

# Scoffers Will Come in the Last Days

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The Apostle Peter, in his second epistle to the Church, devotes an entire chapter to warning us that in the last days there will be scoffers. As he says, they'll be walking according to their own lusts, and they'll be denying the reality of the coming Day of the LORD. Now, if you're like me, oftentimes in my lifetime, the way I've seen this particular chapter approached is oftentimes just looking at it as if all that Peter is addressing here is the crowd that just completely disregards the Bible. People who don't really believe in God or take Him seriously. They just look at the Bible as a bunch of fables that somebody wrote in a book. So, of course, they would deny the reality of anything the Bible has to say about the end time.

However, if we carefully read this chapter -- particularly the last several verses of this chapter -- Peter makes it very clear that he's not just addressing that audience. He's also warning those who take the Bible seriously. Those who are trying to follow God. And he's giving us a warning to avoid pitfalls that we can fall into. Even those of us who take the Bible seriously and try to model our life after how we understand it.

So, what we're going to do today in the sermon is take a look at this particular chapter. And again, not just from the point of view of individuals who completely disregard the Bible, but from the lessons that we can learn from it so that we can avoid falling into the pitfalls that Peter is warning us about. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon it's:

## Scoffers Will Come in the Last Days

So, to start off with, let's turn over to 2 Peter 3, because this is the chapter where Peter gives us this warning. And if you have a ribbon in your Bible, you probably want to place it in this particular chapter. Because throughout this sermon, we're going to turn back and forth to this chapter quite a bit. So, that'll just make things a little easier for you keeping up.

But the first thing we're going to do here is just read the overview to get the general overview of what Peter's talking about. And then we're going to come back and dig more into the specific details verse by verse and then take a look at how these lessons can apply to us today in the Church of God. Those of us who don't disregard the Bible, who don't view it as a bunch of fables. What lessons we can learn not to fall into the pitfalls that he's warning us about. So, to start off with here in 2 Peter 3 in verse 1.

**2 Peter 3:1** *"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2) 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, 3) knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts," (NKJV)*

Now, we're going to dig into that verse in more detail here a little bit later. But as we're going to see here, we can apply this a lot more than just how it oftentimes appears on the surface. Because oftentimes we look at this and think, "Well, this is just people who just totally disregard the Bible and are just living a life of hedonistic lust." To put it in modern-day terminology, just sex, drugs and rock and roll is kind of their focus. They just don't care what God has to say at all.

Now, he is addressing that audience, but as we're going to see later when we dig into this, there's a lot of lessons that we can learn here. Pitfalls that we can fall into. Those of us who take the Bible seriously and try to live according to it. Pick-up in verse 4.

*"4) 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." 5) 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, 6) by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 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."* (NKJV)

Now, as we'll see here in just a second, he's obviously referring to the coming Day of the LORD, because he's going to specifically reference that here in just a few verses. Now, pick up in verse 8.

*"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. 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. 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."* (NKJV)

So, you can see he's very clearly referencing the coming Day of the LORD.

*"11) Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?"* (NKJV)

He's referring to the cataclysmic destruction that will be brought about because of the plagues of the Day of the LORD.

*"13) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14) Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15) and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written*

*to you, 16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” (NKJV)*

Now, pay particular attention to these last two verses.

*“17) You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” (NKJV)*

See, he makes it very clear in those last couple of verses, he's not just addressing an audience that just totally disregards God and views the Bible as just a bunch of fables that somebody wrote. It's just kind of meaningless and we can brush it aside. He's not talking just to that audience. He's warning us about pitfalls those of us who try to follow the Bible can fall into and that can trip us up in our relationship with God and in growing in grace and knowledge.

So, as we're going to see as we go through this in greater detail, there's a lot of lessons that we can learn and we shouldn't just look at this as, "Oh, he's just talking about those people over there. He's just talking about those atheists who disregard the Bible." That's included, but he also has some important lessons here to teach us. Those of us in the Church of God who are trying to follow the Bible, there's lots of important things that we can learn here too.

But just to notice the big picture here, you might say the greater purpose of prophecy. Because oftentimes people are fascinated by prophecy solely from the perspective of wanting to know the future. You might say, to put it in a modern-day terminology, kind of a Polymarket kind of point of view. Some of you may not be familiar with the term "Polymarket". It's basically a form of gambling today. I'm sure you're familiar with Las Vegas casinos where people are gambling on all sorts of different games. Whether it's card games or slot machines and such. Well, today in our world, we have what's also called "Polymarket" where people make similar bets and it can be on all manner of things. It can be on world events or if this nation will go to war with that nation by this particular date and such. And people can bet on these things and, of course, if they bet correctly, they can win a lot of money. People have always had a fascination with predicting the future.

But when God predicts the future there's a purpose involved. And it's always the purpose of warning us to strengthen our relationship with Him. Oftentimes there is an underlying message of repenting of our sins and drawing closer to Him. And if you notice as we read through this, Peter even says, "knowing this what manner of persons ought we to be" and how much more serious about our spiritual relationship knowing these things are coming? And so, that's always the lesson that we need to see when we look at the subject of prophecy. It's not just about predicting the future. There's also a warning involved.

