

Scoff Science

2 Peter 3:1-7 April 12, 2026

Perhaps some of you remember Harry Truman. Not Harry S. Truman the president, Harry R. Truman the bootlegger turned prospector who, for 52 years, ran a lodge at the base of Mount St. Helens.

Harry has been labeled a folk hero by many in the media.¹ More than 100 songs have been written in his honor.² He appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Examiner*. He was featured by *National Geographic*, *The Today Show*, *Time Magazine*, *Life Magazine*, and *Newsweek*.³

Was it because he sounded the alarm that an eruption was coming? Was it because he worked bravely to save those who needed to evacuate? No, Harry is remembered for *refusing* to leave despite many, repeated warnings.

For two months, the mountain showed all the signs that it was no longer dormant. There was all sorts of seismic activity day after day. There was steam and ash in the air.⁴

Authorities, friends, well-wishers, and strangers pleaded with Harry to evacuate. But he wouldn't budge. He had been at the mountain for more than half a century and was convinced nothing would change. He said, "That mountain just doesn't dare blow up on me."⁵

As the ground beneath his feet continued to shake in the days leading up to the historic eruption, Harry admitted he was afraid and had taken to sleeping in the basement of his lodge. The day before Mt. St. Helens blew, *five* people visited Harry, trying to get him to leave. But he wouldn't go. Instead, journalists reported that he *scoffed* at the concern for his life. After all, as Harry said, "The mountain is a mile away, the mountain ain't gonna hurt me."⁶

And then 8:32am came on Sunday, May 18, 1980, and Harry R. Truman was the *first* to die in the extreme heat of the volcano's pyroclastic flow. Somehow *this* man is celebrated as a *hero* for *scoffing* at people who were simply trying to save his life.

In our text this morning, Peter talks about those who scoff at the idea of fiery judgment coming to the world and how they scoff at God's revealed word altogether.

Instead of being apathetic to what God has said, it should *animate* us to live out our Christianity, paying attention and living with intention based off God's reliable revelation.

¹ Richard Slatta *The Mythical West: An Encyclopedia Of Legend, Lore, And Popular Culture*

² "Ballad Of Harry Truman Hails Folk Hero" *The Washington Star* September 1, 1981

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_R._Truman

⁴ "Mud, ash inundate old Truman's lodge" *The Bulletin* May 21, 1980. p 27

⁵ *Bulletin*

⁶ Michael Green *Washington In The Pacific Northwest*

2 Peter 3:1 - ¹ Dear friends, this is now the second letter I have written to you; in both letters, I want to stir up your sincere understanding by way of reminder,

In chapter 1, Peter focused on how good and *essential* it is to be a growing Christian. How we can rely on God's word, and how as we live it out, our lives will be full of strength, peace, and purpose.

In chapter 2, Peter warned us about the false teachers who try to break into the Church and into your life to deny the word of God, exploit you, and ensnare you. They offer freedom, but all they really do is ruin lives.

Now in chapter 3, Peter will focus on the second coming of Christ. How these scoffers deny that Jesus is ever coming back or that there will ever be a judgment for sin. But that for Christians, the second coming is not only a reality, it is one of the most important aspects of our faith.

As he wraps up his final message before death, Peter says, "I'm writing to stir you up." The term means to awake from sleep.⁷ To stimulate.⁸ He's not scolding us for being asleep. This is a positive reminder. Our "understanding," which means our minds and our disposition,⁹ should be animated. God's truth should be energizing us as we live out our lives.

Christianity is not just some things we learned in Sunday school, but the vitalizing engine of life. We have received the truth that *actually* sets people free and through it the peace of God and the hope of God and the joy of God and the *love* of God.

Where Peter says "dear friends" the term is *beloved*. He uses it 4 times in this chapter to describe you - the object of God's love. And so, as he draws to a close, Peter says, "I'm writing to you who are *loved* by God so you can have a *living* faith, animated by hope, overflowing with grace."

2 Peter 3:2 - ² so that you recall the words previously spoken by the holy prophets and the command of our Lord and Savior given through your apostles.

