

International Bible Lessons Commentary
2 Peter 3:1-18

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, May 26, 2013

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, May 26, 2013**, is from **2 Peter 3:3-18**; verses 1 and 2 are also included below. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

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2 Peter 3:1-18

(2 Peter 3:1) This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you

Peter wrote 1 Peter to the Christians in the area of what is now modern Turkey. Though this letter does not address these same Christians directly, we can suppose that the same Christians were meant. However, his letter to these churches is a letter to all churches. Just as Peter wanted to remind them of important truths by repeating them, so we need to keep reminding ourselves of important truths as we learn new truths by our continued study of the Bible.

(2 Peter 3:2) that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles.

Peter insisted on three sources of divine truth. First, the holy prophets are the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. Moses, David, and others were among the writing prophets; such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Second, Peter expected his readers to obey the commandments or moral law of love, and trust in the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, because Jesus is Lord and Savior. The commandment of the Lord is to love God and others, and we must bow before Jesus and obey Him as our loving Lord and Savior. The words the apostles spoke

and wrote comprise much of our New Testament, and this is a third source of divine truth.

(2 Peter 3:3) First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts

The last days had a beginning, which included what Jesus accomplished for the salvation of His followers. The last days are the years between Jesus' first coming and His second coming. What Peter described will intensify and be seen as more obvious to believers than to unbelievers (who may become scoffers). Scoffers will include those who live in open rebellion against God, Jesus, His followers, and their warnings. Opposed to God, scoffers will do whatever they want for their personal pleasure and ambition.

(2 Peter 3:4) and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!"

These scoffers reject the operations and presence of God in past space and time history in our world. Rejecting God's past judgments on sinners and societies in the past, they also reject any promises they learn respecting Jesus returning and a future judgment of God upon their disobedient behavior and persistent false beliefs. They do not believe that God

created the world or that God has made any changes in our world in history.

(2 Peter 3:5) They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water,

Unbelievers, those who live contrary to God's commands, ignore the facts. In response to unbelievers, Peter described one important fact that those who reject the existence of God (as God has revealed himself) ignore. They deny the fact that God created the world. This fact includes that God created the world by His word, by speaking (see Genesis 1 and John 1).

(2 Peter 3:6) through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished.

The fact of God's involvement in His creation is further confirmed by the fact of the great flood in the days of Noah, when God judged rebellious sinners and brought an end to the increasing violence upon the earth because of sin. He saved Noah and his family, but the original creation was changed by the great flood. Unbelievers ignore the evidence of the great flood as part of God's judgment and God's ending of a period of time.

(2 Peter 3:7) But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

By the Word, the world was created. By the Word, the prophets spoke words of warning and coming judgment. This present worldly order will not be destroyed by water again, because God promised never to do so again. However, this present worldly order will be cleansed or destroyed by fire and prepared for the visible rule of Jesus as King in the visible kingdom of God in heaven and earth. The godless will have no place in God's kingdom, having chosen His judgment and punishment rather than love and worship God and live with His people.

(2 Peter 3:8) But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.

Peter reminded his readers (and that includes us) that God does not measure time exactly as we do. How much can one human being accomplish over 24 hours? How much do you suppose God can accomplish with His wisdom and power – the power of His Word – during 24 hours? God measures time in ways beyond our understanding, so we must be patient and not suppose that Jesus will never return

just because the days and years pass by over centuries of time.

(2 Peter 3:9) The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

God's patience and God not desiring or wanting any to suffer from His judgment and destruction are some of the reasons Jesus Christ has not yet returned to earth. God will keep His promises, but He will not send Jesus back to earth until He is certain no more people will repent and turn to Him in faith. Since God does not desire or want anyone to perish, the fact that some people do perish and will perish indicates that God respects the right of people to reject Him and His love.

(2 Peter 3:10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

The day of the Lord is when Jesus returns to our world. Jesus will return unexpectedly, and those prepared to meet Him will be caught up with Him in the air (as Paul explained). The godless and unrepentant will remain on earth when it is dissolved: their spirits will face God in the final judgment and their thoughts and deeds will be disclosed.

(2 Peter 3:11) Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness,

The godless and all that make up what people love about this world, whether their sins or the possession of gold, silver, and precious gems, will be dissolved. Everyone will face either the judgment of God and His punishment or His salvation and eternal life. Therefore, true believers and followers of Jesus Christ need to express their love and thankfulness to God by leading lives of holiness and godliness.

(2 Peter 3:12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

If the followers of Jesus Christ live godly, holy lives, then they will not perish for they have come to repentance. They can hasten the return of Jesus Christ, because God will not need to wait patiently for them to repent. Furthermore, by following Jesus in love, holiness, and obedience, some of the ungodly may be led to repent, and this too will hasten the coming of the day of God.

(2 Peter 3:13) But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

As Christians, we do not feel at home in this world. Those who live godless, unrighteous lives, cause as much grief both directly and indirectly. Therefore, we long for and pray for the soon return of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, though that will mean the destruction of the godless; for then, we will feel at home in a righteous heaven and earth where the godless would not feel at home.

(2 Peter 3:14) Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish;

When Peter wrote about the future of both judgment for the ungodly and hope for the godly, he did so to encourage those who say they believe in and follow Jesus Christ in order to help them stay motivated in their efforts to maintain their faith and love for Jesus Christ. Their love for Jesus should motivate them to strive to live godly, holy, without practicing sin, while maintaining peace with Jesus by obeying Him and not rebelling against His commands.

(2 Peter 3:15) and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

The patience of our Lord as salvation includes Jesus giving us and others another opportunity to turn from the practice of any sins to faith in Him and obedience to Him. God gives us sufficient time to repent; therefore, His patience is salvation if we choose to trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. If we continue to live apart from faith in Jesus Christ, then God's patience is not salvation, but even more reason for God to justly punish us (for God has been patiently waiting).

(2 Peter 3:16) speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

Paul wrote with wisdom that God gave him, not his own ideas about God and life. His letters were inspired by the Holy Spirit; therefore, Peter called them the other Scriptures which we have preserved in our Bibles. The Holy Spirit will help the followers of Jesus Christ understand Paul and the Scriptures. Those ignorant of God or unstable will misinterpret the Scriptures and destroy themselves if they do not repent.

(2 Peter 3:17) You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not

carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability.

The lawless try to tempt others into lawlessness. If we follow the ways of the lawless, we will be unstable or tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. The lawless will misinterpret the Scriptures and try to prove that God now permits their sinful choices, the sins they want to commit. If Christians are not careful, they can be misled by the godless into sin or into accepting the sins of the godless.

(2 Peter 3:18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

The way to avoid the traps of the lawless and ungodly is to keep praying for God to give us more grace (His power and wisdom that we do not deserve) and more knowledge of Jesus Christ as we study the Bible. Then, we can honor Jesus by telling others the truth about Him and by living publicly on the basis of the truth that we teach from the Bible as the Holy Spirit helps us.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some activities that churches can do today to encourage and help believers remember Bible truths?
2. What are some sources of divine truth?
3. In what way does Peter say some will scoff at Christian truths?
4. How would you compare or contrast Genesis 1, John 1, and 2 Peter 3:5?
5. What will God do with the godless someday?

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