Before we dig into this in detail, turn over to Proverbs 29. I want you to see what naturally happens if we don't heed the warnings of prophecy. And again, not just from a perspective of predicting the future and knowing events in advance but taking it seriously in terms of applying it to our relationship with God. Because one of the things that prophecy is intended for is to sober us and to see how important it is for us to be relying on God. And to see this, read Proverbs 29 in verse 18.

**Prov 29:18** *“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.” (NKJV)*

Now, to properly understand how to apply this verse, the important thing here is understanding what's meant by the English word “revelation” here. In my New King James translation I have, next to the word “revelation”, it has a little “1” marker there. And then if you look in the margin, it says “prophetic vision”. Now, that's actually headed in the right direction for what this actually means. Because let me share with you the meaning of the Hebrew word here that's translated into English as “revelation”. It's transliterated into English as “hazon”. It's Strong's # 2377 and the definition I'm going to read to you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter. They define it as:

*“A masculine noun meaning a revelation by means of a vision, an oracle, a divine communication. The primary essence of this word is not so much the vision or dream itself as the message conveyed. It signifies the direct, specific communication between God and people through the prophetic office...or the collection of such messages...”*

So, it is referring to “prophetic vision”. It's saying if we don't have a vision of God's plan of the future, where He's trying to take things here and take His warning seriously, what happens? We cast off restraint. We don't take our spiritual life and our relationship with Him seriously as we should and that becomes detrimental to our spiritual life. Again, we shouldn't just look at prophecy from the perspective of our fascination to know the future. Or, again, just from a Polymarket point of view, something we want to bet on to try to make money on. No, it's about our spiritual relationship and understanding how we should take that seriously and grow closer to God.

So, with that in mind, let's turn back over to 2 Peter 3. Let's go through this chapter here in some detail. As I mentioned, if you have a ribbon, you probably want to put it here because we're going to turn back and forth to this chapter a number of times. But again, starting again here in verse 1.

**2 Peter 3:1** *“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2) 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, 3) knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,” (NKJV)*

Now what we're going to do is dig into the words here to understand this a little more clearly. Because as I mentioned, oftentimes when we just read this on the surface, we think of this in terms of, "Oh, this is people that just totally disregard the Bible who just are living a life of, again, to put it in modern day terminology, just sex, drugs and rock and roll is their perspective and they don't even care what the Bible has to say." It obviously also would apply to that but let's dig a little deeper to understand how this could be relevant to our lives. Because first of all, let's look at the word here that's translated as "lusts". It's transliterated into English as "epithumia." It's Strong's # 1939. And the definition I'm going to give you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. He defines it as:

*"to desire greatly. Strong desire, longing, lust. Generally longing....More frequently in a bad sense, irregular and inordinate desire, appetite, lust."*

So, you can see it can obviously apply to hedonistic lust as we oftentimes think of but also realize it can just refer to a strong desire. And just to show you kind of the opposite end of the spectrum. In other words, a strong desire that's not hedonistic lust by any means. Just keep your finger here but turn over to Luke 22. I just want you to see how broadly this word can apply. We're going to look at an example here of where Christ uses this word. And obviously there's nothing evil or carnal about the desire that He's referring to here. And this is again in verse 14 of Luke 22.

**Luke 22:14** *"When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. 15) Then He said to them, "With fervent desire..." (NKJV)*

Now "fervent desire", this is the same Greek word here.

*"...I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16) for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (NKJV)*

Now, obviously, Christ's desire to share the meaning of the New Covenant Passover with His Apostles had nothing to do with hedonistic lust. This was just a strong desire that He had.

But now turn back over to 2 Peter 3. And let's notice another qualifier here in this verse. Because notice the very last phrase of verse 3. It says "walking according to their own lusts" or their own desires. Now, let me share with you the Greek word there that's translated as "own". It's transliterated into English is "idios." It's Strong's # 2398. And again, the definition I'm going to come to you comes from Zodhiates. He defines it as:

*"Properly one's own. As pertaining to a private person and not to the public, private, particular, individual, as opposed to dēmosios (1219), public, open, and koinós (2839), common...."*

So, you can see what he's referring to is our "own desires". And again, not necessarily a hedonistic lust. But what I want you to see is we can walk according to our "own

desires”, and that can be just leaning to our own understanding. Letting our own desires, our own thinking, what sounds right to us, kind of shade out God's desires and what He tells us when He instructs us in the Bible. And just leaning to our own understanding, not necessarily from a rebellious, hedonistic lust point of view. It can be much more subtle than that. And that's an important thing to understand as we apply the lessons of 2 Peter 3 here to our own individual lives.

And to just see some examples of what I'm referring to here, turn over to Proverbs 16. To see some basic concepts of human nature here. But again, it's important to have this understanding to see how we can apply the lessons here to our lives. It's Proverbs 16 in verse 25.

