

2nd Peter Chapter 3- John Karmelich

1. The last lesson was the heavy-topic of false teachers. Chapter 2 focused on the deceitful and sinful practices of false teachers. Peter taught how we as Christians can recognize them by certain character traits. In this lesson, we lighten up and talk about the end of the world. ☺
 - a) I'm not kidding. The primary focus on this lesson is on the final wrap-up events of the world as we know it. The world had a beginning. The world, again as we know it, also has an end. This happens not when the sun dies out, but when Jesus comes back.
 - b) In Chapter 3, Peter states his purpose for writing both of his letters. His main purpose of both letters is for us to "think about" the commands taught through out the Bible. It is about getting proper perspective as we live for Jesus as part of our Christian life. Part of that focus is to understand that the world as we know it will end one day. One reason to keep a "light touch" on things of this world around us is that God will destroy it one day.
2. I'd like to give a football illustration. (I have to do this to keep the guys interested. ☺)
 - a) Years ago, I attended a football game at Stanford University. Prior to the game, Stanford held a ceremony where their mascot-costume was destroyed. Their mascot is a student dressed as a giant tree. The "tree" dances as their band plays. One day, that costume was captured by students of their archrival, the University of California-Berkeley.
 - b) When the Stanford student body got the costume back, the Stanford student staff felt that since the costume had been captured by their "enemies", it was now "contaminated" beyond any sense of repair. The tree costume had to be destroyed and a new one needed to be made. They had a ceremony before the game where the old costume was destroyed.
 - c) When I watched that event back then, I never thought I would be using it as a bible illustration. ☺ The point is sometimes in life, something is contaminated beyond saving. With horses, the most merciful thing one can do is kill them when they break their legs. God has stated a number of times in the bible, that he will destroy the heavens and the earth. Why? Because it is "contaminated beyond repair". Sin has spread to a point where it affects everything and anything it touches.
3. Why does God have to kill the whole earth because of sin? Why not just the sinners? Why kill, trees, canyons, mountains, animals and planets just because of sin? The problem is that man's sinful behavior does damage to all of these things. Environmental damage is due to man's sin. The only thing God can do is a "mercy killing". This is why God has to destroy the world as we know it one day as it is beyond repair.
 - a) Another reason God has to destroy everything is to give us perspective. Knowing God will destroy all "things" give us perspective about what is important. Before you get too excited about a new car or a new outfit, keep in mind it is all going to burn up one day. Does that mean you can't enjoy such things? Of course not. If anything, you appreciate them with the proper perspective knowing that such things are only temporary.
 - b) OK, let's go to Verse 1 and bring on the apocalypse. ☺
4. Verse 1: Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.
 - a) Notice the opening words are "Dear friends". The King James and other versions translate "friends" as "beloved". It is the idea that we are special to God and are saved for a purpose. Peter is going to talk about the end of the world as it is "contaminated beyond repair". The idea of "beloved friends" is that we are special and "pure" to God in contrast to sin and what it has done to the world.

- b) Peter says “this is my second letter to you”. This verse implies that Peter intended the letter for the same audience.
 - i) Peter’s first letter was addressed to specific churches in what-is-today Turkey.
 - ii) Peter’s second letter doesn’t specify an audience. I believe Peter understood that both of his letters were God-inspired and were meant to be circulated.
- c) Verses 1 and 2 state the purpose of Peter writing both letters.
 - i) It is stated in Verse 1: “To stimulate you to wholesome thinking”
 - ii) Peter wants to “stimulate us to wholesome thinking” not so we can just sit there and say, “Oh, that is interesting, how about that?” Peter is giving us commands. Like a good soldier, we are to then go out and obey those commands. That is the purpose of this letter.
 - iii) Peter’s letters bring up specific topics and specific commands to help us mature as Christians. Peter gives us commands to comprehend so we can act accordingly.
- d) In Verse 2, Peter expands upon the authority of “just who is giving you these commands.
 - i) In the first half of Verse 2, Peter says, “the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets. That is the entire Old Testament.
 - a) Peter has just validated the entire Old Testament as the word of God.
 - ii) Does this verse mean that we as Christians are obligated to obey every command in the Old Testament? Well, yes and no. ☺
 - a) First of all, there are “the 10 Commandments” are binding on all thinking people who reach the age of the accountability. (For example, “You shall not steal” is binding on all people.) The hundreds of other laws given by Moses were binding to religious Jews prior to Jesus.
 - b) Jesus came to fulfill all of those laws. (Reference 5:17). We accept Jesus perfect sacrifice as fulfillment of God’s requirement of the law.
 - c) Does that mean we can now steal and murder as God the Father accepted Jesus payment? Of course not. Does that mean we have to eat kosher? ☺ No. The New Testament is our guide to which specific laws of the Old Testament are still binding. Acts Chapter 15 is a good reference for a discussion of how Christians are to deal with food and ceremonial laws.
 - iii) Remember Peter quoted liberally from the Old Testament in both of these letters. Off the top of my head, he quoted from Isaiah and Proverbs a number of times.
 - a) The point is that Peter understood that the Old Testament teaches us how to live a life that is pleasing to God, which is the goal of every Christian. The New Testament teaches us the proper interpretation of those laws.
- e) Next, Peter says, “the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.”
 - i) That’s Peter stating his authority for us to obey the commands of his two letters.
 - ii) Don’t take this lightly. Peter saying that his writings as well as Paul’s writings (coming up in the latter verses of this chapter) are equal in Scripture to that of the Old Testament. That’s a pretty bold statement for a religious Jew to make.
 - iii) One of the mysteries of the New Testament is just how it was canonized. That term “canonized” refers to the public acceptance of a letter or book as Scripture. For example, someone had to decide if all of Paul’s letters and Peter’s letters were “real” Scripture, or if they were counterfeit.
 - a) Around the 4th Century, when Christianity became legal, the leaders of the church got together, “compared notes”, and decided which books of the bible and which epistles were genuine and which were phony. Some were accepted more quickly than others, but soon, the bible as we know it was “canonized”.

