

2 Peter 3:1-18 ~ The Day of the Lord ~ Discussion Questions

1. When someone promised you something important and then failed to deliver, how did you feel? (Disappointed, angry, resigned, expected it, something else)
2. With what sort of people do you find it difficult to be patient?
3. Why did Peter say he wrote both of his letters? What did he want the readers of the letter (Christian believers) to recall? (3:1-2)
4. What did Peter say would occur in the last days? (3:3) If people mock you or make fun of you, can that discourage your wholesome thinking?
5. What was the argument against the second return of Christ that the scoffers were using? (3:4)
6. How was most of the world once destroyed and how will it be destroyed in the future? (3:5-7)
7. In 3:8, what did Peter tell his readers not to forget? Is this a new idea? (Psalm 90:2-4)
8. We read many places in the Bible about the Lord's patience. In this particular instance, why does Peter say he is patient? (3:9) Have you personally benefitted from God's patience? When? How?
9. "The Day of the Lord" is a huge concept and will be a huge event! What does the Bible say about it? (Joel 1:15, 2:10-11, 2:30-31, Amos 5:18-20, Isaiah 2:11, Malachi 4:1, Hebrews 4:13)
10. What reason did Peter give his readers (and you!) for living holy and godly lives? (3:11-13)
11. What did Peter urge his readers to make every effort to do? Why? (3:14)
12. What does the Lord's patience mean to all of us? (3:15)
13. In closing, why did Peter instruct his readers to be on guard? What were his final instructions? How can we grow in the "grace and knowledge of Christ?"

2 Peter 3:1-18 ~ The Day of the Lord ~ Leader's Guide

1. When someone promised you something important and then failed to deliver, how did you feel? (Disappointed, angry, resigned, expected it, something else)

2. With what sort of people do you find it difficult to be patient?

3. Why did Peter say he wrote both of his letters? What did he want the readers of the letter (Christian believers) to recall? (3:1-2)

He said he wrote them “as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking” [NIV] and to “refresh your memory.” [NLT] He re-emphasizes this idea before addressing the central issue of this chapter: the apparent failure of the promises of Jesus’ second coming. This statement actually casts some doubt on the authorship of the letter (as we looked at earlier) as 1 Peter cannot really be described as a reminder (it is more the idea of living a holy life, suffering, and persecution).

Nevertheless, continuing with the idea of this letter being a reminder, Peter says in 3:2, “I want you to recall the words of the holy prophets and Jesus’ commands passed on by the apostles.” (Remember, a prophet does not only forecast future events but also expounds on messages, commands and revelations from God.) Here Peter speaks of OT prophets (personages) and apostles equally; both are vehicles of God’s sacred truth.

4. What did Peter say would occur in the last days? (3:3) If people mock you or make fun of you, can that discourage your wholesome thinking?

Peter said scoffers would come and mock or make fun of the truth. The *last days* refers to the entire period after Christ’s first coming, not just the days of final judgement. So we are in the last days now. These *last days* are in comparison to the time of the Old Testament, which was preliminary and preparatory. Peter also spoke of scoffers in Chapter 2 who follow their own evil desires (2:10, 18-19). These people also may have been Gnostics who resisted the idea of a time of judgement and moral accountability.

Even the most dedicated person is susceptible to being mocked.. No one likes to have fun made at his expense or be asked a loaded question with an unjustified assumption for which there is no clear-cut answer. We joke about asking questions like, “have you stopped beating your wife?” but that’s what these scoffers were doing.

5. What was the argument against the second return of Christ that the scoffers were using? (3:4)

Effectively they were saying since the second coming has not occurred up to this time, it will never occur. They argue that nature is not subject to divine intervention, which they say, has been proved by observing that the way things

have gone on in the thousands of years from the beginning of creation has continued in the period “since our fathers died” (30 years? 50 years?). It’s like saying because a 200-year-old house that my father bought 30 years ago is still standing, it will continue to stand forever and not even Hurricane Katrina or Sandy could knock it over. It’s absurd.

6. How was most of the world once destroyed and how will it be destroyed in the future? (3:5-7)

The world was created, was destroyed, and will be destroyed by what? By God’s word. Yes, he used other forces, water the first time and, according to Peter, he will use fire the second time. Look back in Genesis 1:3-10 and you’ll see that after light was created on the first day, water was created and separated into water and the sky on the second day. It was not until the third day that dry land was separated from the water. Then in Genesis 6 and 7, God again used water to destroy mankind (except for Noah and his family) and the surface of the earth.

By telling this, Peter pointed out the fallacy of the scoffers’ arguments by describing the divine intervention of the flood.

7. In 3:8, what did Peter tell his readers not to forget? Is this a new idea? (Psalm 90:2-4)

Peter said, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” His readers would have been familiar with the similar words from Psalm 90. One of a number of psalms not written by David or Asaph, Psalm 90 is called a prayer of Moses (although he did not write it).

Psalm 90: 2-4 – ² Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³ You turn men back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, O sons of men.”

⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

Interestingly, this psalm also refers to the creation of the earth and from it comes the idea that the creation days referred to in the first chapter of Genesis may well be much longer than a current 24-hour day. Many (most?) apologetics scholars such as Eric Lyons scoff at this notion and come down on the side of a day is a day and a year is a year. Lyons says that not all the arguments in the world that a day is a thousand years could account for the 13+ billion years since the Big Bang. Want more? Google finds 8.5 million web sites as of Nov. 2012 that speak of this issue in some fashion.

8. We read many places in the Bible about the Lord’s patience. In this particular instance, why does Peter say he is patient? (3:9) Have you personally benefitted from God’s patience? When? How?

Peter says the Lord does not want anyone to perish, but he wants everyone to repent. Thus the scoffers are wrong on two points. 1) They fail to recognize that

all things have not continued without divine intervention. 2) They misunderstand the reason for the apparent divine delay.

Most of us who have become Christians anytime in adulthood have benefitted from God's patience on this specific issue. But hasn't God been patient with you on other things as well? Not following his commands. Repeatedly falling into temptation. Much more.

9. "The Day of the Lord" is a huge concept and will be a huge event! What does the Bible say about it? (Joel 1:15, 2:10-11, 2:30-31, Amos 5:18-20, Isaiah 2:11, Malachi 4:1, Hebrews 4:13)

Joel 1:15 [NLT] – The day of the Lord is near, the day when destruction comes from the Almighty. How terrible that day will be!

Joel 2:10-11 – ¹⁰ The earth quakes as they advance, and the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine.

¹¹ The Lord is at the head of the column. He leads them with a shout. This is his mighty army, and they follow his orders. The day of the Lord is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can possibly survive?

Joel 2:30-31 – ³⁰ And I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth— blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives.

Amos 5:18-20 [NIV] – ¹⁸ Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. ¹⁹ It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. ²⁰ Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light—pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

Isaiah 2:11 – The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Malachi 4:1 – "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them.

And, of course, we have Peter's description in 3:10 – The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it laid bare [some manuscripts say "burned up"]. The *elements* could refer to heavenly bodies, to physical elements, or to "earth, air, fire, and water."

The Day of the Lord is further described in the apocalyptic portions of Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Revelation.

Two other ideas appear with descriptions of the Day of the Lord: 1) it will come without warning, suddenly and unexpectedly, "like a thief in the night" and 2) everything will be laid bare, which is often taken to mean that everything will appear before God's judgement seat.

Hebrews 4:13 – Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

10. What reason did Peter give his readers (and you!) for living holy and godly lives? (3:11-13)

Peter said since the everything will be destroyed in the Day of the Lord, if you live a holy and godly life, you will actually look forward to its coming and want to speed it along. He says, “we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness”—God’s home, my home, and your home. I can’t wait!

How can you speed its coming? The Lord’s prayer says, “May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” [NLT] Since the Lord gave free will to us all, we are not asking in the prayer that the Lord override this attribute, but rather that he help us to do his will and obey his commands here on earth to hasten the coming of his kingdom. Peter also said in 3:9 that the Lord is waiting for everyone to come to repentance, so the sooner that Christians bring others to the saving grace of God, the sooner the Day of the Lord will come. Prayer helps too (Matthew 6:10 above) as does holy living.

11. What did Peter urge his readers to make every effort to do? Why? (3:14)

Peter urged his readers to “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.”

I personally found the note on 3:14 in the NIV Study Bible one of the scariest notes in the entire Bible. It explains the phrase, “*at peace with him [Jesus]*” as follows. Believers have peace with God as a result of being justified by faith (see Rom 5:1 and note), but they may displease him by failing to live as he desires and thus not receive his commendation and reward when he returns (cf. 1Co 3:10-15, 2Co 5:10 and notes). The further note on 1Co 3:13 reads, The work of some believers will stand the test while that of others will disappear. And the note on 3:15: “...with one’s work being burned up by the fire of God’s holy justice and judgement.” The note on 2Co 5:10 reads, “To give an accounting of what we have done with our lives as Christians...Although the body is wasting away, we are responsible for our actions while in it.” I have to confess, this scares me out of my mind and if it wasn’t for God’s love and patience, I’d be doomed.

12. What does the Lord’s patience mean to all of us? (3:15)

Peter is essentially repeating verse 9 in an even more positive way in saying the Lord’s patience means salvation.

It is interesting to note in 3:15-16 that Peter expresses warmth and unity with Paul and mentions parallels in their teaching about salvation and exhortation to holy living.

13. In closing, why did Peter instruct his readers to be on guard? What were his final instructions? How can we grow in the “grace and knowledge of Christ?”

Again, Peter warns against those who would lead believers astray. Throughout the letter he talks about false teachers, scoffers, and people who tempt us with sex

and money, and here in the closing he again says, “since you already know this, be on your guard...” Then, on a positive note, he exhorts us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The stress on knowledge is an antidote to the false teachers who boasted of their esoteric knowledge.

How can we grow in knowledge? Easy: read and study the Bible every day. Go to Bible studies. Talk about it with other Christian men. Attend a good, Bible-based church. Memorize scripture verses. Meditate on sections of scripture. Pray.