

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 PETER 3

Are you familiar with the term, “*slacker?*” According to Webster’s a *slacker* is “a person who avoids, or attempts to avoid work, or obligation, or responsibility.” A slacker is a minimal contributor. *Do you know one?*

If you have trouble recognizing a slacker I have a few quotes from accomplished slackers. Here’s some *slacker philosophy*... “Never put off until tomorrow what can be put off until the day after tomorrow.” Or “Do it really bad the first time, and no one will ever think of asking you again.” Or “Practice makes perfect, but no one’s perfect, so why practice?” Or “I’m waiting for my ship to come in - I just haven’t wandered down to the docks to meet it.” Or finally, “The sooner you fall behind, the more time you have to get caught up.”

A quick Internet search reveals the following websites, “Slackers Domain,” “Church of the Slacker,” “The World Nap Organization.” There’s even a Slackers Olympics... The slackers compete in channel surfing (long and short programs), backseat driving, freestyle sleeping, sheep counting, and lounging.

I certainly hope you’re not a slacker! But here’s what’s really appalling, Peter says there’ll be skeptics and scoffers who criticize God for being a slacker. *Can you believe such audacity? Our faithful God a slacker?* Yet Peter says they’ll accuse God of not keeping His promises. *In Chapter 3 Peter proves otherwise.*

He begins in verse 1, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior...” Once an old man told his teenage grandson, “Sonny, the key to success in life is how much you learn **after you know it all.**” Realize, we can know a truth, without really knowing that truth.

A truth can be grasped academically, but never be put it into practice and applied to our living. Or we can know a truth; yet forget that truth. This is why Peter wants his readers to “*be mindful*” of the truths they’ve been taught. He wants the words spoken by the prophets and apostles to be fresh on their minds.

Peter continues in verse 3, “**knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His**

coming?" In the "*last days*" "*scoffers will come.*" People will question the promise of our Lord's coming.

In a December 2022 poll, Pew Research found that only 39% of all Americans believe we're living in the end times. That's 58% who said we're not - *that we have plenty of time*. And only 10% - 1 of every 10 Americans believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth in their lifetime. A shocking 22% of Christians don't believe Jesus will return despite the fact He said He would... The scoffers Peter warned us of *have come*.

Today people squawk, "You Christians keep talking about the last days and the Second Coming of Jesus. You're like a broken record. You claim God will judge the earth. *Well, where is He?* I do as I please and I'm not hurting. My life is okay, I'm not worried. *If God hasn't come back by now, I'm not holding my breath.*"

Some people have concluded God doesn't exist. Other folks assume God doesn't care. But Peter says you need to think again. For there are truths the scoffer has forgotten - realities that he has **willingly ignored**.

First, people forget that **God judged the world before**. Second, these scoffers should realize **if God judged the world before, He can do it again**. And third, they need to realize that **time is relative to God**. These are three truths the scoffer conveniently neglects.

Here's the first false conclusion they draw, verse 4, "*For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.*" The scoffers assume world history progresses without interruption. That our planet was shaped in the past only by the influences that are shaping it today. Scientists use a huge, ten gallon term for this idea, "**uniformitarianism**." That over millions and millions of years the Earth's geology has resulted from the *uniform* processes and laws that are currently working in nature presently.

The theory of uniformitarianism was first purposed by Charles Lyell, an English geologist in the 1800s. Lyell's ideas became the foundation for Darwin's evolution, and its the dominant view among evolutionists today.

Last year Kathy and I got to fulfill a bucket list experience. I was invited to speak in Arizona and after the conference we went to the Grand Canyon and took a helicopter ride over the canyon. It was amazing!

Yet a uniformitarian would stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon - looking the five miles downward at the slender blue thread called the "*Colorado River*" snaking its way

through the canyon, and then claim that it was that tiny river that cut out that gigantic canyon.

A uniformitarian would keep a straight face, and tell you that the Grand Canyon was formed the same way the *gulleys* are formed in your backyard - by simple erosion. Hey, I'm sorry, but I'm not that *gulley-able*.

It's interesting that the atheistic and anti-biblical idea of uniformitarianism was actually predicted by Peter 2000 years ago. And it's been the prevailing philosophy in American intellectual circles for the last 100 years.

