



Remember the Second Coming

2 Peter 3:3-9

1. Don't forget that mockers are coming (verses 3-4).
2. Don't forget that all is not the same (verses 5-7).
3. Don't forget that God is patient (verses 8-9).

The famous philosopher, Bertrand Russell, once gave a lecture entitled, "Why I am not a Christian." In this lecture he gave at least 10 reasons why he didn't believe in God or Christ or the church. Of note to us today are the comments that he made concerning his denial of the second coming of Christ. In his lecture (which later turned into a short pamphlet), Bertrand Russell reasoned that Biblical account of Christ depicts Jesus as believing that He was coming back within the lifetime of his disciples. And yet, ... that certainly hasn't yet happened. Therefore, he concludes, you cannot trust the words of Jesus, because His prophecies concerning Himself simply weren't true.

Russell wrote the following words, ...

[Christ] certainly thought that His second coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that time. There are a great many texts that prove that. He says, for instance, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come." Then he says, "There are some standing here which shall not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom"; and there are a lot of places where it is quite clear that He believed that His second coming would happen during the lifetime of many then living. That was the belief of His earlier followers, and it was the basis of a good deal of His moral teaching. When He said, "Take no thought for the morrow," and things of that sort, it was very largely because He thought that the second coming was going to be very soon, and that all ordinary mundane affairs did not count. I have, as a matter of fact, known some Christians who did believe that the second coming was imminent. I knew a parson who frightened his congregation terribly by telling them that the second coming was very imminent indeed, but they were much consoled when they found that he was planting trees in his garden. The early Christians did really believe it, and they did abstain from such things as planting trees in their gardens, because they did accept from Christ the belief that the second coming was imminent. In that respect, clearly He was not so wise as some other people have been, and He was certainly not superlatively wise. [\[1\]](#)

Bertrand Russell is just one in a long line of people down through the ages, who has denied the second coming of Christ. In our text this morning, we will find Peter warning his readers against men similar to Bertrand Russell, who will come and deny that Jesus is coming again. In our text, Peter will help us to think right so that these men might not sway us from our faith in Christ. Let's consider our text, ...

2 Peter 3:1-9

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 like a thousand years, and a thousand years like 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.

Last week, we examined verses 1 and 2 in which Peter gave us four things to remember. He told us to remember:

1. The first epistle (verse 1).
2. The second epistle (verse 1).
3. The words of the Prophets (verse 2a).
4. The commandment of Jesus (verse 2b).

In many ways, our text this morning continues on the same theme as last week. However, Peter escalates it. He makes it more important than verses 1-2. He says in verse 3, "Know this first of all." It's not first in the order of time. When Jesus taught His disciples about His second coming, it wasn't the first thing that He taught them. In fact, most of His teaching on the second coming comes near the end of His life, just before He was about to die. In many ways, this brought attention to His disciples of the priority of such teaching. When you are in the last months of your life, you will see to it that the most important things that you have to pass on are said. This is the point of Peter when he said,

"Know this, **first of all**."

To put it another way, Peter is telling us that remembering the first epistle is good, but, this is more important. Remembering the second epistle is good and needful, but this is more important. Remembering the prophetic words is good, but this is more important. In some ways, this is even more important than remembering the commandment of Jesus. You say, what is it that Peter calls us to remember? It is the second coming of Christ.

At this point, I trust that you will see Peter's theme of 2 Peter come shining through. His theme has been, "Know and Grow." In our section this morning, Jesus will focus our attention upon the importance of "knowing." We need to be knowing about the second coming. "Growing" will come next week as we look to the impact that the second coming will have upon our life.

In verse 4, Peter tells us that mockers will come asking the question, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Peter identifies these men as "mockers." That is, they are saying these things in ridicule! The question naturally arises, "Who are these people?" Peter is probably referring to the false teachers in the church (concerning whom chapter 2 speaks). [\[2\]](#)

These mockers are saying, "Do you really think that Jesus is coming again? How long has it been since Jesus left? Is there any sign that He's coming? You are fools to think that he is coming again." Against their mocking, Peter tells us to "Remember the Second Coming." (which is, by the way, the title of my message this morning). Peter will climax his argument in verse 10 (which we will look at next week), "But, the day of the Lord will come!" Christ is coming back. And don't forget it!

