

Title: **The Promise of Christ's Coming**

Passage: **2 Peter 3:3-4**

Theme: **Understand the prophetic presumption of the pessimists in light of the promise of God's perfect patience.**

Number: **02122Pe3.3-4(31)**

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{Read Passage}

Turn your attention back to vv. 1-2 (looked at a few weeks ago).

I. Peter's Final Reminder: An Introduction to the Letter's Conclusion

(3:1-2)

Beloved . . . (those loved by God and the brethren / believers).

A. The Intention in Our Remembrance:

That Our Minds be Revived (v. 1)

Beloved, this is already the second letter I have written to you . . .

"Second letter" ==> No doubt, this refers to 1 Peter

. . . in which I am trying to stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder:

B. The Direction of Our Remembrance:

That We be Found Faithful (v. 2)

that [you] remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

Peter says, *"I want you to remember: the words spoken by the holy prophets in the past and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles."*

1. Holy prophets of the past = the OT prophets

Given the context here, I tend to believe that Peter is thinking specifically about the OT prophets who proclaimed God's judgment in the face of skeptical people who doubted or denied that He would.

... and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

2. NT Revelation

Commandment (ἐντολή) collective sing. A singular word that refers to a body of things, much like a class of students or a collection of items. (sing. class is made up of pl. students; sing. collection is made up of pl. items).

Body of Xn truth as handed down by t/Apostles through JC.

Jude 3 **the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.**

Cf. 2:21. "holy commandment."

ISW - singular "commandment" is made up of many doctrines.

Specif. ==>

... the commandment of the Lord and Savior . . .

The one who said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

So Peter begins ==>

... remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets

AND

the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

Introduction to the letter's conclusion.

It's at this point in chapt. 3 that Peter addresses, really for t/last time, the false teachers – those that he spent so much ink on in chapter 2 (remember 2:1?).

Chapter 2 is filled w/descriptions of these men. We saw that they were promiscuous; licentious and reckless. They were apostates who left t/true faith demonstrating that they never really knew it. They are dogs returning to lick up their own vomit & swine rolling around in a garbage dump (end of chapt. 2).

They laughed at t/thought that they would one day be judged by God, much less eternally condemned.

Here in chapt. 3 we have not a description, but an example of their own words, the kinds of things that came from their own mouths and the accompanying attitude that went along with it.

. . . mockers will come with mockery, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His [X's] coming? . . .

Again, it's really all about judgment.

"While the cat's away t/mice will play" is an old saying. They not only thought t/cat was away, they thought he was never coming back.

They were wrong on both counts.

Why the delay in Christ's return?

23 of 27 NT books refer to t/Lord's return. Est. that of t/260 chapters in the NT there are close to 300 instances in which t/return of X is referenced.

Little doubt that t/first c. Xns initially believed that X would return in their lifetimes.

The Thess. Xns struggled w/this. Some thought t/Day of t/Lord had already come & Paul writes to them telling them that this isn't t/case. First there must come a time of great apostasy and t/revelation of t/AC.

We're told that day will come "like a thief in t/night" // "be ready"

John finishes t/last book of t/Bible, t/BOR w/the Words, "Come Lord Jesus."

That was 2k years ago.

While God did visit t/Jews w/judgment in t/destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, that's not t/same thing as t/Second Coming of X & I don't think it's relevant to what Peter writes here.

We're talking about t/blessed hope of t/CH. The personal, visible, return of JC to earth.

What's described in Revelation chapter 19 ==>

11 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.13 And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood;

and His name is called The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.¹⁵ And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Every gen. of Xns from t/1st c. to t/21st has believed that this could happen in their lifetime.

t/o those same 2000 yrs there have been mockers who have said, "What's up?" "Where's t/promise?" "All things remain t/same".

Why t/delay?

We must understand the prophetic presumption of the pessimists in light of the promise of God's perfect patience.

The delay of God's judgment is in keeping with the promise of His mercy.

That's what we will see unfolded in vv. 3-9.

I. A Two-Part Accusation (3-4)

II. A Three-Fold Answer (5-9)

I. A Two-Part Accusation (3-4)

This relates to t/"mockers who come with mocking" v. 3.

