Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Certainty of the Second Coming, Part 2
Scripture: 2 Peter 3:1-9
Code: 61-24

Turn in your Bible with me, if you will, to 2 Peter chapter 3. We're coming back to part 2 in our series on the certainty of the Second Coming, as we work our way through 2 Peter. To establish again in our minds this wonderful text, I would like to read for you verses 1 through 9.

Second Peter chapter 3 verse 1: "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.

"For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

The final words of the great apostle Paul, I think, express the confident hope that every believer has when, in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, he identified Christians as those who love His appearing. True believers love the appearing of Jesus Christ. That is our hope, that is our desire, that is our ultimate goal and glory. We noted, last time, that the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our hope in that great glorious event becomes the greatest motivator for our joy, the greatest motivator for our service, and the greatest motivator for our holiness. We live in anticipation of the coming of Jesus Christ.

We noted that when He comes He comes to gather His own to Himself. He comes to destroy the wicked, both men and demons. And He comes to set up His kingdom and ultimately to bring in eternal righteousness. That event, really a series of events, is the goal and the purpose and the culmination of the Christian faith. Because it is so crucial, and because our faith culminates in that, Satan works very diligently to deny the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Satan works very diligently to deny future judgment.

We noted, last time, in some detail that the church has always been plagued then by false teachers who deny Christ's return and deny judgment to come. As Peter wrote this epistle, you'll remember he was writing it to help believers overcome false teachers and their false doctrine. As he comes to the third and last chapter in the brief letter, he comes to the climax of his discussion of false teachers, and that is his argument against their denial of the coming of Christ.

We're not surprised that false teachers teach this, since we have learned that it is the greatest motivator for our joy, our service and our holiness. We would assume that the enemy would attack this doctrine. And so we're not surprised that these false teachers representing Satan do that. Nor are we surprised that Peter wants to make a clear argument against them so that we can stand the onslaught of their false teaching in this regard.

Now, last time we looked at their argument, the argument of the scoffers against the Second Coming. And I only want to just sum it up very briefly. They articulate their argument in verse 4 when they say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Basically that's an outright denial that He will return. Where is He? If we're supposed to believe this doctrine of the Second Coming, then where is He? It's a scoffing, mocking denial.

Now, the text reveals that their argument follows three tracts, three forms. First, we said, is the argument from ridicule. In verse 3, it says "In the last days mockers will come with their mocking." Sarcasm, mocking, belittling, demeaning, designating the Second Coming and the judgment of Christ as anti-intellectual.

This is an emotional ploy. It is to be used on people who have been waiting and waiting and Jesus hasn't come, and life is difficult and they are discouraged and they are disappointed. And so the false teaching mocker comes along and assaults their disappointment and their discouragement with the sarcastic mockery of where is His coming? The argument from ridicule that capitalizes on emotional disappointment.

Then there's the argument from morality. The underlying and compelling argument in their false theology is indicated at the end of verse 3, when it says they really are following after their own lusts. You see, the reason they deny the Second Coming is not because they can disprove it scripturally. The reason they deny the future judgment that Christ will bring is not because they have some profound insight into theology. The reason they deny the Second Coming and the reason they deny the judgment of Christ is because they love their sin and they want no ultimate accountability.

They want an eschatology that fits their immorality, to put it simply. The return of Christ means judgment on sinners. The return of Christ then means accountability as to how you live your life. They don't want that accountability. They don't want any judgment to come. So if you love your lust, then

you want no judgment. So you develop an eschatology that fits your immorality.

The third argument, into which we went with some great detail…as the other two…is the argument from uniformity, verse 4. They say, “For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” Their argument is this. There will never be some great cataclysmic judgmental event at the end of history because that’s not how history works. It works in absolutely consistent uniformity and immutable unchanging process.

Everything just goes along the same all the time. There are no cataclysms, there are not massive earth-shaking events, there are no divine invasions, there are no supernatural judgments, everything in the world is a stable, closed, fixed system governed by never varying patterns and principles. Nothing catastrophic ever has happened, so nothing catastrophic ever will happen.