Peter says this erroneous view is a sign of the end of time. When humanity forgets the earth was judged previously, it proves it's ripe for God's judgment again.

Peter writes, verse 5, "For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water." What today's scoffers "*willfully forget*" is the record of Genesis 6-9 - the global deluge of Noah's day. The flood was God's judgment of the ancient world. "*The world that then existed perished.*"

Which remind me of Noah's Top 10 statements. 10) Strange, we haven't seen another boat for weeks... 9) If only I'd brought along more rhino litter... 8) I never want to sleep on a waterbed again... 7) Fish for supper again?... 6) Honey, please stop saying, "Into each life a little rain must fall..." 5) Does anyone have more Dramamine?... 4) Where's my phone? I want a photo of that rainbow... 3) How can I fish with just two worms?... 2) God, are you sure I don't need to keep the termites in a tin can?... 1) Noah was seen years later, slapping his neck and mumbling, "*I should've killed those lousy mosquitoes while I had the chance!*"

Notice Peter's description of the flood. He describes a world much different than today. He speaks of the earth "*standing out of water and in the water.*" Realize there are Bible scholars and geologists alike, who hypothesize that at one time in its past the earth was shrouded with an atmospheric vapor canopy. This vapor blanket kept out harmful radiation from the sun which allowed the age of man to reach the triple digits recorded in Genesis. It also produced a worldwide tropical climate with teeming fauna and lush foliage...

Apparently, the flood was not just forty days and nights of normal rain. The flooding came from the collapse of the earth's vapor canopy and the ocean's subterranean pools. Genesis 7:11 reads, "*all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the*

windows of heaven were opened.” Seismic eruptions may’ve spewed water onto the surface of the earth.

In verse 6 the word, “flooded” is a translation of the Greek, “*katakluzo*,” from which we get, “*cataclysm*.” The global deluge of Noah’s day was a cataclysmic event that totally altered our planet’s eco-system.

In the post-flood world, aging factors dramatically decreased life-spans to what they are today... The relatively flat tropical paradise that existed before the flood was replaced by extremes in topography (mountains, valleys, and canyons) and harsher temperatures... The enormous water run-off formed today’s oceans... The earth became a harsher planet.

Humorist, Will Rogers, said, “Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects.” And today’s rationalist has made himself ignorant of a global flood. For in addition to the biblical record - historical documentation abounds for the actuality of Noah’s flood. A world-wide deluge is the most universally accepted event in history. Every ancient culture has its account. Not just Hebrews, but the ancient Greeks and Orientals - even the American Indians - all have traditions of a worldwide flood. The stories all vary, but the central ingredients are all similar - the entire earth is flooded with water, animals are saved, and a family is chosen.

Not only does history testify to a global flood, so does geology. God has left evidence for a worldwide deluge in the geological strata of Earth’s crust. Uniformitarians claim Earth’s fossil-filled layers were laid down over long periods of time, but the evidence contradicts this belief. The strata show that all Earth’s mountain tops were at some point in the past underwater. Sedimentary rock and marine fossils are found near the summits. Even volcanoes show they were formed under water. All sedimentary rock, which is throughout the Earth’s crust, were formed by the deposit of material after transportation through water.

Just the basic formation of a fossil flies in the face of uniformitarian notions. A bird doesn’t fall to the ground and just become fossilized. Neither does a fish fall to the ocean floor and turn into a fossil. A dead carcass gets eaten by other animals - or deteriorates and blows away in the wind - or dissolves in the water. Fossils don’t form as a result of natural processes over millions of years. An animal’s fossilization requires rapid burial, intense pressure, and immediate compaction. Elements that occur under catastrophic circumstances.

One evolutionist writes, “Many entire skeletons of duck-billed dinosaurs have been excavated in a swimming position with their head thrown back as if in death throes.”

There are countless examples of non-aquatic fossils who died in water. And the evolutionist lacks an explanation. The believer turns to Genesis.

Another amazing evidence for the flood are the 5000 or so woolly mammoths which were frozen and buried in the ice of northern Siberia and Alaska. In several cases undigested, tropical vegetation have been found in the mouths of these mammoths. Two questions rise: *Where did they find tropical plants in the arctic?* And *how did they die so suddenly, before they had time to digest their food?* No natural processes can account for their demise. They were victims of a cataclysm!

