

Days of Future Present  
II Peter 3:3-7

This morning I want to jump right into our text.  
Please take your Bible and open to II Peter 3:3-7.  
Follow as I read.

My outline this morning is simple.  
A future problem  
A forgotten past  
A faithful proclamation

I. A FUTURE PROBLEM – vs. 3-4

Peter begins by saying “First of all”. Your Bible may read “Knowing this first”. This is not a matter of sequence suggesting that he is going to list additional items like a shopping list. Instead it is an expression in the Greek language that calls attention to a matter of great importance. In essence, Peter is saying listen up there’s something really important you need to pay attention to. He’s about to give a warning, something that they should be prepared for, something to look out for what is yet coming.

Last spring on my way out to Washington D.C. for the Pastor’s conference I attended, as I got into the Appalachian Mountains there were signs posted that simply said “FALLING ROCK”. Now the sign didn’t mean look for falling rock right at that very spot but to be ready because falling rock could happen anywhere and anytime along that stretch of road. Be warned, be prepared, be alert.

Peter is warning them about something that is still in the future. As we keep on reading we find out what is so important that folks need to be prepared for. Look at verses 3-4.  
“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 fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”

Peter says that there are going to be those who mock God. We see first that their attitudes are concerning.

A. Their Attitudes Are Concerning – 3a

The word mock basically means to sport or jest. Every time it’s used in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with one exception it is used in connection with mocking or ridiculing Jesus. For example: Matthew 27:27-31, 41-44

The religious leaders mocked Him.  
At His trial the soldiers mocked him by putting a purple robe around Him, putting the crown of thorns on His head, and placing a reed as a scepter in His hand. They mocked Him as He carried His cross up to the place where He would be crucified. And then as He hung on the cross the Jewish people mocked Him and said if He was really God’s Son He should be able to come down from the cross.

Here’s how the dictionary defines mockery: to hold up to scorn or show contempt; to ridicule; to imitate or mimic, as in fun or derision; to defy and make futile.

I have mentioned before growing up at Camp that there was a week just for handicap people. It really was a wonderful week and a real blessing in so many ways to see many of these people with disabilities express real love for God. But I can distinctly remember one week when I was in High school getting caught up with some of the other counselors mimicking one of the campers in how he ran. Because of his disease he ran with stilted legs that moved at the hips. One arm was out to the side and the other one tucked in to his body. Looking back at it now I’m ashamed of my actions because it was mocking him.

I titled the message Days of Future Present to show that while God will be mocked in the future, it’s already been happening for centuries.

Eighteenth Century French Philosopher Voltaire vehemently attacked Christianity, the Bible, Church doctrine and Jesus Christ, calling Him a degenerate.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Philosopher Frederick Nietzsche famously stated that God is dead. He attributed this philosophy to the age of reason or the age of enlightenment as the catalyst for promoting the idea of the death of God or any of the gods as having never existed. But he wasn't the first or only German philosopher to espouse such a mockery of God's existence. Philipp Mainlander and Frederick Hegel taught it. The God is dead theology in Germany goes back into the 17<sup>th</sup> Century teaching that the Christian God who existed at one point had ceased to exist.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Carl Sagan said this about God: "The idea that God is an oversized white male with a flowing beard who sits in the sky and tallies the fall of every sparrow is ludicrous. But if by God one means the set of physical laws that govern the universe, then clearly there is such a God. This God is emotionally unsatisfying... it does not make much sense to pray to the law of gravity."

"What I'm saying is, if God wanted to send us a message, and ancient writings were the only way he could think of doing it, he could have done a better job."

"In many cultures, the customary answer is that a God or Gods created the Universe out of nothing. But if we wish to pursue this question courageously, we must of course ask the next question: where did God come from? If we decide that this is an unanswerable question, why not save a step and conclude that the origin of the Universe is an unanswerable question? Or, if we say that God always existed, why not save a step, and conclude that the Universe always existed? That there's no need for a creation, it was always here. These are not easy questions. Cosmology brings us face to face with the deepest mysteries, questions that were

once treated only in religion and myth."

Neil Degrasse Tyson says that "God is an ever decreasing pocket of scientific ignorance."

As the day Christ's return gets closer it's only going to get worse. People will more aggressively attack and mock God and those who believe in God.

