

Contend For The Faith  
April 1, 2020 Lesson #10 Mockers & Scoffers

Peter wrote II Peter [65-68 AD] to awaken and arouse his readers. It is easy for Christians to "get accustomed to God's truth." Our heavenly Father sacrificed so we might have the truth of the Word and the freedom to practice it. The church needs to be aroused regularly lest the enemy find us asleep and take advantage of our spiritual lethargy.

Peter's Ministry of Stirring Up the Saints

- Peter exposes these mockers, along with the folly of their denials. [II Pet. 3:1-2]
- Peter then describes the mockers of whom he warns his readers, both in terms of their lifestyle and their creed. [II Pet. 3:3-4]
- Peter then exposes the folly of their thinking, especially as it relates to the role of the Word of God in OT history and in prophecy. [II Pet. 3:5-7]

II Pet. 3:1-2 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of Remembrance: <sup>2</sup> That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior:

A. Peter's Ministry of Stirring Up The Saints

In II Peter 1:1-11, Peter exhorted his readers to diligently pursue holiness. Then he conveyed his resolve to remind his readers of the truths of the inspired Scriptures.

II Pet. 1:12-15 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. <sup>13</sup> Yea, I think it meet [consider it right], as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; <sup>14</sup> Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me. [made it clear to me] <sup>15</sup> Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

II Pet. 1:16-21 Peter reminds us of his certainty in turning our attention to the inspired Word of God. Because of the Father's testimony concerning the identity of His Son at the transfiguration, we have the "prophetic word made more sure," a word "to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." [II Pet. 1:19]

1. Jesus Christ is the "day star." When He returns, He will shine in His full glory. Until THAT DAY, we have the inspired Word of God and the Holy Spirit to illuminate it.
2. Once again Peter reiterates his commitment to REMIND us of the truth of Scriptures as revealed through the OT prophets, the Lord Jesus, and His apostles.
  - He strongly implies that no longer is new revelation needed and that what God has revealed is entirely SUFFICIENT.
  - He states in II Pet. 2:1: There were once "false prophets," but now there are "false teachers."

- These false teachers do not communicate new revelation from God; rather they seek to deny and distort the Scriptures which have once for all been revealed. [II Pet. 3:4, 16]

Consider: The natural man is always more interested in something "new" than in being reminded of that which is "old."

Acts 17:19-21 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? <sup>20</sup> For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. <sup>21</sup> (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

- ❖ Our technological age sees "old" as inferior and "new" as better.
- 3. Peter has little "new" for his readers. Like the rest of the apostles, he continually turns his readers to the truths of the Scriptures. There is a continuity and a climax to Scripture because God has progressively revealed His truth to men in the course of history.
- This revelation culminated in Christ, God's "final word," which was communicated to us by the apostles [Heb. 1:1-3; 2:1-4]. The truth of God is therefore found in the writings of the "holy" Old Testament prophets, whose teachings are affirmed, clarified, and further explained by our Lord, whose teachings were recorded by the apostles.
- 4. Peter wants us to view the Scriptures as sufficient, as reliable, accurate, and true.
- 5. He also wants us to see these Scriptures as authoritative. These are not merely words which claim to be true; they are the only absolute truth God has revealed.
- 6. But they are not truths submitted to the bar of human judgment.

They are not divine suggestions; they are divine "commands."

Quote: Historic Protestantism is grounded in the conviction that the canon of Scripture is CLOSED. No "new" revelation is necessary because Scripture is complete and absolutely sufficient. Scripture itself is clear that the day of God's speaking directly to His people through various prophetic words and visions is past. The truth God has revealed in Christ including the complete New Testament canon is His final Word. [Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 22:18-19]

A. Peter's Ministry of Stirring Up The Saints

B. Peter & Jude Describe The Mockers, Scoffers

II Peter. 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

Jude 1:17-19 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>18</sup> How that they told you there should be mockers [scoffers] in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, [cause divisions] sensual, having not the Spirit.

- Apostates Will Be Mockers - They will mock the fundamentals of the faith.
- Apostates will create schisms or separations.
- In the course of time, the two factions develop into a split within the church.

Note: The process begun by mockery results in a division of the church.

### Knowing This First: preeminent matter: Expect Scoffers

- In The Last Days [Entire period between His 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming]
- Entire period will be marked by saboteurs of the Truth of God's Word and especially the hope of His return.

### Scoffer Or Mocker Or Scorner

- Defined as a man characterized by contempt.
- Mocks at moral principles, willfully ignoring them in his own conduct but seeking to correct them in others.

Prov. 15:12, 14 The mocker already knows everything. But the wise seek to gain more wisdom and knowledge.

Prov. 9:7-8 A scoffer hates correction and reproof.

Prov. 21:24 A scoffer acts in insolent pride.

Prov. 22:10 A scoffer creates contention.

Prov. 24:9 A scoffer is an abomination to men.