What anchors our lives? What gives us stability and direction? How do we receive all that we need for life and Godliness? *Recall the word*. Walk in the word. Apply God's word to your life.

Peter assigns the whole text - cover to cover. Both Testaments, all 66 books. Prophecy begins in the opening chapters of Genesis. It continues all the way through the last chapter of the Bible.

Notice Peter's perspective on the Bible. First, both Testaments are still needful. Just because we're in the Church age, the New Testament era, doesn't mean we don't need the Old Testament anymore. Second, the apostles have the same authority as the Old Testament prophets.

⁷ Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old And New Testament Words

⁸ Edwin Blum The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 12: Hebrews Through Revelation

⁹ James Strong A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible

On the *devotional* level, this is an important reminder, too. Your spiritual life must not be anchored on *feelings* or *experience*, but on *revelation*. Feelings matter - look at chapter 1. God *wants* you to have peace in increasing measure. He *wants* you to enjoy your relationship with Him. But we cannot hand the helm of our lives over to our feelings. That's what the false teachers of chapter 2 did, and the result was absolute ruin. We anchor our spirituality on God's revealed word. *All* God's word.

2 Peter 3:3 - ³ Above all, be aware of this: Scoffers will come in the last days scoffing and following their own evil desires,

Some jobs require more situational awareness than others. Sometimes being aware makes the difference between life and death.

Peter has used this phrase "above all" before. He means that what he's about to say is of overwhelming importance,¹⁰ so we need to be aware.

What does he want us to be aware of? Scoffers. What are scoffers? Well, they scoff. Proverbs talks a great deal about scoffers. But how do we recognize them? They're the people in chapter 2. And they are those who constantly follow their own desires rather than God's commands. They are those who reject God's word and the idea that He is coming back again. So, we can recognize them by their theology, their morality, and the way they treat the Bible, Christ, and Christians.

Notice that Peter believes anyone reading *is* living in the "last days." That is a technical term in the Bible. It refers to the time just before Christ's return. How could Peter be in the last days if it's been 2,000 years since he wrote this letter? Well, he's going to explain that with God a day is like a thousand years, but the "last days" started at Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.¹¹

Now, here's some irony: The Bible predicted what these mockers would say and how they would behave. How they would laugh at the idea of Christ's return because, after all, where is He? But *they themselves* are proof that His second coming is imminent!¹²

2 Peter 3:4 - ⁴ saying, "Where is his 'coming' that he promised? Ever since our ancestors fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation."

Essentially, the argument of the scoffers is that even if God exists, He does not intervene in the world.¹³ This was the position of Epicureans, Deists, and among many agnostics today. Everything *seems* the same, so that must mean God is not involved and never will be.

2 Peter 3:5 - ⁵ They deliberately overlook this: By the word of God the heavens came into being long ago and the earth was brought about from water and through water.

¹⁰ Dick Lucas & Christopher Green *The Message Of 2 Peter & Jude*

¹¹ Acts 2:17

¹² Tord Fornberg *An Early Church In A Pluralistic Society: A Study Of 2 Peter*

¹³ Blum

Remember: The specific people Peter was warning the original audience about still *claimed* to be believers. And yet, they rejected the Bible and the teaching of the apostles.¹⁴

It is a willful ignorance. They close their eyes to the revelation of God and the testimony of God through history. He has been constantly involved, from the beginning. And from the start He uses *His word* to accomplish and communicate His work.

By the *word* of God the heavens came into being. He could've done simply by His power or through His thought or in any way He wanted. But God uses *His word*. He *wants* to communicate.

In antiquity, many philosophers and scientists taught that the universe was eternal. Of course, we have discovered that is not true. It had to have a beginning. Not only that, we have found that it has a clear design. We've also discovered that order cannot come from chaos.