Many have defiantly thumbed their noses at God and dared Him to come down from His ivory cloud and intervene if He exists. Peter says that people will mock God with their attitudes.

These same mockers will also mock God with their actions and that, too, is a concern.

#### B. Their Actions Are Concerning – v. 3b

"Scoffers will come following their own evil desires."

The rationale is that if God doesn't exist or if He does He isn't as powerful as He claims or doesn't rule everything like He says, then we can do whatever we want. If God is dead we determine what is moral. It's called moral relativism. There are no absolutes when it comes to morality. There are no absolutes when it comes to right or wrong. (Cartoon slide)  
You get to decide.  
Moral relativism changes with what's acceptable to the culture and with the times. What was wrong 10 years ago or 50 years ago needs to change with the changing culture. God's moral law has no relevance or basis for guiding culture in being a moral society. Instead of God's Holiness and His Word dictating morality, culture dictates morality now.

Peter's point is that without God scoffers or mockers will do whatever evil desires they have. They are free to do whatever they want. Scripture is right when it says that what was once evil is good and what was good is now evil.

How did we get to this point?

Romans 1:18-23

Because there has been an affront to the personal holiness of God in how people are living in a moral freefall or a moral free for all, God will pour out His wrath against this blatant and open wickedness committed by people who lack proper reverence for God. Their wickedness is a way for them to mock God and His holiness. Paul explains how that is being carried out in verses 24-32. He says that these people know the truth but have suppressed this knowledge of God and His holy commands.

To suppress means to subdue by force or to hold down. People had God's truth but they refused to listen to it and obey it. To use a football term "they stiff arm the truth". They keep it at arm's length.

If someone denies God exists then it's easier to justify their own lack of restraint when it comes to any kind of sin they wanted to do. Verse 18 literally reads they "are constantly attempting to suppress the truth by steadfastly holding to their sin." They suppress the truth by continuing in their sin.

Without a moral compass it is just like the days of Noah when "wickedness on the earth had become...every inclination of the thoughts of his heart that it was only evil all the time." Or in the days of the judges when everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

What is the rationale for such attitudes and actions? Notice they have a concerning argument.

C. Their Argument Is Concerning – v. 4

There is some debate among Biblical scholars as to just which "fathers" they are referring to. Some believe it's referring to the first Christians who died after the resurrection of Christ. Others believe they are referring to the Old Testament Patriarchs.

Either is possible, but given the nature of their argument it seems to me that they are referring to the Old Testament patriarchs. I believe that for several reasons.

The first is that the word "fathers" is never used in the New Testament to refer to 1<sup>st</sup> generation Christians, but to those in the Old Testament.

In relation to that, the second reason is that the span of time is only about 30 years even though they are talking about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ.

But third and perhaps most important is in the nature of their argument. Pointing back to creation they say that nothing has changed. Though they didn't necessarily know about the laws of nature they could see that from their perspective nothing ever changed. They continued the same day after day, year after year, century after century. The sun rises. The sun sets. Seasons come and seasons go. The calendar marches on without interruption.

It's an argument based on the idea of uniformity. Everything is the same. This argument is based on the belief that there has never been any divine intervention when it comes to the laws of nature. We look out the window and we see the changing colors of leaves. In a couple months we can expect snow. Then we can expect around April/May to see leaves sprout and flowers begin to bloom.

Given the unchanging nature of the seasons they argue that the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ won't occur. There has been no divine intervention in the past and there won't be any in the future.

Let me remind you of a couple instances of God's miraculous intervention into the laws of nature.

Joshua 10:12-13

Isaiah 38:4-8

These mockers say the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming must not be true because everything keeps on going. Miracles like the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming can't exist in a universe that is governed by natural laws, natural laws they saw came into existence without any divine creative event in history. They just happened.

Now there are many who believe in evolution but not in creation. Given enough time a simple single celled organism developed out of the primordial soup of earth's ever changing surface when conditions were right for life to begin. God wasn't needed. Other scientists believe that evolution got some help. Some scientists conclude that the evolutionary model has some flaws because there doesn't appear to be enough time based on their calculations of how long it would take for nature to mutate and evolve. They have come up with a variation to evolution. There are two similar theories. One is called panspermia and the other is direct panspermia. This is stuff right out of science fiction. Panspermia is the belief that microorganisms survived in deep space on meteors and hitched a ride through the galaxy or universe eventually landing on earth surviving the collision where conditions in the primordial soup were just right to spawn life.

