

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #12

II Peter 3:3-9

In many churches every Sunday there is the recital of what is called “The Lord’s Prayer.” Part of the prayer says “Thy Kingdom come.” Many recite this prayer over and over again, but really don’t believe the start of that could be today. In fact, there is an eschatological perspective in many of these churches that quote this prayer that denies any real literal kingdom will ever come. There are those who think this world will just get better and better. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Most people who go to church want to hear about positive things about a God who is good and a God of love. Most never want to hear about a God of destructive, eternal wrath who intends to burn up the heaven and the earth and the godless people. So as a result churches spring up with ear-tickling ministers who present God as being a God of love who just tolerates everything and appreciates everyone and likes people just the way they are.

The problem with this view is that the Bible paints a very different picture of God. The Bible makes it clear that God is a God who will ferociously judge. There are many passages that stress this very point. So what one must do, as one goes to a church where the truth is taught, is either accept this truth and make adjustments in life or try to dismiss it from your mind and perhaps even disregard it to the point that you mock the thought of it.

That is exactly what was happening at the time Peter wrote II Peter. Peter was about to die and He communicated to the people the importance of keeping their minds focused on God’s Word and on God’s truth. One of the motivations for this was future judgment.

As we come to **II Peter 3:3-9**, it is very clear that Peter’s point is this:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT IN THE LAST DAYS LUSTFUL RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND PEOPLE WILL SURFACE AND THEY WILL MOCK THE BIBLICAL TRUTH THAT JESUS CHRIST WILL RETURN AND HE WILL JUDGE.

As near as I may determine, there are three main prophetic points Peter wants to make:

PROPHETIC POINT #1 – What we need to know about false religious God-mockers. **3:3-7**

Now Peter identifies them as “mockers” (εμπαικτης). This is a rare Greek word and it is used twice in this verse. It is a word that means just what it says, one who mocks something or makes fun of something. William Mounce in his *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (p. 453) says that this specific kind of mockery is that which makes a sport of something. This word was often used in reference to mocking and making sport of Jesus Christ - Matthew 20:19; 27:29; 27:31. There are five specific points of knowledge that we need about God-mocking, false religious people.

Point of Knowledge #1 - In the last days of the church religious mockers will come. **3:3a**

Peter says here is what I want you to know first of all as you are studying the words of the Scriptures. As you are taking your minds and focusing them on understanding the inspired Word of God, I want you to know that in the last days of the Church there will be a bunch of religious people who will not care about the Word and in fact will mock it.

Now it is interesting to see that a future tense verb “shall come” is used here. The verb is middle voice and indicative mood. What this means is that Peter was prophetically looking into the future (future tense), from the time of his existence and by inspiration of God, and wrote about the fact (indicative mood) that these teachers would arise in and of themselves (middle voice). In other words more and more ministers would service who had not really been called by God.

So what Peter is saying here is that you need to know that the future will intensify the surfacing of these self-appointed ministers. So these people who actually mock God’s Word will be very religious people and in fact will be self-appointed ministers. I do not think it is a coincidence that many seminaries are minimizing the Bible and maximizing things like counseling and other things. This is exactly what is predicted to occur in the last days.

It appears to me from the context that there are two specific things that these religious mockers will target and mock. 1) The literalness of the Scriptures; 2) The literalness of Biblical prophecy as it relates to Jesus Christ.

God wants us to know in the last days, many religious Bible-mockers will surface who will laugh at and make sport of the fact that the Word of God can be literally believed and interpreted.

Frankly, we are living in a day and age in which most churches do not believe the words of Scripture literally. If they did they would go to work on carefully understanding all of the words that are in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

We are living in a time when very few want to take God’s Word seriously or interpret it literally. They want to take the Bible and just have it mean what they want it to mean to them. If someone comes along and really knows what the Scriptures are teaching, they are mocked and ridiculed.

Point of Knowledge #2 - They mock the Scriptures because they are pursuing their lusts.
3:3b

These religious mockers are not motivated by their scholarly insights of the Scripture. They are not skilled theologians who really have a handle on the depths of eschatology. At the heart of those who mock the Scriptures is a lustful lifestyle. Richard Lenski said “mockery and lusts will go together” (*II Peter*, p. 339). If you can get behind the scenes of a religious leader who mocks future judgment you will discover a depraved, lustful lifestyle.