My message this morning has three points, because Peter emphasizes three things as he tells us to remember the second coming of Christ. First of all, Peter says, ...

1. Don't forget that mockers are coming (verses 3-4).

This comes in verses 3 and 4, "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."

Peter tells us, "Don't be surprised when people come up and mock you for believing in the second coming of Christ." They will come. There is no doubt about it. Now, it's not that Peter is so brilliant at this point. Nor is it that he needed some extra-special revelation from God to make this point. Rather, it's that there have always been those who have come denying the coming of God. And there will always be people who deny His coming.

The Psalmist explains how his enemies have said to him all day long, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:3). In Psalm 115:2, the Psalmist says how the nations are saying, "Where, now is their God?" In Malachi's day, the cry was, "Where is the God of justice?" When Sennacherib arose to fight Judah, he sent a letter to the Israelites, seeking to scare them into a peace treaty, saying that the gods of the other nations were not able to save them. "And if they couldn't save them, where will your god be to deliver you?" (2 Kings 19:8-13). And if people have always denied God's coming, won't there always be people who will deny the return of Christ as well? Of course they will! And this is Peter's point.

Verse 3 has the same feel that chapter 2, verse 1, does. In that verse, Peter said, "False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you." Peter knew the Old Testament revelation: there have always been false prophets in the days of old. Thus, there will always be false teachers in our day. Peter knew that people have always denied the coming of God. Therefore, there will always be those who will deny the return of Christ. For his readers, they may not have experienced that yet, but, such mockers would come. This is especially true as the return of Christ is further delayed.

Now, Peter said that this would take place, **"in the last days."** Don't let this confuse you. Don't think that this has some reference to some long-in-the-distant-from-now future days. No, when the New Testament mentions, "the last days," it has reference to the days following the resurrection of Christ. "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2a). When has God spoken to us in His Son? Ever since the days of the apostles. The "last days" refers to Peter's day. And, it also refers to our day. We are living in the last days. And in these days, "mockers will come with their mocking." And they will say, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

It was well-known in the days of the early church that Jesus had promised to return again. Jesus, Himself, said it on many occasions. He told His disciples, ...

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

"For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:27).

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37-39). "Be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:42).

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious [judgment] throne" (Matt. 25:31).

It wasn't only the disciples that Jesus told of His second coming. At His trial, he told all of the leading chief priests and elders of the people, "You will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

The angels also made His second coming known. When Jesus ascended to heaven in the presence of His disciples, two men in white (probably angels) told them, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The apostles picked upon on this teaching and made it a core part of their message. Peter preached to Cornelius and his household that Jesus was returning to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42). Paul preached to those in Athens that God had appointed Christ to judge the world (Acts 17:31).

The epistles of the New Testament are flooded with references to the return of Christ. Consider the following verses, ...

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God" (1 Thess. 4:16).

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7).

"Therefore, prepare you minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when he appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).

The theme of the return of Christ dominates the last book of the Bible: Revelation. The book begins by mentioning the return of Christ: "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him" (Rev. 1:7). The book ends with Jesus testifying, "Yes, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

In fact, one man pointed out that there are 260 chapters in the New Testament. In those chapters, there are 300 references to the second coming. [\[3\]](#)

The message of Christianity couldn't be more clear. Our Messiah has come. He was crucified for our sins. And God raised Him from the dead, exalted His name above all names, and seated Him at His right hand. There will be a day in which Jesus returns to rule and reign in His kingdom.

Now, with the Christian church, there is much debate upon when Jesus will come. Will He come before the tribulation or will He come after the tribulation? Is His coming imminent? Or, must several things take place before His coming? Furthermore, there is a question as to what Jesus will establish when He returns. Will He establish His millennial kingdom? Or will it be His final kingdom? Though many disagree on the answers to these question, one thing is sure within the Christian church, and all agree. The return of Christ will take place. Jesus will come back.

In fact, this very claim is crucial to the message of Christianity. But, there has been, and there always will be people who will deny this. So, don't forget that mockers will come.