So you have here an emotional argument, you have a moral argument, and then you have an intellectual argument. And this is their revisionist history intellectual argument. Of course, to do this they have to reject the Bible, which they do. They did then. They do now. Liberal theologians who deny the Second Coming of Jesus Christ do so from within the church by basically denying the Bible.

They deny what Jesus said about His return. They deny what Paul and Peter said about His return and what everybody else in the Scripture said about His return. In fact, they tell us that those verses aren’t true. They’re not inspired by God. They have to be demythologized. They’re mythical; we have to get them out of the Bible. So there is the threefold argument of the scoffers who deny the coming of Christ.

Now let’s look at the argument of the saints for the Second Coming. We’ve seen the scoffers’ argument against it. Now, let’s see the argument of the saints for the Second Coming. These are marvelous, just absolutely marvelous as Peter responds to the argument tract and line of the scoffers. The conclusion of Peter’s argument, by the way, is in verse 10, “But the day of the Lord will come.” And you can stop at that point.

That’s the summation. It’s going to happen. You may ridicule it. You may not want it because you want no accountability and you want to live in lust and immorality and sexual freedom. And you may believe in the uniformitarian doctrine of history that says everything continues exactly as it always has. But it’s going to come no matter what you believe, no matter what you want and no matter how you ridicule it.

Now Peter’s going to give us several arguments. Argument number one, argument number one is the argument from Scripture, the argument from Scripture. For this we look at verses 1 and 2. Now this particular section, verses 1 and 2, is really the opening of the chapter, but it fits perfectly into Peter’s polemical scheme. Polemical means argument. And so fitting into his argument beautifully is verse 1

and 2. Look at verse 1. As he starts to get into the subject, he says, “This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.”

Just a few little notes about how that begins. This is now, this is now the second letter, means that there’s a very small period of time between the first and the second letter. That phrase seems to indicate the brief time between letter number one and letter number two. The use of the word “beloved” is typical of Peter as he identifies his pastoral heart, his pastoral concern for these people for whom he cares. When he says the second letter I am writing to you, that’s not too hard to figure out, and yet you would be absolutely astounded if I were to bring in here about ten commentaries and show you about 200 pages in which scholars attempt to discover what is the first letter.

Now I am here to tell you, folks, you don’t even have to be Phi Beta Kappa to figure out when he writes 2 Peter and talks about the first letter he wrote, that must be 1 Peter. But I am amazed at how much effort scholars go to try to show that he didn’t mean 1 Peter at all. He says, “Look, this letter and the first letter I wrote you have the same purpose, I want to stir up.” What does that mean? Awaken, alert, I want to stir up your sincere minds. I want to alert you.

Alert you to what? Well to the potential of the invasion of false doctrine and false teachers and satanic lies. “In order to alert you and awaken you,” he says, “I have to stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder.” There’s some things you already know. You’ve heard them in the past. But you need a new rehearsing, you need a refreshing.

Now, would you notice the little phrase “your sincere mind” for just a moment? It’s a very good commendation. It tells us that Peter believed that his readership were genuine believers. The word “mind” means understanding or thinking. And the word “sincere” means pure, uncontaminated, unmixed by the seductive influences of the world and the flesh. Plato, by the way, used the same phrase “for pure reason.”

Peter is saying, “Look, you’re pure minded. Because you’re genuine believers you have a pure faculty for spiritual discernment and I want to stir up that…that redeemed mind, that pure faculty for spiritual discernment.” By the way, that’s in great contrast to the kind of mind that the false teachers have. The false teachers have a mind that is very, very different. They have a mind that is dark. They have a mind that is depraved. And they have a mind that wallows in sin as he points out in chapter 2.