The word scoffer refers to one who denies the truths of Scripture and entices others to go along with his error. A "scoffer" in this context is one who mocks Christ, ridicules the things of God, and opposes the gospel. Both Peter and Jude were writing warnings against false teachers who were intent on leading others astray.

### II Pet. 3:4a And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?

Peter's priority is to warn Christians about how the false teachers [mockers] would try to:

- Deny Their Judgment and Steal The Hope of Believers.

False teachers, who know not the truth and know not God, have nothing to restrain their lusts.

### Walking According To Their Own Lusts

- Walking speaks of the way of conduct, the lifestyle.
- Lifestyle of false teachers: sexual lusts; greed; material wealth

They particularly mock the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ > they want to pursue immoral behavior without consequence or without having to face divine retribution.

- They want an eschatology that fits their conduct. [I John 2:28-29; 3:2-3]

I John 2:28-29 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. <sup>29</sup> If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him.

It should come as no surprise that men would arise who Deny The 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming Of Our Lord.

- One of the most common falsehoods referred to in the NT [I Cor. 15:32; II Thess. 2:1-2]
- This false teaching had an adverse effect on some of the saints [II Tim. 2:18].
- To deny the Second Coming is to deny the Christian's future hope
- To deny the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is to deny the judgment of unbelievers at the return of Christ.
- No wonder these "scoffers" denied the Second Coming.
- They were "following after their own lusts" [v. 3]. How much more comfortable it was to practice sin with the false assurance that they would not give account to God.

- These mockers were compelled to deny the second coming of Christ, not by the weight of the evidence, but due to the guilt and deceit produced by their sin.  
They are led astray by their impure lusts, not by pure logic.

These mockers, scoffers point to the nearness of the day of judgment by mocking it. Peter summarizes their argument in v. 4. Like so many heretics, their doctrine is posed in the form of a question. This use of a question well suits their character as mockers.

II Pet. 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

- Notice the apparent piety of the language of denial.
- These mockers have used all the right theological buzz words.
- They deny the faith with stained glass words.
- They speak of the "fathers," of the "promise," of the creation of the world, and they even speak of death as "sleep."
- They use orthodox terminology, but they have created a heretical theology.
- Truly these are "wolves in sheep's clothing" [Matt. 7:15].
- They appear orthodox, but "secretly introduce destructive heresies" [II Peter 2:1]

Their logic appears to be:

- (1) The "day of the Lord" will entail a cataclysmic change.
- (2) There has been no such change since the death of the patriarchs ("the fathers"), and there is no indication that there will be.
- (3) Since the Lord has not returned for such a long time, and since there is no indication that He will, we must conclude He is not coming.
- (4) Since the Lord promised to come to establish His kingdom on earth and He has not, we must conclude His promises are not reliable, and His word cannot be trusted.

This kind of logical process is not new. We see the same reasoning in Asaph's description of the wicked in Psalms 73:3-12

For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. <sup>4</sup> They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. <sup>6</sup> Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. <sup>9</sup> Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. <sup>11</sup> They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?" Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased [in] wealth. The wicked may have gone about their sinful ways tentatively at first, but when they perceived that no punishment was meted out to them, they became arrogant and blasphemous. They publicly sinned and mockingly declared that God either did not exist or He did not care.

Consider: What the Bible teaches about the day of the Lord, His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, was not invented by the apostles. The prophets taught it and so did Jesus Christ. [II Pet. 3:2]

When the scoffers denied the "power and coming" of Jesus Christ, they were denying the truth of the prophetic books, the teaching of our Lord in the Gospels, and the writing of the apostles. God's Word predicts the coming day of the Lord and the judgment as far back as the days of Enoch. God warned: Judgment was coming.

Jude 1:14-15 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, <sup>15</sup> To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Many of the Hebrew prophets announced the day of the Lord and warned the world would be judged. [Isa. 2:10-22; 13:6-16; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Amos 5:18-20; Zech. 14:1-14:3; Joel and Zephaniah. This period is also known as "the time of Jacob's trouble" [Jer. 30:7] and the Tribulation.

Jesus taught about this Day of Judgment in His sermon on the Mt. of Olives. [Matt. 24-26] Paul discussed it in I Thess. 5 and II Thess. 1-2. John described the terrible day in Rev. 6-19. It will be a time of God's wrath poured out on the nations and Satan will be free to vent his anger and malice. It will culminate with the return of Jesus Christ in glory and victory.

God's Word predicts the appearance of the very scoffers who deny that Word.

Their presence is proof that the Word they deny is the TRUE Word of God.

Scoffer: someone who treats lightly that which ought to be taken seriously

- People in Noah's day scoffed at the idea of a judgment and flood.
- Citizens of Sodom scoffed at the possibility of fire and brimstone their sinful city.
- Many today scoff at the idea of hell or a future day of judgment for them and this world.

Question: Why do they scoff? They want to continue living in sin.

