

# CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

## A Study of 2 Peter

### STUDY NINE

## The Day of the Lord

*2 Peter 3:7–13*

*Rather than seeing Christ's delay in coming as uncaring, see it as merciful and patient.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE subject of God's plan for the future has always sparked fascination. When Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple, the disciples perked up:

*"Teacher," they asked, "when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to take place?"* (Luke 21:7)

We'd have asked the same questions. Who isn't eager to pull back the curtain of time and peer into the future?

Scripture's prophecies paint a tantalizing picture of God's plan. And yet, while some things are revealed, much remains a mystery. Even the prophets saw only what God showed them, and a thick haze settled over the rest. So, it's a good idea to leave room for questions as we search for answers.

Certainly, on matters of doctrine—such as the resurrection of the dead, the return of Christ, the existence of heaven and hell, and the coming judgment day—we should stand firm. On debatable matters, however, patience with those who disagree with us is wise.

In our passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* study, Peter clears away some of the haze about the future, so let's peek behind the curtain and see the part of God's fascinating plan that Peter reveals.



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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The subject of future events in Scripture can be challenging, so ask the Lord for insight as you open the Word.

*Father, I seek to know what You want me to understand. Illuminate my mind through Your Spirit and stir my heart with the truth I discover. Give me insight into Your Word today. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The scoffers who opposed Peter jeered, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again?” (2 Peter 3:4). They questioned whether Jesus really would return—and, by implication, whether Peter’s teaching could be trusted. When persecution intensifies, even true believers struggle with doubts about Christ’s coming. The scoffers, however, weren’t doubting; they were heckling.

In response, Peter pointed out: “They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago” (3:5). Since God made the world, then He can do as He pleases with it. He stepped in once when He judged humanity with the flood, and He will step in to judge it again someday. “The present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire,” Peter sternly warned, and on “the day of judgment, . . . ungodly people will be destroyed” (3:7).

In 2 Peter 3:8–13, Peter addressed the confused and hurting faithful. “Dear friends,” the aging apostle wrote tenderly (3:8). Putting his arm around them, he laid out the promise of their deliverance from judgment and the hope of life forever with God. In the same way, we can view the grim news of destruction in the light of God’s plan for our future with Him.



### Observation: The End That Leads to a New Beginning

Careful *observation* is vital in this passage. Good interpretation depends on accurate observation, so take your time as you read and make notes.



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### God's Mysterious Timetable—2 Peter 3:8

What truth about God did Peter remind the believers of in [2 Peter 3:8](#)? What rebuke was Peter making to the clock-watching skeptics?

*God may appear late in acting, but He is never delayed. We can't use a wristwatch to determine God's plan for the future. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Salvation's Patient Plan—2 Peter 3:9

In the next verse, Peter clarified the reason God is waiting. What appears *sluggish* in our perception is *strategic* in God's plan. Why didn't God come sooner, according to [2 Peter 3:9](#)?

*The Lord is not slow, He's patient. The Lord is not tardy, He is deliberately waiting. The Lord is not indifferent, He is merciful. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### The End before the Beginning—2 Peter 3:10, 12

How will the Lord come, according to [2 Peter 3:10](#)? What's the point of Peter's comparison?

What will happen to the heavens? The elements? The earth?

What detail did Peter add in [3:12b](#)?

The Creator alone has the authority and the power to end this world. In His sovereign timing, God will release the atomic power stored within the elements, instantaneously obliterating the earth, sea, and sky. But what seems to be the end will be a new beginning for God's creation and His people.



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*God is in charge of “the day of the Lord.” It’s His day. The same One who created the earth reserves the right to end the earth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Now and Then—2 Peter 3:11–13

Instead of fearing the day of the Lord, Peter said believers should look forward to it. To what are we looking forward, according to [2 Peter 3:11–13](#)?

How should this future hope impact our present behavior?

*Prophecy in Scripture is not meant to be an end in itself. Prophetic truth should light a fire under our lives and change the way we live. The purpose of prophecy is not speculation. It’s motivation. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Interpretation: The Day of the Lord

Let's explore the meaning of "the day of the Lord" (2 Peter 3:10). In his commentary, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll sets Peter's use of the phrase in its biblical context:

In the Old Testament, it referred to any period of time when God sent judgment on the wicked, so there were many historical "days of the Lord"—like the flood of Noah or the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . Yet in the midst of the judgment, God promises that the righteous will be saved.<sup>1</sup>

There are two sides to the "day of the Lord"—judgment and deliverance. When will this day come? Peter only said that it would come like a thief, *unexpectedly*—which is what Jesus taught in [Matthew 24:42–44](#). What details did Jesus give?

On that day, the "heavens and earth" will be destroyed by "fire" (2 Peter 3:7). Click on the links to Bill Mounce's online Greek dictionary and define the words Peter used to describe the intensity and devastation of God's fiery judgment:

"*roar*" (3:10 NASB): \_\_\_\_\_

"*intense heat*" (3:10 NASB): \_\_\_\_\_

"*disappear*" (3:10): \_\_\_\_\_

"*melt away*" (3:12): \_\_\_\_\_



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The inferno Peter described is no ordinary forest fire. What makes God’s fire like nothing anyone has ever seen?

Compare God’s judgment by *water* in the flood of Noah’s day with God’s future judgment by *fire*. How are the two judgments similar and how are they different?

God will consume all the elements of creation to make way for “the new heavens and new earth he has promised” (3:13). Let’s look closer at this glorious new day in the next section of our study.



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### Correlation: New Heavens and New Earth

What did Isaiah prophesy about the new heavens and earth in *Isaiah 65:17–19*?

How will this prophecy be fulfilled, according to *Revelation 21:1–7*?

Twice, Peter used the phrase, “looking forward,” regarding this wonderful new day in God’s plan for His people (2 Peter 3:12–13). Peter was so eager to see the new heavens and new earth! What about “a world filled with God’s righteousness” (3:13) are you looking forward to?

*God waits patiently. His waiting is designed to get us in gear to make the message known.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





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### Application: Our Marching Orders

The opening pages to Genesis unveil creation's origin and the beginning of humanity. Soon after, sin corrupted God's creation, and God launched His plan to redeem His beautiful handiwork. With the new heavens and new earth, the saga of Scripture comes full circle. All things, including humanity, will be remade according to its original design, only better. Jesus will sit enthroned and we will live under God's glorious blessing forever.

*In light of this hope, how should we live?*

First, let's *clean up* our lives, as Peter writes, "in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11). We can live today how we will live in eternity, in purity as God's children. How can Peter's glimpse into the future help you live purely today?

Second, let's *speaking up* every chance we get because Christ's coming will not be delayed forever. God restrains final judgment while He lovingly calls lost sheep into His fold. "He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent" (2 Peter 3:9).

God patiently holds open the gate of salvation. Who is He waiting for in your circle of family and friends? How can you pray for these loved ones? What can you say to them?



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Third, let's *look up* in expectation of Christ's return when He will set right all wrongs and re-create the paradise we long for. How can the hope of God's new creation help you through your current trials, the loss of a loved one, or maybe a conflict in a relationship?

Just like the first readers of Peter's letter, our hearts resonate with Peter's song of hope. Eagerly and longingly, we pray with joyful anticipation: *Come, Lord Jesus!*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, not a day goes by that I don't see another sign of corruption in our world. You must grieve how those You created have fled from You to embrace the ways of sin. I long to see Your righteousness fill this world and turn darkness to light. Shine Your goodness in my life so I may radiate Your light to others today. In Jesus' name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: 2015), 357.