Let's look more closely at verse 4 to see exactly how it is that they deny his coming again. They say, "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." The reference here to the "fathers" is a reference to those who have gone before them, clear back to the patriarchs of Israel (see Heb. 1:1 or Rom. 9:5). These mockers say, "Ever since Abraham, all has been the same. God hasn't visited us for two-thousand years. In fact, you can go beyond Abraham. Ever since the creation, nothing has changed. What give you reason to think that things are going to change in the future? What gives you reason to think that Jesus is really coming back?"

Do you see their argument? They are arguing from a purely naturalistic, materialistic mindset. Some have called this, "uniformitarianism." That's a big word that merely means things always remain the same. They are always uniform in appearance. In other words, "What was is. And what is will always be."

It is incredible how up-to-date the Bible is. These words were originally written almost 2,000 years ago. And yet, scoffers today are saying the same thing. Those who believe in evolution use the same fundamental argument when attempting to explain the realities of life that we see today. They believe that what we see and observe today is what has always been. Since we don't observe the miraculous intervention of God today, everything in the universe must be explained without reference to the miraculous. Everything needs to be explained naturalistically.

If you go into a typical biology department across our land, their premise is entirely naturalistic. If you go into a typical geology department across our land, their premise is entirely naturalistic. If you go into a typical physics department across our land, their premise is entirely naturalistic. Such assumptions are good when dealing with observable, repeatable phenomena. Our universe runs on the laws of physics. We ought not to expect them to change. But, when you begin to deal with philosophic question of origin and cause and creation, you must be open to taking God into account. Because, origins are not observable. They are not repeatable. And in many ways, when dealing with these questions, the miraculous intervention of the Lord in the early days best explain the data.

However, scientists today think otherwise. Most secular scientists say that you need to explain the origin of everything we see today based upon what you observe today. They believe that today is the key to the past. As we don't observe God overtly intervening in our world today, we cannot use God in any way to explain the past.

So, when modern scientists are asked today, "How is it that life began?" they seek to answer based upon purely naturalistic explanations. They observe changes in animals from generation to generation. They reason that that must be the key to understanding the past. It must be (they claim) that life started in a warm pool, where all of the needed building blocks of life were present. And then, they all came together to form an organism, which reproduced itself. After many, many millions of years, this original organism then evolved into all of the different species of animals that we see upon the planet today. As one has put it so eloquently, "From the goo, to the zoo, to you."

When modern scientists are asked today, "How do you explain the mountains and the oceans and the fossils and the canyons and the coal beds and the caves?" again, they are compelled to explain things naturalistically. They look and see what is happening today. Little to nothing is happening to change the geological formation of the earth today. So, in the past, things must have changed slowly. Rivers must have cut through mountains bit by bit. Fossils must have formed through localized mudslides or windstorms. Mountains must have slowly risen. The tectonic plates must have moved slowly across our planet to form the continents that we have today.

When it comes to the origin of the universe, with all of its physical properties, (like gravity and electro-magnetic forces and chemical properties), modern scientists are hard pressed to explain it all. They might say that it has always been this way. Or, they might say that by chance some explosion created everything like it is. Today, some are admitting to some intelligent design which had to be behind it all.

But, so ingrained is this type of naturalistic thinking in the world of science today, that should you attempt to bring God into the equation, you will be laughed out of the laboratory. You will be mocked. You will be scorned. You will be labeled as a "naïve Biblical literalist." ^[4] Because, in the minds of many secular scientists, their assumption going into the laboratory is that you can explain everything naturalistically. When you attempt to bring God into the picture, you have violated their most basic scientific presupposition, which simply cannot be tolerated. They argue that doing so is to bring a presupposition into science, which is hitting at the very heart of the scientific method. What is so ironic about this, is that they deny one presupposition with their own naturalistic presupposition.