But the mind of the believer has been purified. We have a pure mind, uncontaminated, unmixed by the seductive influences of the world and the flesh. So he says, “Look, I want to get into that pure mind, that new mind that Christ gave you at salvation and I want to stimulate that new mind, and I want to stimulate the truth that you already know so that your sanctified reason and your spiritual discernment will be able to understand false doctrine and give a proper rebuttal to it. When these false teachers come along and they attack the Second Coming, I want to stir your sincere mind up so

that you can meet that attack head on.? And so he says, “I do this by way of reminder.”

Now of what does he want to remind them? What is the first safeguard? Verse 2, here’s what you need to remember, “You should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets.” Stop right there. That is a reference, beloved, to the Old Testament. “You need to go back and be refreshed in the Old Testament.” The Holy Spirit-inspired Old Testament had much to say about final judgment when scoffers come along. And by the way, they were having some effect or Peter wouldn’t have bothered with this.

They were having some effect and he is saying, “Look, you can’t buy their argument from ridicule. You certainly don’t buy their argument from morality; you don’t want to buy their argument from uniformity, their new kind of history that looks back and says God never invaded history, it’s always been going along the same.” You don’t need to buy those things. And what will help you not to buy into that, first of all, is to go back and rehearse in your mind the Old Testament, which he designates as the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets.

Go back to chapter 1 for a moment. In chapter 1, verse 20, he talks about the Old Testament. He says, “no prophecy of Scripture,” that is the Old Testament, “is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” So you go back and you read those holy prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God because if you go back and read that, you’re going to read about judgment.

By the way, the reason he uses “holy” is very simple. He is contrasting these prophets with false prophets. And just like the first category of prophets, the false ones needed an adjective. So do the true ones, and he chooses the adjective “holy”. The false are unholy, the true are holy. And it’s true. If you go back into the Old Testament and read the words spoken beforehand, long ago, by the holy prophets, you will read about divine coming judgment.

I wish we had the time to do a full study of the Old Testament and all that it says about final judgment. But we don’t. Let me just give you a little flavor. Psalm 50 verse 1, “The Mighty One, God, the Lord, has spoken, and summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth. May our God come and not keep silence; fire devours before Him, and it is very tempestuous around Him. He summons the heavens above, and the earth, to judge.”

Now that’s typical of Old Testament passages. If you were to look into Isaiah’s prophecy and you were to examine chapter 13, you would read in verse 10, “For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man

scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the Lord of hosts in the day of His burning anger."

And over in Isaiah chapter 24 we find another similar passage, chapter 24 beginning in verse 19, "The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard and it totters like a shack, for its transgression is heavy upon it, and it will fall, never to rise again. So it will happen in that day, that the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders." Judgment. And you can go on. Isaiah 30, Isaiah 34, Isaiah 51, Isaiah 64, Isaiah 66, Daniel chapter 7.

But look at some of the minor prophets, just ever so briefly. Look at Micah. Don't bother to look for it if you don't know where it is, I'll read it to you. Micah 1:4, "The mountains will melt under Him, the valleys will be split like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place." Malachi chapter 4, next to the New Testament, the last book in the Old. " 'For behold, the day is coming – ' " chapter 4 says " ' - burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be like chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,' says the Lord of hosts, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.' "

It's coming, it's coming, it's inevitable, so says the Old Testament. Where do we go then to argue for the Second Coming? Where do we go then to argue for the judgment of God at the end? We go, first of all, to the Scripture and first of all in the Scripture to the Old Testament. Go to Zephaniah chapter 1, go to Zephaniah chapter 3, it's everywhere in the Old Testament.

But that's not all. Go back now to 2 Peter chapter 3 and see what else Peter says. Remember, not only the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets, but remember also the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. What's that? That's the New Testament. What is the New Testament? It is the commandment of the Lord and Savior, spoken through the apostles who wrote the New Testament.

Your apostles, those who by virtue of God's marvelous grace belong to you because they gave you the truth, speaking of Christ's chosen, plus Paul, those who wrote the New Testament. So he says, "Study the apostles who wrote the commandments of Christ," which means the New Testament. Now we don't even have time to go into all that the New Testament says about the Second Coming and judgment. Suffice it to give you this information. You ready for this?

