

A DOUBLE TAKE ON DISBELIEF

Usually different people are described in Double Top Bible Studies, but, in this special study of Second Peter chapter three, the same group of people are described in two different ways. The skeptical mockers in the first part of the chapter are the same as the false teachers who twist the Scriptures in the last part of the chapter. (They are also in chapter two.)

Each page in this study has interactive commentary from an imaginary [Apologetics Class](#), led by Dr. Ed, the chair of the Christian education department at fictional Quest Bible College.

Dr. Ed (on the Double Top Bible Study method)

The Double Top Bible study method is one of my favorites, because with two worksheets focused on two different aspects of the same passage we can discover far more than with just one. Our study today is especially interesting because the skeptical mockers in 2 Pet. 3:1-7 are the same people as the false teachers in 2 Pet. 3:16-17. Yet they are described differently enough for us to do a double take on them. — *Please read through the chapter carefully and try to outline it, taking special notice of where the mocking and the false teaching fit. We will start the discussion in ten minutes.*

Sketch (on a Double Top graphic)

What stood out to me is Peter's teaching on how to live in light of the Day of the Lord. So I thought about how 3:8-15 relates to the scoffing earlier in the chapter and the false teaching near the end. As I often do, I tried to visualize it. The result is a mountain with a narrow 'knife edge' between two peaks at each end. Since the chapter is somewhat difficult, I think of it as a challenging hike. Here is my ridgeline sketch. (Dr. Ed helped with the design and labels.)



Red (on the Day of the Lord in Second Peter)

I also think this chapter is challenging. I've read a lot about the Day of the Lord in the Minor Prophets, but much of what Peter wrote is unique. He is the only biblical author who wrote about the elements being dissolved or broken up (3:10). This sounds like total nuclear destruction or meltdown. What amazing words these are from a lowly fisherman! Obviously, the Holy Spirit guided him so that he could write about things that nobody understood two thousand years ago.

Dr. Ed (on the negatives and the positives)

There are many negatives in Second Peter chapter three because of the focus on the Day of the Lord and false teachers. Even so, Sketch's diagram shows that at its core the chapter is positive.

Dr. Ed (on the relationship between willful ignorance and sin)

Apologetics often begins with simply reminding church members of the basic biblical facts that mockers have willfully forgotten. [See the B lines below.] That is not how Peter began, however. He began in chapter two by exposing the lustful, immoral lifestyle of the scoffers. Their lustfulness is mentioned briefly in 3:3, but much more was written in the previous chapter. [See line A-4.] The skeptical mockers did not want to keep the facts straight because their lives were crooked. What do you think about this, Frank?

Frank (on two common forms of willful ignorance)

Well, frankly it is just like today. Those who want to keep on living promiscuously and killing the unborn refuse to acknowledge the obvious fact that life begins at conception. Likewise, homosexuals refuse to acknowledge that life began with Adam and Eve, rather than with Adam and Steve.

Mark the lines below as either correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A () **The skeptical mocking is not surprising** (3:1-3).

- A-1 () Peter's main purpose was to warn about the mockers (3:1).
 A-2 () False prophets mocked true prophets (3:2, Jer. 28:10).
 A-3 () The apostles forewarned about the mockers (3:2).
 A-4 () Immoral people enjoy mocking (2:12-3:4).
 A-5 () There is more mocking today (3:3).

B () **The skeptical mockers sound like atheists** (3:4-7).

- B-1 () They did/do not believe in Christ's return (3:4).
 B-2 () They did/do not believe in divine creation (3:4-5).
 B-3 () They did/do not believe in the great flood (3:6, 2:5).
 B-4 () They did/do not believe in judgment from God (3:6-7, 2:6).
 B-5 () Their disbelief was/is based on willful ignorance (3:5, 2:4-6).
 B-6 () They did/do not believe the world has changed much (3:4).

C () **The skeptical mockers do not understand God's program** (3:8-13).

- C-1 () People are naturally impatient; God is not (3:8).
 C-2 () God is patient in order to save (3:9, 15).
 C-3 () Everything will be destroyed (3:10).
 C-4 () There will be a new earth (3:13).
 C-5 () Believers understand (3:14-15).

Dr. Ed (on the link between mocking and twisting)

Mocking and forgetting biblical facts is one common strategy of the wicked (3:1-7, 17). Another is to distort the Scriptures (3:16). This is what the false teachers did. It was more than just mocking. The false teachers did not like the biblical teaching on God's future plans for the world (3:8-15). So they twist(ed) the Scriptures to fit their twisted lifestyle. What do you think about this, Red?

