refine what is good” (Green, op. cit. page 132).

What is the focus of this judgment and destruction? _____

The Great Flood is the one precedent we have for God’s end-time judgment. Then God destroyed the wicked but spared Noah and his family. Likewise, “the end of the world will be a time of judgment on the ungodly and a time of deliverance for the faithful” (Lutheran Study Bible, page 2166). Those who have been saved through water and the Word will not be harmed by this fiery judgment.