Directed panspermia is the theory that aliens somewhere in outer space put these microorganisms on meteors that eventually landed on earth and began life. It's along the lines of 2001: A Space Odyssey.

And they think our beliefs are crazy.

Christ can't come again because no one ever has. Nothing has ever changed to suggest otherwise. Folks, the promise of Christ's return are well documented in Scripture. The one who made the promise is faithful.

John 14:3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am."

Acts 1:11 "'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go to heaven.'"

I Thessalonians 4:16 "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet

call of God."

They were mocking that Christ would return, but dear folks, God's Word is faithful and this promise will be fulfilled. Peter reassures them of this.

We have seen first a future problem stemming from the mocking attitudes, actions, and argument of scoffers – actions, attitudes and arguments that are concerning. In verses 5-7 Peter gives a rebuttal to these mockers. In these verses he talks about a forgotten past.

## II. A FORGOTTEN PAST – vs. 5-7

These scoffers used selective reasoning. It's the same idea Paul talked about in Romans 1. Paul says evidence is clear and compelling yet in their desire to live as they pleased, they suppressed the truth. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools..." Romans 1:21-22

Peter counters their argument citing two things these scoffers had conveniently forgotten. The first is the forgotten creation.

### A. The Forgotten Creation – v. 5

Romans 1:19-20 "Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Paul is saying that God has given evidence of His existence by all the creation around them, but many have rejected that evidence.

Folks, those who believe in evolution or creation

don't have different pieces of evidence or information. We have the same fossil records. We have the same rock layers. We have the same biological, anthropological, astrological, paleontological and any other logical evidence you want to throw in there.

It all depends on your starting point.

The starting point for the evolutionist is not God but man.

The starting point for the creationist is God.

The starting point for the evolutionist is man's word.

The starting point for the creationist is God's Word.

Peter says they have deliberately forgotten about God's creation as evidence of His divine intervention by creating both time and space. I like to call it willful or deliberate amnesia.

In Genesis 1:1 we see God's creative act to bring about time and space.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Now if there was a point of beginning for all things to come into existent that assumes there had to be a time, and I use that term loosely here because before the beginning there was no time, there had to be a time when nothing existed. There wasn't a supersized ball about the size of a marble or such that was so densely packed with energy and matter that on its explosion it hurtled billions of stars and planets in millions and millions of galaxies out into space billions of years ago. Scientists believe they can calculate the edge of the universe. But if God is infinite isn't it a likely assumption that the universe may also be infinite. The Bible says that God spoke and out of nothing He created everything.

There are some Bible scholars, and you would be amazed and surprised at some of the names on the list, men who are godly who want to put a gap between Genesis 1:1-2. Because it was formless and empty the earth needed time to get ready for God to put things on it. It was uninhabitable.

There are other Biblical scholars who believe in what's called the long day theory. Essentially each day of creation was millions of years long. Essentially it's Theistic evolution. God had a part but it was small.

Another group of Bible scholars believe that each day was a literal 24 hour day but that there were millions of years between each day.

You see there are some Bible scholars who want to interpret the Bible from science instead of interpreting science from the Bible. They want to take the never changing Word of God and interpret it by the ever changing word of man and science.

No the Bible is not a science book, but where it speaks of science it is accurate.

It is not a history book, but where it speaks of history it is accurate.

It is not a geography book, but when it speaks of geography it is accurate.

When the Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth and He did so in 6 days it means just that. Every use of the word day in the Old Testament is in reference to a literal 24 hour period of time. It is not to be taken allegorically or poetically. This is historical. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and He did so in six days.

These scoffers deliberately refused to acknowledge that God stepped in and created time and space and everything we see, that it was formed out of water and by water.

That is simply referring to where the waters on earth were separated from the atmospheric waters of the heavens. God shaped the earth between two areas of watery mass. On day two of the creation week we see that he collected the waters into two areas. One was a vapory canopy around the earth. The second became the lower waters on the earth and on day three He separated the land from the waters to form the sea, lakes, rivers, and underground reservoirs.



By the way, scoffers today who deny that the earth had a global flood, an earth which is over 70% covered by water are the same people who believe that Mars, which has no surface water, was once covered in water.

They deliberately forgot about creation. They also deliberately forgot about a catastrophe.