Their argument comes in 2 parts & Peter's answer comes in 3 parts.

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A. The Accusation Anticipated by Peter (3)

Knowing this first . . .

1. He used the same phrase in 1:20

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,

It's a way to emphasize something. "Listen up". "Don't miss this point!"

. . . that in the last days mockers will come with mockery . . .

2. Gotta love this: "mockers with mockery"

Hebrew way of turning a phrase. Like saying, "thieves coming with their thievery" or "adulterers coming with their adultery."

(3:1b-2a "remember / reminder")

3. Peter's saying, "Don't be surprised"

Much like what we saw in chapter 2 – there were false prophets in Israel; there will be false teachers in t/CH.

a. This is something that will characterize the last days

(1) Phrase "last days" is something we come across quite often

Were t/OT saints in the last days? No.

Were Peter and His readers in t/last days? Yes.

We're the 16th century Reformers in t/last days? Yes.

Are we in t/last days? Yes!

The last days began w/the death, burial, resurrection & ascension of X.
"All eschatology begins at the cross."

Writer to t/Hebrews makes this distinction between t/OT economy of long ago & t/NT economy of t/last days ==>

1:1-2 1 GOD, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

See this time period predicted in t/OT ==>

ISA 2:2 Now it will come about that In the last days, The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.

. . . for it is a rule with the Jews, that wherever the last days are mentioned, the days of the Messiah are intended; [Gill]

1PE 1:20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.

For by the last days is commonly meant the kingdom of Christ, or the days of his kingdom . . . [Calvin]

. . . that in the last days mockers will come with mockery . . .

b. This is prophetic!

1 Timothy 4:1-3 1 BUT the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage

and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

2 Timothy 3:1–7 1 BUT realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The great Baptist preacher, C.H. Spurgeon saw these passages fulfilled in his own day, 19th c. London. ==>

A prophecy which has been abundantly fulfilled. You need not go far to find them; they come in the form of living men, and they swarm in the form of their books. They are to be met with almost everywhere; like the locusts, they fill the air, and hide the light of the sun: “There shall come in the last days scoffers?” Every time a blasphemer opens his mouth to deny the truth of revelation, he will help to confirm us in our conviction of the very truth which he denies. The Holy Ghost told us by the pen of Peter that it would be so.

Jude, the Lord's half-brother wrote in his brief epistle ==>

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,18 that they were saying to you, “In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.”

4. Sinful men who hate the idea of submitting themselves to a sovereign God will always find reasons to doubt and deride the faith

- * Evil in the world
- * Hypocrisy among Christians
- * Sins of the church
- * Post-modern doubt about anyone knowing absolute truth
- * Supposed "errors" in the Bible - Bible being myth
- * Unreliability of the NT (Bart Ehrman)
- * Belief that Science somehow trumps the Bible (Darwin "fish")

- * Delay in the coming of Christ (v. 4)

For most, these sorts of things aren't t/real issue anyway. It isn't as if by answering their charges they're going to repent. That takes a sov. work of God by t/H.S.

Romans 1:18–20 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

That's basically what Peter is saying here when he writes that they are:
... **following after their own lusts,**

Another way of saying that they are led along by their own sinful desires. These are same men (women) who denied the Master who bought them (2:1).

Anthropocentric hedonism [man-centered pleasure-seeking] always mocks at the idea of ultimate standards and a final division between saved and lost. For men who live in the world of the relative, the claim that the relative will be ended by the absolute is nothing short of ludicrous. For men who nourish a belief in human self-determination and perfectibility, the very idea that we are accountable and dependent is a bitter pill to swallow. No wonder they mocked! [M. Green, 127]

They mocked X while he hung on t/cross

. . . “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Matthew 27:40

41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him, and saying,42 “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him. Matthew 27:41-42

They mocked X while he hung on t/cross & J. himself said that those who follow hard after him will be insulted and persecuted as well:

Matthew 5:10–11 10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.11 “Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

When was t/last time you were persecuted? // insulted for X's sake?
Missing a blessing [^]

Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come with mockery, following after their own lusts,

. . . the more God offers himself by the gospel to the world, and the more he invites men to his kingdom, the more audacious on the other hand will ungodly men vomit forth the poison of their impiety. . . . Thus, the first Psalm speaks of the seat of scoffers. So David, in Psalm 119:51, complains that he was derided by the proud, because he attended to God's law. . . . As, however, the Holy Scripture has foretold that they would come, and has also given us a shield by which we may defend ourselves, there is no excuse why we should not boldly resist them whatever devices they may employ. [Calvin]

Fact they exist & increase is a living demonstration that we are in t/last days.

