
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 2 Peter

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2 Peter 3: 10-13: "Christ will Certainly Return—Unexpectedly!"

General idea: Peter, in graphic imagery and hopefulness, is making a strong argument that Christ will return and when He does, it will be un-expected with unsurpassing wonders the world has never seen. This is the climax of the Kingdom of God, the time when it comes into its fulfillment and fruition. The earth and all we know and see will be destroyed and re-formed as a new earth and a new life. There will be a judgment from which nothing will be exempt. Because all will be judged and destroyed (or renewed), we must make the most of our lives here and now, not wait for a future that may not come, or bask in the past. We must live for Christ with the hope and purpose He gives us with power, passion, and conviction. The promise of His Second Coming is to give us hope and confidence. We live in a sin-infested world now, but the one to come will be perfect, as all in it will be right with God. We look forward to His Second Coming and the fruition of his Kingdom. But, beware of sitting and doing nothing; we will delay His work and impede the preparation of His Kingdom. Our participation helps His coming, as we help build His Kingdom now.

This passage is very figurative. The purpose of figurative or apocalyptic language is to describe the indescribable. Peter attempts to help us understand these events and the importance of our being ready (Matt. 24: 36 through chapter 25). This is about being hopeful for the future, but living and being viable for the present. We can take comfort in the fact that Jesus is coming back. This time it will not be a subtle event, as a baby born in a feed trough in a cave. Rather, the entire creation will glow and bend to show the whole world His glory. This passage gives hope to a persecuted church, hope to people in despair, and hope that He is indeed in charge, even when we cannot see it!

Vs. 10: These early Christians were being discouraged by the persecutions and seemingly insurmountable sufferings and loss. The comfort of Jesus' return was like cool water for a person dying of thirst on a hot day. Consequently, false teachers were taking advantage of them. These so-called Christians, who were making apocalyptic predictions, had bad motivations. They operated just like Satan, seeking to disrupt, seduce, and carry people away from Christ and to their way. If you are not sure who they are, watch their character and Fruit, which will show their true nature (Jer. 23:13; Micah 3:5; Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-30; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Eph. 4:14; Phil. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:4-6; Titus 1:11,12; 2 Peter 2:18,19).

- *Day of the Lord* means the Lord's final Day of Judgment where He settles all accounts and injustices. It is a synonym for the Second Coming and refers to the anticipated eschatological climax of events. Victory over darkness and sin will be achieved after God intervenes in the world with judgment and

destruction to His enemies, and rewards and blessings to those who are in Him. Although this Day started with the resurrection of Christ and His victory over sin and the coming of the Spirit, it comes to its consummation and fullness after Christ's Second Coming and Judgment (Isa. 2:11-20; 13:9-13; Joel 1:15; 3:14-21; Amos 5:18-20; 1 Thess. 2:1-3; 5:2).

- *Like a thief in the night*, a quote from Jesus Himself, is a vivid image of anticipated End Times, and literally means to “break in,” as to dig into the clay and brick sides to get inside the home. Here, it is a metaphor, and does not refer to a literal thief who would rob us, but that Christ's coming will not be predicted or expected. It will be a surprise and a shock. This could only happen if the people were not there, as in *not ready*. Do not be ignorant of His promise (Ex. 22:2-3; Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39-40)!
- *The Heavens...disappear... with a roar* refers to an Old Testament image of purification and renewal (Isa. 34:4; 64:1-4; Matt. 24:29-31).
- *Elements/heavenly bodies* refer to the building blocks of the universe. It is interesting that the Greeks theorized about molecules centuries before science discovered them. The basic elements in ancient times usually refer to earth, air, fire, and/or water. This term also refers to all that is in the universe such as celestial beings, planets, and stars. Here, it is most likely referring to the heavenly bodies. Peter's point is that everything will be destroyed (some believe transformed or rebooted). (Isa. 34:4)
- *Earth and everything...* possibly refers to God's judgment, that He will remove all evil and iniquity, and all of humanity's works will be held in account.
- *Laid bare/ burned up/exposed* means to be found out or found, and refers to the judgment that is coming. The earth will undergo a climatic destruction or reformation. This could also mean that the earth will be destroyed and made new (1 Cor. 3:13-15). Also, it could mean being aware of our own motives—why we do what we do. Is it to please our curiosity or manipulate others to see our way of thinking, regardless of revealed biblical truth?

The main point of this passage is to tell us not to be discouraged, but to remain faithful and vigilant. We are to live our lives preparing and planning as if Christ would be coming tomorrow or if He were coming a thousand years from now. We are not to be preoccupied with the details and trivialities. That is why Jesus did not give them to us. Rather, our faith development and steadfastness are far more impacting and real on others around us (Matt. 24)!

Vs. 11-13: God's call for us is to be confident and exuberant that He is in control and things will work out. He does not want us forsaking our duty as Christians in the world here and now by using our energies in nonsocial and nonsensical ways, trying to predict the future and arguing our views of it. If you really think

this through, it is like focusing on your favorite junk food and arguing why it is good while forsaking healthy food that is good for you and helps you to grow and thrive.

