

Why We Believe that Jesus is Coming Back

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Date: 07 December 2025

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[0 : 00] But we're going to, this morning now, be reading in our Bibles, and Edward Lobb is going to be preaching to us from Peter's second letter, from 2 Peter 3. Don't have your own Bible with you. There are some outside. If you're a visitor, we'd love you to go and have one. It's page 1019, I think, on those Bibles. So don't be shy if you need a Bible.

It's great for you to be able to read along and see where we're coming from. And I'm going to read more or less the first section of 2 Peter 3, from verse 1 down to verse 13.

And you'll see that it's got a heading there saying, the day of the Lord will come. And that really is a good summary of what Peter is speaking about here.

So Peter says, this is now the second letter that I'm writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They'll say, where is the promise of his coming?

[1 : 25] For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.

And that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowest, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.

[3 : 14] But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Good morning, friends. Good to see you all. Let's turn to Peter's second letter, and chapter three.

My title is, Why We Believe That Jesus Is Coming Back. I'm due to be preaching both today and next Sunday morning, so over these two weeks, I want to get us to the heart of what the Apostle Peter is saying in this remarkable chapter.

His subject, in this third chapter, is the end of the old world, and the beginning of the new world, and how the Lord's people are to live in the interim period.

Or to put it a bit more briefly, in this chapter, God is teaching us how to understand world history. Now, the context. Let me give you a word first about chapters one and two in this letter.

[4 : 31] If you turn back a page to chapter one, verse 12, chapter one, verse 12, you'll see that Peter is writing this letter to remind his readers of various things.

He says there, I intend always to remind you. And then verse 13, I think it right, as long as I'm in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon.

Two elderly Irishmen met in the streets of Ballymena one day, and one said to the other, How are you, Vincent? And the other replied, Well, Michael, as you can see, I'm still on the green side of the

turf.

Now, the apostle Peter is conscious that he is still just on the green side of the turf, but not for much longer. And that's why getting this letter down on paper is a pressing issue for him.

He says in chapter one, verse 15, I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things.

[5 : 42] So the message of this letter is urgent. The churches who receive it have got to get it into their systems so that at a moment's notice, at any time, they can recall the apostles' teaching so as to live by it and profit by it.

So in chapter one, Peter urges his readers to make every effort as he puts it in verse five. You see, he's making every effort in verse 15, and he asks them to make every effort, verse five, to become more godly in their lifestyles.

But in chapter two, he goes on to issue a solemn warning to his readers to beware of false teachers. Look at chapter two, verse one. He says, there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.

So just as the serpent insinuated himself into the thinking of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, destroying their relationship with God, so false teachers will continually try to insinuate themselves into positions of influence in the churches.

Friends, I wish it were not so. But it is so, as church history demonstrates times without number. So the church must be continually on its guard.

[7 : 05] And it's this theme of false teachers and false ideas that Peter is pursuing as he moves into chapter three. And the question in chapter three is, what are true ideas about the end of world history?

And what are false ideas, false teachings about the end of the world? Now this question about the world's end looms rather large in the minds of secular society today, as well as in Christian minds. People wonder and people worry if the alleged change in the world's climate is going to reach some kind of a tipping point, which will quickly make the globe uninhabitable.

Others are worrying, understandably, lest foolish and power-crazy dictators force the nations into unprecedented levels of warfare.

Other people fear the arrival of pandemics, far more destructive than COVID-19. There's a sense of impending doom in the world. I don't really know what the poet T.S. Eliot meant by it, but one of his poems ends with the words, this is the way the world ends.

[8 : 16] This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang, but a whimper. Well, that quotation raises more questions than it answers.

So let's turn to the Apostle Peter and to this third chapter, which deals precisely with the way the world ends. In verse 1, he's telling his Christian readers that what he's about to tell them is something he's told them before.

He's not giving them new information. He says in verse 1, this is now the second letter that I'm writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.

In other words, I've told you these things in the past, but I'm going to remind you of them now.

