

Forgotten the Future?

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[0 : 0 0] Our reading this morning is from 2 Peter and it's chapter 3 which you'll find on page 1223 in the Bibles in front of you.

2 Peter chapter 3. Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you.

I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, where is this coming he promised?

Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. But they deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

[1 : 1 1] By these waters also, the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

[2 : 1 4] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him.

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction.

Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord's and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To him be glory, both now and forevermore. Amen. Very much indeed. And what a joy it has been for myself and the team to be here for the weekend.

[3 : 30] In fact, we think we want to stay. If you could have us, we'd be very happy to join this church and move in, and we could live up there in the organ or something like that. But what a joy, particularly today, to witness what we've witnessed.

Amy and Arthur, what a delight. What a real joy. I actually find it quite emotional to see people who have come from another part of the world, to hear the good news of the Lord Jesus.

And what a great testimony to the church family here, how you were cared for, how you were shared with you, how the gospel was shared, the good news of the Lord Jesus. This is just so wonderful.

And I bring greetings from all saints, our church family back in Belfast in Northern Ireland. This is a Belfast accent. I do apologize. As I said earlier on, I haven't heard many Scottish accents amongst you.

And that is both good and a bit unnerving, because the Scottish that I have heard, I've found to be, well, maybe not awfully authentic Scottish. I think of, okay, the new, that sort of Scottish accent, which is not real, is it?

[4 : 34] I'm also delighted that Martin has many people looking after him. His wife looks after him and keeps him organized. I've noticed his daughters keep him organized and going the right direction.

One jumped up here just as the baptism was happening. I thought they were quite concerned for their father. But it's just to remind them to say something like to invite the kids up. So I'm glad that he, but thank you, Martin, for the invitation for this weekend, and that we've been able to be part of your church family.

I didn't stay for the Kili last night, but the team did stay, and they had a great time. So I think that's another reason why we want to stay here, live here. Is that all right? It'd be great if you had a Bible near you.

And if you turn back to that Bible reading, for those of you who haven't been here this past weekend, we've been in this letter, this short letter, this three-chaptered letter, of a man called Peter, who was a follower and a knower of Jesus.

He was a disciple of the Lord Jesus. He had been a fisherman, but his whole life was turned upside down by the Lord Jesus because Jesus said to him, come on, follow me. Peter was quite the character.

[5 : 39] And this is his second letter to those whom he had already written to. In the first letter, you want to find out what he's about? Well, you can read what he's about in 1 Peter.

This is his second letter, and because he knows that death is imminent, he puts all of the things in it that they should know. He deals with the past in this letter.

He deals with the present in this letter. And in this third part of this letter, this short letter, three chapters, he deals with the future.

He writes in it all the things that he needs to leave with those whom he's loved, those whom he's shared Jesus with, because he knows that for him, death is imminent. So as we get into this third chapter, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for your word, that you love us so much that you've given us Jesus, that also you've given us his word. Father, we pray that we would hear it, understand it, build our lives upon it, Lord, that you would shape our daily priorities from it.

[6 : 42] We pray help us now in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. I think we're all influenced by this. No matter where we've come from, we're all influenced by this.

Whether we're European, Western, from the global South, we are all influenced by this. It is a bit of a common influence, I think. For some, it's more than others.

But even if we haven't lived in places where this is the absolute dominant influence, worldview, we are a bit drawn in by it.

Well, what is that worldview? It is the worldview that all that there is, is all that you can see, all that you can measure, all that you can touch, that there's nothing beyond that.

The system is called materialism. The view is called materialism. And that is the dominant worldview, certainly, of my world, the world that I'm from.

[7 : 45] And so if that is the view, well, you're going to live like that. You're going to live for here and now, for the things that you can see, for the things that you can measure, for the things that you can touch, for the things that you can own.

Of course, you're going to live like that. And it is fueled, of course, by the view that there is no God, that there's nothing beyond the grave, that there's nothing beyond this world.

Maybe you've come here for the first time, perhaps, certainly for the first time to this kind of gathering, this kind of event. And maybe you've come with that view, that that's been the dominant view occupying your mind and your life.

I think this bit of the Bible should perhaps, just for a moment, stop you in your tracks, where you think, hang on, this thing that's happened to Amy and Arthur, these people who've looked at this over this past weekend, we've been stuck here since yesterday morning.

We did get home last night, but most of us have been stuck here since yesterday morning, looking at chapter one and chapter two, page 1222 and 1223 in those Bibles that are in front of you.

[9 : 06] We've been here, and this church family, these people who've been here, are trusting this stuff, listening to this stuff, and building their lives on it, shaping their worldview, shaping their entire lives, giving their everything to this message.