- *Since everything* refers to *what should I do now*. This is also a call—a call to keep you from being spiritually or emotionally defeated when tough times come. We are to always see our Lord, not our situation (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:31-39). This is an aspect of the character of *faithfulness*, as it will help you persevere under stress and chaos. Christ is the One who keeps us secure, not our environment!
- *What kind of People you ought to be* means to watch our motives and behaviors, making sure they are lined up to Christ and not with what is false and pretentious. We are to conduct ourselves with good ethics, honor, and godliness. What we do as a Christian is in response to what Christ has done in us. Works are not for our salvation; they result from our gratitude for the salvation that was freely given to us. Thus, what we should be thinking, as committed Christians, is *how do we now live for Him and His glory*, not *how do we live for our desires and needs*. He has given us everything in abundance and in love. This is not a time to be impatient; it is a time to grow and do more in Him and for Him (Heb. 13:9).
- *You ought...live holy and godly/lives of holiness* refers to not letting suffering overtake us or move us from His Way. Suffering is a part of life; it will happen. We have to learn to cope, seek Him, and prepare so we can help others and ourselves through it (see our article on “Suffering”). We are called to not be discouraged when bad things, troubles, disasters, and tribulations happen in the world (2 Chron. 15:6; Isa. 13:8; 19:2; Jer. 51:46; Hosea 13:13). We live in a fallen world where sin has corrupted everything and everyone, so disasters will come. We are called to prepare, plan ahead, and look to Christ as the Deliverer. He is in control!
- *The day of God*. This is slightly different than the “Day of the Lord” and refers to “The Coming One,” as no one else but God Himself. Both terms are interchangeable, meaning great signs will take place, and He is seeking us for our salvation as well as for our spiritual growth. (Rev. 16:14)!
- *Speed its coming/eagerly waiting/hasting* means to hasten on as we desire for Him to come back now. But, we cannot change God’s mind or speed things up. His timing is deemed and decreed by God’s providence and by God alone (Eph. 1:11). Peter uses this term so we will not diverge into sensationalism, emotionalism, or fatalism, but can see it from God’s view and trust in His timing. Contemporary Jewish thought was divided on whether we participate in God’s intervention. Some rabbis taught we do hasten it by our repentance, piety, and good deeds, while others said it was fixed and we have no sway over God. The debate continues today amongst Christians.

Many Christians feel we hasten God's timing by our missions and evangelism to all people groups (Matt. 24:14). The fact is, we have no knowledge of the factors God considers or how His providence, mercy, and patience are working out for our benefit, too. We do contribute; our actions matter. We hasten this day by our fervor, our humble and honest prayers, and our obedience to know Him and make Him known to others. These are the only contributions we make to His timing (Matt. 6:10; Mark 13:10; Luke 11:2; Acts 3:19-20; Rev. 8:3-5; 22:20).

- *Coming* refers to when Christ will come back and gives us blessings as Christians who are faithful in Him. This is an aspect of great hope, that our righteousness does matter and it will come into fruition when He comes (Isa. 9:7; 32:16-17; 62:1-2; Jer. 32:40).
- *New heaven and a new earth* could refer to an entire, new, created order after God destroys this one, but other passages indicate this means God reboots this one, cleanses it, and restores it as in a transfiguration process. Whatever means is used is because of His redemption that allows us to have a *home of Righteousness*. His righteousness will exemplify the world, not sin (Isa. 11:4-5; 45:8; 65:17-25; 66:22; Dan. 9:24; Rom. 8:21-23; 1 Cor. 15:35-57; Rev. 21:1).

Peter makes the point that since everything will be destroyed and judged, we should focus ourselves on Christ. He is our Hope and reason for life and living. He will return. There is no "if;" only "when." It is not theory, but fact, and it points us to a faith that is sensible and useful. Our lives need to be in pursuit of Him and His Truth and principles so we are not spending our energies in sensationalism and endless debates, but rather in knowing Him and making Him known.

God calls us to be curious and hopeful with what is to come. This is to give us strength for endurance and anticipation for His work to come. But, we are not to be obsessed and impatient or slip off the path He has for us. Our focus is to be in and on Him, not on our agendas. We are to make sure we do not fall prey to sensationalism or are not carried away by those who are deceptive, manipulative, or condescending or who play to our fears, hopes, and desires. Nor, are we to fall prey to our own faulty thinking, negating the real, revealed truths. Our footing is in Christ. Let us not lose it and fall off a cliff! Our security, salvation, and lives are in Him and in Him only—all for His glory.

His promise to return is the climax of our life and the beginning of life everlasting. It is our hope in the midst of our trials and sufferings as well as in the daily grind of life. He wants us to live in the contentment of His love, not in the circumstances of ours or other's notions or trepidations.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive](#))

Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. When you were a kid, how did you feel about waiting for a birthday or Christmas or some other big event? How is this like waiting for Christ to come back?
2. How is seeking sensationalism like focusing on your favorite junk food and arguing why it is good? How do you feel physically when you forsake healthy food that is good for you to grow and thrive? How is this like forsaking good Bible teaching?
3. What do you think is the purpose of *figurative* or *apocalyptic* language? How do you feel about it? How has it brought you fear? What about hope?
4. The earth and all we know and see will either be destroyed or re-formed into a new earth and a new life. How does this make you feel? How does this give you hope?
5. Do you believe that when Christ comes, it will not be predicted or expected, perhaps even be a surprise and a shock? How, and why?
6. How can the *Second Coming* give you hope and confidence? How does this passage give hope to a persecuted church?
7. What do you think discourages hopeful Christians? What can be done to inspire someone who is discouraged to remain faithful and vigilant?
8. What preparation and participation do you think we are to do? What happens when people do nothing with their faith and just wait for a future that may not come?

9. What does it mean that we are to live our lives as if Christ would be coming tomorrow and also preparing and planning as if He were coming a thousand years from now? Is this a contradiction, or a plan to do?
10. Why do you suppose that Jesus did not give us the details of His second coming? What would have happened if He had?
11. Can you think of a specific area in your life that could use more hope? What does it mean for you to be confident and exuberant? What can you do to be more confident and exuberant?
12. From this passage, what do you understand God's call to be for you? What can your church do to discipline and/or warn people who make apocalyptic predictions or have bad motivations for their teaching?