There are 27 books in the New Testament; 23 of the 27 refer to the Lord's return explicitly, 23 out of the 27. Three of the other four are only one chapter long. Philemon, 2 John and 3 John. And the fourth one that doesn't explicitly speak of the Second Coming is Galatians, which implies the Second Coming. Very clearly, in fact, is it implied. Galatians 1:4, it says "That Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present evil age." That implies the Rapture and our deliverance. And in chapter 5 verse 5, it says, "We're waiting for the hope of righteousness," which, of course, is the coming of Christ and our eternal glory.

There are 260 chapters in the New Testament, 260. There are 300 references to the Second Coming. The New Testament is replete with warnings about judgment, information about the Lord coming to gather His own, teaching about the fact that He will judge the wicked, establish His kingdom and bring in eternal righteousness. Peter, marvelously, in this second verse pulls the Old Testament and the New Testament together as Scripture.

And his first argument is the argument from Scripture, bearing witness to the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. So while the scoffers may mock, Peter says, "Go to the Old Testament, go to the New Testament. It's everywhere." And if you study the Scripture you find everything you need to know. It tells us that He will come in the clouds, He will come in the glory of His Father, He will come in His own glory, He will come in flaming fire. He will come with power and great glory, He will come as He went, He will come with a shout.

He will come accompanied by angels, He will come with His saints. He will come suddenly, He will come unexpectedly, He will come as a thief. He will come as lightning, the heavens and earth will be dissolved and on and on it goes. It says the purpose of His coming is to complete the salvation of the saints, to be glorified in the saints, to be admired in the saints, to bring delight to hidden things of darkness, to judge, to reign, to destroy. That's only the first argument. Three more.

Argument number two, Peter say the second argument for the Second Coming is the argument from history. I love this. The argument from history, verse 5, follow what he says. Now in verses 3 and 4, which we studied last time, they say, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Peter says, "For when they maintain this," what? This uniformitarian view, this evolutional view that everything just keeps going along at the same pace, and there are no cataclysmic, catastrophic invasions by God and no judgments.

"For when they maintain this," the NAS says, "it escapes their notice that the whole world was drowned," is what he's going to say eventually. But before he says that, "That by the Word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water." And then he says, "Through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water."

Now hold on to your seats, folks, ‘cause you’re going to learn some profound and rich things. When they say, “There will never be a Second Coming because there has never been any cataclysm; there has never been any catastrophe. Everything just goes along as it always has. It escapes their notice.” These people who translated this were very kind, very kind. The Greek says, “They shut their eyes to the facts.” That’s a little different. I love what the Authorized Version, the old King James says, “They are willingly ignorant of.”

It doesn’t escape their notice, they shut their eyes to the facts. Don’t confuse me with the facts. It is deliberate ignorance, deliberate forgetfulness. Why? They love their evil. They love their sin. They love their lust. They don’t desire truth. They don’t desire virtue. So they don’t want a judgment and they don’t want Christ to return, so they develop a system that says He won’t, and that leads them to evolutionary uniformitarianism.

But you know something? They have to shut their eyes to two great historic, cataclysmic events that totally disprove evolution and uniformitarianism. You say, “What are they? What do they shut their eyes to?” First of all, creation, creation. He says they willingly shut their eyes to the fact that by the Word of God, not by uniformitarian evolution, not because there was a one-cell thing in a puddle somewhere that said I think I’ll be two, and off it went. But by the Word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

What he is saying is creation was a cataclysmic invasion by God. Creation was God stepping into the world, not by uniformitarianism, but by cataclysmic, catastrophic, instantaneous, explosive creation. Everything hasn’t gone along the same way, evolving, not at all. By the Word of God, the creating, controlling, sovereign, preserving, power of God creation came.