So just for a moment, if you've never been before, you've never opened the Bible before, been a Bible flipper or whatever before, just have a look, have a listen to this. Because there might be something in this that will make you think.

Materialism is the dominant worldview. And even though you may not articulate it like that, perhaps that is how you're living. Well, chapter three, verse one.

And if you have one of these little handouts, you'll see in the inner panel, the first inner panel, you'll see the outline for what I'm saying this morning. And you have indeed in this chapter, the past, the future, and the present.

So all of time is here. So, first one. Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. Remember I said there's 1 Peter, this is 2 Peter, his second letter?

[10 : 18] I've written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

These words have already appeared, or these ideas have already appeared. In chapter one, you remember at the very end of that first chapter, you see that on the left-hand side of your Bibles, page 1222, verse 20.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about but the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So the word prophet has already appeared. The idea has already appeared. And he picks this up here in verse 2 of chapter 3 on the right-hand side of your Bibles. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

The apostles are those authorized messengers of Jesus who bring the truth about Jesus. Peter's one of them. Paul was one of them who wrote the majority of the New Testament. James was another one of them.

[11 : 22] So we have these words. So you can trust this stuff. It's the horse's mouth, if you like. So what did it say?

Well, verse 3. Above all, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come scoffing and following their own evil desires.

This ought not to be a surprise to those who are receiving this letter. But for some of them, clearly they were surprised and shook, shaken.

They will say, these scoffers, we don't know exactly who they are, but you might be able to identify with what they say in these words. They will say, where is this coming?

He promised. And thank you to the reader for getting the emphasis in this. Where is this coming? He promised. Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning.

[12 : 24] Maybe you've heard this kind of thing. You've been a Christian for a while and you've tried to share the good news of Jesus with people around you. And you say, yes, there will be a day when everything will end, everything will conclude.

There will be that day and they say back to you, yeah, yeah, today is like yesterday and tomorrow will be like today. There will be no change.

There is no end. There's no, your words really aren't true. The message that you're believing isn't true. But Jesus promised that he would come back again.

The Bible tells us that. Jesus will come back again and everything will end. Everything will complete. Jesus will return.

As he came first, one time, promised, he will come a second time. And that is a basic claim of Christians.

[13 : 31] That Jesus will return. But of course, if you're a materialist, if you think that all that there is is all that you can see, well, you'll reject that.

You'll reject that idea. It's impossible. There's nothing beyond this world. Where is this coming?

He promised. Ever since her ancestors died, everything has gone on since the beginning. So how does Peter retort?

How does he come back? How does he build the Christians to whom he's writing? Well, he brings them back to the Word, to the Bible.

He brings them back to the major, big claims of the Bible. And he goes right back to the very start of the Bible. He says, verse 5, there, that is the scoffers.

[14 : 31] Now the scoffers may be within the church. They may be outside the church. We don't know where they are, exactly their location, but that doesn't really matter. We know that there are false teachers, chapter 2, within the church, who were, through their own, well, willful denial, preaching and teaching and causing the Christians to doubt what they believed.

So those false teachers very definitely within the church had infiltrated the church. Maybe some of the scoffers also had infiltrated the church. Or there might have been outside the church.

There might have been those who, well, just thought, well, Christians, you are daft, really. Stop believing that stuff.

Don't be so ridiculous. You could almost hear a Richard Dawkins say this, couldn't you? Don't be so daft. Don't be ridiculous.

Everything will just go on, roll on, roll on, roll on. But they, scoffers, deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

[15 : 51] If you're not a Christian here this morning, what do you think about the universe? Its origins. I mean, where do you go?

What do you think? These scoffers, the issue with them was that they were deliberately forgetting. They were deliberately forgetting that God spoke and everything came into existence.

When you go right back to the very start of the Bible, right back to the start of the story, how does God make things? Is it like baking a cake with pre-existing ingredients?

No, he just spoke and it happened. Let there be light and there was light. Let there be monkeys and there were monkeys.

They deliberately forget, they deliberately ignore, they deliberately, notice, notice, they deliberately, they deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

[17 : 00] Now, you can read all this at the start of the Bible. Verse 6, by these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. Remember the story of Noah? The story of Noah, great wickedness on the earth and God in his judgment causes destruction.

Verse 6, these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. God is so powerful, so powerful, he's able to do this. Deluged and destroyed.

By the same word, notice this emphasis on his word, the speaking God, the true and the living God has spoken. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

This is what happened in the past. And the scoffers are deliberately forgetting what has happened.

Deliberately forgetting their origins. I mean, where do they come from? What answer will they give? That's the past.

[18 : 19] We have the future from verse 8, 9, 10. Here is Peter's reason as to why everything hasn't been wrapped up yet, as to why Jesus hasn't returned yet.