You say, "Why is it that people think this way?" Much of it comes down to the little phrase that Peter adds at the end of verse 3, "Mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts." According to Romans 1, God has made himself known in the hearts of men. But, because they want to pursue their own unrighteousness, without accountability, they "suppress the truth" (Rom. 1:18). Although they know the truth, that God exists and will one day judge the world, they deny the truth (Rom. 1:19). They deny God's power (Rom. 1:20). They deny God's attributes (Rom. 1:20). They refuse to give Him honor (Rom. 1:21). They refuse to give Him thanks (Rom. 1:21). Why? So that they can follow after their own lusts! If you deny a Creator, you no longer have a judge. If you have no judge, you lose accountability. If you lose accountability, you can live as you please. Those who live as they please are those who follow after their own lusts.

See, there is often another motive going on here with those who deny the second coming of Christ. They want their own way and will go to great lengths to get it, even denying the Creator, who has "set eternity in their heart(s)" (Ecc. 3:11). You need to know what's behind some of the bigger, philosophical ideas of our day. It's all for the purpose of living life without accountability. Peter says, "don't forget that mockers are coming" (verses 3-4). Let's look now at my second point, ...

2. Don't forget that all is not the same (verses 5-7).

Peter does a masterful job in this text of diffusing the argument of these scoffers, who deny the return of Christ. Verses 5 through 7 are a direct response to these mockers who deny the second coming of Christ. The first phrase in verse 5 sets it up, "For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice." In other words, these mockers are maintaining that all has been the same since the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, right up to Peter's day.

For those in Peter's day, that was a long time. Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Christ. For 2,000 years, the world has remained essentially the same. Take note here that their argument is even stronger if made today, because we are some 2,000 years after Peter wrote. People might easily say, "For 4,000 years, nothing much has changed. I don't see much difference in the realities of life and death and the planet earth since the days of Abraham. All remains the same!" But, Peter points out that all has not been the same. Instead, Peter points out the flood that destroyed the earth long ago (verse 6). And then, Peter brings up the final judgment, which awaits all who deny Christ's coming again (verse 7).

Before we look into the details of what Peter says, I want for you to notice how it is that Peter transitions into these things. He says, that "it escapes their notice." That's a very gentle way of translating these things. Other translations are more blunt. The ESV says that they "deliberately overlook" these things. The NIV says that they "deliberately forget." The NKJV says that they "willfully forget." For those denying the second coming using these uniformitarian arguments, Peter says that they have deliberately suppressed the truth (Rom. 1:18). They have forgotten what God has done on this planet. That's the thrust of my point. They have forgotten a crucial observation. But, don't you forget, that all is not the same.

Look at verses 5 and 6, "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." In these two verses, Peter mentions the creation of the world and the destruction of the world. Peter says, "There was a time when this world came into existence."

God created the world, with His word. He said, "'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). And, throughout the 6 days of creation, whatever God said came to pass. When God spoke of the expanse, the expanse came into being (Gen. 1:6). When God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation," the earth brought forth vegetation (Gen. 1:11). When God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens," there were stars in the sky (Gen. 1:14-15). When God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures" there were swarms of living creatures (Gen. 1:20-21). When God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures," it was so (Gen. 1:24). Finally God crowned His creation with the creation of Man in His image (Gen. 1:26).

God spoke and the world was created. And that's the very point that Peter is pointing to here in verse 5, it is "by the word of God" that the heavens and earth was created. His word is powerful. The writer to the Hebrews said that it is "by the word of God that the worlds were prepared so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:3) God created, "Ex Nihilo." That is, "out of nothing." He did it by His word! When God speaks, the creation obeys His voice. Don't lose that thought, that God, with His word, created the world. We'll come back to that in a bit.

As Peter emphasized the creation account here in verse 5, you can see his emphasis upon "water." God created the world "out of water and by water" (verse 5). When you read the creation account in Genesis 1, you get a strong sense of the presence of water. On day one, we read that "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). On day two, God created an expanse, "in the midst of the waters ... [to] separate the waters from the waters" (Gen. 1:6). On day three, God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place" (Gen. 1:9). On day five, God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures" (Gen. 1:20).

Indeed, God created the world "out of water and by water" (verse 5). Now, the reason why Peter mentions the water so strongly here in verse 5 is because of verse 6, "through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water." Here, Peter brings us back, once again to the flood narrative. This is the third time in Peter's two epistles that he mentions the flood. He mentioned Noah and the flood back in chapter 2, verse 5. He mentioned Noah and the flood in 1 Peter 3, verse 20, as well. Such repetition speaks of the importance of remembering the flood.