**Prov 16:25** *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”* (NKJV)

Now, that can apply to areas where we're just leaning to our own understanding, our own carnal thinking. It doesn't have to be motivated by just blatant rebellion and total disregard of God and a pursuit of just total hedonistic lust. No, this can just be relying on ourselves and not fully relying on God. And allowing our own carnal thinking to kind of cloud out what God's really revealing to us in the Bible. That's something that we all face, and we all have to battle. Because we have to realize that inherently, if we allow our carnal human nature to do that -- and again, we all fall into these pitfalls -- what that does is it can give us a blindness and a delusion in how we live our lives and how we see the world around us. And to see a good example of that, turn over to Jeremiah 17. We'll start reading here in verse 5.

**Jer 17:5** *“Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. 6) For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes,...”* (NKJV)

Now notice that particular phrase there. Notice it does not say this guy who's trusting in himself too much and clouding out God in his thinking. It doesn't say good is just never going to come to this guy. He's just never going to catch a break. No, it doesn't say that. It says good will be right in front of him and he won't see it. Because he is basically blinded from being able to see it. He's got a blindness and a delusion as a result of relying on himself rather than fully yielding and trusting in God. Pick up in verse 6 here.

*“...But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. 7) “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. 8) For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.”* (NKJV)

So, you can see that the point I'm getting at here is we have to realize that sometimes walking according to our own desires doesn't have to be an attitude of total rebellion.

Just totally disregarding the Bible and viewing it as fables and not taking anything seriously. No, we can fall into the pitfalls that Peter's warning us about here in 2 Peter 3. Again, just by simply relying too much upon our own carnal thinking. Just trusting in ourselves and not fully surrendering and relying on God. And again, that's a pitfall that we can all fall into. Even those of us who are trying to actively follow the Bible and to take it seriously.

So, now to continue in 2 Peter 3, turn back over here, and we'll pick up in verse 4. Because notice here what he says is a natural result of trusting in our own desires.

**2 Peter 3:4** *“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.” (NKJV)*

And again, oftentimes we look at this as people who just totally disregard the Bible and just view it as a book of fables. But let's take a look at this from, again, a more typical human nature pitfall that we can all fall into. It's commonly referred to as “normalcy bias”. And as you'll see here, it's something that can apply very much to our everyday lives. And it's very consistent with what he's saying here. It's the idea that everything's going to continue the way it always has. Again, this is oftentimes referred to just in our modern-day terminology today as “normalcy bias”.

Now, let me read to you part of an article I pulled off the internet to give you an idea of what's meant by the term “normalcy bias”. This is from a website [cognitivetrain.com](http://cognitivetrain.com). The title of the article is Normalcy Bias -- Meaning, Examples & How to Overcome It. Now, I'm not going to read to you the entire article here. This is just some sections of it to give you kind of an overview of the concept. But quoting from the article:

*“Normalcy bias — also called normality bias — is the tendency to underestimate both the likelihood and the potential impact of a disaster or disruptive event. When faced with warnings of an unusual or unprecedented threat, people assume that things will continue as they normally have, that the situation will resolve itself, and that the disruption will be less severe than it actually turns out to be.*

*In plain terms: because disasters have not happened before — or have not happened to you personally — your mind defaults to the assumption that they will not happen now. Warning signs are minimised, preparations are delayed, and evacuation decisions are deferred, all because the brain is anchored to a baseline of normality that the incoming evidence is failing to shift.....*

### ***Why the brain does this***

*Normalcy bias is driven by the brain's reliance on past experience as the primary template for predicting the future. For most of human history, most days have been normal. Threats have been rare. Warnings have frequently been false alarms. The brain has been shaped by this statistical reality to treat normalcy as*

*the default prediction and to require strong, repeated evidence before revising it toward an abnormal scenario.*

*This makes normalcy bias closely related to the availability heuristic: people assess the probability of an event by how easily they can recall similar events. If a major hurricane, earthquake, or financial crash has never been directly experienced, it is cognitively unavailable — and therefore feels less probable — regardless of the objective statistical evidence.”*

Just to give you some common everyday examples of this, notice what I just read here. It referred to hurricanes. I actually grew up in the southeastern portion of the U.S. in Alabama. Just a couple of hours away from the Florida coast. Well, if you're familiar with that area of the country, typically around the fall of the year, hurricanes are a normal thing. Going into the Gulf of Mexico there and threatening various areas up and down the Gulf. This is a normal thing every year.

I've seen this happen in a number of cases where a hurricane is charging right towards a particular area, maybe on the Florida coast or the areas of Alabama or Mississippi that are touching the Gulf Coast. It's heading right towards that area. Well, some of the people in that area, they'll go, "Yes, we get threats of hurricanes every year, and they always say it's going to come here but it always winds up turning, going somewhere else. It's not going to hit our city because it hasn't in what, how many decades?" And people just deny the reality of it.