#### B. The Forgotten Catastrophe – vs. 6-7

Peter continues the thought from the creation week and reminds them that the waters that surrounded the earth in a canopy and waters that were separated from land became the same waters that God used to flood the world. People scoff at a global flood. They can't believe that water could cover the earth higher than Mt. Everest. Keep in mind that the surface of the earth today is not the same surface that God created in the beginning. The face of the planet was reshaped. Genesis 7:11 "On that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened."

This was no normal storm or flood. It was not local as some suggest, but global in nature. There was a violence in the planet that shook earth to its very core where earthquakes and volcanic eruptions began to reshape the land, breaking it up and making the continents. In that flood we read in Genesis 7 that everything living died except for Noah and his family who were safe on the ark. They survived the global destruction because God saved them. It was total destruction.

The same powerful word spoken by God to bring into existence all creation is the same powerful word that spoke and caused a global catastrophe to wipe out everything living because of man's pervasive wickedness. It is the same powerful word of God we read in II Peter 3:7 that is holding back a catastrophe of another kind. Where the first global catastrophe was by a flood, the next global

catastrophe will be by fire.

When scientists were working on the atomic bomb there was great concern that if detonated it would unleash a global chain reaction igniting all the atoms that would destroy the world. There are some who believe Peter is speaking about a man made atomic catastrophe of a global scale. It could be, but I'm skeptical.

On this verse John Philips makes this comment: "God does not lack for means to kindle the end-times fires. Every erupting volcano reminds us that we are seated on a raging furnace beneath the surface of the earth. Oxygen is highly flammable, and it's all around us. Each atom carries a furnace of doom within its tiny heart."

John MacArthur also notes "The entire creation, because of its basic atomic structure, is a potential nuclear bomb. The devastating power of nuclear weapons demonstrates the destructive force God has placed within the atom."

Think about it. Approximately 10 miles of crust separates us from 12,400 degrees of blazing fire.

Does God need man made weapons to bring about such a devastating judgment? All He needs to do is speak. That's how I understand verse 5 and verse 7. In verse 5 it says that "by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed." In verse 7 it says "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

All God has to do is speak and a consuming fire will be unleashed that brings His judgment.

We have seen a future problem. There are going to be scoffers who seem to be increasing by the minute. They willingly mock God.

We have seen a forgotten past where scoffers

deliberately ignored creation and the global catastrophe both brought about by God.

I want to close by just speaking to a faithful proclamation.

### III. A FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION

Scripture makes it very clear that God will not be mocked. People may taunt Him or claim that He doesn't exist and go on living as they please, but God won't be ridiculed and made fun of. He will tolerate only so long being the brunt of Saturday night talk shows or philosophical or scientific or even pseudo religious banter. People can fool themselves all they want into thinking and doing things that mock God, but we read that He won't be ridiculed.

Galatians 6:7-8 "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit [of God], from the Spirit will read eternal life."

Using the principle of sowing and reaping Paul says that if you sow sin to please your lust then you will reap destruction, eternal separation from God. If, on the other hand, you sow to please God by living a godly character, you will reap eternal life. God isn't going to have people turn their nose up at Him or snub Him by rejecting Him or by living to satisfy their sinful desires. They will be punished. They will experience His destruction. God is keeping the ungodly for a day of judgment. Don't fool yourself into thinking you'll get away with it. To "deceive" means to be led astray. God takes the matter of sneering at Him seriously. He will bring that person to destruction. His holiness demands that justice.

Just before the launching of the Titanic someone was quoted as saying that not even God could sink this ship, but on May 31, 1911, it did just that.

When it comes to a faithful proclamation this passage shows the power of God's Word. He spoke and the universe was created.

This passage shows the promise in God's Word. He told Noah that the world was going to be destroyed by a flood and it happened just as He said it would.

This passage shows the punishment by God's Word. The ungodly are being kept or held or reserved for a day of judgment.

When God says He's going to do something, no one or nothing can thwart His plans.

Peter gives a warning to watch out, but all is not lost. We'll see next week God's plan to rescue the ungodly. Judgment awaits the ungodly but God is demonstrating incredible restraint and patience allowing time for people to repent and accept His gift of salvation. God has made a way for eternal life by believing in His Son Jesus Christ for salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." That's how you avoid the coming judgment and destruction.