Verse 8, do not forget this one thing, dear friends, and he quotes a psalm here, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And then Peter extrapolates a lot, a bit here, and a thousand years are like a day.

Our concept of time is not God's concept of time. Of course, how could it be?

How could it be? We live from this perspective. We see from this perspective. God sees from his perspective, and his perspective is, well, listen to it here, a day is like a thousand years.

Now, try and get that into your head. As far as God is concerned, as far as he sees timelines, a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day.

[19 : 36] We have no concept. We have no concept of God's timings. We have a clue and an insight here that God does not work to our time scales.

The Lord, a day is, with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. We see God's sovereignty, God's powerfulness, in his perspective.

A day is like a thousand years, a thousand years is like a day. We hear his strength in his patience. Verse 9, the Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, understand slowness.

Instead, he is patient, not wanting anyone to perish. Imagine, imagine that, when did you arrive in Glasgow? September, was it?

[20 : 46] Imagine had God ended everything before Amy and Arthur had an opportunity to repent. Imagine. You see, our impatience would insist now, God.

But God says no, in his patience, there are many, many, many others drawn from around the world who need to be gathered around the throne, around the Lamb on that last day.

Those drawn from every nation who speak every language from every nation on a micro scale, every tribe on a micro scale. around my throne and that hasn't happened yet.

That's why God has not sent Jesus back. This might even be the day that you repent. This might even be the time that you repent.

That this all hasn't happened yet for you. In God's patience, he's not slow. We think, come on, hurry up.

[21 : 56] I mean, as we think of the world, as we think of the destruction in the world and the difficulties in the world and the abuses in the world and the wars of this world and all those kinds of things, we might think, oh, please, Lord. But no, there are those to be drawn from different parts.

Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. It might be you. God's strength is shown in his patience.

But don't think that it will never come. Don't think that it will not come. Don't think that his patience will allow the thing to go on forever because, verse 10, there will be a suddenness around whenever it does come.

These are words of Jesus'. Now, there aren't quote marks around here, but we know the ideas are from Jesus. Peter has clearly heard these words from the Lord Jesus. The day of the Lord will come, verse 10, the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

I don't know whether you've ever had a burglary. I mean, we've been burgled twice. And had we known, had we known that it was going to happen, we would have left out some supper for the burglar or maybe had the heat on for him.

[23 : 24] I'm saying him, I'm assuming, him, her, him, her. We would have, you know, set out some cheese, maybe, some wine, something like that. You know, come on in. We're very warm and hospitable people like you are in Glasgow here.

Us Belfast people are very warm and hospitable and very welcoming, that kind of thing. Had we known, had there been some kind of notice, you know, like a wee letter or an email even or a text, something like that, you know, it would have been, you know, we might have left the door open for him instead of him wrecking the door or kicking it in.

The secret of a successful burglary, the modus operandi of a successful burglar is their lack of notice.

Their lack of notice. Like a thief. We don't have in the night here, that's, we read that in the Gospels, the death, the Lord will come like a thief.

The heavens will disappear with the roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. This will happen when we're least expecting it, when we're least waiting for it.

[24 : 39] And of course, Peter, as he's facing his end, he wants those whom he's serving in these letters to be well aware that it will happen and not to let the scoffers throw them.

Not to let the scoffers confuse them. This is pretty big stuff. This is life-changing, particularly whenever you read about what will happen to all the things, all the material things that we value and need live for.

Because it wouldn't make sense really to live for them in the light of what will happen to them. the heavens will disappear with the roar.

Everyone will know. The elements will be destroyed by fire. This is global warming on a universal scale and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

The G7 meeting in Japan that's happening ought to pay attention to this kind of thing. This is probably the most important document that should be in front of them.

[25 : 56] Everything God will come back. Everything will be destroyed. The elements will be destroyed by fire. Earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

So the question is why are you living for these things? Why are you building your life and spending your energies and spending your time and giving all of your attention focus on a daily life to the things that will be destroyed?

That's in the future. The promise from the past. What about the present?

How should we now live? Well verse 11. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? Listen to the things that will last beyond this day of the Lord.

the things that will go into eternity, the things that we ought to be building our lives upon. Since then everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

[27 : 09] You ought to live holy and godly lives. Remember chapter 1? All those characteristics in those first few lines? God's days? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by far and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward. Now the materialist would say, we're looking forward to the grave.

Bertrand Russell, British philosopher, when I die, I rot. He was a materialist. That's all that there is.

Nothing more, nothing beyond. That's it. That's where the materialist would stop. We're looking forward to nothing.