Because there are two things here. It's not just whether or not they have experienced it before. It's also more comforting oftentimes when we see something threatening -- a disturbing thought that this hurricane could come and hit and wipe out our city. It's just kind of psychologically comforting to kind of deny the reality of it. "No, every year they always turn and go somewhere else. That'll happen again. We'll be fine."

Or just to think of another example, think of an individual who most of their life has always been pretty healthy. They've had a few ups and downs with health, but they always get through it fine. And then they start having symptoms that start pointing to something serious going on. But instead of taking that seriously, they think, "Oh, it's nothing. I've always been fine before. This will just fade. Just ignore it, it'll go away." And they just keep ignoring it and keep ignoring it. Well then by the time they finally go to the doctor and get it checked out -- maybe it's something like cancer and now it's spread so far it's too late to do anything about it.

See, these are normal examples of what we refer to as "normalcy bias". We just kind of assume everything is going to continue as it has. Again, it's not just an assumption based upon past experience. Sometimes it's our way of psychologically comforting ourselves because to think about this negative thing that could happen, well that's uncomfortable and we don't want to think about that. So again, we kind of defer back to our normalcy bias to kind of push that away so we don't have to look at it. And so, that's going to be important to realize when we start looking in greater detail how 2 Peter 3 can apply to our lives today.

But now let's pick up in verse 5. Because what we're going to notice here is Peter basically refers to three major events, two of them historical and one of them in the future. And all of these events have one thing in common. They're all situations where an all-powerful omnipotent God basically intervenes in the normal events and causes things to dramatically and severely change from what would be considered the "norm".

Because again, he's warning about this concept of normalcy bias and what he does is he's going to refer to creation where an all-powerful creator God spoke things into existence. He's going to refer to Noah's flood where God dramatically intervened, totally interrupted the norm and wiped out the majority of the human population. And then he refers to the coming Day of the LORD where a very similar event is going to happen. Where again, an all-powerful God is going to pour out His wrath upon mankind and basically destroy the planet and wipe out the majority of the Earth's population.

See, what all three of these have in common is they greatly disrupt this concept of normalcy bias. Because they very much interrupt anything that anyone can call the norm. So, let's pick up now in verse 5.

**2 Peter 3:5** *"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," (NKJV)*

Now, what he's specifically referring to here is the Genesis 1 account of creation. So, keep your finger here and turn over to Genesis 1 and we'll read the verses he's specifically referring to here. Genesis 1 and we'll start reading in verse 6.

**Gen 1:6** *"Then God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.' 7) Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. 8) And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. 9) Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. 10) And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good." (NKJV)*

Because if you notice what's happening here is you have an all-powerful God basically speaking these things into existence. And to just get the underlying concept that we're getting at here just think about what the alternate explanation is that's typically put across in our world today particularly by the atheist community that denies the existence of God. How do they explain how all this came about? Well, it's this very long process of evolution and things changed very gradually and very slowly over millions of years and eventually came about what we have today. Again, it's this concept that things just change very slowly and all things remain as they always were. It's again kind of based on this normalcy bias concept is what this is based on. Well, that's not what the Bible tells us happened. It tells us there's an all-powerful almighty God who spoke these things into existence and they suddenly and dramatically came about.

So, now if you turn back over to 2 Peter 3, we'll pick up here in the next verse. And we'll notice here he's now going to refer to the flood. Because just think about it like this, you initially have creation that we read there in Genesis 1. Adam hasn't even been created yet. So, mankind is not around to experience this. But then after God creates all of this and He makes mankind. Well then, a couple of thousand years go by of what we could call the norm of human existence. And then everyone who has existed up to the point of the flood, them and everyone that they've known before them has an experience they refer to as the "norm". And so, when Noah comes along and starts building an ark and telling people there's going to be this dramatic change and God's going to flood the earth, well again, this totally violates their normalcy bias.

Of course, as we know from Genesis 6, they've become so evil at that point they were totally disregarding God in general. But again, just think of this from a normal human nature normalcy bias point of view. That just sounds crazy because everything that these people have experienced and all the generations before them -- the stories that were passed down -- there's no dramatic event of a flood suddenly changing everything that they think of as the "norm". So, they're locked into the idea that everything is going to continue as it always has. So, pick up now in verse 6.

**2 Peter 3:6** *"by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water."* (NKJV)

Again, he's referring to Noah's flood. So, again, keep your finger here and just turn over to Genesis 7. Now, we won't read through Genesis 6 where God explains that mankind has become so evil that He has to wipe them out. You're probably familiar with that. But what I want you to see here is just how dramatically and quickly things changed from what you could call the norm. This is Genesis 7, and we'll start reading in verse 10.

**Gen 7:10** *"And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth. 11) In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12) And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights."* (NKJV)

Notice, this was very sudden and dramatic and totally disrupted everything that was considered "normal". Now jump down to verse 17.