Fast forward to today and we don't really have Epicurean and Deist philosophy dominating philosophical discussion. But what is the dominant dogma among unbelieving scientists? "Well, the universe isn't eternal, but let's use numbers that keep getting bigger...millions of years, billions of years, so that effectively we think of it as eternal. And even though we know order can't come from chaos and something can't come from nothing, we'll say that's true, except that one time it wasn't when everything came into being and we'll call it The Big Bang." It is a deliberate refusal to accept that design must have a Designer and that Designer has spoken through His word.

Rick Oliver, who has a PhD in biology and is a member of a variety of scientific groups wrote about how this happens. He said,

"I remember how frustrated I became when, as a young atheist, I examined specimens under the microscope. I would often walk away and try to convince myself that I was not seeing examples of extraordinary design, but merely the product of some random, unexplained mutations."¹⁵

But a Creator *does* exist. And that Creator *has* spoken. We know His word is reliable. These truths beg the questions: *Why* did He create this universe and what does He plan to do with it?

2 Peter 3:6 - ⁶ Through these the world of that time perished when it was flooded.

So, first of all, Peter holds to a literal, historical, global flood. Genesis 1 through 11 is just as literal as Genesis 12 through 50.

But the point Peter is trying to make is that God does not *only* act to create. He has also intervened in human history to judge and to deliver. And, as He did so, He *talks* about it! He prophesies about it. He sends messages and commands and truth so humanity can know about it.

¹⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert *Second Peter And Jude*

¹⁵ Rick Oliver *Designed To Kill In A Fallen World*

Because God is just, He *must* judge sin. But because God is love, He does all He can to make a way for people to be *saved* from judgment. But when we ignore Him, when we plug our ears and reject His offer, the result is death and judgment. It happened in Genesis, it is going to happen again.

2 Peter 3:7 - ⁷ By the same word, the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

By the same word! This is pretty basic spiritual math. Look at how God has intervened before, how He warned about it, and then what happened. And now consider that God has said - *throughout both Testaments* - that a global judgment of fire is coming at the end of human history. It *is* coming. It cannot be avoided. It can be *escaped* on the personal level - that's what salvation is about - but judgement is coming to the world. The Day of the Lord is near - near and rapidly approaching.¹⁶

As we've seen in this letter, there are two groups: The Godly and the ungodly. The Godly are those who believe God's word and receive His salvation. The ungodly are those who will *not* believe and receive judgment. Christ is going to return, bodily, literally, to accomplish two purposes: To deliver the Godly and to destroy the ungodly. And because He *loves* the people of earth, He has sent warning after warning, proof after proof, reminder after reminder, because He's not willing that *any* should perish, but that all would come to repentance. But He will not force you. He allows you to choose whether you want His deliverance or His destruction. And when He comes, Matthew 3 tells us the fire of His coming will burn the chaff from the wheat. The wheat is gathered into the barn of heaven, the chaff burns in the fire forever.¹⁷

Before his death, Harry Truman received *many* letters from children, pleading with him to listen to reason and evacuate from the inevitable eruption of Mount St. Helens. He said some of the letters moved him to tears, but rather than humble himself and leave, his response was to write back to the kids, enclosing some of the volcanic ash that was even then covering the area.

Just *four* days before he died, Harry *did* leave his lodge. National *Geographic* paid for him to fly via helicopter to Oregon to answer questions and sign autographs to a group of schoolchildren. In one of his last messages, he said, "I'm king of all I survey. I've got plenty [of] whiskey."¹⁸ And then he flew back to the base of the mountain, as the very ground shook beneath his feet.

Christ is coming to save the world. But with His deliverance He brings wrath and destruction on those who *refuse* to believe Him. Have you believed? God loves you. He *wants* to save you. He's explained what He's doing and what's going on in the world and how He can totally transform your life. Each beat of our hearts brings us closer to the Day. If you haven't *accept* Him. If you have, are you slumbering? It's time for us to be awake, be animated, be invigorated to live out true Christianity in a vital and meaningful way.

¹⁶ Zephaniah 1:14

¹⁷ Matthew 3:11-12

¹⁸ R. Findley *St. Helens: Mountain With A Death Wish National Geographic Volume 159, No. 1*