When Mount St. Helens erupted in May, 1980 it provided scientists a unique opportunity to study the geological changes that occur under catastrophic conditions. Geologists found that certain geological formations which previously were thought to take thousands of years to form, actually took shape in a few days following the Mount St. Helens blast. It all proves that a global flood is a far better explanation for the geological formation of planet Earth than are uniform processes over millions and millions of years.

Make no mistake about it, God has judged this world before, and there is plenty of evidence to prove it...

Yet the scoffers are not forgetful of God's prior judgment because they have a bad memory, or they're unaware of the evidence... No, when it comes to God's intervention and Noah's flood scientists are deliberately ignorant... As Peter puts it, ***"they willfully forget."***

For if you agree with the biblical record - that God judged the Earth for its wickedness - then you're conceding that there's an authority higher than you, that there's someone else to whom you must answer. You are not your own god after all. Peter says, ***"Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts..."*** The problem is not *logic*, but *lust*.

And **if you admit God judged the Earth before; then you're agreeing He'll judge the Earth again.**

And this is what Peter tells us will happen in verse 7, ***"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."***

Our physical world consists of trillions and trillions of atoms, and each atom contains a nucleus made up of positively-charged protons and neutrally-charged neutrons. If

you know your physics you realize that Coulomb's Law states that like charges repel, while unlike charges attract. *So how do the protons in each atom hold together?* Physicists call it the atomic glue, *what is it?* Scientists don't know. But the Bible is exact!

Hebrews 1:3 tells us Jesus is *"upholding all things by the word of His power."* Here we're told the heavens and Earth are being *"preserved by the same word."* And that word is Jesus! He's the atomic glue that binds the positive charges in the nucleus of every atom.

And the universe is being *"preserved"* for a day of reckoning. It's being *"reserved"* for a coming judgment.

Verse 8 tells us, *"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* Don't get frustrated that Jesus Christ ascended to heaven 2000 years ago, and we haven't seen Him since! Jesus is not marching to our drumbeat. He's not on our clock.

To an eternal God time is relative. God lives outside of time. He's not subject to time as we are. Peter tells us that to God, up against eternity, a thousand years is as twenty-four hours. It's no big deal!... It was Albert Einstein that advanced the theory of relativity. He identified time as a physical property, like light and energy. Einstein proved mathematically the closer you get to the speed of light the more time slows down.

If we jumped on a light beam traveling into space we would sail passed the moon in 1.25 seconds - passed the Sun in 7.5 minutes - the planet Neptune in 14 hours. But it would take us 100,000 years to leave our galaxy, the Milky Way - and you wouldn't make it to the next galaxy, Andromeda, for another 1.5 million years.

Now let's say you road that light beam to the next galaxy and back. You would be gone 3 million years, but based on Einstein's theory you'd actually be only a few hours older. Time is relative to the speed of light. And God is light! So for God, time is a non-factor.

Once a man read this verse, and prayed, *"God, is it true that to You a thousand years is as one day?"* God replied him, *"Yes."* He prayed again, *"God, is it true that to You a thousand dollars is like one penny?"* Again God answered, *"Yes."* So the fellow asked, *"Well then, can I have a penny?"* God said, *"Sure, just a second."*

Peter concludes in verse 9. **God is no slacker.** *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that*

any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Did you hear about the Martians who visited earth? They flew their saucers right into the Vatican to talk to the Pope. The Pope asked them, *“Do you guys know a person named Jesus Christ?”*

The Martians said, *“Sure, we do. We love Jesus. He’s fantastic. He visits our planet once a year just to hang out.”* The Pope didn’t understand, he said, *“Well, Jesus came to visit us once, but He hasn’t returned for 2000 years.”* The Martians replied, *“He must not have liked your chocolates.”* Again, the Pope didn’t get it, *“What do chocolates have to do with anything?”* The Martians replied, *“Well, when Jesus visits us we roll out the red carpet. We give Him praise and celebrate His coming. We even give Him a box of chocolates. **What did you guys give Him?”*** This planet crucified Jesus!