*"17) Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18) The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. 19) And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. 20) The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. 21) And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. 22) All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. 23) So He destroyed all living things which*

*were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive. 24) And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.” (NKJV)*

So, you can see this was a sudden and dramatic event that again totally just obliterated any sense of “normal”. The idea that things will continue on as they always have. This just completely obliterated the concept because this completely disrupts everything and destroyed the majority of the population on the earth. It was just Noah and his family on the ark who survived this whole thing. So, you can see again why Peter would choose this particular event to compare it to the coming Day of the LORD because there's a lot of similarities. Now let's turn back over to 2 Peter 3 and this time we'll pick up in verse 7.

**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.” (NKJV)*

In other words, the same all-powerful God is going to bring about similar catastrophic events. And it's going to come suddenly and dramatically in a similar way as the flood happened. And pick up in verse 8.

*“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. 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.” (NKJV)*

Notice he also gives a warning here that's similar to what happened between creation and the flood. And what I mean by that is you have a couple of thousand years of events that go on where there's basically a “norm” that people get used to. But then God brings about a flood and suddenly and dramatically everything changes. Well, you can see the logic of what he's putting across here. It's been thousands of years since the flood, and the Day of the LORD is coming. All the people existing at that point and all the people that they are familiar with – those that came before them -- understand a sense of normalcy that they're used to. And he's saying all of this is going to get dramatically interrupted in a similar manner to what happened to the flood. So, continue in verse 10.

**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.” (NKJV)*

And see, Peter is not the only one who makes a comparison between the flood and the coming end times and the Day of the LORD. And again, this normalcy bias that basically blinded people from taking it seriously. Because Christ Himself uses this exact same comparison.

So, turn over to Matthew 24 and we'll see here where Christ Himself compares these same two events and warns us about this normalcy bias that will cause people not to take it seriously. It's Matthew 24 and we'll pick up in verse 37.

**Matt 24:37** *"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38) For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39) and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."* (NKJV)

So, you can see Christ makes this same comparison. He also gives us this warning that the Day of the LORD is going to come as a surprise as well. But if we read the verses that lead up to this Christ also tells us that we should be paying attention. He's going to tell us we're not going to know the exact time. There's not a Biblical formula where we can try to set dates and figure out when exactly things are going to be happening. But we need to be paying attention. And if we are paying attention to general trends, we'll actually see things coming. We'll see the general trends that are playing out and we should heed that as a warning like what Peter said to purify ourselves. To draw closer to God. To depend upon Him because again that's the only way that we'll get through it. And to see that look up in verse 32 here of Matthew 24.

**Matthew 24:32** *"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33) So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! 34) Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35) Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 36) "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."* (NKJV)

Now verse 36 is a very good warning for all of us. Now the reason I mention that is all of my life growing up in the Church of God, I've seen countless efforts of people trying to figure out the Biblical formula so that they can nail down the exact date when the end starts and when Christ is going to return. I've seen tons of predictions throughout my lifetime. Of course, none of them ever came true. Because that's a futile effort if you're trying to find the Biblical formula so you can set dates and know exactly when things are going to play out. I mean, Christ Himself tells us that He doesn't know. Only the Father knows. Do we really think that we're going to outsmart Christ? We can see that that's pretty much a futile effort. But we do need to heed Christ's warning here. He tells us to pay attention to the events that are happening and if we take that seriously then we can be prepared. And again, most importantly not just taking physical preparations but drawing closer to God and taking our spiritual life seriously.

But now, we need to look into ways of how this whole concept of normalcy bias and all the warnings that we've read here can apply to us today. Because as I mentioned from the beginning of this sermon often times, we look at 2 Peter 3, and we look at it as if it's just talking about and warning about the people that just scoff at the Bible and disregard

everything it has to say. We don't take it as warnings that can apply to us. And we saw at the very end of the chapter there, Peter made it very clear he was addressing those of us in the Church of God who are trying to take the Bible seriously and follow it. He is warning us about pitfalls that we can fall into.

Let me start by sharing some examples of this concept of normalcy bias and how I've even seen this playing out in the Church of God in my lifetime. Now, I'm going to share with you a conversation I had with my brother just a couple of years ago. And for this particular example to make sense -- particularly for those of you who don't live in the United States -- let me explain a little bit about how politics in the United States works so this example will totally make sense.

It's typical in the United States that every four years we have a presidential election and our presidents typically serve for four years. The current rules are that they can serve two terms whether those are consecutive or even broken up. That's kind of the limit of that. But the point I want you to understand is, about every four years there's a national election and we're choosing a leader. Well, in 2024 that was a presidential election year in the United States.

The reason that's relevant is it's specific to the conversation I'm about to share with you. Because my brother was sharing with me an observation that he made of people in his congregation that were talking about the upcoming election around that time of year. And he was kind of amused by this because what he was sharing with me is he was seeing a lot of Church members expressing the idea that they were very passionate about. "We have got to support Donald Trump and get him into office so he can save America and turn things around and keep America strong as we've always known it."

But as my brother expressed to me, he said he found this amusing because as he said to me, "These are the same people that I often hear talking about they just really wish the end time would come so Christ can return and we can have the resurrection and set up the millennium and just can get on with the plan of God. And it's like they don't realize that they're expressing two opposing concepts here. You can't have all of the above. You literally have to pick one."

