



SCOFFERS



DENIERS



THE LAST DAYS



THE WORD



GOD'S LOVE

2 PETER 3.1-10

# BLIND TO THE TRUTH

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## The Fellowship of Ailbe

*A ReVision Resource*

Blind to the Truth: 2 Peter 3.1-10  
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## 2 Peter 3.1-10: Introduction

Those who mock the teaching of Scripture select their facts, well, selectively.

They reject the Bible and anything having to do with faith as being factual. Facts are physical things you can see, feel, hear, taste, and touch. Faith is not facts.

But who says? Peter says the teaching of the prophets and apostles is factual, and he ought to know – he was, after all, there.

God is patient with scoffers, and He has left us here to proclaim His truth and live out the fact of Christ's resurrection. It's hard for scoffers to deny the fact of changed lives.

We're living in the last days, but the vehemence and sophistication of scoffers cannot change the truth and facts of God's Word. As we take our stand on that Word we become a powerful force to be reckoned with by our age in flight from God.

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1 and 2 Peter can encourage, embolden, and instruct us, if we're willing to take the Apostle's words to heart. My prayer is that all who take up this study will do just that. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Remember the Word

*2 Peter 3.1, 2*

*<sup>1</sup> Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), <sup>2</sup> that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior...*

**The Story:** An unguarded mind can be a source of many troubles. The world is filled with ideas, many of which run contrary to the truth of Scripture and which, for that reason, can derail and destroy our journey of faith. Peter insists that all he has been trying to do in his two epistles is remind his readers of what the Word has previously taught, to “stir up” their minds to alertness, clarity, and true conviction of truth (cf. 1.19-21). Peter knows that only the Word of God remains unchanging and unfailing. He wants his readers to be firmly grounded in God’s truth. Note also how he includes “the apostles” in that line of reliable revelation. The “prophets” would represent all the Old Testament literature while “the apostles” represents the New. Standing in the middle as the hermeneutical key to both is “the Lord and Savior.” Jesus is the theme of both Testaments; as we read the Law and the Prophets, as well as the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, we must stir our minds up to seek the Lord Jesus, and to find in Him the life, truth, and righteousness we need in unstable times.

**The Structure:** Right understanding of the Word of God can only be realized within the whole framework of that Word, as the different sections of Scripture are used to give light to one another, and, thus, to illuminate more fully the redemption accomplished by our Lord (1 Cor. 2.12, 13). Throughout the ages of Church history, faithful interpreters, following that general principle, have indicated how we should understand and apply the Scriptures as followers of the Lord. Their words are very helpful, even indispensable; however, their words, like our own, must always be subject to the principle Peter establishes here: The Word of God has the last word in all matters of faith and life.

*Is your overall grasp of the Word sufficient to allow you to draw from all parts of it to understand any individual passage? How might you improve in this area?*

## 2 Scoffers Abounding

*2 Peter 3.3, 4*

<sup>3</sup> ...*knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,* <sup>4</sup> *and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”*

**The Story:** Peter knows that we are living “in the last days” (cf. Acts 2.16, 17); therefore, he expects his readers to be accosted by false teachers (chapter 2) who will try to dislodge their faith. He describes them as “scoffers.” This word carries a good deal of nuance. False teachers don’t just disagree with believers; they scoff at them and mock their beliefs, seeking to belittle and humiliate them for believing. The rants and screeds of some of today’s passionate atheists seem a bit like Hamlet’s mother saying to the prince, “Methinks the lady doth protest too much.” Such people don’t just politely disagree and wish us well. They want to *destroy* faith in God. They say to their audiences, in effect, “Just look around. Everything is as it’s always been. Science alone can unlock the truths of the world. The promises of a non-existent god are of no value.” Are they so vehement in their opposition because they’re afraid a reasoned conversation might shake their firm – but false – convictions? We must not respond to such scoffing in kind, but always be ready to give a reason for what we believe, with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3.15).

**The Structure:** Peter suggests that we need to try to understand the arguments of those who scoff at our worldview. We can’t ignore them; nor can we respond to them with the same vitriol with which they attack us. We want to be able to give them a reasoned explanation, but not on their terms of how reason must work – within out any interference from revelation, for example. That would be to fall into their trap and become like them (Prov. 26.4). If we give up that ground, we’ve lost the hill for sure. We don’t come pounding our Bibles, but reasoning with our opponents, gently and with respect, to try to help them, through reason, to see the folly of their views (Prov. 26.5). One example: How can anyone today know, except as a matter of *belief*, that “all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation”? We’ll want them to explain that to us as anything other than a tenet of faith. They won’t be able to do so.