- b) By the way, Protestants, Orthodox and Catholics accept the same bible, as we know it. The only difference is the Roman Catholic Church has some additional Old Testament books that Protestants do not accept.
 - c) I once asked a bible-teacher mentor about this topic. His theory was that the early church fathers “just knew” they were Scripture. In other words, the readers of those New Testament Gospels and Epistles just “knew” they were more special than whatever letters they were writing and they were Scripture. We have writings of the 2nd and 3rd generation Christians who refer to parts of the New Testament as “Scripture”.
 - d) Peter claiming his writing was God-inspired. I don’t think a bright light shined as Peter as he wrote this. ☺ Somehow, Peter just “knew” that this letter was to be part of “Scripture” on the same level as the Old Testament.
 - iv) Remember Peter spends time establishing his authority is so we can obey the commandments of this letter. In other words, Peter is not stating his apostleship so he can brag about his relationship with Jesus. He is stating his authority so that we do obey what is written.
 - f) One last thing and then we can actually move on to Verse 3. ☺ Notice that Peter says in Verse 2 that we obey “the command given by our Lord and Savior.”
 - i) Notice the word “command” is singular. If you read the Gospels, only once did Jesus ever give a command. Jesus gave lots of instructions, but somehow a “commandment” is higher in authority, like the 10 Commandments.
 - ii) Jesus said, “A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35 NIV)
 - a) That command is to love one another. If you think about, of all our behavior as a Christians is “just commentary” on that commandment.
 - b) There was a famous rabbi who once summarized the writings of Moses as follows: “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. The rest is just commentary”. That is a paraphrase of what he actually said, but you get the idea.
 - c) The biblical concept of “love” is to give of oneself. It is about putting other’s needs as priority over one’s own needs. It is about thinking of one self as the lowest servant.
 - d) Remember that this is a command given by Jesus himself. It is on the same level of importance as “do not steal” and “do not murder”.
5. Verse 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."
- a) Verse 3 opens with “first of all”. If Peter is saying “first of all”, why didn’t he mention that back on Chapter 1, Verse 1 as opposed to Chapter 3? If this is “first”, why is Peter just now getting around to this? The answer is this phrase is first in “preeminence”, not first on the list. It would be like saying, “Here is a list of ten things, but number-seven is the most important”.
 - b) The key topic of these verses are “scoffers”. Before we actually get to scoffers, it is necessary to talk about the phrase, “the last days”.
 - i) The “last days” is a not a one week or a one year period of time. It refers to the whole time era between the time Jesus was resurrected and the time period where Jesus comes back.