Red (on twisting the Scriptures and the spinning the news)

Well, the literature I've read shows that Scripture twisting takes many forms. Yet, I believe all of it has parallels in the secular media. Some news stories are nearly-all-made-up 'fake news.' To me, these stories are like the book of Mormon. Most false news reports, however, are deceitful 'spin' applied to something that actually happened. This approach is like beginning with Scripture and twisting it, or, in reverse order, beginning with psychology and adding a biblical twist or two to it.

Mark the lines below as either correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

D () The false teachers dislike(d) but use(d) the Scriptures (3:14-16).

- D-1 () They twist the Scriptures because they do not like them (3:14-16).
 D-2 () They do not like what the Scriptures say about the future (3:14).
 D-3 () They do not like Paul's teaching (3:15-16, 2:18-22, Heb. 6:4-6).
 D-4 () They are unable to ignore Paul's inspired Letters (3:16).
 D-5 () They are false teachers, not false prophets (2:1).
 D-6 () They do more than just mock (3:3-4, 16).

E () The false teachers had/have a huge negative impact.

- E-1 () They were/are wicked (3:17).
 E-2 () They were/are covetous (2:1-2).
 E-3 () They had/have many followers (2:1-2).
 E-4 () They were/are ignorant and uneducated (3:16, 2:18).
 E-5 () They were/are unstable (3:16) and attract(ed) the unstable (2:14).
 E-6 () Peter was afraid of the false teachers' big impact (2:1-3,9, 3:1,16-18).

F () Peter showed how to avoid false teaching (3:17-18).

- F-1 () Those who are mature in Christ won't go astray (3:17-18, Gal. 2:13).
 F-2 () Peter explained what Christian maturity is in 2 Pet. 1:5-11.
 F-3 () Today, there are more false teachers than scoffers.
 F-4 () God will remove all false teachers (2:3-6, 3:16).

Commentary from various perspectives as overheard in an Apologetics Class at imaginary Quest Bible College

Dr. Ed (closing comments on various worksheet lines)

With two worksheets, there is always a lot to talk about in each Double Top study. Here are some of my thoughts on various worksheet lines.

Peter knew that believers need to understand God's program for the future, but his Second Letter does **not** show that they actually did (C-5). He knew that the false teachers would have a big impact on some, especially those who were not mature in Christ (F-1), but I would not say that he was fearful (E-6). If fear were Peter's main motivation, I think he would have probably started with the material about the false teachers in chapters two and three. Instead, he began by explaining what Christian maturity is in chapter one (F-2). He did a lot more in his Second Letter than just warn about the mockers and false teachers (A-1). — What do you think?

Evan (questioning why evangelism is not stressed more)

Since this is an apologetics class, shouldn't we be talking about evangelism, instead of about Christian maturity and false teachers? Peter seemed to stress the need to do evangelism in these last days (3:15). So why have we spent so much time talking about the Double Top study method?

Dr. Ed (on the need to oppose uniformitarianism)

Good questions, Evan. Maybe it would be better if Dr. Evans, the campus evangelist, taught this course instead of me. If he did, I suspect he would spend more time on the mockers in the first part of chapter three and less on the last part of the chapter about false teachers. As you know, creation science folks use 3:3-7 a lot to speak about the flood and against uniformitarianism and the theory of evolution. I think that probably needs to be done more today, since there seem to be more scoffers now than ever before (A-5, F-3).

Sketch (questioning why Dr. Ed teaches apologetics)

As a Christian education major, I've really enjoyed this study, and working with Dr. Ed on the ridge-line visual was a special blessing. [See the first page.] Yet, I also understand Evan's frustration and questions. Evangelism is stressed in our chapter and on the ridgeline diagram. So why are you teaching this class, Dr. Ed, instead of Dr. Evans? You have plenty of other classes to teach.

Dr. Ed (on why Christians should study apologetics)

The main reason is because the Quest Bible College faculty believes that Christians need to study apologetics in order to be more stable in the faith (E-5). So we believe, for instance, that creation science literature and videos help believers. We use the material some in evangelism, of course, but we think it is even more effective in helping to strengthen believers. What do you think, Pete?

Pete (on Second Peter being addressed to believers)

Well, for me, the clincher in this is the fact that Second Peter chapter three was addressed to believers (3:1) rather than to mockers and false teachers. **We** need to know what **we** believe and why **we** believe it, so that **we** will live properly (3:11) and be able to adequately answer the unsaved (1 Pet. 3:15). **We** must not be ignorant (E-4). Peter strengthened his brothers (Lk. 22:32).