And what he meant by that is for the end times to come about as the Bible says, the U.S. has to lose their prominent position of world dominance that we've had and what's been the norm throughout all of our lifetimes. That's something that by necessity is going to have to go away. So, if you want the end time to come about, you're not going to be able to hang on to the norm. That's something that's going to go by the wayside as events play out and we just have to trust in God to get us through it.

Because see what oftentimes happens is people want to see the end come and they want to see God's plan play out but they don't want to lose the comfortable norm that they have become used to all of their lives. And this is something we can see if we just look at what the Bible tells us just from a common sense point of view. Even though we don't know all the exact details we can easily see that for prophecy to play out the way

that the Bible describes, the United States and the other Israelite descended nations that have been so blessed throughout all of our lifetimes have to lose the prosperity we have enjoyed in our lifetimes. Things have to change and our norm is going to be very much interrupted.

Because think about it like this. The Bible is very clear that for the end time to come -- even before the Day of the LORD fully hits -- what's going to happen is you're going to have the end time beast power rise up and become a world dominating force. Now look back throughout the lifetimes of all of us hearing this. Particularly the United States and your other Israelite descended nations -- the U.S. and Canada and Australia and others have had a position of prominence particularly throughout my lifetime. When you look at it economically and militarily, the U.S. has been the major superpower dominating the world. Again, militarily and economically in many ways for the 60 years that I've been alive. And so, if you think about that, for a Gentile empire to rise up and to have that kind of influence what naturally is going to have to happen? Well, our norm is going to have to get significantly disrupted and the U.S. and the other Israelite descended nations that they have enjoyed such prominence throughout our lifetimes that has to significantly change.

In fact, the Bible specifically predicts this. Turn over to Ezekiel 30. And let's notice here a comment that Ezekiel makes in describing the time when the Day of the LORD will come about. And again, if we just look at this in the context of world history it becomes kind of obvious what he's getting at here. This is Ezekiel 30 in verse 1.

**Ezek 30:1** *"The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 2) 'Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Wail, 'Woe to the day!' 3) For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.'" (NKJV)*

Notice he's describing it as the "time of the Gentiles". Now look at this from a big picture overview of world history and you'll understand what he's getting at here. If you look back at world history starting in the mid to late 1400s all the way forward to where we are today, your Israelite descended nations that came primarily out of western Europe wind up colonizing literally the majority of the planet. This is how the U.S. came into being, how Canada came into being, how Australia came into being and New Zealand. These all started off as colonies of Europe. And you can see again if you go back through history there were portions of time here where the vast majority of the planet was colonized and dominated by Israelite descended nations out of Europe.

As time goes on some of these empires wind up declining but then you have the British empire that it was said the sun never set on it. It was dominant all over the world until after World War I and World War II. Britain still exists today but they're not the big empire they used to be. Well then, the U.S. pops up as the world's superpower and my entire lifetime that's been the case.

Well, this is the time that the Israelite descended nations received the promises. The dominance that they were promised through Abraham would take place. But let's keep in mind that there were promises for obedience and promises for disobedience. And see, what Ezekiel is telling us here is there's going to be a shift in world dynamics where it's no longer the Israelite nations that are the dominant forces in the world. It's going to be the Gentile nations. That means the norm that we're used to is going to get significantly disrupted and we just have to be prepared for that to happen. This is also mentioned over in Luke 21 in verse 20. This is Christ speaking here.

**Luke 21:20** *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21) Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22) For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23) But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24) And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* (NKJV)

Notice once again, it's referring to the end times as the time period where the Gentile nations are dominant. They are the dominant force in the world. What I've noticed just watching Church of God members not only in personal conversations and their posts up on Facebook and such. There's kind of this cognitive dissonance you might say where oftentimes they want to see the end come. They want to see Christ return and the resurrection and such. But they don't want to see any interruption in the comfort and the dominance that the Israelite descended nations have enjoyed throughout all of their lifetimes. Without realizing that for the end to come about, their norm, their normalcy bias is going to have to be greatly disrupted. And, just from a common sense point of view, the military and economic dominance that we've had on the world, that's going to have to change and that's going to bring about some painful disruptive events. But we just need to be aware that that is a part of it and trust in God to get us through it.

Because turn over to Leviticus 26. You're probably familiar with the fact that this chapter is oftentimes referred to -- Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 -- as the "blessings and cursings chapters". In other words, all the great blessings that Israel and their descended nations would receive for obeying God. But then there's also all the curses that they would receive if they disobeyed God. What we need to understand is, these things will come about. A lot of these are uncomfortable things to look at. But we have to realize that they have to come about by necessity for the world to be structured in a way for prophecy to be fulfilled. So, pick up now in Leviticus 26 in verse 14.

**Lev 26:14** *"But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15) and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16) I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And*

*you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17) I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.” (NKJV)*

Now skip down to verse 23.