Yet, that’s not why He hasn’t returned. In fact, *Jesus’ motivation is just the opposite!* Rather than hold a grudge against us, for 2000 years He’s been long-suffering and patient. He’s giving folks as much time as possible to repent of their sin and surrender their lives to His rule. **The Lord’s delay is because of His love.**

Repentance is the desire to start over. It’s not within our power to change ourselves and begin again. We need God to work a miracle in our hearts. But we repent when we provide Him **the desire to start over.**

From that point onward God takes over. Repentance is the key that opens the door for God to begin His work in our lives of saving, and healing, and helping.

The reason Jesus doesn’t loosen His grip, and let this universe go up in smoke is the same reason He gripped the cross, and allowed them to drive nails into His hands. He loves people, and holds out hope that at some point they’ll humble themselves - turn from their sin – and ask Him to begin a new work in them.

Two kids were admiring a rainbow when one girl stuck her head between her legs, and looked at it upside down. She told her friend, **“Look at a rainbow this way and you can see God smile.”** Since God’s first judgment the rainbow has been a symbol of His mercy. He wants to forgive us and start over with each of us.

And I love Jesus! I long to see His face. Living in this wicked world grieves us, and we often pray for Jesus to come quickly. But let’s admit if we had our way, and Jesus had returned when we wanted Him to, some of you wouldn’t be going with us. *If Jesus had come five years ago how many of you would be left out?* God is patient *not wanting any to perish, but all to repent.*

And if waiting a few more moments means a few more souls can be saved and be raptured; the wait will be worth it. Let’s not despise the Lord’s long-suffering.

At Jesus' first coming He came to save us, which is still His goal. But when He returns He'll bring judgment. And Peter tells us how that judgment will play out...

Verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." The first time God judged this wicked world He did so with water. But the second time He'll judge the Earth with fire. Some people read the phrases "great noise" as the *whistle* of a *missile*. And "fervent heat" as the detonation of a nuclear warhead.

But I believe when God judges the world it'll be an act of His own hand... As we mentioned in verse 7 the universe is being "preserved" by Jesus - everything is being held together by Him - Peter says, "reserved for fire." Yet one day Jesus will loosen His atomic grip and the physical universe we live in will incinerate. You've heard the expression, "It's all going to burn." *Well, it is!*

And in light of that day, we need to do two things. He told us to **repent**, but second, he tells us to **prepare!**

We're told in verse 11, "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness..." *Certainly, not a materialistic person!* This physical world is about to be dissolve, we need to live for the world beyond.

Once a tourist was traveling in Israel when he had the opportunity to visit a famous rabbi. To the tourist's amazement when he entered the rabbi's home all he saw was a table, a lamp, and a cot. He asked, "*Rabbi, where's the rest of your furniture?*" The rabbi replied, "*Where's your's?*" He replied, "*My furniture, but I'm just a guest.*" The wise rabbi answered, "*So am I.*" And we all are. Always remember, this world is not our home.

The world we live in is headed for judgment, we're headed for heaven... This world is destined for a melt down, we're destined for glory... This world will be dissolved, we'll find ultimate fulfillment... This world will be judged for its evil, we'll be rewarded for our good...

Jesus is coming again to judge this wicked world, and we need *to prepare* ourselves to meet Him. You and I need to be wholly devoted to Jesus.

We should be "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with

fervent heat?" We should live looking for Jesus! Peter even says we can "**hasten**" the Lord's return. What a provocative thought - *we can speed it up!*

Once, while waiting for the church bus to return from the Junior High Retreat, a fellow father in our church, and myself, were trying to guess how late the group would be. He had an interesting insight. He said, "**We need to factor in that the driver is coming home. Because when you head home you drive a little faster.**" It's true. The desire to get home hastens your arrival.

And Peter says we can hasten the Lord's return, *but how?* Well, Romans 11:25 tells us that the end times events won't begin "**Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**" Implied is a set number that'll be saved.

Apparently, the Lord is looking for the last person to get saved, and when that set number is reached, the Father will say to the Son, "**Go get them.**" That means every person we lead to Jesus gets us one person closer to His return. Think of it, the last sinner to be saved may work on your job site, or in your office cubicle, or is in your class. Thus, the more we share our faith we can speed up - or "**hasten**" - Jesus' return.

Verse 13, "**Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**" The world we live in still bears the curse of sin. It's subject to randomness and decay. But one day, this universe will melt with fervent heat, and God will usher in new heavens and a new earth. An *awful end* will lead to a *glorious beginning*.