- ii) In perspective of all of human history, it is the last significant era of time:
 - a) It was roughly 2,000 years from Adam to Abraham (the first Jew).
 - b) It was roughly 2,000 years from Abraham to the time of Jesus.
 - c) The final great segment of time is called “the last days”. Does that mean it will be exactly two thousand years (Jesus died in AD 32 or 33) to when Jesus comes back? I hope so. ☺ Jesus says no one knows the day or hour of His return, and we’ll discuss that in a few pages. My point here is to simply to understand the time frame of “the last days”.
- iii) Hebrews 1:1-2 is a good cross-reference to this point: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, (Hebrews 1:1-2a, NIV)
- iv) So how can roughly two thousand years of history be thought of as “last days”?
 - a) The first century Christians believed Jesus could come back at any moment. Christians today believe Jesus can come back at any moment. The idea is to “be on our toes” as Jesus can return at any time. That is the perspective one should have when thinking about “the last days”.
- c) OK, on to the main point of this verse: Scoffers. These are nonbelievers who scoff at the idea of Jesus Second Coming.
 - i) Peter says that through the whole Christian era, there will be those that scoff at the idea of Jesus Second Coming. That is the idea of Verse 4.
 - ii) To paraphrase “scoffers”: “Do you actually expect me to believe that Jesus is coming back? Yeah right, it has been 2,000 years folks, give it up. Life just continues on as it always does.”
 - iii) So why do scoffers scoff? Peter says, “They follow their own evil desires”.
 - a) What does that mean? That means they don’t want to think about God. They want to live a life based on what is pleasing at the moment. They don’t want any accountability to God. Therefore, they act out their willful disbelief by scoffing at Christian believers.
 - iv) Remember that this letter is written to believers and not to scoffers.
 - a) Peter’s point is to expect the scoffing from outsiders. We should expect the university professors and television shows that shed doubts on the Second Coming of Jesus. There are all sorts of false theories out there.
 - b) Remember that Satan’s goal for believers is to make them ineffective. He can’t take away your salvation, but he can make you an ineffective witness for Jesus. One way to do it is to get you to doubt some of the fundamental principals of Christianity. One of them is Jesus Second Coming.
- 6. Verse 5: 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.
 - a) Let’s start with the phrase “deliberately forget”.
 - i) As one preacher once put it, “that means they’re dumb on purpose”!
 - b) If you look at the creation of the universe, it becomes obvious that there is a power greater than the universe that made it in the first place. For example, if you happen to believe the “big bang theory”, then someone must have lit the fuse. ☺
 - i) Ask someone who believes in the Big Bang theory, “Where did space come from?”, or ask, “How did the explosion happen anyway?”
 - ii) The point is one cannot ignore a power greater than the universe and that power is God. Even if one believes in multiple gods, then there has to be a single source that created those gods. Eventually one comes down to a single source.

- iii) For example, children always ask, “Who made god?” If someone made god, there has to be a “greater” god. Eventually it comes down to a single source where it all began. That is our God. The name “Jehovah” means “I am that I am”. It includes the idea that God always existed.
 - iv) The reason God holds all thinking people (who reach an age of accountability) accountable is that the existence of God is “self-evident” by the universe.
 - c) If we acknowledge there is a God, then the next step is to wonder “what does this God expect of us?”
 - i) The answer is most of the bible. If you believe in God, you behave accordingly.
 - ii) To those who don’t have access to a bible, God judges people fairly based on what information they do have about God.
 - iii) We are born with instinct and a conscious. We instinctively know that stealing is wrong and killing is wrong. Therefore, we have no excuse before God.
 - iv) If we have further understanding, such as the knowledge of the Law, then we have no further excuses. If God has given us more understanding, then God holds us to a higher degree of accountability.
 - d) With all of this in mind, we can now go back to 1st Peter.
 - i) Peter’s next point is that God destroyed the ancient world of Noah’s time.
 - ii) There was a world that existed for centuries that was destroyed by the flood.
 - iii) In case you forgot, my main topic today is the end of the world. ☺ Peter is about to make the point that just as God destroyed the ancient world by a flood, so once again God will destroy the world as we know it. Only this time by fire.
 - iv) When the flood was over, God created the rainbow as a sign he would never again destroy the earth. Our problem is we forget to read the fine print. ☺ God specifically said he would never again destroy the earth by a flood. (Reference: Genesis 9:13-15). God left himself a loophole so He could destroy the earth by some other means other than a flood. In that sense, the end of the world was “implied” back in Genesis 9 when God took the time and trouble to state He would never again destroy the earth by a flood.
 - a) The story of the flood was past on from generation to generation. Almost every culture around the world has a version of the flood story. That is evidence it was a worldwide phenomena. There is also great geological evidence to support a worldwide flood if you take the time to study it.
 - b) This leads back to Peter’s point how we some people willfully choose to ignore the flood story so they don’t have to be accountable to God.
7. Verse 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.
- a) Peter is stating the next time the world is destroyed, God will destroy it by fire.
 - i) Peter says that God will destroy “the heavens and the earth”.
 - b) We need to stop for a second and define “heavens”.
 - i) Paul once said he was caught up into “the third heaven” (Ref. 2nd Cor. 12:2).
 - ii) In Hebrew thought, there are “three heavens”:
 - a) The first “heaven” is the atmosphere above us.
 - b) The second “heaven” is “outer space”, which are the planets and stars.
 - c) The third “heaven” is where God’s throne is.
 - iii) This does not mean God’s throne is somewhere in outer space. I take the view that world exists in more than three dimensions. There are dimensions we cannot comprehend and that is where God exists. In that sense God is “everywhere” from our comprehension.

