

# CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

## A Study of 2 Peter

### STUDY EIGHT

## Skeptics and Sinners, Beware!

*2 Peter 3:1–7*

*As long as there have been saints on the earth, there have been scoffers to attack the faith of the saints.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**E**VERYWHERE we go, we see examples of scoffers defaming Christianity. It's rare to turn on the television or go to the movies and not see at least one Christian truth splayed out and barbecued on the screen. In the media, on the college campus, in the workplace, and even at the local store, our faith is under fire.

The enemies of Christ don't just target truth. They also attack those who speak the truth and try to live by it. Paul warned that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). *Everyone*, not just some; and he wasn't talking about mild disagreements but bold, blatant, brash mocking and overt public rejection for following Christ.

Peter sounded the same alarm, but he said the threat would come from within the church. "There will be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:2). Even our churches and seminaries are a hunting ground for those who "scoff at things they do not understand" (2:12).

The apostles didn't intend their promises of persecution to frighten or discourage us but to inspire our resolve and confirm our faith. We shouldn't be surprised when scoffers attack. Instead, we should face persecution calmly, knowing it is a sign that we're living in the last days, Christ is coming, and we're on the right track.



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2 Peter 3:1–7



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Invite the Lord to fill you with anticipation of Christ's return.

*Father, You are faithful to Your promises and trustworthy in Your Word to bring about everything You decreed in ages past. From eternity to eternity, You are Lord. I praise Your works and cling to the hope of Christ coming soon. Open my mind to understand Your plan for the future. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Since Christians know scoffers will come, they can prepare now. They can plant their feet firmly on Christ and the solid foundation of Scripture, assured that the day is coming when mockers will be silenced and persecutions stopped. Read [2 Peter 3:1–7](#) as an overview, noting Peter's reassurance to the godly in 3:1–2 and warning to the ungodly in 3:3–7.



### Observation: Reassurance and Warning

Use your skills of *observation* to identify the key words and central points in Peter's teaching. Closely examine every word. Each one is a stepping-stone to deeper understanding of God's message for you today.

### Strong Reassurance for the Godly—2 Peter 3:1–2

In the previous *Searching the Scriptures* study, we noted Peter's purpose for his letter in [2 Peter 3:1](#). Write down what you observe in this verse.



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2 Peter 3:1–7

If the believers remembered and obeyed Peter’s teaching, the crosswinds of heresy would not blow the church off course. They could listen to Peter with confidence because his teaching followed the spiritual compass set by “the holy prophets” and by what other two sources of truth in 2 Peter 3:2?

*There is something incredibly reassuring, calming, and encouraging about the timeless truths of God’s book. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Sober Warnings to the Ungodly—2 Peter 3:3–7

Earlier, the scoffing false teachers accused Peter of “making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:16). Peter anchored his credibility in his eyewitness account of Christ’s glory at the transfiguration (1:16–18) and to the Old Testament prophets who spoke from God (1:19–21).

In chapter 2, Peter shredded the false teachers’ credibility in a scathing exposé of their sin, and now, in chapter 3, he was ready to confront their arguments against Christ’s second coming. What did Peter affirm in 3:3?



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What were the mockers attacking with their question in 2 Peter 3:4? What flimsy evidence did they cite to back up their accusation?

Peter countered by pointing to the past. In 3:5–6, how did Peter address the scoffers' claim that "everything has remained the same" (2 Peter 3:4)?

Then, in 3:7, what did Peter say would happen in the future?

God's judgment by flood foreshadowed God's future judgment by fire. In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll delve deeper into this future judgment. For now, let's interpret what Peter has said so far.



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### Interpretation: How the Flood Forecasts the Future

Through the lens of *interpretation*, Peter’s convictions come into view. First, Peter believed in Scripture as a unified whole. The “holy prophets” pointed to Jesus, the gospels revealed Jesus as “Lord and Savior,” and the “apostles” spread Jesus’ message to the world (2 Peter 3:2). What point about Scripture in [2 Peter 3:2](#) was Peter making to the Christians shaken by the scoffers?

Second, Peter believed we are in “the last days” (3:3). In what era of biblical history do the “last days” fit? How does increasing hostility from the world correlate with Christ’s return? For help, consult the article, “[What does it mean that there will be scoffers in the last days?](#)” at [gotquestions.org](#).



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Third, Peter believed God could alter nature at any time. Like the mockers in Peter's day, modern materialists assume that everything in the universe will keep going as it always has. According to Peter, these skeptics "deliberately forgot" two key points about God in *2 Peter 3:5–7*. What realities did they intentionally overlook, and why are these truths central to our faith and hope?

Fourth, Peter believed that just because Christ hasn't returned yet doesn't mean He won't come. Scoffers sneer, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again?" (*2 Peter 3:4*). How would you respond?

*In case you tend to get demoralized by the attacks of scoffers, remember you are experiencing exactly what God told us would happen in the last days.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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 **Correlation: Scoffers through Time**

Since the beginning, scoffers have been nipping at the heels of God’s people. Take a brief tour of the many accounts of persecution in Scripture by reading the verses in the following chart and noting the abuses.

God’s Person	Verses	Scoffing
Moses	<i>Exodus 17:1–4</i>	
David	<i>2 Samuel 16:5–8</i>	
Elijah	<i>1 Kings 19:1–4</i>	
Nehemiah	<i>Nehemiah 4:1–4; 6:5–9</i>	
Jesus	<i>Mark 3:20–22; 15:16–19, 29–30</i>	
Paul	<i>2 Timothy 4:14–15</i>	

These are just a few persecutions suffered by God’s people in the Bible—and the attacks haven’t stopped. We might get the impression that persecutions will never end. But Peter’s good news assures us that a day is coming when scoffers will be silenced. May that day come soon!

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2 Peter 3:1–7

*Have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because judgment is coming. The mocker may have his day now, but in eternity, it will all be over. Persecution will end. Mistreatment will be gone. All scoffing will cease. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Eternity Preparedness Kit

Those who live in a region prone to earthquakes are encouraged to pack an earthquake preparedness kit. If “the big one” hits, water supplies will be contaminated, power lines will be down, gas lines will be ruptured, and homes will be destroyed. To survive, people will need their own supplies of water, food, clothes, and medicine.

Just as we can't predict when an earthquake will strike, we don't know when Christ will come again. Christ may return at any moment—maybe before you finish reading this sentence! What do you need in your eternity preparedness kit? What can you do spiritually to be ready for Christ's return?

Someday, all humanity will witness the glory of Jesus as Peter did on the mount of transfiguration—but to an exponentially greater degree. In the next study, we'll examine the events that will follow Christ's return. For now, simply imagine seeing your Savior face-to-face in all His majesty and splendor. What will that moment be like for you? What anticipation do you feel?



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How might the hope of Christ's return affect your attitude and response toward scoffers and mockers?

The nonstop barrage of attacks against our faith, our Savior, and the Bible can be discouraging. See the attacks, however, not as signs of defeat but as proof that what Scripture said would happen is happening. Also, remember, we suffer in good company—with the ranks of persecuted people who have suffered for their faith for centuries.

Scoffers may win today, but we can be certain that *God wins in the end*. Take comfort in knowing your future is secure. In your final prayer, follow Jesus by praying for those who persecute you just as He prayed for those who persecuted Him.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I pray for those who scoff at what they do not understand. The evil one has blinded their eyes so that they cannot see the glory of Your Son as I see Him. Their minds are clouded by lies, and their will is surrendered to sin. Oh Lord, save these poor souls and forgive those who do not know what they are doing. I pray not for escape but endurance and opportunities to declare Your love in this lost world. In Jesus' name, amen.*