That word “lusts” (επιθυμια) refers to a lustful longing that really dominates the heart (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 171). Behind the scenes of false teachers and false religious people is a heart that is given to the sensual, a heart given to a lustful lifestyle.

You cannot consistently be in the Word of God or in a church where the Word of God is carefully taught and be comfortable if you are pursuing a bunch of lustful things.

Point of Knowledge #3 - They specifically mock and question the return of Jesus Christ.
3:4

Now I want us to keep this in its context. We are not talking about atheists here; we are talking about men who stand in pulpits in churches. Many of them mock and question the idea of the return of Jesus Christ.

One of the key points of their mockery is a denial of the very idea of the last days. Obviously lustful people do not want to face the fact that time is running out on them. As a result they mock the idea that we are living in the last days and that Jesus Christ will soon return.

The real reason they question the return of Jesus Christ is because they have a lifestyle that they know is heading to serious judgment. The moment they concede the Bible is literal and the future return of Jesus Christ is real, is the moment they face the fact that when I face Him I am going to lose.

They try to minimize any thought of the return of Jesus Christ by saying, “they have been saying this for years.” Everything just continues as it always has. They go clear back to “the fathers” which could refer clear back to Adam and include every other believer they know who has died. Their idea is all kinds of people have been saying the world is going to end in judgment since way back in time and nothing has really changed. We have just progressed along and there is nothing we need to worry about.

Point of Knowledge #4 - They specifically neglect to think about God’s past judgment against the world. **3:5-6**

Peter says apparently you have missed something in your Bible reading. You have obviously “neglected” to see something in the Word of God, starting in chapter 1 of the book of Genesis. You may know that you are in the presence of a God-mocker when he attacks Genesis.

Peter says they have apparently forgotten about a couple of episodes that featured a lot of water. God, by His Word, spoke the heavens and the world into existence out of water (Genesis 1:6-10). There was water above and water below and God gathered up the waters and set boundaries for where water would be (Job 38:8; Proverbs 8:29; Jeremiah 5:22).

Not only have you forgotten about God’s power in creation, but you have also forgotten that God spoke something else into existence and used water again. Things have not just continued along from the beginning of creation. You have apparently forgotten about Genesis 6-9 which describes a worldwide flood.

What these leaders forget is that there was a literal time in past history when God got fed up and destroyed the whole world by a flood. In other words, this world has not just continued on without any judgment of God. There was a major judgment and there is coming one even worse than this.

Peter wants God's people to know that God is the Creator and God is the Judge of His creation.

Point of Knowledge #5 - They do not know that the present heavens and earth are heading to a worse future judgment. **3:7**

Peter says the same God that used water for judgment has another judgment stored up that He will speak into existence. There is another future judgment coming in which God is not only going to judge the earth but heaven too. This will not be another water judgment; this will be a fire judgment. There is coming a future judgment of fire in which God will burn up the heavens and the earth and all ungodly people. There is a verse of Scripture in Habakkuk 2:3 which states exactly the same time principle. Time is moving toward God's goal and He will not fail to bring His judgment to pass.

Now I want you to think for a moment about the different kinds of fire that God has available. There is fire that can burn wood; there is the electrical fire of lightening; there is fire that burns the sun; there is the unquenchable fire of hell. God has a lot of fire to work with and He says there is coming a day in which He will destroy the heaven and earth and ungodly people with His fire.

PROPHETIC POINT #2 – What we need to remember about God's eternal calculation of time . **3:8**

Peter begins by saying past judgment has escaped the mockers' notice (**3:5**), but don't let God's timing of things escape your notice. We need to notice how it is that God calculates time. Now the verb "escape notice" (λανθανω) is one that refers to something that one is unaware of, truth that is hidden or not entertained (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 264). So Peter says to the "beloved" that here is something we need to know about time and God. Never forget this. Delay from our perspective is really no delay from God's perspective.

