

2Peter 3:5-9 "A Sure Hope - God's True Word"

Well, it's been a few weeks since we've started our study in 2Peter as we've seen how Peter is continuing his theme of the return of Christ from his first letter and is now encouraging the body of Christ not to be sidetracked by the false teachers and mockers who would undermine the teaching on the return of Christ.

2 Peter 3:3-4 ³ Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ 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."

It is these types of people who are not just determining in their own hearts that Christ is not a reality, but have, in many instances, become militant in trying to convince believers that our hope is worthless and thus creating doubt and worry among those in the body of Christ.

This is Peter's main concern. He doesn't want the flock of Christ to be influenced by those who would try to make the work of the gospel ineffective by creating disbelief, which in turn creates inactivity, as it relates to the gospel and the sanctification of true believers in Christ.

But, he also wants us to understand that, despite all of this, the scoffers will most certainly come and will make every effort to disrupt the body of Christ from within and without. There will be false teachers within the church, as well as people outside taking potshots at us with their scoffing and mockery.

And so, we shouldn't be surprised, and therefore, should not be unprepared, when the attacks come concerning our faith in Christ. This is why Peter could exhort the Church to always be ready to give a defense of the faith to those who want to know the hope we have.

1PE 3:15-16 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

We are always going to be slandered in one form or another, but that should never keep us from giving the truth in love. And as Peter writes this section in this second letter, concerning the scoffers and slanderers, he wants us not to be deterred by the attacks, knowing that it is Jesus Christ who is faithful to be there for us in every battle we face.

HEB 10:23-24 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Yes, the attacks will come. Yes, the world will still hate us because they hate Christ. And yes, we will be tempted to want to throw our hands in the air and say, 'what's the use, no one seems to want the truth.'

But, we must persevere in the grace and power of God and do the work He's called us to do despite the opposition. And this is where we left off in our study in 2Peter.

2PE 3:3 "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 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."

The objective of this statement by the mockers is to shake us up and create doubt and have us question the faithfulness of our God. After all, if this is true, that nothing has changed and that it never will, then we're just spinning our wheels and we might as well join the rest of the world and enjoy the time we have. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. (Isaiah 22:13)

But, that's not the case. The Scriptures teach us that this world is not an end in itself. When we die we don't simply occupy space six feet below the ground as the earth eventually consumes us and we return to the dust. There is something beyond the grave for all men. For the believer, hope found in his creator God. For the unbeliever, judgment and condemnation to be separated from God forever.

And what Peter would have us see is that we should not listen to the vain babblings of those who know nothing of the truth of God's word as though they supposedly have the answers to life. They don't. And so, don't be shaken.

Remember what they say? "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

Is that sound biblical exposition? Is that really what the word of God teaches? You see, what Peter is telling us here is to consider one of two things. Either, trust your circumstances, which in this case would have to admit that Christ hasn't come back yet, or trust God who says, 'Christ will come back.'

One has to do with looking at life through our natural perspective, the other has to do with life as we look at it by faith, through the eyes of God who is the beginning and the end and who has determined all things, as He has revealed His truth and will in His word.

That's exactly what Paul meant when he wrote in 2CO 5:7 "We live by faith, not by sight."

If we live by sight we will always be disappointed. We will always be wondering if there is a God in heaven who even knows we exist. That's how the world views life, but that is not how we should view it. We know the truth and the truth has set us free, not only from the penalty of our sin, but also free from the way we used to view life, as though it was all futility.

In Christ, nothing is futile and nothing is wasted, not even the trials and bad decisions we make which are not in faith. God causes all things to work together for good, to those who love Christ and are called according to His purpose. (Rom.8:28)

And so, we should never lose heart even when we seem to have messed up. We just grab on tight to our Lord's hand and He lifts us up to get back on the path to love and serve Him. That's the wonderful reality of what John wrote in his first epistle.

1JO 2:1 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

But what about these scoffers, these people who would try to convince us that the hope we have is useless and that Jesus Christ is not the answer? Well, notice that the logic they use is one of mere sight. It's a sight which deals only with today. Let's look at our text.

2PE 3:5-7 "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 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."

Notice what Peter says here. They deliberately forget. What does that mean? Just what it says. They have purposed to look at the facts and yet have not believed them because they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They have purposed to conclude that despite what has happened in the past regarding this world they will not let that alter their bias.

And so, Peter points out that despite all of their arguments that "ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation," this simply isn't the case. They have hid their heads in the sand because ever since our fathers died, nothing goes on exactly as it has since the beginning of creation. The world is in constant change and the world is personally affected by the God who created it.

And so, Peter brings up a case in point. "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water." (2PE 3:5)

What he is saying is that there was a time in which this world was first brought into existence. And it was brought into existence by the One they are denying. They know this to be true. If, in our text, these are Jews who are scoffing at the idea of the return of the Messiah, then they most certainly have the O.T. Scriptures which spend a great deal of time revealing who brought this world into existence.