Friends, don't we need plenty of reminders? To speak for myself, my head is rather like a sieve.

And very often, it's the more important things that seem to escape through the sieve while the trivial things remain. And Peter knows that Christian heads are often like sieves.

[9 : 23] And so important is this teaching that he's going to press it home so that they cannot forget it. And there's an eyebrow-raising moment in verse 2 which we need to get hold of.

Look with me at verse 2. That you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. And you see what Peter is saying there, especially in the second half of the verse.

He is saying that the teaching of the apostles conveys the commands of Christ. So when the apostles speak, Jesus speaks. The apostles' teaching carries all the authority of Jesus himself.

So let's banish from our minds any thought that the apostles' teaching is second-rate scripture whereas the teaching of Jesus is full-strength scripture. No.

Jesus issues his commanding instructions through the words of Peter, Paul, and John, and the other apostles. It is a startling thing for Peter to say but it clarifies the authority of the apostles for us.

[10:32] We must take their teaching as seriously as we take the teaching of Jesus because their teaching is his teaching. So what is Peter wanting to press into the memories of his Christian readers?

Look at verse three. He says, I want you to know this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing. Now that phrase the last days in the New Testament refers to the whole period between the ascension of Jesus and the return of Jesus.

Here is Peter writing this letter in about 60 AD and he was living just as much in the last days as we are today. And he says in the last days, this whole period scoffers will come.

If perhaps English is not your first language, you may wonder what this word scoffers means. We sometimes speak of people scoffing food, which means shoveling it in greedily.

But Peter is using this word in an entirely different way. These scoffers are people who not only oppose the message of the gospel and the message of Christ's return, they ridicule the message.

[11:51] And in verse 4, Peter gives us a snatch of their contemptuous language. They say, where is this promised, so-called alleged return of Christ that you Christians go on about?

We haven't seen your Jesus. It is 30 odd years since his alleged ascension into heaven. In fact, ever since the first people began to die, everything has just gone on in exactly the same way. Silly old Christians with your peculiar beliefs. Ho, ho, pull the other one. Now, Peter tells us at the end of verse 3 what motivates the scoffing talk of the scoffers.

He says there, end of verse 3, they are following their own sinful desires. That's their motivation.

They have no wish to be taught by the word of God. The thing that determines their position is something unworthy and ignoble, their own sinful desires.

They just want to go on sinning, living without reference to God, because they don't want to have to give an account of themselves to a savior who will return as their judge. They reckon they can avoid the judgment by scoffing at the very idea of it.

[13:06] So if the scoffers are motivated by their own sinful desires, how are the Christians, Peter's readers, to form their view of the truth?

Look again to verse 2 where Peter tells them that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Now that is the source of a true view of the return of Christ. Peter is saying look back to the Old Testament prophets and to the teaching of Jesus expressed through his apostles.

And if Peter's readers build their understanding of truth on the words of the prophets and the apostles, it will have the effect, verse 1, of stirring up their sincere mind by way of reminder.

The scoffers who scoff at the idea of the return of Christ are not sincere. Sincerity and scoffing don't belong together. So Peter is contrasting two completely different ways of life and two completely different views of world history.

[14:15] People will either be governed by their own sinful desires or they will listen to the teaching of the Bible, the predictions of the prophets and the commands of the Lord Jesus through Peter, Paul and John and the other apostles.

Effectively then, Peter is forcing us today to ask the same question of ourselves. Do we accept the teaching about the return of Christ or do we turn away from it because it seems bizarre or even ridiculous?

Well, let's dig a bit deeper into this. Is the expectation of Christ's return something that we have really latched onto? And if so, on what grounds do we believe that he's coming back?

The great historical creeds and confessions of the Christian church all include prominent assertions of belief that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead.

The expectation of his return is not some kind of a side issue. It is central to the whole gospel. But what is the ground of our belief in his return?

[15:28] Much in the Christian faith makes sense to us because it echoes our personal experience closely. So, for example, think of the teaching about sin.

