

Preliminary Definitions

1. **The last days** – the period of time between the first and second coming of Christ. **Heb. 1:2; 1 John 2:18.**
2. **Uniformitarianism** – a view which effectively presupposes the non-existence of God and states that the laws of nature run the universe on their own with no divine intervention. “All things continue as they were...” and as such the past is the best predictor of the future. Existing physical processes, acting as they do now, account for all past, present, and future activity in the universe.
3. **Limited uniformitarianism** – Biblical view which explains present uniformity of natural processes based on the explicit promises of God to that effect. See **Gen. 8:22** for instance, or **Jer. 33:20**. This view explains what we see today (basic uniformity) in light of creation and the flood, two major Divine interventions in cosmic and world history. In this sense, it is “limited” because, though present processes are uniform, past and future ones can be interrupted by God.
4. **Catastrophism** – the view that God has directly intervened at one or more key points in history with world-wide catastrophic events. The flood is such an event. *Catastrophism per se* is the basis of explaining modern scientific observations from a Biblical standpoint. This is opposed to *uniformitarianism* and *evolutionism*, which is the way of explaining modern scientific observations from a secular-humanist, non-God standpoint. In other words, you can explain the Grand Canyon or the fossil record by *uniformitarianism* (bad) or *catastrophism* (good).
5. **Canopy theory** – the creationist understanding that there was covering of water surrounding the earth from the time of creation until the flood. This view most easily explains phrases like “the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament” (**Gen. 1:6-8**), the “windows of heaven” (**Gen. 7:11, 8:2**), and “out of the water and in the water” (**2 Peter 3:5**).
6. **Secondary causation** – the notion that God works *indirectly* to bring about (cause) His intended ends in many cases. We call this *providence*.
7. **Miracle** – Opposite of above; this is *immediate causation* which refers to the miraculous, direct intervention of God in the universe.

Overview

In **3:1-2**, Peter said that his purpose in writing was to remind the readers of the OT and NT Scriptures. Having reviewed this purpose in a general way, he moves into his next point by calling for their attention: “knowing this first.” What follows is a primary thing that they are to keep in mind, namely, that scoffers will come – verse **3**. He points out that ignorance in what he is about to say is exactly what characterizes their opponent—verse **5**. He wants the readers to not be ignorant about God’s timing of things—verse **8**.

The present discussion has to do with the coming of scoffers in the last days. A scoffer is one who ridicules, mocks, derides, or makes fun of something. The last days have already arrived and the future tense “will come” points to their increasing presence as time goes on (**1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 3:1**). These scoffers are marked by three actions:

1. Walking – v. 3.

Literally this phrase can be translated “going according to their own lusts.” They go along in life following whatever their lusts dictate. This is not Christian, friends. Believers deny fleshly lusts and flee from them (**Titus 2:11, 2 Tim. 2:22**).

This description ties the scoffers with the false teachers from the earlier parts of the letter (**2 Peter 2:10**). If they are not the same as the false teachers, they are at least first cousins with them!

2. Saying – v. 4.

The scoffers say two things, which Peter will rebut in the following verses.

A. Where is the promise of His coming? Though cast in the form of a question, this is meant to be a rhetorical question regarding the facts of the situation. The scoffers’ implied answer is “there is no real promise of his coming...there is no coming...he is not coming...duh!” In other words, they are saying, “where is the fulfillment of His promise?” They believe it is all bunk.

B. All things continue as they were from the beginning. This is the strict uniformitarian approach to life, science, etc. which was defined above and denies the miraculous. The fathers refer to the OT patriarchs, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

These are bold denials of Biblical truth—not just intellectual arguments. The first statement jumps right out at you (did it?)—it denies the second coming of Christ. This is a fundamental of the faith. To deny this is tantamount to denying the whole system of Christian doctrine. It’s like a denial of the substitutionary atonement. Anyone who does that is cannot truly be a Christian.

Notice regarding the flow of thought up to verse **10**: In verse **4**, the scoffers are basically denying the doctrine of the second coming of Christ as well as God’s judgmental intervention in world history. Verses **5-7** take up the latter denial by teaching that God indeed has intervened and will intervene in history in catastrophic ways; verses **8-10** rebut the former denial by teaching that God has not forgotten his promise to come again.

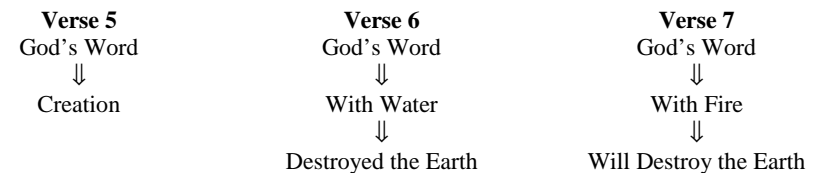
3. Willful ignorance – v. 5-7

Finally, the scoffers willfully closed their eyes to basic truths clearly revealed by God. Their general condition is marked out in **Rom. 1:19, 21-23, 25, 32**. The KJV “willingly” does not mean that they are *wanting* to be ignorant; rather it means that their *volition* is involved in *deciding* against the things of God.

At this point we have seen the three ways that the scoffers behave themselves. Now Peter points out revealed truth that destroys their position. We take that up in the next section. In other words, the next section is truth which Peter wants to remind the readers of, at the same time it is the things that the scoffers are ignorant of, which ignorance allows them to tenaciously hold to their foolish position.

Divine Interventions in History – v. 5-7

The basic outline of these three verses can be diagrammed as follows. I’ve keyed in on the phrases “by the word...whereby...by the same word.”



1. The Creation – v. 5

I understand this to refer to the creation and particularly to its state immediately after the initial creation. There was water above the earth (the canopy) and surrounding the land masses (**Gen. 1:6-9**). All of this happened “by the word of God.” Evolutionism and big-bang cosmogony are ignorant of this God-based starting point.

2. The Flood – v. 6

By that same word ultimately, and by the water mediately, the *world* was flooded. Peter is saying the flood was universal. We can tell this from Genesis by its purpose (**Gen. 6:7**), the water’s depth (**7:19**), the sources of water (**7:11**), the length of time given to Noah to build the ark (**6:3**), its size (**6:15**), the flood’s duration (**7:11, 8:3, 13-14**). Millions of souls perished. Evolutionists ignore the possibility of this world-wide cataclysmic event in their uniformitarian analysis. They are willfully ignorant of it.

3. The Final Destruction by Fire – v. 7

Finally, by that same word of God, Peter prophesies that not only the earth, but the heavens and earth will be burned up. **Rev. 20:11, 21:1** tells us that the old earth and heavens pass away and new ones are made. The present heaven and earth are *preserved* (kept in store) and *reserved* for judgment. Imagine...Christ in His grace holding all things together for the salvation of more people (**2 Peter 3:9**) yet those same things he will ultimately destroy.

Conclusion: The point is this: be sure to know that scoffers are lurking around every corner, and that we are not to be ignorant of basic Bible truth as they are. MAP