The flood is a great picture for us of salvation, even in the midst of destruction. Peter's point here in verse 6, however, is all destruction. God destroyed the world through the flood. God destroyed the entire world through the flood. The testimony of Genesis is clear. Everything was destroyed by water.

Genesis 7:13, 17, 19-22

On the very same day Noah ... entered the ark, ...the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted upon the ark so that it rose above the earth. ...the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind. of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died.

It was a sad day. But, that day changed everything. We have reason to believe that the earth experienced some mighty change in that day. Soon after the flood, the genealogies record a decreasing lifespan of people. Whereas the genealogies before the flood frequently recorded the lifespan of people as 700 years, 800 years, 900 years. Immediately after the flood, the lifespan was 600 years, then 400 years, then 200 years. It appears as if something drastic changed on the earth at this time. We weren't there, so we don't know exactly what changed. However, there was certainly some sort of change in the atmosphere, because a rainbow appeared for the first time (Gen. 9:12-15). Some have thought that the change in the atmosphere allowed more radiation to enter the earth, which shortened life spans. It may have been that the earth became a more rugged environment to live. [\[5\]](#)

We can't know the exact details for sure. But, something did change. And this is Peter's point that we need to remember all is not the same as it was in the day of creation. There have been some changes in this world since the day of creation. And if you know about the amazing devastation that water can cause, there may be much of what we observe in geology that can be attributed to the flood, such as fossils all around the world, the formation of rock layers, and the formation of canyons.

At this point, the question naturally comes, so, "why has it been more than 4,000 years without a catastrophe like this?" Peter gives his answer in verse 7, "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."

Do you know why it has been so long without God destroying the earth? It's not that we don't deserve it. Rather, it's His grace that has kept the earth in one piece for so long. Notice how verse 7 begins. "By His word." Just as the word of God spoke the world into existence. Just as the word of God brought forth the flood. So also does the word of God preserve our world today.

In causing the rainbow to appear, God made the promise to Noah, "never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:15). God has kept that promise. And this spring, when you see your first rainbow, remember that God has set it there by His word as a promise to us never to flood the earth again. But, that doesn't mean that the earth will forever stand. No, there's a day of destruction that's awaiting the earth. It's the day when the earth is destroyed with fire. Water destroyed the world the first time. Fire will destroy the world the second time.

Look once again at verse 7, "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." The latest buzz in the media in recent days has been global warming. Our family went to the Museum of Science and Industry this past week in Chicago. There, they had a nicely done presentation on the facts concerning global warming. Well, there will be a day of global warming all right. I don't need to say much about this, because we will look at it next week, when Peter gives us a bit more detail on the fire that's coming on the day of the Lord. He says that "the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (verse 10). He says that "the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat" (verse 12).

But, Peter's point is this: "Don't forget that all is not the same" (verses 5-7). It wasn't the same in the past--God destroyed the world with a flood. It won't be the same in the future--God will destroy the world with a fire. So, don't rest upon the fact that things have been the same for thousands of years. Go back a bit further and you will remember how the world was once destroyed with the flood. Think about the future and you will know that the world will be destroyed with the fire.

Christ is returning again. As verse 10 says, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." It's going to be sudden. It's going to be quick. It's going to be unexpected. But we'll look at that next week. Let's consider my final point, ...

3. Don't forget that God is patient (verses 8-9).

Peter writes in verses 8 and 9, "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like 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 first thing that you see here in verse 8 is that it sounds a bit like verse 5. In verse 5, Peter wrote that the changes the earth has experienced "escaped the notice" of the mockers. Here in verse 8, Peter urges us not to let one fact "escape your notice." It's the same Greek word as used in verse 5, *lanqanw*(*lanthano*). It means "to forget, neglect, be hidden." Peter says, "Don't forget that God is patient." This is the point of verses 8 and 9. Don't neglect this fact.

In verse 8, Peter quotes from Psalm 90, verse 4, in which Moses wrote, "a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night." Isn't this the essence of patience? Patience takes little regard for the passing of time. You arrive on time to meet someone, but they are late. They arrive 10 minutes later. The patient one isn't rattled by the passing of time. It's fine with them.