Now this, of course, is diametrically opposed to the false teachers who don’t want a God, who don’t want a God who is going to judge their sin and so they…if they believe in God and they have to since they’re in the church, they have a God who really isn’t involved. Peter says they forget willingly. Let’s look at verse 5, fascinating. He says, “They forget willingly that the heavens existed long ago.” The heavens were from long ago. Now follow me very carefully. Long ago there were heavens, okay? And these heavens did not exist by evolution. They existed by the Word of God. See that. God spoke them into existence. They were created by God.

And then he makes a fascinating statement. He says, and then after God had created the heavens, He created the earth, and this is how He created it, “The earth was formed out of water and by water.” Did you know that? Did you know that the earth was formed out of water and by water. You say, “What does that mean?” Well, it means that the earth was some kind of a watery chaos at first. So what you had was by the Word of God heavens. The Hebrew word is always plural. And so Peter uses in the Greek the plural word to fit with the Hebrew which is always plural. So when the heavens existed long ago, spoken into existence by the Word of God, at the same time the earth was formed

from some kind of watery mass.

Now, to understand this you have to go back to Genesis 1. Let's go. Genesis 1, and what he says in verse 1 is pretty simple, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Isn't that what Peter just said? He said, "God spoke the heavens into existence and the earth was formed out of some watery mass." And he even tells us about it. This is really marvelous.

Listen to what he says. He says, "And the earth as God began to create it, was at first *tohu* and *bohu* ," two Hebrew words, "formless and empty," a sort of chaotic mass. You say, "What was the mass made of?" Well what did Peter say it was made of? What was it? Water. And it existed in the heavens which is space that was dark. You say, "How do you know it was dark?" Well it says, verse 2, "Darkness was over." We'll stop there.

So here was this formless, shapeless mass of water existing in darkness. By the way, if you study carefully the six days of creation, the first three have to do with giving the form and the second three have primarily to do with filling up the emptiness. For the better part of the first three days, He gives the form, and then He starts to create the creatures starting at the end of day three and moving to day six that fill up the void. So it starts out as formless.

All of a sudden God does something. Look at this, verse 2, "And darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." Now we find out two times, this has got surface, surface. It isn't just the watery mass, it got a surface. If it got a surface it had a shape. God pulled it into a sphere. You have in verse 2 the creation of gravity, holds it in shape by creating gravity. It's in the shape of a sphere. He made the water molecules cling together. And so this mass of water became a sphere.

In fact, in Proverbs 8:27, God says He "inscribed a circle on the face of the deep." It was this formless mass and He made a circle and He used gravity, specially designed, to make that circle and to pull that thing into a shape and the shape was a sphere, the circle of the earth. So you have gravity, you have shape to the watery mass in verse 2. Then verse 3, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." And all of a sudden, there existed light.

There weren't any bodies, there weren't any stars, there wasn't any sun, there wasn't any moon, there was just light. And all of the spectrum, all of the rays that go across the whole spectrum of light were created. All the waves and rays and everything that makes up light.

And then He turned to the earth in verse 6, "And God said let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." What? God says, "I want to do something, I want to take some of the waters in this watery mass and I want to pull them up here, and I want to leave some of them down here in this sphere, and I want to create an expanse in between the two."

So you had the watery mass and then you had an expanse of space, and then you had water like a canopy surrounding it. A canopy around the earth. This describes the heavens that were long ago. God created them. Did the whole thing in a couple of days, not necessarily, exactly 24 hour-days, maybe 23 point something. But God just spoke it into existence. So now what He's got is the heavens that were long ago had light in them. There was a canopy of water above; there was an expanse of space in the middle, and then there was a watery mass with a surface that held together was a sphere. God called the expanse heaven, verse 8. Did all this by day, too.

But He wasn't done. He wasn't done. By the way, you'd be interested to know the Hebrew word for heavens is connected to the Hebrew word for water because the early heavens had water. We understand that now because even our heavens have water. But the canopy was there that surrounded the earth. Verse 9, "Then God said, 'Let the waters below the heavens,'" now what's that? That's the watery mass that's existing in a spherical shape.