Brings us to verse 4 ==>

B. The Two-Part Accusation (4)

First part is the accusation proper ==>

1. Where is the Promise of His Coming? (4a)

Gotta get the entire picture

. . . mockers will come with mockery, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

a. What exactly are they asking?

"Promise of His coming" most certainly refers to t/2nd coming of X.

See that by looking back to chap. 1 as well as looking forward in ch. 3.

(1) Chapter 1 (v. 16)

For we did not follow ingenious myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

This isn't referring to His 1st coming // destruction of Jerusalem.

"Coming" = παρουσία. which is a technical word for t/future visible personal return of JC to the world in judgment and restoration.

Nowhere used of His 1st coming.

(a) This is what the false teachers were denying

They weren't just denying it, they were accusing Peter and the rest of t/Apostles of following myths in their proclamation of it!

.. but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

(2) His μεγαλειότης = grandeur, splendor, immensity, majesty

Luke uses the word in Luke 9:43 of God's greatness. {context}

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

The same kind of greatness that characterizes the Father also characterizes the Son.

The eyewitness account that Peter is referencing is what we call "The Transfiguration" (Matthew 17).

Account during the life of Jesus witnessed by Peter, James and John. Jesus took these 3 up to a secluded place on a mountain & they saw t/radiance of His glory. "He was transfigured." It was a glimpse of His perfect majesty and holiness.

It was attended by a cloud, what t/Jews referred to as the "shekinah glory of God" The same glory that will accompany t/2nd coming. (Acts 1:11).

Church historian JND Kelly writes that t/early post-apostolic CH viewed t/transfiguration as a foretaste of the yet-future parousia. [cf. JND Kelly, 318]

(2) Chapter 3

and saying, "Where is the PROMISE of His coming?"

Note that it's the promise of His coming.

Cf. v. 9, 13.

Something else – Can't divorce this statement from t/concept of final judgment.

WIMBT = this isn't just about t/return of JC. It's about t/judgment aspect of His return. This was a feature of these false teachers: They laughed at t/idea of judgment.

Promise of His coming = future and final judgment. Cf. vv.10-12.

B. The Two-Part Accusation (4)

1. Where is the Promise of His Coming? (4a)

Big word of the day.

2. The Basis for Their Argument: Uniformitarianism (4b)

Uniformitarianism comes from the word "uniform" which is something you wear, but also refers to something that remains the same.

"the present is the key to the past"

a. Uniformitarianism is a term generally used in geology

Popularized by t/19th c. British lawyer & geologist Charles Lyell.

Basically the idea that features of creation, esp. geologic formations, can be explained by slow processes over a long period of time.

An example in minuscule would be erosion. Over time, waters lapping at the edge of Lake Ontario erode the shoreline. Why you find these large stones and boulders there. They didn't wash up; they were put there to slow the process of erosion.

Take the Grand Canyon. Uniformitarians contend that the canyon was cut, largely by the Colorado river some 17 million yrs. ago.

That would be in contrast to Catastrophism that argues that t/geologic features of the earth were formed over relative short periods of time by cataclysmic events, such as a world-wide flood.

Peter does mention creation here in this verse – no surprise that many Bible commentators jump right on the creation vs. evolution bandwagon.

b. Not what Peter has in mind

When I use the term "uniformitarianism" I'm using it theologically, not scientifically.

This is more of a theological issue. Remember, this is part of the argument that the mockers are making ==>

"For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue has they have from the beginning of creation."

"the present is the key to the past." Not in geology, but in theology.

c. There is a theological uniformitarianism – Deism

God created, put all the laws in motion, & has stepped out of t/ picture.

Analogy that's often used is a clockmaker

This is a theological naturalism as opposed to biblical supernaturalism.