*Do you consider yourself to be “ready” to give a reasoned explanation of the faith to the people around you? How might you improve your ability to do that?*

### 3 Stubborn Blindness

*2 Peter 3.5, 6*

*<sup>5</sup> For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, <sup>6</sup> by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

**The Story:** Those who scoff at the Christian worldview and the Gospel of redemption do so from a platform of selective bias. They choose which “facts” will be allowed into their worldview and which will not be allowed. Anything that pertains to “faith” or “religion” or “God” is simply irrational and unscientific, on their terms, and, therefore, does not qualify for a place at the table of facts and public policy. They “deliberately overlook” the facts of the Bible’s historical, psychological, and cultural reliability; and they “overlook” the long record of human history which reveals that the Christian faith has brought more good to humankind than any other worldview. They also deliberately overlook the fact that Christians today are the most generous of all people to those in need; and they deliberately overlook the fact that the Bible can account for things their worldview simply embraces by faith, but cannot explain. All this “deliberate” overlooking of evidence and facts makes those who scoff at the Christian worldview vulnerable to being exposed as not basing their own worldview on, well, facts.

**The Structure:** Defending the Christian worldview is not as complicated as it can seem. When we begin with the understanding that reason and the facts are on our side, because the facts are truth, then we can welcome the marshaling of all kinds of facts to support the teaching of Scripture and expose the lies of unbelief. But, while unbelievers may feel free to “overlook” the teaching of Scripture, we must not. As we respond to the rants and challenges of scoffers, we do so out of a Biblical framework of truth and facts, and we will reason with our opponents on the basis of those facts, in order to demonstrate the reliability of those facts *vis à vis* the false worldviews of those who scoff at us.

*What are some ways that the facts of history, science, human progress, psychology – any and all disciplines, in fact – demonstrate the reliability of Scripture?*

## 4 The Same Word

*2 Peter 3.7*

*But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

**The Story:** This brief verse is packed with wisdom for those who are called to vindicate the Christian worldview before the scoffers of this age. The focus in these remarks is on the sovereignty of God and the certainty of His Word's being fulfilled. Scoffers may choose to overlook Biblical truth in the array of "facts" they select as the foundation of their worldview. Christians know that the only thing that allows them to think, converse, make arguments, and continue existing is the Word of God, Who upholds the universe and all things in it (Heb. 1.3). We also know that Word has determined the course of human history and will one day fully and finally vindicate Himself against all scoffers. We rest in the sovereignty of Christ even as we argue the case for Christ, looking forward to the appearing of Christ, for which we earnestly long. We don't have to "win" every argument, in other words; we simply need to make a reasoned explanation for others to consider. God Himself will make the final argument in His own defense, whether now or in the coming day of wrath.

**The Structure:** The only way we can keep from becoming angry, passionate, and denunciatory toward those who scoff at us is to rest in the sovereignty of God and to follow His example in giving a "reason" (Greek: *logon*) for the hope that is within us. God sent His Logos for all the world to consider; we bear witness to that Logos by Logos-like lives and "logical" (Logos-like) explanations of the faith, knowing that it is God Who gives life and brings forth fruit as He pleases (Jn. 6.63; 1 Cor. 3.7). So we don't have to convince or convert anyone; we simply need to explain, gently and with respect, resting in the sovereign pleasure and timing of the Lord.

*How would you suggest keeping this in focus as you are talking with an unbeliever who is beginning to become a bit heated?*

## 5 Do not Overlook

*2 Peter 3.8*

*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

**The Story:** I don't think Peter's intention here was simply to aver the obvious, about how the Lord relates to time. This is not what Peter wants us *not* to overlook. Instead, he's calling on *us* not to make the same mistake that those who scoff at us make – choosing to “overlook” the larger Biblical perspective on truth and reality. God's thoughts and ways are not the same as ours; He is not subject to the silly mind games of simple men about what proves what. All true knowing *starts* with God, and with what He reveals. It then constructs a worldview on the basis of what God reveals, even though what He reveals may seem contrary to the “facts” as we “observe” them (the length of days, for example). Truth, in other words, is what God says it is, not what human beings selectively embrace as convenient to permit their “sinful desires” (v. 3). Aldous Huxley once famously responded that he had arrived at his preference for evolution and atheism over a theistic view of life because the former fit his preferred morality so much better. When you “overlook” God in constructing your worldview, you can make room for much that He finds abominable. Christians must *not* “overlook” the divine perspective and economy, either in living for Christ or defending His Gospel.