- False teachers cultivate "the lust of uncleanness." [II Pet. 2:10]
- They allure weak people by means of "the lusts of the flesh." [II Pet. 2:18]

If your lifestyle contradicts the Word of God, you must either change your lifestyle or change the Word of God. False teachers choose to change God's Word so they scoff at doctrines of judgment and the coming of Jesus Christ.

Question: What is their argument? Nothing cataclysmic has happened in the past so there is no reason to believe it will happen in the future.

Truth: God's day of judgment will come on the world and Jesus Christ will return to establish His glorious kingdom.

Peter is about to show the fallacy of these mockers' theology in the following verses.

But before moving on to consider his rebuttal, notice a very subtle but important inference contained in the statement of the mockers' theology:

*Nothing cataclysmic has happened in the past so there is no reason to believe it will happen in the future.*

- No direct reference is made to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- They make a sweeping statement covering a large expanse of history going all the way back to the "beginning of creation."
- They insist there is no evidence to support the Lord's promised "coming," but there is not so much as one word about the first "coming" of the Lord Jesus.
- "Nothing of any significance has happened," they maintain, "which would support the Biblical promise of the Lord's coming." The first coming is not even given so much as an honorable mention. Yet it was during this first coming that Peter, James, and John witnessed the transfiguration and beheld the glory and splendor of His second coming.
- It was at this time that the Father testified to the identity of the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah [II Peter 1:16-19].

When the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels spoke these words to the disciples: Acts 1:10-11 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "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."

The worst form of insult is to ignore: The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, His miraculous birth, His sinless life, His mighty miracles, His amazing teaching, His death and resurrection from the grave. None of these seem to have any significance to the scoffers.

These scoffers daringly said nothing of significance had happened since the time of the creation to lend credence to the promise of God to come and establish His kingdom on the earth. They looked back to the creation. But in so doing, they overlooked the coming of Christ just a few short years before. What an amazing oversight.

- A. Peter's Ministry of Stirring Up The Saints
- B. Peter & Jude Describe The Mockers, Scoffers
- C. Leaks in the Logic of the Mockers

Peter points out a number of Biblical truths which must be overlooked if one doubts or denies the certainty of the Second Coming.

II Pet. 3:5-7 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

<sup>6</sup> Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

<sup>7</sup> But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

When they maintain this: *Nothing cataclysmic has happened in the past so there is no reason to believe it will happen in the future*, 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 the present heavens and earth by *His word* are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Peter's teaching:

- The false teachers of whom he wrote are unbelievers. Their fate is eternal destruction [II Pet. 2:1, 3-13, 17].
- While they represent themselves as true believers and even participate with the saints in worship [II Peter 2:1, 13; Jude 1:12], they are not born-again believers.
- Jude tells us they are "devoid of the Spirit" [Jude 1:19]. NOT SAVED

The mockers' lack of faith is evident in their response to our Lord's apparent delay in coming to establish His kingdom on earth. If they had faith, they would believe not in what they see but in what God has said; they would believe God's Word [Heb. 11:1-3]. But lacking such faith, they live only on the basis of their interpretation of what they see and touch and smell.

Worse yet, lacking experiential knowledge, they act purely on impulse, or as Peter says, "instinct" [II Peter 2:12].

How can they claim to be orthodox in their doctrine and speak of the creation of the world without acknowledging that the world was created by the Word of God?

In the creation account of Genesis 1

- Every step of the creation began with the spoken Word of God.
- Each day begins with the statement, "And God said ... " [Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24] shortly followed by the statement, "And God called ... " [Genesis 1:5, 8, 10].

The "beginning of creation" to which these apostate mockers refer was a dramatic demonstration of the power of God's Word. When God spoke, He spoke creation into existence. God's Word transformed the chaotic mass of land and water into a world that would sustain life. Ps. 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

It is the same "Word of God" which reversed the process of creation at the flood so that the land was covered with water, destroying all life [II Peter 3:6].

The Word of God which created all life was now the Word by which all life was destroyed.

- Creation and the flood both involved "water."

The "promise of God's coming," which the scoffers deny, involves "fire."

II Pet. 3:7 Peter reminds us the present heavens and earth are "being reserved for fire."

It will take but a Word from God, and this judgment will take place.

- Until that time, it is the Word of God which sustains creation as it is.

Heb. 1:3a Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the Word Of His Power,

Scoffers point to the constancy of life on this planet as evidence of God's lack of involvement and proof that His Word is not true.

Peter points to this same continuity as proof of the sustaining power of God's Word. He is the living Word, who not only created this world but who also sustains it:

Col. 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created, [both] in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

God is never "late;" He is always "on time." But there are mockers who seek to convince themselves and others that the promise of our Lord's second coming is false based upon the passage of much time and compounded by no visible evidences that He will come at all.

Peter assures us any delay in Christ's return does not show a failure regarding His promises. II Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.