When we have become Christians, we don't have any difficulty believing the Bible's teaching about sin because we're so conscious of the sin within us. Jesus says, from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, envy, false witness, and so on. And we say, yes, of course, that's exactly me. That's exactly what my heart does produce. So what Jesus says about sin tallies exactly with our own experience.

Or think about the Bible's teaching about forgiveness. We all have experience of forgiveness. We've all been at one end or the other of it. We've all been forgiven for various things. And we've all offered forgiveness to people who have hurt us. So when the Bible describes the forgiveness given by God to men and women, we know that what the Bible is talking about is true. [16:39] We've experienced forgiveness at a low human level, the level of our relationships with other people. So our minds are quick to grasp the much more glorious level of forgiveness that God is willing to give to us.

God is but something like the return of Christ has no counterpart in our normal experience of human life. We've experienced sin and we know something about forgiveness.

But the return of Christ is in a different category altogether. By definition, we have no prior experience of anything remotely like it. So on what grounds can we believe that he is going to return to earth in glory and power?

Now we'll return to that question in just a moment but I want first to ask another question. How do we believe the truth about anything?

The normal answer is by research, by testing, and experiment. Now this is true in the study of history. For example, I believe with a very great degree of assurance, amounting to certainty, that the Second World War in Europe ended in early May 1945.

[18:04] I wasn't there myself, I wasn't born, but I believe it on the basis of various books and articles that I've read, films and television programs that I've seen, and conversations that I've had with various people, like my own parents who were around at the time.

Anybody who seriously doubts that the war in Europe ended in May 1945 can very easily research the question because there is so much material available.

Well, how do we come to believe that certain things are true in the fields of physics or chemistry or astronomy? By research, by testing, by experiment.

So the physicist, having made certain observations, comes up with a theory. Eureka, he says, or if he's wise, he says, perhaps Eureka.

But I must now devise a series of experiments by which to test out my theory. So he sets up various contraptions and machines, and he creates ideal conditions in his laboratory, and he sets the experiment going and records his findings.

[19:14] He then repeats the experiment. He modifies the conditions. He consults learned papers. He discusses his ideas with learned friends in case they can spot a flaw in his procedures.

And then finally, a long time later, when he's really confident about it, he presents his findings to the world. If he's wise, if he's humble, he'll remember that he might just be disproved at some future point by some latter-day Einstein.

But he and his friends have considerable confidence that they now know something which nobody knew in the past. In this world, then, we come to know things and believe things on the basis of research and testing and experiment.

But we shall never come to believe in the return of Christ on those grounds. There are no data in this world which could possibly help us. There's no telescope, however powerful, that could cite the Lord Jesus coming from millions of light years away.

The finest libraries in the world contain no ancient books or learned papers that could establish or prove the fact of his future return. On what ground, then, do Christians believe that he will return?

[20:37] There's only one ground, and that is revelation, God's revelation. And there's only one place where we can discover God's revelation, and that is the Bible.

We come to believe these wonderful things because we read them in the Bible. And we come to trust the Bible because as we come to know it better, we become increasingly convinced of its integrity, its truthfulness, and its unity.

There is no book on earth like it. It carries a unique power, and its effect on us as we believe its message is not only to shape our thinking, but to bring us to life.

As Psalm 19 puts it, the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. When our souls come to be deeply revived by the Bible, we have no difficulty in believing the truths that it reveals.

truths which could never be demonstrated by historical or scientific research. So we believe in the coming return of Christ because that great future event is revealed to us in the scriptures.

[21:50] Here in 2 Peter chapter 3, many times in the teaching of Jesus himself, and many times in the letters of Paul. All the greatest truths of Christianity are revealed to us.

For example, we wouldn't know that it was God who purposefully created the heavens and the earth unless Genesis chapter 1 revealed that fact to us. We wouldn't know that Jesus was divine as well as human unless the Gospels and the New Testament letters revealed that fact to us.