"**Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless...**" Notice Peter's encouragement to "**be diligent.**" Here's a more common word for us. Instead of "**diligent**" - think sports - think of the term, **hustle!**

We all understand and admire hustle when we see it. The player who *hustles* gives it everything he's got on every play. He leaves it all on the field. If you're a Bulldog fan think Brock Bowers. The kid is non-stop. Like ex-Steelers coach, Chuck Noll once said, "**Good things happen to those who hustle.**" And this is how last days' believers remain in Christ... we need to add some hustle to our faith. Refuse to get sidetracked.

Peter exhorted us in 1:5, "**add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.**" Add to your faith the supplements that cause it to grow stronger. **Add some hustle to your holiness.**

“And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...” Again, God is no slacker. He waits for men and women to be saved, because He passionately loves them - so much so that He sent His only Son to die *in their place for the forgiveness of their sins*.

Think about it, if our Lord Jesus came back today, someone you love would be left behind. You and I can wait a little longer, for a few more souls to be saved.

Peter continues, “As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you...” He says Paul had agreed with his conclusions.

“As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”

If you’ve ever read Romans 9-11, or 2 Thessalonians 2, or 1 Corinthians 11, or other passages from Paul, you too may’ve concluded he was difficult to understand. *If so, don’t worry, you’re in good company, Peter thought so too and said as much!* Apparently, from Peter’s point of view, Paul was a bit complicated. He could churn out some mind-grinding theology. And here, Peter accuses Paul of being hard to understand and as a result prone to being misinterpreted.

Even today there are “*untaught and unstable people*” who “*twist*” Paul’s writings. This word translated “*twist*” means “*to wrench or torture*” - a vivid description of what false teachers do with Scripture. They’ll torture the text - literally, put it on the rack - until it yields the interpretation they hope to derive. The false teacher’s goal is not to understand what the Bible actually is saying, but to make it say what they want it to say.

Notice too, at the end of Peter’s comments about Paul, he equates Paul’s writings - his letters to the churches - to the other books of the Bible. “*As they do also (in) the rest of the Scriptures.*” This is important.

First of all, it’s proof that Peter had a sense that what he and the other apostles were writing was sacred Scripture and should be added to the Hebrew Bible...

And second, that very early in history, the first church had a sense of what they were doing in terms of choosing which books were in and were out. They were already forming the sacred canon of Scripture.

And apparently, Peter had no doubt Paul’s writings should be considered equally inspired. As Peter puts it, “*as they do also (in) the rest of the Scriptures.*”

Verse 17, “**You therefore, beloved...**” Four times in Chapter 3 Peter has referred to his readers by this term of endearment. He’s called them his “**beloved.**”

I would imagine Peter knew this was the last chapter of his last letter to the Church. He knows that soon he’ll be led away to the site of his crucifixion. Tradition says he requested to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy of being crucified like His Lord Jesus.

Perhaps Peter hears the Roman guards coming down the stairs - or the executioner preparing his hammer and nails. Maybe they’ve already summoned him, and he’s asked the officials if he can first finish his letter. *Maybe it didn’t happen that way... maybe it did...*

And if so, Peter is getting a little teary-eyed, not because he’s leaving. This is his graduation day! He’s about to be re-united with His Master. Peter is headed to glory!... But he’s leaving behind those he loves and cares about.... people who are “**beloved**” to Peter.

So he sums up his feelings in verse 17, “**You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked...**” Stay steadfast, persevere, don’t fall away or be led astray...

“**But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**” Peter’s counsel is to have both a **good defense** and **good offense**... Beware of falling into error. There’re smooth talkers who wrench and twist the truth. Beware of “**the error of the wicked.**” But as you do, continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. Seek Jesus in season and out of season - in the good times and in the bad times.

You can build and build, but if you don’t protect what’s been built Satan can slip in and lead you to ruin. Or you can always be fighting, looking for the next enemy to pounce on - beating the stuffing out of your straw man - and never build a life worth protecting.

Recall when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls he carried a sword in one hand and a shovel in the other. He built and battled. And that’s how a Christian grows. He **guards** himself against deception and **grows** in grace and knowledge. **Beware** and **be growing!**

Peter closes his letter in verse 18, “**To Him (our Lord Jesus) be the glory both now and forever. Amen.**”

May you and I decrease as Jesus increases.