If these are Gentile pagans who are doing the scoffing, they too have an abundance of secular literature which also speaks of the gods bringing this universe into existence.

Now, the point isn't which God or gods did the creating, though we know it can only be the one true God; the point is that they deny what most people know to be true about the universe; someone greater than themselves brought it into existence.

You must also add into the equation that the one true God has built into every person a God-conscience, if you will. Paul makes this very clear in the letter he wrote to the Romans.

ROM 1:18-20 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.** 20 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."

And so, you have God making it plain through His creation and the spirit which makes up every person, which was originally designed to have fellowship with God, since all men are made in His image.

All people were created by God with body, soul and spirit. Since it is God who placed all of this in man it stands to reason that man has an innate understanding that the one true God has created him.

That's why Paul can say that no one is without excuse when it comes to saying that they didn't know there was a God they had to seek. No, as Peter points out, they deliberately rejected the facts in favor of their own agenda, as we all did before coming to Christ.

In the case of creation, they deliberately forgot. Now, that sounds pretty weird. How do you deliberately forget anything? Well, it's not as though they woke up one day with a rudimentary understanding of how God was responsible for creating this universe, and then decided to force themselves to forget it, as though they could induce some sort of selective amnesia.

No, what Peter means is that the conscience does have a tendency to put things on the back burner when it doesn't like what it conveys. How many people who entered into a life of crime, let's say theft, started with no conscience about stealing?

At some point in their lives, even if it was in childhood, when they first stole something, their conscience told them it was wrong. But, the more they did it and got away from the truth that stealing is wrong, there was a point at which their conscience no longer effected their decisions.

They deliberately forgot what the truth is concerning stealing and it made stealing something which could be justified according to their new sense of right and wrong.

In the same way, many of these scoffers, whom Peter addresses, had gotten so far away from the truth that they had essentially forgotten the truth, which at some point in their lives they knew to be true. Their conscience toward God and His creation, which screams of a Creator, was made dull in favor of their own agenda of not having to be responsible to God.

Remember, Peter is trying to comfort these saints who are being assailed with these scoffers and the false teachings they bring. He's saying that the premise they start with is false. Don't be swayed by such illogical thinking which holds no water. Hold fast to the truth we have been given by a God who has proved Himself faithful as we look to the past and see how He has personally been involved in the lives of people and the universe He created.

How many times have people said to you: "How do you know the Bible's true, it was written by men?" "How can you say God created the world, when science has proven that it evolved over billions of years?"

Many Christians have panicked over such confrontations. But, even if you don't have all of the answers, does that change anything regarding the truth that God has revealed Himself through His written word and that He really did create the universe?

What if someone came to you and gave you what appeared to be a scientific explanation as to how the sun really does not exist. You may not be able to explain all of the reasons it does from a scientific perspective, such as the gravitational pull it extends to the planets which can be measured with instruments, or the types of gases which can also be measured, along with the solar winds we are bombarded with each day and on and on and on.

You may not be able to convince someone using such logic, but you know the sun exists. All you have to do is look up into the sky. In the same way, Christians know that God exists and that He is who He says He is, despite the fact that many Christians probably could not enter into a debate over such issues of "Christian theism, the rational proofs of God's existence through ontological, cosmological or teleological arguments, or presuppositional apologetics." (Bruce Milne)

This doesn't mean that Christians shouldn't be informed or that we shouldn't study to show ourselves approved, but when it comes to having life in Christ, in most cases, we really don't need to go into

some sort of academic and scientific approach to the truth. Paul puts it this way.

ROM 1:16-17 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Hab. 2:4)

Did Paul have the ability to debate many of the issues of his day with unbelievers who purposed to approach God on their own terms? You bet he did. He was a trained Pharisee who was taught how to use logic to win arguments, as well as being trained in the Scriptures. And he often used both approaches in sharing the truth.

But, given a choice, when he had very little time to approach someone lost in sin, Paul would have gladly given the Scriptures and the gospel whether someone said they believed in them or not.

Why? Because he trusted God and knew that the same truth that set him free in Christ was the same truth that could set anyone free from the penalty and power of sin as they entered into a relationship with the Creator of this universe by faith in Christ.

Okay, let's move on. Peter is stating a truth about this creation which these scoffers have chosen to forget or not to acknowledge. He says, "long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water."

What is he talking about? He's stating a couple of things here. First, we see that the heavens and the earth existed because of God's word. The second thing we see here is that the earth was formed out of water and by water. Let's deal with the first.

When Peter says that, "by God's word the heavens and the earth existed," he is stating the truth that God spoke all of creation into existence. Now, this may sound fantastic, but it's no more fantastic than people saying that matter created itself and over billions of years decided to form life out of non-life; from one-celled life to man.

No, God is life and only through Him can life and anything else come into existence. He spoke and it was. In Theological terms this is often referred to as Ex Nihilo, which is Latin for, out of nothing.

God didn't start with something like matter and then form the universe. He started with nothing other than His will and power and decided to bring something into existence. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way.