And again, it's only by biblical revelation that we understand the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross, how he bore our sins, bore the penalty that we deserve and died in our place on the cross. Remember the children's song, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. If it weren't for the Bible, we would never have guessed that the cross was the place where Jesus showed his love for us.

We would simply have thought of it as a cruel miscarriage of justice, not as the supreme purposeful demonstration of love. What needs to happen to each one of us is that our hearts and minds learn to suck in the Bible as a hungry teenage boy hoovers up his dinner.

[23 : 12] Let's pray that the Lord will give to each of us a hunger for the Bible that is never satisfied. The more we eat and drink the words of God, the more we will quickly believe the great Bible truths that can never be demonstrated by historical or scientific research.

Another way of putting this is that we accept these great truths by faith. The Apostle Paul says, we walk by faith, not by sight.

In this world, we believe things because we see them. I believe that you exist because I see you. If I were a physicist, I would believe the results of my research because I would measure them on instruments that I can see and touch.

But we're never going to see the return of Jesus before it happens. We'll see it when it happens. But until that day comes, we accept it by faith.

Faith is trusting that what God says will happen, will happen. Let me say that sentence again. It's so important. Faith is trusting that what God says will happen, will happen.

[24 : 27] We accept that Jesus will return, not because we can prove it by this worldly means, but because we trust God to tell us the truth. Well, let's dig a bit further now into Peter's thinking about the opposition to these revealed truths.

And we'll do this under three headings. First, Peter tells us that scoffers or ridiculers will come. Now, it's striking to see at the beginning of verse three that Peter gives this point great emphasis.

He says, I want you to know this. First of all, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days.

People who express with scorn all sorts of barbed criticisms of Christian truth.

And in particular, they will poke fun at the teaching about Christ's return. And of course, this will be just as true in our generation as it was in the first century.

We quite often hear these days, we read these days of the attacks of atheists against Christian truth. And it can be unsettling for us, especially if the atheist is very articulate and has a title like professor.

[25 : 42] If we think, Professor Multibrain of the superb Superb University of Ox Andrews, if he thinks that the Bible is no longer believable, we are in trouble.

Friends, we are not in trouble. These highly applauded universities and their exquisite professors get too big for their boots. Peter's words here are such a great encouragement to Christians.

He is saying, expect the scoffers. Don't be surprised when they turn up. Expect them to be sharp and articulate in their opposition to the truth. He gives us a small slice of their critique here in verse four.

So when the scoffers turn up and write popular books and get praised by book reviewers, it's a demonstration that Peter has been right all along.

It would be worrying if Peter had written, in the last days, everything will get better and better for the church. As the centuries roll on, people will be simply queuing up to get into churches on a Sunday to hear the truth.

[26 : 49] There will be a growing sense of worldwide anticipation at the thought of the return of Christ. Little groups of people will be seen standing at street corners, excitedly saying to each other, do you think he might come today or will it perhaps be next week?

But that's not what is happening, is it? What is happening today is exactly what Peter prophesied would happen. If you were to stop in turn ten different people on Socky Hall Street on a Saturday morning and ask them their reviews on the return of Christ, most of them would look at you as if you were a total weirdo.

Someone might say to you, I think Arnie Schwarzenegger is going to be back before Jesus is. It's encouraging to us to find that our situation today is exactly as Peter had prophesied it would be. Peter's prediction about scoffers buttresses his central point about Christ's return. We mustn't be cowed or brow beaten by opposition, even when it's laced with scoffing. Don't let's be on the back foot when we can be on the front foot. The soldiers of Christ don't need to hang back. The weapons of our warfare are able to demolish strongholds. [28 : 03] It's encouraging to see how the Apostle Paul writes about widespread opposition to the gospel in his second letter to Timothy chapter 3.

Again, he's writing about the last days and he says this to Timothy. Understand this, that in the last days, people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Jesus says many similar things in Matthew chapter 24 about the opposition that his people will have to endure in the last days. He says they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away. There's a warning to us. Many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Do you see how Peter and Paul and the Lord Jesus are all saying the same thing about the inevitability of opposition?