*23) “And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, 24) then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. 25) And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.” (NKJV)*

So, notice here what he's telling us is there comes a point where you're not militarily dominant. Your military is getting defeated is what happens because God has removed His blessings. And to see this just one more time turn over to Deuteronomy 28. You're probably aware that this is kind of the parallel chapter of Leviticus 26. It's structured the same way where you have the blessings and then the cursings. But now notice here in Deuteronomy 28 in verse 25.

**Deu 28:25** *“The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26) Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away.” (NKJV)*

Now, let me share with you again some ways that this is actually starting to come about. And again, you may or may not be aware depending on what news sources that you're looking at. And what I'm referring to is the war that's been going on between Iran and the United States since February of this year. The reason I mention it depends upon what news source that you're going to. Even if you're watching just the mainstream news you can't help but notice that every couple of weeks you basically hear our president and the U.S. spokesmen declaring victory. “We've totally defeated Iran. They're begging for a deal, and they've got nothing left.” But yet the battles keep going on. And they keep having to escalate and the strait doesn't open and things keep getting worse. Well, if you're just paying attention to that, you have to start realizing that that's not exactly the story that we're being told. Because if any of this were true this would all be over.

See, in reality what has taken place is there's at least 15 military bases of the U.S. in the Middle East that have already been destroyed by Iran's missiles and drones and are just unusable. And in fact, the U.S. military is being pushed further and further away from the Persian Gulf area simply from the attacks from Iran that have been successful.

I started watching this from the start of the war and quickly realized that I had to start turning to some independent news sources to get some real facts about what was

taking place. Because much of what I was hearing through the mainstream media was just endless propaganda that we're winning everything and Iran's having no success. And what I would find is there'd be a point where the U.S. would bomb or attack Iran. And of course, Iran would start firing back at our bases. And the official line would be, "Our interceptors were so effective they just shot everything down and nothing got through." I started watching independent news sources that would literally show from commercial satellites where you could get satellite views of the bases in question and what was being officially reported wasn't accurate at all. Because they would show you, "Here's what the base looked like before the attack from satellite views and here's what it looks like afterwards." And you'd see these nice buildings that were there and in the after picture you see this burnt pile of rubble where it got hit and destroyed. And you start realizing this isn't going the way that it's being reported.

The reason I point this out is throughout my lifetime the U.S. military has been a very dominant force and oftentimes stomps out any major nations that we're fighting against. What we're seeing now is kind of an opposite picture where we're not so dominant. These verses are coming to pass.

And just to give you another example of this cognitive dissonance point of view -- let me express this in something I saw early on when the war was first starting. If you're from the United States, you might be familiar with the name Glenn Beck. Now, Glenn Beck is an individual who initially became famous for being on Fox News. A number of years ago he had a show for them. Then he left Fox News and he started his own independent organization called The Blaze. He's not only a conservative commentator and news reporter he's also a person that would say he's very religious and very much believes in the Bible. Now he's Mormon. He has his own views. He's not from a Church of God point of view but he's not somebody who scoffs at the Bible and totally disregards it. He would tell you he very much believes in end time prophecy. At least his interpretation of how he sees the Bible.

And one thing that Glenn has talked about quite a bit that I would personally agree with a great deal is -- if you've followed many of my sermons -- I believe that the end time beast power will actually come out of the Middle East and will be an Islamic power. It's not going to be a revival of the Roman Empire. Well, Glenn shares that particular view. And in fact, he's done a number of programs where he's talked about the immigration invasion into Europe and how that's largely Muslim and the effects it's had on the culture there. And he's covered a lot of these things and connected it with what the Bible talks about, I think, in a fairly accurate manner.

What was interesting is when the Iran war started playing out Glenn started talking about, "We've got to prevent these things from happening. And if we all just rally behind Donald Trump and the U.S. military and just fully support him, well he can stop this from happening." It was kind of humorous to me hearing him say this having heard some of his other views expressed. And the thought that came to mind was, "Glenn, how big is your God?"

The reason I mention that particular phrase is when I was attending Ambassador College, one of my professors used to love to make that statement. And the way he would always express it – he would ask in your view of God, is He an all-powerful God who declares the end from the beginning and scoffs at the plans of men because He can bring about anything He has planned? He can handle any problem. Or do you follow a hip pocket God? And what he meant by that is like a God that you take out and you follow Him when it's comfortable for you but when you want to ignore Him and do your own thing, you just kind of stick Him back in your pocket and don't take seriously what He has to say.

Well, that's what came to mind because if you see God as this all-powerful God who's going to bring about the end times the way that He has said that He will, the idea that we can vote our way out of it or if we get this particular politician in office or something like that, and that's going to derail God's plan. That's kind of ludicrous when you think of it that way.

But the reason I mention this is just watching Church of God members and their Facebook posts and discussions I've had with others, I see sometimes that same cognitive dissonance where people want to see the end coming. They want to see Christ return. They want to see the resurrection happen and the millennium set up and all the positive good news. But "Don't disrupt my norm. Don't upset the national prominence and the comfort that I live in today. I don't want that to go away. I want all that to remain the same and just jump straight into the Kingdom." Well, that's not the way the Bible describes it.