How miserable. We're looking forward to, Peter says, Christian, you and I are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

[28 : 24] The place that there will be no sin, sickness, sadness, no tears even. The book of Revelation explains all of this for us. Where there will be nothing, there will be nothing that will be a blight on the new heavens and the new earth.

So then, verse 14, dear friends, since you're looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. In contrast to the false teachers of chapter 2.

Not to have spots, not to have blame, rather be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. God's word is eternal.

Christ is eternal. God's people are eternal. Spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience, hear that word again, God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

This is your opportunity. Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him.

[29 : 44] There's a bit of a spat between Peter and Paul. You can read about that in, for example, Galatians or the book of Acts. You can do some research on that whenever you go home, find a Bible that might help you with that. Bit of a spat between them, and Peter was the one who was in the wrong.

Peter was holding back, holding back from sharing fellowship with those who'd become Christians with Gentile backgrounds, not eating with them, holding back for fear of the circumcision party.

And Peter was well rebuked by Paul. Was he one of the unstable people that he mentions here in verse 16? Peter, that is. Is this semi-autobiographical?

He writes the same, this is Paul does. Notice Peter's treating Paul's words as scripture. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters.

His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort as they do the other scriptures to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away from the error of lawless and fall from your secure position, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[31 : 06] To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. How does he want them to live? He's going to die. How does he want them to live?

He wants them, chapter one, to live confident Christian lives. Chapter two, he wants them to live secure lives in the truth of the gospel.

Chapter three, he wants them to live lives that will not be all about the material world. Rather, to look forward and to wait for the Lord Jesus, to build their lives on that fact that Jesus Christ is coming back again.

Now, I don't know whether you're a Christian here this morning and what you think of this stuff, but let me just say, God made everything. But we've rebelled against God.

We've said, no, God, I don't want to live your way. I'm going to live life my way. And God is perfectly within his right to judge us out of his justice for that.

[32 : 15] Rather, out of his love, mercy, kindness, he sent a savior, a rescuer, Jesus, his son, who willingly bore everything that I've done wrong, my rebellion, my saying to God, no, you're not my king.

He bore that. He died. He was punished for that. And I, you, can be made right with the true and the living God simply by saying, sorry.

Thank you, Jesus, for doing what you did for me, for dying for my sin. I am sorry. Please help me to live with you as my king forever.

Verse 18, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Jesus. When you have said this to the Lord Jesus, when you've said, I am sorry, please forgive me. Verse 18, there's growth in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. The true scriptural source of consolation in the face of all that troubles us is to keep steadily before our eyes the second coming of Christ.

[33 : 36] We must grasp and realize the blessed fact that the rightful king of the world is returning soon and shall have his own again. And he shall put down that old usurper, the devil, and take away the curse from off the earth.

Let us cultivate the habit of daily looking forward to the resurrection of the dead, the gathering together of the saints, the restitution of all things, the banishment of sin and sorrow, and the reestablishment of a new kingdom of which the rule shall be righteousness.

So said a bishop in the 1800s. This is how we're to live. Knowing that this world is not all that there is, that Christ is coming back again.

And we're to build our lives and invest in the things that will last beyond the grave. For a church that means seeing more Amys and Andrews coming to know the Lord Jesus.

For you, it might be that today is the day that you say, Lord Jesus, please forgive me. It might be for you that you think, well look, here's something I need to be giving of myself to.

[34 : 49] And we'll get stuck into the life course, or you get stuck into telling people in your course, or in your office, or in your neighborhood about the Lord Jesus, and saying, look, Jesus is coming back.

Look, get ready. And here's the way to get ready. That might be the way you spend your time. time. You invest in the things that will last beyond the grave.

It's been a real delight to have been with you over these 24 hours or so. Thank you so much for the privilege. I'm going to pray now, and what I'm going to do is I'm going to pray that some of these things we would take into our hearts that God would make them alive to us as he's spoken through his word.

I'm also going to pray within the prayer, just a very simple prayer that you might want to pray that says, Lord Jesus, please forgive me.

I know I've sinned. Thank you for your death on the cross. Please help me to live with you as my king forever. So we'll take a moment. And so we pray.

[36 : 10] Heavenly Father, thank you so much for sending the Lord Jesus to die for my sin. I am sorry that I have not lived with you as my king. Please forgive me.

Thank you for Jesus' death on the cross where he willingly bore my sin. Thank you for the promise of forgiveness.

Please help me live with you as my king. Father, we thank you for these words. we thank you that this world is not all that there is.

We pray that we would not live for this world, knowing that there is an eternal home in the new heavens and the new earth for those who trust in you.

Lord, we pray that we would live for that, investing our time, turning around our priorities. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

[37 : 16] Amen.