[29 : 26] So when we feel the force of it, we can be reassured that Jesus and his apostles accurately forewarned us that this would happen. So there's the first thing.

Peter tells us that scoffers or ridiculers will come. Then secondly, Peter shows the flaw in the scoffers argument. Look again at what they're saying in verse four. Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.

Now it's in verse five that Peter Peter shows us where these scoffers go wrong. He says they deliberately overlook this fact.

Now that's a telling phrase. They're not innocent. There's a fact of Bible history, which they know very well, but they deliberately overlook it.

[30 : 24] They willfully ignore it. Of course, this deliberate ignoring of facts is a favorite tactic, which I guess all of us use from time to time. It's a branch of self-deception.

We suspect that something is true, which we don't want to acknowledge as true. We know in our heart of hearts that it is true, but we won't admit it because if we do, it's going to wreck our argument.

Now Peter is saying this is what the scoffers are doing. These people who are trying to rewrite world history. There's a fact here, but the scoffers are deliberately ignoring it.

So let's see first what the scoffers are saying and second, why they are mistaken. What they're saying in verse four is that nothing could ever alter the stable progress of world history. ever since the fathers fell asleep, they say, which means ever since the time of the world's very first inhabitants, ever since those very first days, all things are continuing as they always have done from the beginning of creation.

[31 : 29] In other words, the world is a stable, reliable, unchanging entity. It has always simply gone on without interruption or catastrophe.

And its future will surely be as safe as its past. But Peter blows the whistle on this line of thinking. He says in verse six, but you are deliberately overlooking the great flood.

The world has not simply gone on from its first beginnings without change. God deluged the world with water back in the days of Noah. Your so-called unchanging continuum was devastatingly interrupted by God because he was judging the world for its wickedness and rebellion.

A precedent has been set. The God who intervened back then shows that he is able and willing to intervene again. That first judgment was a judgment by flood, by water.

The second judgment will be a judgment by fire. How then had Peter come to understand all this? Well, remember the process explained in verse two, that it's Jesus, the Lord and Savior, who issues his commands through his apostles.

[32 : 50] Jesus is the source of this teaching about his second coming. We find it in Matthew 24, where Jesus speaks at length about his return. He speaks of the son of man coming on the clouds

of heaven with power and great glory.

And he goes on like this. As were the days of Noah. He's referring to the flood as Peter does. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the son of man.

For as in those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark. And they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away.

So will be the coming of the son of man. It's a terrifying picture. And it's a tragic picture. They were unaware. They were just getting on with the regular duties of life.

Eating, drinking, planning weddings, getting married. If they heard Noah explaining the reasons why he was building his ark, they paid no attention to him.

[33 : 57] They probably thought he was a crackpot, building a huge boat under the hot sun and announcing a catastrophic intervention of God by water. But Jesus says it will be just the same before his return.

People will simply be doing their own normal thing. He says there'll be two men working in the field, but they will suddenly be separated. One will be saved and the other lost. Two women will be grinding corn to feed their families.

They too will be separated. One for salvation, the other for judgment. Therefore, says Jesus, stay awake. Be prepared. You don't know the day of your Lord's return, but it will be like a thief coming in the night.

In other words, it will happen when you least expect it. A long time ago, I was enjoying a walking holiday in the hills of Dartmoor in Devonshire.

I must have been about 20 or 21. I was with a friend, two young men in hobnailed boots in the springtime of the year. And we passed through a very pretty village where there was a very pretty little parish church.

[35 : 07] And this parish church had a squat tower, one of those short square towers. And in the tower was set a large clock. And written across the face of the clock in large letters, I read this.

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. What Peter is doing in this chapter is reproducing the teaching of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus and his apostles are saying the same thing, that he's coming back. And Peter's argument in verses 5, 6, and 7 is that the scoffers are doing a major airbrush on world history.

They are deliberately, foolishly, culpably overlooking the fact that the world was once deluged with water and perished. God did not overlook or turn a blind eye to the wickedness of the world.