The patient one can wait. "We can do it next week. I don't have to rush ship my package. I can wait a few weeks and save some money. Money's tight right now. I can wait until next summer to fix the dishwasher." But, God's patience far outlasts our patience. We may commend someone who has the ability to wait a few minutes or a few months or a few years. But, God can wait thousands of years without much of a problem. To him, it's like 4 or 5 days since the flood took place. So, why is God so patient? Why is God so patient with people who are his stated enemies? Because He is waiting for repentance.

Look again at 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." The Lord has made a promise that He will return. Any delay in His returning isn't a sign of weakness or inability. It's not that God has forgotten his promise. It's not that God is incapable of fulfilling His promise. He will someday! Rather, it's a sign of His patience.

How ironic, that the very purpose why God delays His coming judgment (He is waiting for repentance), becomes the very reason why people refuse to believe! Take note here of the heart of God. His heart is for people to repent!

Now, obviously, there are questions that abound in this verse! How is it that God doesn't wish for any to perish, but people actually do perish? Is God not in control? Are there things that He really wants, but just can't get done? No. God is fully in control. The one who can destroy the world with a flood can certainly change a human heart. The one who will destroy the world with a burning fire can do as He pleases.

So, don't reduce the sovereignty of God in any way. Rather, see 2 Peter 3:9 as teaching us about the heart of God. To be sure, God will afflict. God will punish. God will condemn. But, as Lamentations 3:33 says, "He does not afflict willingly." In other words, His judging work brings no sadistic joy to Him. He is like the judge, who comes to have compassion upon those He sentences to death. Imagine the earthly judge, who comes to feel sorry for those who have been found guilty in his courtroom. Without a doubt, a crime has been committed and a guilty verdict needs to be pronounced. However, the punishment will surely be hard on the family of the one convicted. So, he performs his duty: he issues a guilty verdict. but, he does so with a tear in His eye. This is what God does in

I love John Calvin on this passage. Calvin writes (to the shock of many Calvinists), "So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost. But the order is to be noticed, that God is ready to receive all to repentance, so that none may perish; for in these words the way and manner of obtaining salvation is pointed out." [6] His delay is waiting for repentance. Will you repent this day?

I want to close with one final illustration. Picture my family in the airport, all set to travel to California (where my in-laws live). All seven of us (my wife and five children) arrive at the airport a bit on the late side. The lines inside are long. So, it takes us quite some time before we finally arrive at the ticket counter. By the time we receive our tickets, the plane is set to leave in ten minutes. The counter calls back to the gate and informs them of our situation. So, those at the gate will be looking out for us. So, our family rushes through security and scrambles through the corridors of the airport in an effort to reach the plane in time.

As it turns out, we are a bit late. However, those at the gate were gracious enough to delay the departure of the plane until we arrived! What kindness! They had a schedule to keep. They had passengers who were all anxious to depart from the gate and get to their destination. And yet, the flight has been delayed for us. This is a picture of what the Lord is doing regarding His second coming. God has delayed the cosmic departure date, so as to allow more people on the plane. That's grace. That's God.

Romans 2:4 says, "the kindness of God leads you to repentance." Is this the case with you? Has God's kindness in delaying His return led you to repentance? Or, are you still holding strongly to your sin, unwilling to repent and cry upon the Lord. Oh, may today find you repenting of your sin and crying to the Lord for mercy before it's too late.

[1] Bertrand Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian."

[2] It may be that this mocking comes from those outside the church, who are ridiculing those in the church. However, in the entire epistle, Peter makes no mention to such a class of people. To assume it here is dubious.

[3] John MacArthur, "The Certainty of the Second Coming (part 2)," preached at Grace Community Church on February 24, 1991. You can trace down the transcript on www.gty.org.

[4] Phillip Johnson wrote an excellent article entitled, "What is Darwinism?" In the article he did a good job explaining how closed the scientific community is to intervention of the miraculous.

[5] Henry Morris, The Genesis Record, p. 281.

[6] John Calvin, commentary on 2 Peter.