- c) Peter says God will destroy the heavens and the earth. Notice the plurality of heavens.
 - i) Does that mean God's throne room is part of the destruction? It could be. You can read all of the end-of-the world passages and argue it either way.
 - ii) This goes back to my "contamination" illustration of the Stanford tree costume. The world is contaminated by sin. It needs to be destroyed as a mercy killing.
 - iii) Some argue that since Satan himself has or had access to heaven (e.g., Job 1:6), that is the reason that heaven as we think of it must also be destroyed. Again, it is a debate question for bible scholars to speculate.
 - d) Peter then says the "heavens and earth are reserved for fire".
 - i) This isn't like a dinner reservation that we can cancel or no-show. ☺ It is reserved in the same way a prisoner on death row is waiting for their turn to be executed. It is a "done deal" that has not happened yet.
 - ii) Also remember that all people live forever. It is not like condemned souls get burned up with the earth's destruction and that is the end of them.
 - iii) Notice there is no reference to a "new hell". Maybe there is one. Maybe the condemned are in some "holding tank" until the new one is created. The point here is to understand that one's life does not end at death, no matter what is our eternal fate.
 - e) OK John, what does this have to do with my life? Glad you asked. ☺
 - i) God will destroy everything we know. Don't just think of all the rotten things that will be destroyed, but the beautiful things as well. There are places on this planet that are beautiful to visit. They're all be "burnt toast" one day. ☺
 - ii) This is about having perspective on "things". Yes we can enjoy the beauty of what God has created. Yes we can enjoy our new car or our new home. We just have to remember that all belongs to God. If God created the world and all that is in it, then the world belongs to Him, and not us. If it is God's prerogative to destroy it one day, who are we to say otherwise?
8. Verse 8: But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.
- a) Peter is paraphrasing Psalm 90:4 "For a thousand years in your sight, are like a day that has just gone by" (Psalm 90:4a, NIV).
 - b) This verse says that from God's perspective, 1,000 years equals one day and it says that from God's perspective, one day equals a 1,000 years.
 - i) I emphasize that fact because there is lots of bad commentary out there that Jesus will come back in exactly year-6,000 counting from the day the earth was created.
 - ii) These commentators look at the one-day equals a 1,000-year reference and think, "OK, God created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day (ref. Exodus 20:11, et.al.). The Book of Revelation talks about a 1,000-year period where Jesus rules from the earth (Ref: Rev. Chapter 20). Therefore, God must work on a 6,000-year cycle and then have this final 1,000-year period where Jesus reigns.
 - iii) It's a nice theory. As best scholars can tell, we're coming up to year-6,000 from the time of Adam. It hard to be very accurate partially because the Hebrew calendar has only 360 days. The point is, how can these "scholars" focus on the "one day equals 1,000 years" and ignore that Peter also said from God's perspective (not our perspective) that "1,000 years also equals one day?"
 - iv) Jesus specifically taught that no one knows the day nor the hour of his return (Reference Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32). When Jesus says "no one" that includes you and me. That means we can't look for clues in the bible to calculate the day.

