

## When Jesus' Return Becomes a Laughing Matter

### Responding to End-Time Prophecy Scoffers

2 Peter 3:1-14 "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye 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 Saviour: **knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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 the creation.** For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the **world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:** but **the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.** But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, **the earth** also and the works that are therein **shall be burned up.** *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved*, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless **we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth**, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

#### Three key Biblical beliefs that will evoke scoffing in the last days.

1. **The second Coming of Christ** "Where is the promise of his coming?"
2. **Creationism** "all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation."
3. **God's past judgment by the flood and coming judgment of the world by fire**
  - "world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"
  - "by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment"

#### Here is a classic example of the scoffing prophesied in this passage.

**We should expect no less from this source...** Rolling Stone magazine March 6, 2022.<sup>i</sup>

"For millennia, end times Christians have tried to **shoehorn current events into proof of Jesus' imminent return**, taking **cryptic language** from the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation to come up with various theories as to how the world will end.

From a biblical standpoint, **none of this is particularly sound.** **End times Christians are ...disaster artists,** The war in Ukraine is incredibly horrific, and Russia's leading role — coupled with the **end times fortune-telling** that's currently in fashion — **makes it a dog whistle moment** for the 41 percent of Americans who believe that Jesus will definitely (23 percent) or probably (18 percent) return to Earth by 2050. (58% of white evangelical Christians – 2010 Pew Research Poll)<sup>ii</sup> "...There's something **really perverse** about **hoping for nuclear holocaust. It's a bloodlust**, is what it is."

It's also a reframing of Christianity from a source of compassion into a **source of vengeance.** "What you have is this kicka\*\*, superhero Jesus who comes back to fix the passive, humble **Jesus who didn't get things right the first time,**" Then you find yourself in a place where **you essentially have to cheer on violence. You have to cheer on calamity,** because you've already decided that it's a sign of the times."

**Scoffers love to quote from someone who switched teams or betrays their former belief system.**

This article quotes from the book *Unraptured: How End Times Theology Gets It Wrong* “As a teenager in the buckle of the Bible Belt, Zack Hunt was convinced the rapture would happen at any moment. Being ready meant never missing church, never sinning, and always listening to Christian radio. But when the rapture didn't happen, Hunt's tightly wound faith began to fray. If he had been wrong about the rapture, what else about his faith might not hold water?” After years in ministry Zack Hunt attended Yale Divinity School.

**This scoffer's jabs toward Bible Prophecy preachers and teachers in the above referenced article:**

- “it can be shaped and shifted” – “shapeshifting” is a sci-fi term
- “From a biblical standpoint, none of this is particularly sound.” – implying rapture claims are unbiblical
- “End times Christians are disaster artists” – implying enjoyment of apocalypse as a sheer creative escape
- “end times fortune-telling that's currently in fashion” – equating satanic soothsaying with divine prophecy
- “makes it a dog whistle moment” – preachers are sending out a secret signal to *sic* their dogs
- “If you're in that world, it's exciting — as perverse as that sounds — because it means Jesus is coming back”  
Implies Christians live in an imaginary world that is hoping for global horror to happen
- “fasten your seatbelts for the apocalypse” – illusion to an amusement park thrill ride
- “to connect the dots between current events and crazy” – seeing imaginary things as reality
- “Wars and rumors of wars' become this perverse source of excitement” – accusing enjoyment of catastrophe
- “there's something really perverse about hoping for nuclear holocaust. It's a bloodlust” – Evil mischaracterization of prophecy preachers and students as gleefully hoping for global catastrophe
- “reframing of Christianity from a source of compassion into a source of vengeance” – No, that's what this writer is actually trying to do
- “what you have is this superhero Jesus who comes back to fix the passive, humble Jesus who didn't get things right the first time...This superhero Jesus” – An all-out mockery of Jesus' first coming as a failure, saying He has to return and correct His mistake. “superhero” implies a fictitious comic book cartoon
- “you essentially have to cheer on violence. You have to cheer on calamity” – Accusation of delight in disaster

**This is calling “End times Christians” and their adherence to Bible prophecy of Jesus' return, crazy and dangerous.**

**Scoffers love to quote from someone who is considered extreme as being the norm, or take their comments out of context.** The writer implied that Roberson says the current war of Russia invading Ukraine is the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38. If he did say that, I would not be surprised. It would be an obvious misinterpretation of scripture because Israel is the one being attacked by Gog/Magog.

**There are plenty of enemies of the Gospel, we certainly don't need to be our own worst enemy.**

Preachers should not squander their credibility by straying from the text, and not rightly dividing the Word to become sensational in the area of interpretation of Prophecy. Then they give scoffers ammunition and set up listeners to later question everything they believe because they have unquestioningly listened to a trusted Pastor who loosely handled the scriptures. This makes the listeners susceptible to the influence of apostates or cultists who point out wrong interpretations or inconsistencies. We should avoid all sensationalism. Peter warned, “which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

At the same time we should clearly and boldly preach the clear truth of scripture about the three things Peter mentioned and not be silenced because of the dripping sarcasm of scoffers. Jesus promised his disciples they would be mocked, falsely accused, suffer persecution, even put to death. Following Him requires taking up His cross.

Matthew 5:11,12 “Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

John 15:18-21 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

**Two of the three prophecies mentioned by Peter are scoffed at in this article:**

1. **The second Coming of Christ. "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night"**
2. **God's coming judgment of the world by fire. "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved." "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth."** Here Peter looks ahead to the end of the Millennium.
3. **The Great White Throne Judgment "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."**

**Jesus' first and second comings are mocked.**

**The compassion motivation for Christians to evangelize is supposedly in danger of these End Times Christians.**

"reframing of Christianity from a source of compassion into a source of vengeance"

**It is one of The Accuser of the brethren's hallmarks of deception to misquote scripture or take it out of context.**

**Peter made it clear that compassion for the unsaved who will enter the judgment of the Tribulation is the motive for preaching the prophetic message of end times.**

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

A sign that we are living in the last days will be the mocking and discarding of the belief of three events that show God's sovereignty and justice and call in to account the sin and responsibility of the human race to God.

**The three foundational events are:**

Creation 3:4-5

The Flood 3:6,7

The Return of Christ 3:9-10

**The response of the world is:**

Raising doubts in God's Word 3:1-3,16

Willing ignorance 3:5

Rejection of God's judgment 3:7

2 Peter 3:14-17 "Wherefore, beloved, **seeing that ye look for such things**, be diligent that ye may **be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless**. And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, **beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked**, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."

**The response of believers:**

**Live peaceably and blamelessly** 3:14

**Be steadfast in doctrine** 3:17

**Be ever increasing in the knowledge and the grace of Christ.** 3:18

**Calling all to repentance** "the LORD is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.rollingstone.com/t/ukraine/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2010/07/14/jesus-christs-return-to-earth/>