HEB 1:1-3 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by [the word of His power; NASB]. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

Not only did our Lord create everything by the word of His power, He sustains everything by the word of His power. Nothing would exist today if it were not for the continued power and personal involvement of God in His creation.

If for some reason God decided not to be concerned for any part of His creation it would simply cease to exist. This shows us that every molecule in this universe is important to our God and that despite the sin, which has effected the universe, He still views this universe as good and useful for His purposes and His will, and for our pleasure, which is part of the reason this universe was created in the first place.

God spoke and matter leaped into existence. He did this in a span of six days. I've heard people say, how could the entire universe come into existence in six days? My response is, why did it take so long? God could have created it in a sixth of a nanosecond.

But, it was His will to do it the way He did. In fact, Peter actually points to the first day of creation in our text. Notice the second thing he says in verse 5, "the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water."

The heavens and the earth were formed out of water and by water? What in the world is that all about? Well, if you go back to Gen.1:7, which deals with day two of God's creation, we get a clue as to what Peter is referring to. On the first day of creation God simply spoke and created the light.

GEN 1:3-5 "And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light

from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning - the first day."

But, it's the second and third day of creation that Peter makes note of here in our text.

GEN 1:6-8 "And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning - the second day."

God is apparently starting with water here on the second day of creation. And then He separates these waters out. And so, you have water below which is going to be used to form the world, and waters above which will ultimately be our atmosphere which God calls sky.

But, it is on the third day that God does something with these waters as it relates to Him forming this world.

GEN 1:9-10 "And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good."

By the way, it was also on the third day that God created all the green vegetation, which includes grass, bushes, fruit trees and so forth. And so, by day three the earth was almost ready to be inhabited by living creatures, though they will not come on to the scene until day five.

But, it's these waters which Peter wants to point to. These waters were used by God to form the earth. Peter is not suggesting that solid earth is actually H₂O. He's not talking as much about the actual substances as he is about origin. And so, the text really explains more about how the earth was formed, not all of the substances of the earth that God suspended in water.

Obviously, the substances would include far more than H₂O. It would include metals of all sorts together with every element which is in existence today. When we were studying this section on Genesis in our Thursday night study we saw how this was probably a large slurry of water and elements mixed together which was rotating as God placed it in motion.

Through the rotation of this slurry the kinetic forces, which God also created, such as centrifugal force opposing gravity, would actually help to separate out these elements and water. In this separation process, which God was using, we end up with dry land as well as an atmosphere and waters above our atmosphere as mentioned in Genesis 1:6.

This is far from the naturalistic approach evolutionists use in explaining the cosmology of the universe. Rather we are simply saying that even in the miraculous creation of the universe God can still utilize the means to bring together certain aspects of His creation, even as He did with Adam, whom God fashioned miraculously from newly created existing material, the dust of the earth.

GEN 1:6-7 "And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so."

This expanse between the waters would be our atmosphere. But the water above the expanse, or our atmosphere, would undoubtedly be the water vapor canopy which existed before the flood and may have been one of the sources for the water which subsequently flooded this entire earth.

But Peter's point in bringing all of this out has to do with the statement that, "ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

His argument is that, no, it has not gone on as it has since the beginning of creation. Things have changed since God created this universe. And the One who changed them is the One these scoffers are denying.

Peter is saying that God is still personally involved in His creation. Just because things continue on doesn't mean that God has taken an extended vacation and has no intention of staying involved in this world and therefore in the lives of people.

In fact, Peter then moves on to show how God in the past was personally involved in this world and the people in it when he says, "By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed." (2PE 3:6)

Now, Peter moves from the waters which God created to help form the world to using those same waters to now destroy the earth. What is Peter saying? He's saying, 'see, God is involved and things did not remain the same.

And they did not remain the same because God made the changes by destroying the world, precisely for the same reasons that Peter is pointing out in our text; unbelief and denial of God among the created inhabitants of this world, which will result in judgment.

But, this brings up another point Peter is trying to make and that is that the same God who created is the same God who declares men guilty for their sin, which shows that His creation is not just about matter, it's also about being accountable to a holy Creator and Lord.

Since God is the creator of matter and men, He is also the God who holds out a standard by which all men stand before Him personally. And this is where Peter is going. He is building a case for a personal God who personally holds all men accountable to Himself.

No matter how men kick and scream that God doesn't exist, and that this world will go on forever without having to deal with a Holy God, that doesn't change reality. And this is why every believer ought to rejoice that no matter how the world scoffs at God we have been given the truth which can affect the hearts of men.

We'll pick up in verse seven next week when Peter shows how the past will ensure the future as God has revealed it. Praise God that our past, present and future, have been dealt with by the grace of God found in Christ. There is therefore now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

David put it this way in PSA 103:12 "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

ISA 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

EPH 1:7 "In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace
8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

But Paul also reminds us that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new. (2Cor.5:17)

"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom.6:11)