- a) Can Jesus come back in exactly earth-year 6000? Sure. He can also come back tomorrow or in the year 10,000. The point is we don't know the day.
 - b) We can know "roughly" the time, and we'll discuss that later in this lesson.
 - c) So what did Peter mean by God equates a thousand years as a day and vice versa? It means God exists outside of time as we know it.
 - i) The best illustration is a parade. If you are on the sidewalk, watching a long parade, you only can see a little at a time. If you saw the parade from an airplane, you can see the entire thing happening at once. You can use binoculars to focus on any one aspect, but you can also go "forward and backward" and see all of it.
 - ii) God declared through Isaiah, "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come." (Isaiah 46:10). If God makes known (through bible predictions) "what is still to come", then God must know what is the future.
 - d) An all-knowing God that exists outside of time is comforting to a Christian. When I sin really bad next week, ☺ is that a surprise to God? No Am I still accountable? Yes. It is difficult to reconcile, but must be accepted. For example, Jesus knew Judas would betray him, but Jesus still held Judas accountable for his actions. (See Matthew 26:24).
 - i) When you first committed your life to Jesus and He forgave all of your sins. Back then, was God aware of all the sins you were going to commit in the future? Yes! Did God still call you to be one of his disciples knowing of all those future sins? Yes! Did God still forgive you of those sins? Yes!
 - ii) There is a famous quote that goes, "I'm glad God picked me before the foundation of the world because if He saw me now, He might change His mind". ☺
9. Verse 9: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
- a) If I had to pick one verse to memorize in this chapter, this would be the one.
 - b) The key phrase, is "not wanting anyone to perish". God wants all to follow Him. Paul teaches the same thing in 1 Timothy 2:4.
 - i) There is the false idea that Jesus only died for those who follow Him. The word "anyone" rebukes that argument.
 - ii) There is also the false idea that God only loves those who commit their lives to Christ. The word "anyone" rebukes that argument.
 - c) This is one of those verses where it is difficult to balance "free will" and the fact that God knows all things. God wants all of us out of our own free-will to choose Him. God also knows all things and knows who will choose Him.
 - d) Next, let's talk about why Jesus is taking so long for His Second Coming.
 - i) Think about when you first committed your life to Jesus. (If you can't recall a special day like it, do it now and mark it on your calendar! ☺) Suppose Jesus decided to come back the day before your commitment. Be grateful that God "delayed" Jesus Second Coming so you and I had time to be saved.
 - ii) So why doesn't life go on forever? If some are "always" going to be saved, why not just continue life as it is with some people going to heaven and some to hell?
 - iii) First of all, we're not in charge of our universe, God is. If God made the universe, then it is His prerogative as to when to bring it to an end.
 - iv) Second, if we knew that life would just go on "as is" forever, what motivation would we have to change things? In a sense, "death" is a good thing as it motivates us to live life. We only have a fixed amount of time on earth. God desires that we use it to make a difference for Him. We don't know how long we have, but we do know it is limited. The limitation is a great motivational tool.

- v) If there is a first person that lived on earth, there has to be a last. Heaven will not have an infinite number of people, but a finite. There has to be a last one. To be a last one, there has to be a specific day when Jesus is coming back.
 - e) The reason I encourage you to memorize this verse is not for the reasons I've stated already but to understand why God allows evil and suffering.
 - i) We see horrible things happen all around us and say, "Why does God allow that to happen? Skeptics say, "If there is a God, why did He allow such-and-such horrible thing to happen in the first place?"
 - ii) The answer is this verse by Peter. God is patiently waiting for more people to choose Him and spend eternity with Him. Jesus did not come the exact day as a horrible event. God allows horrible things to happen "temporarily" in order for more people to be saved. "Real" judgment comes in the next life.
 - f) This would be a good place to deviate a little and explain why God allows evil.
 - i) For starters, it keeps us close to Him. Knowing the rotten things that are out there, we pray and stay close to God for protection.
 - ii) Peter's point in Verse 9 is God allows it to give more people time to repent.
 - iii) We live in a world that has been incurably affected by sin. Some of it is demonic, some of it is just the free-will affect of sin.
 - iv) Suppose every time you were about to kill someone, an angel stepped in and stole your gun. ☺ Suppose every time you were about to tell a lie, an angel stepped in and covered your mouth. You would be complaining how God is "unfair" and never gives you a chance. In a sense, that would be God violating our free will. (Illustration source: Greg Koukl).
 - v) What about natural disasters? The answer is I can't explain all things, but I do know God allows them for a reason. We may not know the reason, but God does. Jesus himself commented on this thought when he said, "Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." (Luke 13:4-5 NIV)
 - a) Jesus point In Luke 13 is about a tower that fell and killed 18 people. Jesus said they were not guilty of any special crime. This was just an accident and it was "their time". The point is God allows certain events to happen and we don't know the day or the hour that we die.
10. Verse 10: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.
- a) Now we come to the expression, "The Day of the Lord". This refers to the events leading up to Jesus Second Coming as well as the specific moment of Jesus Second Coming.
 - i) This is used throughout the bible. You will find references in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel (his main topic!) and other Old Testament places. In the New Testament, see 1st Corinthians 5:5, 2nd Corinthians 1:14 and 1st Thessalonians 5:2 as well as here.
 - b) Next, it is important to understand "The Day of the Lord" is not a 24-hour period.
 - i) In Hebrew, the word "yom" means either "day" or "era of time".
 - ii) Whenever the word "yom" is preceded by a number, it refers to a specific 24-period of time. For example, "the third "yom"" is the third day.
 - iii) Suppose I said, "I'm going on a long trip, and in the day of my return, we'll spend six months together. The "day of my return" can be an expression referring to the whole six-month period of time we spend together.