And he will not turn a blind eye to the world's rebellion against him when Jesus returns. Because when that happens, look at the end of verse 7. When that happens, fire will consume the earth and will bring judgment and destruction to the ungodly, to those who have forsaken the idea that there is a God to whom we must give account.

[36 : 25] Well, now third, Peter reassures us by reminding us of the power of God. And his power is seen in this, that he controls the decisive events of world history by his word.

Look again at verse 5. The fact overlooked by the scoffers is the fact that the word of God created the world in the first place and then brought the deluge.

Peter is simply restating the teaching of Genesis at this point. In Genesis chapter 1, as you know, God speaks and it all happens. Let there be light and there was light. Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters.

And he made the expanse and called it sky. And so it goes on. God speaks and the wonderful earth, not to mention the stars and the planets comes into being.

But the flood also happens, not because of a series of odd atmospheric conditions, but because God commands it. He says to Noah, In seven days, I will send rain on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights.

[37 : 38] And every living thing that I've made, I will blot out from the face of the ground. And that's what happened. The account goes on. On that day, all the fountains of the great deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were opened and rain fell upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights.

Peter's point is that the word of God both created the world and brought about the flood. God's word, therefore, both creates and destroys, brings life and death.

Now, verse seven, by the same word, the same powerful word from the mouth of the same powerful God, the heavens and the earth that now exist are, just look carefully at verse seven, because it contains startling information.

What is the purpose of our world continuing? Think of Britain, our own country. Think of the crops that we raise in our fields. Think of the cattle, which provide us with milk and beef.

Think of the industry that provides us with heat and power and roads and cars and airplanes. Think of all the human activity that takes place all over the world every day.

[38 : 57] What is the purpose of all this activity? To feed us? To house us? To bring us comfort and pleasure? Well, yes, in the short term, that's right.

And we can be very thankful for the fertility and resources of our planet. But in the longer term, verse seven is telling us that God's purpose in prolonging the life of the world is to bring it to a day of judgment and destruction.

Look at the verbs there in verse seven. Stored up. Kept. Stored up for fire. Kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Not the godly. Not those who belong to Christ. Christians have a different future. And verse 13 names that future for us. The new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells.

Let's thank God for that. Thank God for the salvation that promises us such a wonderful future. But let's be under no illusions about the old world.

[40 : 01] The old world that turns its back on the Bible and the Bible's author. That world is stored up for fire and is being kept until the day of judgment. And that fire and judgment will be set loose by the same word that brought the deluge and by the same God who sent our Savior.

So the question is, will we dare to believe these things about God? Look back to verse one. What Peter is doing in writing like this is stirring up our minds, stimulating our minds to be sincere in our faith, to remember and live by the words of the prophets and the Lord Jesus and the apostles. Scoffers will come and their aim is to make Christians feel that our position is ridiculous. A passage like this tests our faith and our courage.

Do we dare to gear our minds to the Bible's view of world history? Do we dare to allow the Bible's teaching to sink into our souls and fashion our lives?

Do we dare to be unashamed of the New Testament teaching about the return of Christ?

Remember Jesus' words about his return. He says, whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

[41 : 35] In this third chapter of his letter, Peter has taken the teaching of Jesus and is representing it to a later generation of Christians, including us today.

This third chapter is part of the gospel and it's a glorious gospel. It is an awesome gospel. Scoffers will come. At times, their words, their denials of the gospel will appear powerful.

But Peter calls us to stand firm and not give way to them. The world, in its present form, is stored up for fire, is kept for the day of judgment. But we who belong to the Lord are waiting for new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. Amen. Amen. Our dear heavenly Father, we thank you that your words are sure and altogether reliable.

We thank you that you hold the world in your hand and are bringing it with sure purpose to a great and wonderful conclusion to the day when all that opposes you will be judged and when all who belong to you will be rescued.

[43 : 08] Keep us firm, we pray, and trusting and courageous so that our church here and the lives of each one of us will bring glory to your name. And we ask it in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.