"He says, 'Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place and let the dry land appear.' " Voom. And dry land is injected into the watery mass and, all of a sudden, it starts to rise up everywhere and the water gets collected into rivers and lakes and seas. And the earth begins to take shape. The lower waters were collected as God spoke land into existence.

There you have it, He took the *tohu* and *bohu*, gave it shape, pulled some of the water up, surrounded the whole globe with a canopy. Left an expanse of space in between the canopy and the surface. Into the surface of this watery mass, He injected land, moved it into different kinds of altitudes and caused the waters to rush into the great valleys and separated the sea from the land.

And you know what He said about it? God said about it, verse 10, "It's" what? "Good." It was better than good, folks. God is the master of understatement. It was better than good. It was perfect, absolutely perfect. Perfect place for man to live. He had a canopy shelter all around the earth which completely blocked the sun's ultra-violet rays totally. Perfect environment, perfect. And man lived in that world of long ago.

How perfect was it? Read Genesis 5, even after the Fall. Not now, please. It's a genealogy. Oh, you people are obedient. Read it on your own. Go down there and just look at how long everybody lived. The average length of a person's life on that list is 900 years plus, somewhere around 910 years. Why? Because there was no direct sunlight. The canopy covered the earth. There was no rain. There was no sun. There was a mist that watered the ground, it says about the Garden of Eden. The waters in this marvelous canopy filtered all the ultra-violet damaging rays of the sun and beautifully watered the earth with dew, a perfect environment, and people lived 900 plus years as an average.

But even in a perfect environment which had been created by God. Not by uniformitarian evolution, but by direct act of creation in three days. And then the next three He populated it all, He filled up the void, the *bohu*, the “emptiness” with plants and animals and fish and man. But even in that perfect environment, man fell into sin. And God looked at the world and it isn’t very long, He looks at the world in Genesis 6:5 and He saw that wickedness of man was great on the earth and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and He was sorry that He made the whole thing. And He said “I’m going to destroy it.”

How’s He going to destroy it? Well, He’s going to use…He’s going to use the same thing that He created it from to destroy it. What is it? Water. And so, says Peter…go back now to 2 Peter chapter 3. Peter says this, “Not only by the Word of God did the heavens exist long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water – “ but verse 6 “ - through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.” God destroyed the world with the water that surrounded it.

Listen to this. Listen to what I say. God built into His creation the tool of its destruction. Would you please notice, also, Peter says, “Through which the world was destroyed.” He doesn’t say the earth. He’s not talking about the physical world, he’s talking about the world order. It’s partly physical but he’s talking about not just the dirt, because the earth itself did not go out of existence, but the order of the earth. That is a canopy above, the water separated below, the heavens in the middle, long life, all of the dew that waters the ground, the tremendous ability of the earth like a greenhouse to grow everything and to grow it large, and so forth.

And by the way, that’s where the dinosaurs came from. They came from the pre-flood era and they flourished and grew. That old order, that old canopy order, that old system of life was *apollumi*, Greek, it was ruined. It was flooded by water. The word “flooded,” listen to this word, *katakluz*. Sound familiar? Cataclysm. Means to surge over completely, means to inundate. And God basically did that.

How did He do it? Well there’s so much water everywhere it wouldn’t have been hard. Genesis 7:11 says, “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. The canopy broke up and the earth, the springs and the fountains and the sources of water burst, and water came roaring out of the center of the earth, and water came torrentially falling from the sky.

Verse 22 of Genesis 7 tells us of all that was on the dry land, “all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life,” died. He blotted out every living thing on the face of the land or the earth. It was a worldwide flood because it was a canopy that surrounded the whole globe. Chapter 8 verse 2, “The fountains of the deep, the flood gates of the sky at the end were closed when it ended.” God used the water below, bursting forth, overrunning its banks, God sent the water from above crashing down upon the earth. Water came from everywhere. And this was judgment. The whole world was

destroyed.