- c) Now let's discuss the word "thief". Peter states that "The day of the Lord" will come as a thief. It is important to point what Jesus and Paul says on the same topic:
- i) Paul said, "But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day (of the Lord) should surprise you like a thief." (1st Thessalonians 5:4, NIV)
 - ii) Jesus said, "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." (Revelation 16:15 NIV)
 - iii) And your point is? ☺ No one knows the exact day or hour of Jesus return. However, we should keep watch for His return. It will come unexpectedly, but it will not come as a surprise for those who watch for Jesus' return.
 - a) Does that mean we stand on our driveway all day and look for His return? No! It does mean we are aware that Jesus can return at any moment and live our lives when Jesus returns. When He does show up, we can say, "Oh, good, I was expecting you! ☺"
 - iv) Jesus emphasizes in the Gospels about the importance of knowing the times of His Second Coming. When you read the gospels, Jesus only uses the word "learn" three times. One of those three times was to "learn the parable of the fig tree" (Matthew 24:32 and Mark 13:28). In context, Jesus was talking about the events leading up to His Second Coming. Jesus was teaching that we don't know the day or hour, but we should know the "general time" by certain signs. That is the idea of learning the parable of the fig tree.
 - a) Just so you know, the other two things Jesus wanted us to "learn is:
 - (1) God desires mercy and not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13, 12:7. It is all about having a merciful attitude.
 - (2) Jesus says to learn is to learn of Him (Matthew 11:29. That is a lifetime commitment all unto itself and a regular study of the bible.
 - v) Which leads us back to Peter. The day of Jesus return will come "as a thief" in the sense no one knows the specific time. The specific time of Jesus return will be a surprise to unbelievers, but not to those looking for His return.
- d) It's time for me to deviate to my pre-tribulation rapture soapbox. ☺
- i) I happen to hold the position the church will be raptured prior to the horrible events described in Revelation. There are many who argue that the church goes through the 7-year tribulation. I know those arguments, and I disagree with them. If you hold that view, don't worry, we'll explain it to you on the way up! ☺
 - ii) We don't know the day or hour of Jesus return. We do know, from Daniel 12:11-12 that it will be exactly 1290 days from the "abomination that causes desolation" when Jesus comes back. The "abomination that causes desolation" is a specific event where the Antichrist will go into God's temple, "double-cross" the Jews and demand to be worshipped as God.
 - iii) Here's my point: If Christians do go through the tribulation, we would pretty much know the exact day of Jesus return, as it will be exactly 1,290 days from this specific event. I don't think God wants us to know the exact day. Therefore, I'm convinced we're raptured out of here prior to these events. If not, there is a contradiction to "not knowing the day" and "knowing the day".
 - iv) That is why it is important to understand the Day of the Lord is a series of events as described throughout Revelation and is climaxed by Jesus' Second Coming.

- e) I'm sorry to report, that we haven't actually finished Verse 10 yet. ☺
 - i) The remainder of the verse talks about the destruction of heavens and the earth.
 - ii) I've already discussed this one a lot, but there is one new point to make: Peter goes out of his way to mention several times in this chapter that the earth will be destroyed by fire. Peter gets real technical here and discusses how the elements will melt and things get pretty hot around here. ☺
 - iii) My point is if God wants to destroy the earth, He could just "snap his fingers" and make it disappear. Why mention the specific method of destruction by heat?
 - iv) You can read lots of commentaries how God will use nuclear reactions to melt the elements. It is all interesting speculation, but I personally think it misses the point.
 - v) What the bible spends a lot of time describing is fire as a method of purification.
 - a) For example, the bible regularly describes separating silver from dross. By heating silver, one can make it more pure. The heat separates the non-silver elements ("dross") from the silver itself.
 - b) I believe Peter is making the same point. The same way Peter's culture used hot-heat to purify a metal, God will use "hot-heat" to purify the heavens and earth of sin. Does that mean the "new earth" is just the "old earth" after it's baked in God's oven for awhile? ☺ I don't know. I tend to think of "new" as brand-new as opposed to a remodel. ☺
 - c) The point is Peter mentions several times in this chapter how heat and fire are used to destroy the existing earth and heaven. If God just wanted to blow it up, Peter wouldn't mention all the fire and heat references. I believe they are there for us to understand how God desires to purify the world of sin the same way a metal smith purifies metal by heat.
11. Verse 11: Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.
- a) Peter states again in these verses how God is going to destroy the heavens and the earth one day by heat. The main point of these verses is when Peter asks in Verse 11, "What kind of people ought you to be?"
 - i) In other words, knowing that God is going to destroy heaven and earth one day and knowing that Jesus will return one day, how does that affect our behavior?
 - ii) Let's go back to the purpose of 1st and 2nd Peter. Peter is reminding us of bible truths so we can think about these things and act accordingly. Christians should not to read the bible and think, "Oh that's interesting, how about that?" Christians should read the facts and truth of God's word and act accordingly.
 - b) Peter wants us to think about God destroying the world as we know it. God then wants us to act on that knowledge. How do we do that? Let's give some examples:
 - i) If you just bought a new car, and it gets dinged the next day, how upset should you be? It's going to "burn up" one day. I'm not saying to be passive when someone hits your car. This is about proper perspective toward material things.
 - ii) Let's say you work 12-16 hours a day for the purpose of making excessive amounts of money. What good will it do you? What can you buy that will not burn up one day? Again, I'm not arguing against working hard, supporting the family etc. This is about having proper perspective on life.

