

2 Peter 3 Bible Study

Launch: What different views are there about how (or if) this world will come to an end? Can you identify any links between how a particular view of the end affects how people live now?

1 **Read 2 Peter 3:1-10.** Recall that Chapter 2 was focussed on false teachers (cf. 2 Peter 2:1-3). What specific false teaching does Peter focus on in Chapter 3? Have you ever heard anyone say such things? And/or, have you ever had that feeling/doubt yourself?

- They are saying that Jesus isn't going to return.
- This world just keeps on going as it always has. (have you ever felt like that?!)

2 How does Peter assure his readers that Jesus will return? Taking the example of the flood (verses 5-7), how does Peter compare the flood with the coming day, and how does he contrast the two (cf. v10,12)?

- God's continual (and reliable) word has said so – OT, Jesus, NT apostles. (v2).
[note, v6 is probably best understood as “by these (=his word, and by water)”, not “by these (waters)”. The word ‘waters’ is not there, and in looking back to v5, and the context, it seems best to see “these” as being “word” and “water”.
- God has stepped into his creation to bring judgement and destruction before (v6). That is the **comparison** with the flood. God judged the ungodly with the flood, and at the same time ‘destroyed’ the world. So, there's no reason to believe he won't/can't do it again.
- In **contrast**, the next time he does this, it will be with fire, not water. Implying a more complete process (e.g. water is good for **cleansing**, but fire can **refine** the hardest substance). v10 shows a more complete end to this earth as we know it (and the final revelation of all things done on this earth).

3 Why has God taken so long to bring this about? (cf. Psalm 90:1-4). What implications does this have for Christians in the meantime?

- God is being patient. He is allowing for more people to be saved (cf. v15a).
- He is not being slow (as we understand it). This period of waiting is compared in Ps90 to a ‘watch in the night’. See how God is outside of time (before the mountains were formed...). In his eternal nature, 2000 years is a blip on the radar.
- Implication? Priority of evangelism. Patience... we may have to suffer for a while in this life, but God is doing something significant, and of eternal significance... that our suffering will pale into insignificance in the eternal view. That said, it is okay to cry to God ‘How Long’ (Psalm 13; Rev 6:10?) as we long for this day.
- [The statement that “God desires that none should perish, but everyone come to repentance’ (v9) may raise questions for some. If that's God's desire, why isn't it the case? Can't he bring about his will? There's lots that can be said on this. Here's an article by John Piper that might help: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/are-there-two-wills-in-god> But in summary, God's desire is that none should perish. God is love, and does not delight in the destruction of people. But he does not force us to repent (i.e. we are not robots). He has done everything for us, and Jesus' death is for all (in accordance with his character and ultimate desire). But, in his wisdom, God has ordained that he will be most glorified in punishing those who continue to rebel against him and reject his free gift of forgiveness]

4 **Read 2 Peter 3:11-18.** Peter sees a strong link between the truth of Jesus' return and how we live now. List all the imperatives (commands/exhortations) that Peter gives in this section. Which of these are you conscious of doing? Which ones could you be more focussed on?

- Live holy and godly lives (looking forward to the day)
- Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace (with him). [implied at peace with God, but can include at peace with others too]
- [bear in mind God's patience means salvation] – i.e. perspective when the wait feels hard. (not strictly an imperative here, but a good one anyway!)
- Be on your guard (so as not to be lead astray)
- Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

5 **Think about:**

- Do you struggle to be mindful of this coming day? If so, can you see ways in which your life could be affected by a greater focus on Jesus' return?
- When is waiting for this day hardest for you? How does this passage give you hope and encouragement?
- From this passage, what sort of things should we expect to be seeing and understanding more and more as we read God's word?
- How might you be in danger of being lead astray and falling from your ‘secure position’?
- What can you pray for in response to this passage?