Now there are two specific time realities that God wants us to understand. Before we look at them, we need to observe that **Peter does not say "a day is a thousand years" or "a thousand years is a day."** What he says is, with God it is "as" or "like" this. I think this is important because there are those who try to suggest that the "day" in Genesis 1 is not a real 24 hour day, but millions of years. Richard Lenski said, those who take that position find no support from this text because the text does not say a "day is," but a "day is as" (*II Peter*, p. 345). The Apostle Peter says this in the context of the mocking of the return of Jesus Christ.

Eternal Time Reality #1 - With the Lord, one day to Him is as a thousand years to us.

The time clock started ticking at Genesis 1:1. That clock is still ticking to this hour. Time to God is not what it is to us. To us a day seems short and a thousand years would seem to be a long time. To God a thousand years is short. When it comes to the matter of time in regard to the eternal God, we must never be confused about this. God can do in one day what we could not do in one thousand years. God can do everything He needs to do in one day. We have not been able to fix this world in 2000 years, but God can take care of it in one or two days.

Eternal Time Reality #2 - With the Lord, one thousand years to us is as one day to Him.

Psalms 90:4 says, “For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.”

Peter says I want you to know that when it comes to the return of Jesus Christ, a long time to us is not a long time to God. Since it has now been about 2000 years since Christ ascended into heaven, when Christ returns, from God’s perspective, it will be like the day before yesterday.

Now I want to make a very personal point about this time business to both the believer and the unbeliever. You may be here today and you are a believer and you were involved in some sin five, ten, twenty years ago and you never did face it and you never did try to make it right or resolve it; and you just assume because you have forgotten it, so has God. Well keep this in your mind - God doesn’t forget and even though it may have been twenty years ago, to Him it was like a couple of hours ago. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, you need to know that when it comes to your sin and your guilt, time makes absolutely no difference at all.

When Jesus Christ returns, it will be like He was only gone a couple days; but when He judges, one day of judgment will mean an eternity for those judged.

PROPHETIC POINT #3 – What we need to know about God’s delay in pouring out His judgment . **3:9**

Now do not miss reading what is stated in this verse - God is not slack in His promises and is patient “toward you.” Who are the “you”? These are the “beloved” of **verse 8**. The “you” refers to the beloved elect who are in the family of God. Aren’t you so glad God is patient with “you?”

The reason why Jesus Christ has not raptured the Church to start the ferocious finale of judgment is because of His family. God is still patiently calling out a people for His name, and He is not willing that any one of His elect family members will perish but all of them will come to repentance. In fact, the word “come” (χωρευω) is not the normal Greek word. This word means all will advance or progress or will come forward to repentance. The actual Greek word “any” (τινας) refers to a certain some of something (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 447). Peter has just said in **verse 7** that God is going to destroy the ungodly person, which means He is not going to save those people. God is right now patiently saving and advancing His family and is not willing that one of them be left out. This is the clear interpretation of the syntax, grammar, and context.

Ever since Christ died on the cross, God-mockers have been rejecting the gospel. Why in the world hasn't He done something about it? The reason why God has not burned up the heavens and the earth yet is because there are still many to save in the Church Age and many to save in the Tribulation. God could burn everything up in one day if He so wanted, but if He did, all of the elect would not be in the family.

Think for a moment about this fact. In every generation since the first century, believers have prayed for the Rapture of the Church. In fact, when the Apostle John ended the book of Revelation he prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Now suppose that shortly before you came to faith in Jesus Christ, God would have answered the prayers of those who had prayed for the Rapture. That would leave you out of the family of God. God was not willing to do that. Your name was written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world and He was not willing that you should perish by a premature judgment. Jesus Christ will not lose one of His sheep. All that the Father gives Him will come to Him and that is why He has not come back yet. He is not willing that any one of those who are to repent and be saved will be left out.

Now suppose you are here right now and you are not a believer in Jesus Christ. You need to know that the reason why God hasn't poured out His judgment is because He is advancing His family. If you will believe on Jesus Christ, you will become part of that family. We appeal to you to settle things right here right now. From your own heart admit that you are a sinner and flee by faith to Jesus Christ to save you from your sins.

Peter says in this text that there is a ferocious judgment that is coming. It will be a judgment in which people will burn. If you reject Jesus Christ you will experience the full brunt of God's wrath. You have God's Word on it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.