- iii) The question is, are we primarily focused to live for God or to live for things of this world? If God is going to destroy our world, how “seriously” do we take it?
 - a) By the way, the fact that God will destroy the earth does not give us a license to pollute it or destroy the world. God created the world and it is His decision and His timing to destroy it, not ours.
 - iv) Back in Chapter 1 of this letter, Peter referred to his body as a “tent”. A tent is a temporary structure designed for people who are on the move. Our permanent home is in heaven. That is what we should live for. That’s Peter’s point too.
- c) Verse 12 says something interesting: “the day of God and speed its coming”.
 - i) What does that mean? That means, that somehow, God gives us some authority over when Jesus comes back! When we pray “thy kingdom come”, that is a prayer for Jesus to return. For Jesus to come back, we have to have the desire to want Jesus to return, and preferably, before our credit card statement is due. ☺
- 12. Verse 14: So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.
 - a) Verse 14 is Peter giving his own answer to the question, “Since the world will be destroyed one day, now what do we do?” Peter’s answer is to, “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him”.
 - i) That means to live your life for God. That means to regularly examine yourself and do an inventory of things that may not be pleasing to God. That is about confession of our sins. To be a “peace with God” is the opposite of a guilty conscious. These are all examples of how to be “spotless, blameless and at peace”.
 - ii) This may be a good point to stop and pray: Heavenly Father, if there are areas of my life that I’m not living for you, show them to me. Give me the boldness and the courage to change my ways that are more pleasing to You, Amen.
 - b) Also notice the phrase, “Make every effort”.
 - i) That is the opposite of, “do it every now and then”. Christianity is not something we do on Sunday mornings. It encompasses every aspect of our lives. It doesn’t mean we become hermits and pray around the clock. It means we live every aspect of our lives with the understanding that it will be judged by God.
- 13. Verse 15: Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He (Paul) writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.
 - a) The first phrase in Verse 15 keys on “our Lord's patience means salvation”.
 - i) This goes back to Peter’s point a few verses back where God is delaying Jesus Second Coming as long as possible as to get more people saved. God’s “patience” is about the fact God is putting up with all sorts of sin so more can be saved.
 - ii) I’ve already beaten that point to death. If Peter could repeat it again, I figure so can I. ☺ Remember the secret to learning is repetition. The bible repeats many of the same key points over and over again for us to learn by repetition.
 - b) The second phrase in Verse 15 says, “just as our dear brother Paul wrote you”.
 - i) First of all, Peter speaks fondly of Paul. The bible only records two encounters of Peter and Paul. One was “neutral” when the church met in Acts Chapter 15. The other was the time Paul rebuked Peter for ignoring Gentile Christians and only eating with Jewish Christians (Reference Galatians 2:11).
 - ii) Yet here, Peter calls Paul “our dear brother”.

