

May 2009

Last Days Mockers

Thomas D. Ice

Liberty University, tdice@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/pretrib_arch

Recommended Citation

Ice, Thomas D., "Last Days Mockers" (2009). *Article Archives*. Paper 64.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/pretrib_arch/64

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Pre-Trib Research Center at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Article Archives by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

LAST DAYS MOCKERS
Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. —2 Peter 3:3–7

Peter warns us in his second and final epistle that mockers would arise in the last days denying our Lord's second advent. What is the Apostle Peter saying in this passage? Are we currently living in the "last days" of which he spoke? Who are the mockers to which Peter is referring?

THE LAST DAYS

The Bible has almost three-dozen references to the last days, end of days, etc.¹ A majority of those passages refer to the seven-year tribulation period, but Peter has in mind the last days of the church age, which is supported by the context. Peter wants the church to know "first of all" that there will be a "time of trouble which will precede the close of the present age (2 Tim. 3:1–5; 1 John 2:18–19)."² We are living in this time today.

Peter's warning for our day is that "mockers will come with their mocking." This phrase is also repeated in Jude 18 without reporting to his readers an account of their mocking as we have here in 2 Peter. Jude just says there will be mockers in the last day. Lenski tells us, "Yes, the first thing they should know or realize is that 'mockers shall come at the days' end,' meaning that the second thing to realize is the Parousia itself which shall come after these mockers have appeared."³ In the same vein Mayor notes, "The existence of these scoffers is a proof of that which they deny. It is one of the appointed signs of the approach of the last day."⁴

So here we are in the twenty-first century, it has been about 2,000 years since Christ left earth for heaven and we see last days mockers all around us. Certainly unbelievers and liberals deny a future second coming and apply a uniformitarian rationale to this issue as described in verse 4. However, there are others, even within Christendom, who deny that there will be a future second coming of Christ. Chief among them are full preterists.⁵ Also, partial preterists,⁶ while still clinging to a future second coming, by and large scoff at those who believe the traditional understanding that Matthew 24 (see also Mark 13; Luke 21), Revelation 1:7 and 19 teach a second return of Christ that is still future to our time.

PRETERIST MOCKING OF FUTURE RETURN

Gary DeMar has become a partial preterist who seems to go out of his way to mock Christians who believe that Christ could come at any moment. Even though he admits that Christ will return in the distant future⁷ the clear emphasis in his ministry is upon

why Jesus cannot return in our day and mocking those who believe He can. “We are not end-time scoffers,”⁸ insists DeMar. Oh really?

In his book *Last Days Madness*, DeMar tells the story from Aesop’s fable of the shepherd boy who cried wolf and declares, “In the same way the people of God—the sheep—are harmed by continual shouts of ‘the end is near!’”⁹ He continues, “By crying wolf and being wrong each time, the church is perceived as unreliable.”¹⁰ The fact of the matter is that Christ’s return is a one-time event. Just because some have been wrong in the past does not prove that He will not return in the future. That is the point Peter makes in 2 Peter 3 when he notes that such an assumption is undermined by what the mockers willingly ignore (3:5). They ignore God’s past intervention in history when He created the world and judged it globally at the Flood (3:5–6). Just as in Aesop’s fable, the wolf did come, so also, Jesus will return one day in the future. Just because Jesus has not returned in the past does not mean he will not in the future.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE HEAVENS AND EARTH

DeMar does not think that last days mockers will ever come in the future since he believes that the 2 Peter 3 passage was fulfilled by A.D. 70. “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). He says, “the coming judgments were near for those who first read Peter’s letter. The scoffers were alive and well in the first century. People have a right to mock and scoff when they read that Jesus was to come within a generation and nearly 2000 year have passed.”¹¹ Are there no last days scoffers in our day? How could there be last days scoffers in our day if 2 Peter 3 was fulfilled 2,000 years ago? However, has 2 Peter 3 already been fulfilled?

A first century fulfillment is so bizarre that even fellow partial preterists do not agree with DeMar on this point. Ken Gentry has given five reasons why 2 Peter 3 will be future and was not fulfilled in the first century. “First, the thrust of the book seems to promote a spiritual *perseverance* in anticipation of the historical long run—a long run that ends up in the eternal new creation,”¹² notes Gentry. “Second, the mockers scoff at the promised second advent of Christ due to the long wait associated with it (2 Pet. 3:2–4, 9). Despite the trials to come soon (2:9), Peter even suggests it may be thousands of years before Christ’s return, in that the delay is based on God’s time rather than man’s . . . (3:8).”¹³ When one realizes that 2 Peter was written within four to five years from the time that DeMar says it was fulfilled, there would hardly be reasonable time for any fulfillment.

“Third, the longsuffering of the Lord is due to a process that is necessarily age-long . . . (2 Pet. 3:9) . . . (2 Pet. 3:15a). The process of calling the ‘all’ to ‘repentance’ unto salvation is one that spans the entire inter-advental era and is still continuing today.”¹⁴ So if DeMar’s view were true, then there was only a four to five year window of opportunity for salvation. Gentry further notes, “The way that we ‘hasten the coming of the day of God’ (3:12) is by evangelistic endeavor.”¹⁵ DeMar’s first century fulfillment view makes no sense and is not workable at all in light of this passage. “Fourth, the reference to the unraveling and conflagration of the heavens and the earth is expressly tied to the material creation. Hence, it seems clearly to refer to the consummation and not to A.D. 70.”¹⁶ “Fifth, the strong detailed language of the destruction of the heavens and the earth seems to go beyond apocalyptic imagery, referring to the actual consummation . . . (2 Pet. 3:10) . . . (3:12).”¹⁷ This final point is such an understatement.

CONCLUSION

Clearly there are last days mockers within the unbelieving world who deny the future possibility of Christ's return due to an anti-supernatural bias. Those are obvious. It is also obvious that full preterists within Christendom do not ever believe that Jesus will return in the future because they say He returned in A.D. 70. The more subtle approach concerning this matter is practiced by some like Gary DeMar who not only ridicules those of us who believe that Christ could come at any moment but also think that the last day mockers have already come and gone. Such a view blinds one to the warning that Peter issues in this passage since they do not believe it to be a possible threat to the church today. I guess we will have to wait a little longer for Christ's return to actually take place so that the mockers will become aware to the truth of Peter's words. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ For a discussion of the different nuances of these phrases see Thomas Ice, "Are We Living in The Last Days?" www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=36.

² D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1989), p. 142.

³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 338.

⁴ Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. Jude and The Second Epistle of St. Peter* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers [1907] 1978), p. 147.

⁵ Preterism is from a Latin word meaning "past," or "gone by." A full preterist is one who believes that Christ has already returned in A.D. 70 and He will not return in the future.

⁶ Partial preterists believe that most of the passages that the church has historically thought to refer to a future second advent were fulfilled in A.D. 70, but that a few passages still teach a future second advent.

⁷ The only three passages I have ever seen DeMar give in reference to a return of Christ are Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52.

⁸ Gary DeMar, *Meet the Real Last Days Scoffers: A Response to Ed Hindson's "The New Last Days Scoffers" – Part 2*, www.americanvision.org/articlearchive/05-27-05.asp.

⁹ Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, (Power Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), p. 29.

¹⁰ DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, pp. 29–30.

¹¹ DeMar, *Meet the Real Last Days Scoffers*.

¹² Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), p. 302.

¹³ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. 303.

¹⁴ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. 303.

¹⁵ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. 304.

¹⁶ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. 304.

¹⁷ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, pp. 304–05.