A belief in a closed system where miracles are denied vs. a belief in an open system where they are affirmed.

d. Providentialism

I would like to call t/biblical view that's under attack here (and today) Providentialism (don't know if that's a word; spell-check didn't think so).

Providentialism means that God is active in everything that occurs in all of creation, from t/furthest space to t/deepest oceans. From those things that are happening at molecular level to things seen w/naked eye.

From that which is spiritual & pertains to heaven, hell, demons, angels, t/dead in X who are w/Him to t/wicked dead awaiting final judgment to our everyday hum-drum existence.

Summed up by t/Psalmist in Psalm 135:6

Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

"the present is the key to the past" ==>

"Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep,

e. "Fathers" is a term for spiritual leaders

Example, we talk about t/ECFs. In America we refer to our "Founding Fathers."

These "Fathers" in v. 4 are not t/1st c. Xn fathers (among whom was Peter) but the Patriarchs of the OT (fits t/context of creation).

For ever since the fathers fell asleep . . .

(common euphemism for death: "cemetery" = "sleeping place")

. . .all things continue as they have from the beginning of creation.

f. They are arguing for a theological uniformitarianism

All things continue the same.

Sun goes down at night, comes up in the morning.

Seasons come and go.

People are born, live, die.

We work, we eat, we sleep, we rest.

Round and round we go. Round and round the world goes.

Where is the spectacular? Where are the miracles?

"Where is the promise of His coming?"

(1) This is how sinful men frame the question

"Where is the God of justice?" asked the evil men of Malachi's day (Malachi 2:17).

"Where is your God?" the unbelievers demanded of the Psalmist (Psalm 42:3; 79:10).

"Where is the word of the Lord?" Asked Jeremiah's foes (Jeremiah 17:15).

People ask the same things today

I'm alive today; I'll be alive tomorrow.

My husband drives to work at 7:00 am this am & comes home at 6:00 pm each night.

Day after day after day we assume that stability = security.

For many t/roaring 20s was a time of prosperity and a return to "normalcy" following WWI. For them, stability = security.

Roaring 20s whimpered to a stop in October, 1929.

USA = just under 128 million.

- 1) 12 million of which were out of work.
- 2) 12,000 people being made unemployed every day
- 3) 20,000 companies had gone bankrupt
- 4) 1616 banks had gone bankrupt
- 5) 1 farmer in 20 evicted
- 6) 23,000 people committed suicide in one year - the highest ever

[historylearningsite.co.uk/wall_street_crash.htm]

A few weeks before t/crash, in early October ==>

The VP of the Earl Radio Corporation jumped to his death from the window of a Manhattan hotel. His suicide note read, "We are broke. Last April I was worth \$100,000. Today I am \$24,000 in the red."

In 1929: The Year of the Great Crash (1989) historian William K. Klingaman says asphyxiation by gas was the most common method of doing oneself in, although there was considerable variety.

He writes:

The wife of a Long Island broker shot herself in the heart; a utilities executive in Rochester, New York, shut himself in his bathroom and opened a wall jet of illuminating gas; a St. Louis broker swallowed poison; a Philadelphia financier shot himself in his athletic club; a divorcee in Allentown, Pennsylvania, closed the doors and windows of her home and turned on a gas oven. In Milwaukee, one gentleman who took his own life left a note that read, 'My body should go to science, my soul to Andrew W. Mellon, and sympathy to my creditors.'

[straightdope.com/columns/read/2412/after-the-1929-stock-market-crash-did-investors-really-jump-out-of-windows]

Do you know for sure that the past is key to the present?

Luke 12:16–21 16 And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a certain rich man was very productive.17 “And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’18 “And he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.19 ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’21 “So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

1 day before she was to appear at t/annual Grammy Awards (tonight) famous singer and actress, Whitney Houston, was found dead in her hotel room. She was 48.

The error is that STABILITY = SECURITY.

For us, it's the other way around: Security = Stability.

IOW - My security is in JC. I have been redeemed by Him. I am His slave; He is my Master. I know that all things work together for my good because I love Him and He loves me, because I have been called according to His good purpose.

I know that nothing can separate me from His love and purpose.

That's security!

Romans 8:35, 37–39 **35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

We could add: bad economy; bad health; tragic news; painful relationships?

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are secure in Christ therefore we live in a

stable hope.

What about you?