- iii) Notice Peter says, “Our dear brother Paul also wrote you”. Peter’s first letter was to the churches in what-is-today Turkey. None of Paul’s letters were addressed to those churches. Peter is not discussing some lost letter written to these churches. Peter is saying all of Paul’s letters were designed to be read by all Christian churches and Peter understood that Paul’s letters are to be equal with Scripture.
 - a) Notice in Verse 16 Peter compares Paul’s letters to “other Scriptures”.
 - b) That is Peter validating Paul’s letters as God-inspired.
 - c) Every now and then, you will here of the “Jesus only” movement. This is a group that only “counts” the Gospels and doesn’t recognize Paul’s letters because Paul was not around at the time of Jesus’ ministry. Here we have Peter, one of the 12 disciples validating Paul’s letters as God-inspired.
 - c) In Verse 16, Peter says that parts of Paul’s letters are “hard to understand”.
 - i) So if you or I have trouble with Paul’s letters, we’re in good company. ☺
 - ii) That does not mean Paul’s letters are impossible to understand, just difficult at times. It means we have to apply our “bible rules” to help us understand. These rules include reading prayerfully, comparing Scripture with Scripture and reading the bible in context of the surrounding verses.
 - d) This leads us back to false teachers. Peter states in Verse 16 that some people take Paul’s writings and distort them.
 - i) How do you distort the bible? The most common way is to teach a bible verse out of context of the surrounding verses. All of the fundamental principals of Christianity (e.g., Jesus as God, the Trinity, salvation by faith, etc.) are taught throughout the bible. You might take one bible verse, and out of context it can read like a contradiction to the remainder of the bible. That is why it is important to read any part of the bible in context with the remainder of the bible. The bible is designed to be studied as a single unit.
 - e) Peter is two verses away from ending this letter, but he can’t resist getting in one last shot at false teachers. ☺ In this verse, Peter calls false teachers “ignorant”, “unstable”, and they twist Scripture “to their own destruction”.
 - i) “Ignorant” simply means to not know something. They may be ignorant of the entire bible, but more likely the reference is they are ignorant of the accountability to God for teaching the bible correctly.
 - ii) “Unstable” is the opposite of “balanced”. It is Peter’s way of saying that they teach things out of context.
 - iii) “Own destruction” is back to the idea of accountability to God for what they teach. God cares greatly about His reputation and what is taught about Him. Therefore, God holds teachers to a higher standard than those who are not teachers.
 - iv) My point here is that if you’re going to teach the bible, don’t take it lightly! God holds you accountable as a witness for Him, in whatever teaching capacity we have been given.
14. Verse 17: Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.
- a) Remember that Peter knows his life will end soon. Peter is writing to Christians that he loves like a parent loves their children. Peter wants to protect “his flock”. Since Peter can’t stand there and be guard over them, the next best thing is to write them a letter and warn them about possible dangers. That is the main idea behind both of Peter’s letters.
 - b) Peter writes both letters to remind Christians of certain fundamental truths. Peter’s second letter is mainly a warning against those who would do Christians harm from within the church, which by definition are false-teachers.

- c) With that said, Verse 17 is Peter telling us to be on guard against such people. We don't have to be paranoid about the person sitting next to us. Just be aware that false teachers do exist within the church. Peter's second letter, particularly chapter 2 focuses on the characteristics by which we can recognize false teachers.
 - d) The last phrase is controversial. It says, "fall from your secure position".
 - i) This goes back to the debate of whether one can lose their salvation. Does "secure position" refer to salvation or does it refer to our rewards and "status" in heaven.
 - ii) As I stated in the last lesson, God knows who is saved, and we don't. We can judge behavior, but not motives. We're not mind readers. Therefore, we need to focus on our own "security", pray and minister to others, but let God "worry" about how is and is not saved.
15. Verse 18: But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.
- a) Peter's final sentence deals with 1) keep on growing and maturing as a Christian and 2) may God get all the glory for whatever happens.
 - b) Peter commands us to "grow in grace". If grace by definition, is unmerited (unearned) rewards, does that mean we "work" to receive grace? No.
 - i) What that means is as we trust God more and more, as we understand that God wants to bless us just because He loves us, not because of what we do. We "grow" in grace by realizing that God wants to bless us and we trust in Him for the outcome of our lives as we live for him.
 - ii) To grow requires knowledge. We must learn in order to know how to act. That is why Peter mentions knowledge in this sentence.
 - c) Peter's last sentence gives God all the glory for whatever happens in our Christian life. That is the ultimate goal for Christians. Humility is all about not thinking about yourself. If "somebody" has to get credit for the good things of life, it should be God!
16. I also want to add that since this is the last lesson on 1st and 2nd Peter, it was a joy to study.
- a) What I got the most out of this lesson was about having a good, Godly perspective about life and take the bad-parts in stride. Peter's main point of both letters is to teach us about proper perspective in life and with that, give us lessons on how to live the Christian life.
 - b) On the next page is a biography of my sources, if you are interested.
17. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, Peter wrote these things to help us keep our focus upon you and have proper perspective about life. Help us to remember that this world is only temporary and help us to have a proper and balanced perspective about the things of this world. Help us to grow in your grace. Help us to trust You more and more despite whatever is happening in our lives at this moment. May you get all the glory for our victories! We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. “The Message” copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on First and Second Peter are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in Real Audio® or MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated.

1. Commentary on 1st Peter and 2nd Peter by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://joncourson.com>
2. Commentary on 1st Peter and 2nd Peter by Bob Davies. They are available in Real Audio® format at http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/index.php
3. Commentary on 1st Peter and 2nd Peter by David Guzik. It is available for free in text format. The web address is http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.html.
4. Commentary on 1st Peter and 2nd Peter by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. It is also available at <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
5. The Defender’s Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris World Publishing (1995) ISBN: 052910444X
6. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
7. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm
8. The Expositor’s Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
9. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999 (Available at Christian Bookstores.)
10. I also refer to Greg Koukl’s apologetic ministry which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org