Don’t say all things continue as they have from the very beginning. No they haven’t. We’re not into uniformitarian evolution. God created all this in three days, less than, actually. And then God in a moment in time destroyed the hold…the whole heavens and earth that was. We now live, my friend, in the second heaven and earth. It’s a different system. Nobody lives to be 900 plus or anywhere near that. Three score and ten, the Bible says. So we’re in heaven and earth two. And we’re waiting for what? New heaven and earth, number three. The false teachers and the uniformitarians willingly ignore the flood.

By the way, it should be a curiosity to you to know that as archaeologists study the world and as those who study ancient culture study the world, they find the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Egyptians all have creation stories that have a primeval ocean as the element out of which the universe originated. So even those pagan countries somehow were influenced by the reality. And many of those people also had a flood, a universal massive flood in their traditional folklore.

If you look at the fossil records today and you look at the strata, it can all be explained by the unbelievable cataclysm of the Flood. It is catastrophe that has made our world what it is, not uniformity. Not uniformity. If you throw a leaf in your backyard, for illustration’s sake, how long does it take to become a fossil? What? It never becomes a fossil. If you throw a leaf in your backyard and some day a massive earthquake comes, your backyard splits and slams back together, you might have a fossil. Catastrophe, not uniformity explains fossil records, strata.

So the false teachers refused to face the true history. They become revisionists, historians. They make up their own history without divine intervention so they can live like they want to live. Things have not continued as they were. There was devastating total judgment on the whole world and there will be in the future.

Look at verse 7. I have to give you this. The present heavens and earth, that’s different than the long-ago one. “The present heaven and earth are by His word reserved for,” what? “Fire,” not water. Remember the rainbow. What did the rainbow signify? God will never destroy the world again by water. So this time it’s being reserved to be destroyed by what? “Fire, kept for the judgment, the day of judgment, and the destruction of ungodly men.”

The present world system then, is reserved for future judgment, and that future judgment will come by the word of God just as the past judgment came and just as the creation came. God will speak it into existence. He is the creator and He is the destroyer. Only the next time He’ll do it by fire. It is reserved for fire. The word “reserved,” treasured up, *thsauriz*, from which we get thesaurus, a treasury, stored up.

The world is waiting the destruction of fire. Once water, next time fire. And when you read about the future judgment of the world, when you read about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, you very often read about fire, don't you? In Isaiah 13, it says, "When the final Babylon is destroyed it will be destroyed as were Sodom and Gomorrah." How were they destroyed? By fire and brimstone.

The prophet Isaiah, again, who had so much to say about judgment and so much to instruct us, says in 66:15, "For behold the Lord will come in fire and His chariots like the whirlwind to render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire," Isaiah 66:15. Again, Malachi 4:1 fire; Micah 1:4 fire; Daniel 7:9 and 10 fire. Matthew 3:11 and 12, John the Baptist said He's coming and He's coming with fire. Second Thessalonians 1 verses 7 and 8 is so graphic, listen to what it says, "When Jesus comes He'll be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire." Next time fire.

Now, we understand how that can happen. The sky isn't full of water anymore, it's full of fireballs, isn't it? It's full of flaming fire, stars, sun. The fire could come from up, down. There's another way the fire could come, too, and that's through the splitting of the atom, a nuclear holocaust would incinerate the earth and heavens, wouldn't it? Once a chain reaction begins that splits the atom, it could destroy the whole universe in an unbelievable, undescribable holocaust of fire.

The fire could come from beneath. The core of the earth is filled with fire, the temperature of which is 12,400 degrees Fahrenheit and there's a thin ten-mile crust that separates us from it. Every once in a while it belches out and we see what the fire is like, molten lava. By the way, that's hot enough to melt everything. The highest melt point of any metal known is tungsten. It melts at 6,500 degrees; 12,400 will melt anything.