See, what we have to be aware of is there's going to be a point, whether it comes about as a result of the war that we're seeing currently or not. There's going to be radical changes that take place. In fact, I would strongly advise that you pay attention and watch what's taking place in the war with Iran. Again, I'm not predicting the future. I'm not saying the end is going to come in the next few years. But again, for a Middle Eastern beast power to rise up there's one thing that by necessity is going to have to happen. The U.S. military's dominance of the region is going to have to be removed just by necessity for that to come about. Well, if things keep progressing in the direction where they have been where we get more and more bases destroyed and get pushed further and further out, that may be happening before our very eyes.

And we also have to realize our financial dominance upon the world. Financial and military, that's how nations are dominant forces upon the world. If that's going to switch and the time of the Gentiles is going to come about and the beast power is going to rise up. What that means is there are some bumpy roads ahead. And again, even though the Bible tells us that shift is going to take place, it doesn't tell us how long it's going to be from when those events start playing out until there's actually the end and Christ returns. We may have to live through some very bumpy times.

But what we have to realize is -- don't try to hang on to our norm and think if we vote in the right politician and if they have the right policies that's going to save us. No, the only

thing that's going to save us is trusting in God. That's the only thing that's going to get us through this. And if we want to be awake and prepared for what's taking place, as Christ told us, we need to watch. Just like watching the seasons and the trees budding with their fruit and such. When you see these things, you realize what's happening and you act accordingly. And the most important thing is relying upon God. It's not putting our trust in men. It's not putting our trust in our own physical preparations. Or in trying to get behind the right politician with the right philosophy and such. It's trusting in God.

But again, just in terms of watching events play out -- the Bible describes in Daniel 11. I won't go through that chapter for time's sake, but I've covered that in numerous sermons in the past. The last several verses of that chapter refer to the King of the North -- which is generally considered to be the end time beast power -- basically coming down and taking over Jerusalem and setting up its headquarters there. Well, again as I've pointed out in previous sermons, if we just stay consistent with the definition of the King of the North and the King of the South that are established throughout that entire chapter, the King of the North was the area of the Seleucid Kingdom.

Where is that? Well, if you look on a map -- and again different sources will have a little different boundary lines -- but they're all going to generally agree that what you're looking at is the area from Turkey stretching across the northern part of the Middle East. Basically, from Turkey to Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, and over to Afghanistan -- just to use modern day nations as you would see on a map today. Well, where does Iran fit? Right smack in the middle of all of that. So, again we're watching developments there because again at some point, you'd expect to see the end time beast power rising up out of that area.

Now, is that going to happen immediately? Only time will tell how long that's going to be. But again, I think we need to be paying attention to those things and again not stuck in our normalcy bias that the U.S. is going to remain the dominant force in the world and things will continue as they always have. Because even though that's been true my whole life, we can't assume that that's always going to be true. No, for prophecy to play out that's going to have to change. And that's probably going to result in a bumpy ride going forward as things play out financially and militarily.

But as I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon, the point of prophecy is always pointing us to depend upon God. To get our spiritual life in order to be fully dependent upon Him. Because that's the key to getting through whatever life is going to throw at us in the next several years.

And to see this, turn over to Proverbs 3. The key here is, again, not leaning to our own understanding, not trusting in a politician, not trusting in our own physical preparations, but putting our trust fully in God. Because as we saw when we broke down 2 Peter 3, walking according to your own desires, that doesn't have to be following hedonistic lust. That can be just trusting in ourselves that can get us in trouble. Well, let's see what the answer to this is. This is in Proverbs 3. We'll start reading in verse 5.

**Prov 3:5** *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6) In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7) Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. 8) It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.”* (NKJV)

See, if we just put our trust in God. If we fully rely upon Him to get us through whatever is going to be thrown at us. Because again, if you're paying attention to what's happening there in the Middle East -- and again, looking at some independent news sources not just following the propaganda -- this thing has a potential of mushrooming into something that could change the whole global order here in the next couple of years.

Again, only time will tell exactly how that's going to play out and I'm certainly not setting dates. I'm just saying that we need to be aware of that and don't just dig into our normalcy bias and think, "Oh, it'll just settle down like it always has." There's going to be a point where it doesn't and where things radically change and we need to be prepared for that. We need to be not only psychologically prepared for those events to happen, but again, most importantly, taking that seriously in terms of our spiritual lives. Because regardless of what is thrown at us in the next several years, if we're trusting in God and fully following Him then He will deliver us through whatever bumpy roads that get thrown at us. Whatever happens on the world scene or whatever events play out that may affect our personal lives, He can get us through it.

So, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's learn the lessons of the warning the Apostle Peter was giving us and realize that the scoffers coming in the last days, again that's not just those who are totally disregarding the Bible. That can be us if we allow ourselves to fall into those common pitfalls. But if we pay attention to what's going on in the world and most importantly focus our energy on strengthening our trust in God and totally relying upon Him, He can get us through whatever life throws at us.