**The Structure:** It's possible that believers today are, in fact, “overlooking” a good deal of what God has revealed about the nature of the world and His purpose for it. We need to have our minds stirred up by way of remembrance in order to consult the whole counsel of God in all of Scripture, so that we can begin to see the world with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16), think God's thoughts after Him (Rom. 12.1, 2), and bring the reconciling, renewing, and restoring grace of God to bear on every aspect of human life and interest.

*In your walk with the Lord, are you guilty of “overlooking” any important teachings of Scripture concerning how we ought to live?*

## 6 Not Slow

*2 Peter 3.9*

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

**The Story:** God does not run on the world's schedule; He is not obliged to "do His thing" in the ways unbelieving scoffers think He should. But that's not Peter's main point here. Rather, he wants us to consider whether *we* are running on *God's* schedule and according to God's purpose for the world. God's will is not frustrated simply because unbelievers reject the Gospel. He loves even His enemies, as we know, and His desire is that all might come to repentance and believe the Gospel. Only slowly and gradually does God "give up" unbelievers to the sin that results from their folly and scoffing (Rom. 1.18-32). Otherwise, His Spirit strives with men, to convince them to seek Him while they may (Gen. 6.3). Our role in this is to walk in the Spirit as one of the agents through whom He strives with men. When we are filled with the Spirit, His power will work in us to make us witnesses for Christ (Acts 1.8). In such a way, some, at least, might "come to repentance" and be saved. But only when we are following God's schedule and purpose, and not that of the world or our own hearts.

**The Structure:** Ask yourself: Are you willing for the people in your own sphere of influence to perish without hearing the Gospel? Neither is God. He wants all people to hear the Gospel and, as it pleases Him, to reach repentance. But how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? (Rom. 10.14, 15) Peter knows that the Lord loves even the scoffers and is patient in delaying His judgment so that some of them might come to know His precious and very great promises in Jesus Christ. He is counseling and sending us to be as loving and patient as God is toward even those who scoff at us.

*How would your daily life change if you went into each day with the mindset of one "sent" to proclaim the Good News?*

## 7 Like a Thief

*2 Peter 3.10*

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

**The Story:** The Lord is patient. He has his own schedule and timetables. He knows them; we don't. What *we* know is that we are called to be witnesses, not to indulge vain speculations about things we cannot know (Acts 1.7, 8). If contemporary Christians had expended as much energy reaching their lost neighbors as debating their preferred eschatological schemes, we'd have probably won a good many scoffers and not a few honest seekers more than we have to date. Everything that is familiar to us is coming to an end in God's time. We need to be preparing for that, and part of that preparation is to urge our unbelieving neighbors – even those who scoff at our beliefs – to repent and believe the Good News of the Kingdom of God. When all the works done on the world are finally “exposed”, will any of those be seen to be works of witness we have done?

**The Structure:** Peter is rightly hard on false teachers (chapter 2) and scoffers (chapter 3). But, like God, he does not desire for them to perish eternally. We need more of that mindset toward the lost. These last days are the time of restoration, in which God is calling out a people of His own possession, so that we might declare His many excellencies to the watching world (1 Pet. 2.9, 10). How can we continue, day after day, in our present state of Gospel complacency? The thief is coming upon all men, whether in the form of death or the day of wrath! Are we warning, pleading, and urging them to reach repentance in Jesus Christ?

*What would recommend as a strategy for you and your Christian friends to begin being more consistent in reaching out with the Gospel to the lost people around you?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why do you think people prefer to remain blind to the teaching of Scripture? How should we help such people express more openness to the Gospel?
2. Do you agree that the teaching of Scripture and the record of Christian history represent “facts”? Why does this matter?
3. Do you think Christians today regard all of Scripture as equally factual? Explain.
4. The day of judgment is coming. How should Christians prepare for this?
5. “It’s possible that believers today are, in fact, ‘overlooking’ a good deal of what God has revealed about the nature of the world and His purpose for it.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
6. God longs for the salvation of the lost. Do we? Does your church?

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.