So whether it's the fireballs out of the sky or whether it's the unbelievable nuclear reaction that destroys the whole universe, or whether it's the belching forth of fire from inside the earth, the earth sits in the midst of fire. Why? It is kept there, held there for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Now, keep that in mind, that word "ungodly," that's nice to see there. When God flooded the world He spared the godly, how many were there? Eight. Noah, his wife, three sons, their wives. God has a book, Malachi says, and He writes the names of those who belong to Him in it. And when He comes in judgment by fire, it's going to be for the ungodly, not for us. So when this whole world goes up in smoke, this whole universe is burned to a crisp, we're not going to be around.

We will be delivered out before the day of the Lord judgment ever hits. That judgment, by the way, will destroy this universe and out of it will be born the new heavens and the new earth. He mentions them. Look at verse 12 for a moment, he says, "The heavens are going to be destroyed by burning, the elements are going to melt with intense heat, and after that we will look for a new heavens and a

new earth in which only righteousness dwells." Wow.

There's one other argument I need to give you briefly. That's the argument from eternity. We've seen the argument from Scripture, the argument from history, quickly, the argument from eternity. Verse 8, "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as if a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day," quoting Psalm 90 verse 4. What's he saying? Well somebody is going around saying, "Well, I mean, He doesn't come. Well, why is He waiting?" Peter says, "Why don't you look at it from God's side? From your viewpoint it looks like a long time, from His viewpoint, no."

What he's saying there is not an attempt for us to calculate the one thousand or the one, but what he is simply saying is an illustration of the fact that God looks at time differently than we do, right? That's the argument from eternity. You can't confine God to your schedule. You say, "I'm trying to fit it into my Day-Timer. But I don't know where to put it, it's been so long." He says, "Don't let this one fact escape your notice, beloved."

What he is indicating there is some of these Christians have been sucked in to the false teachers' reproach that God never does anything because He's impotent or indifferent, and the delay is so long maybe He can't act, maybe He won't act. And so he says, "Look, while you're looking at time one way, God is looking at it in a totally different way. For you it's been two thousand years, for God it's been a couple of days, that's all, that's all." And there's something more in that verse that's so rich and so helpful and so wonderful, but I'll have to show you that when we get into the next section of the passage because that's where it ties in.

One last argument, the argument from the character of God. He says the certainty of the coming of Christ can be argued from Scripture, from history, from eternity's view, and fourthly, from the character of God. This is wonderful. Verse 9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Do you know why there's the delay? It's not because the Lord is slow about His promise. It's not because He's not keeping His promise. It's not because He's unfaithful to His Word. It's not because He doesn't tell the truth, it's not because He's impotent, it's not because He's indifferent, it's not because He's just busy doing something else as some men count slowness.

That's a sad statement because that means that some Christians apparently were buying the false teachers' lies that God was delaying out of indifference, or impotence or unwillingness. Some men might think that. But the reason He's delaying is not impotence and indifference, the reason He's delaying is patience for people to repent. Do you see that? He's long suffering.

You remember 1 Peter 3:20, hr wrote about the patience of God in the days of Noah. How long did it take Noah to build the boat? One hundred and twenty years and the whole time he preached righteousness, God was so patient, so patient. Down in verse 15, see what he says? “The patience of our Lord leads to salvation.” It’s because He doesn’t want anyone to perish, but He wants all to come to repentance that He waits.

There’s much more to say about that verse and we’ll say it next time. But those are pretty strong arguments, aren’t they, to cause us to believe in the certainty of the coming of Christ. God is using His time to express His patience for His grace that people might be saved. When the fullness of the Gentiles comes in and the last person is saved, He’ll gather His church. His patience has ended. Judgment comes. Let’s bow together in prayer.

Father, thank You for giving us these 50 minutes together to study Your Word and again be refreshed in the validity of the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Oh how we long for that day. We feel it could be near. To that end we pray that He might be exalted and we might be joined to Him in eternal fellowship. We pray in His dear name. Amen.

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