

"The Promise of His Coming" - 2 Peter 3:1-7

We have successfully navigated through the first two chapters of 2 Peter. As I'm sure you recall, Chapter 1 was all about us; it was about Peter making sure we are prepared for falsehood masquerading as Christianity. And to do that, Peter exhorted us to add to our faith. We are saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. We are not saved by any good works we can possibly do, but once we are saved, once we have confessed Jesus as our Lord, we need to strive for obedience. He is our King. He is our sovereign Lord, so we need to submit to His will. To do that requires effort. We must add to our faith, add virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and agape love.

Furthermore, Peter tells us we must, we absolutely must get our marching orders from scripture ...

... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

So Chapter 1 was all about what we need to do to make our call and election sure.

In Chapter 2, Peter pivots to the false teachers who are sure to come among us. In fact, chapter 2 is an extended rant against these false teachers. They are coming, he says. They're going to try to sneak in heresies. They're going to even deny the Lord and what He requires of us. They will do so because they lust after power, after money, after influence.

As we learned last Sunday evening, Jude writes about exactly the same thing. The only difference is, Peter tells us the false teachers are coming. Jude says "They're already here!" And they are here. They have been here for 2000 years. They are here today and as the Day of the Lord approaches, they are going to get worse and worse.

Christian, you must be prepared. You need to know what the Bible says. You need to know what the Bible means.

As we pick up the letter with the beginning verses of Chapter 3, Peter pivots back to true believers. He speaks to us, directly from the First Century. He exhorts us to remember the purity of the Gospel. He begs us to hold fast to the promises of God recorded in scripture and he asks us to remember the promise of Christ's second coming. It is our blessed hope: That glorious day when Jesus returns as a conquering King.

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 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, (2 Peter 3:1-2)

I want to point out some very important doctrinal points here. Notice first, that Peter is not giving us anything new at all. He is reminding us of commands and doctrines that have been around for a long time. They were spoken before by the holy prophets. This is a reference to our Old Testament. The entire Bible is about the Gospel of Christ. Jesus shows up way back at the beginning and He stays until the very end. As He said Himself:

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39)

When Jesus spoke these words, there was no New Testament. The Old Testament is all about Jesus ... Christocentric. But Peter is also reminding us of the commandments of the Apostles. Not just any apostles, the 12 Apostles of the Lamb, the Apostles of Jesus. They

were the original 12 disciples, minus Judas, plus the Apostle Paul, as one born out in due time. So the foundation is the testimony of the prophets, found in our Old Testament, and the testimony of the Apostles, found in our New Testament.

The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:20) Innovation is not something we need. Innovation will dilute and destroy the message of the Gospel. We need to tell the same old story, the same old story of Jesus and His love.

I also want to point out that Peter is stirring up our **pure** minds. The word translated pure is a compound word in the Greek. It literally means “judged by sunlight”. The idea is that our minds have been examined in the light of day and found to be sincere. He is speaking to people who are serious and sincere about their faith in Jesus Christ. It brings to mind the command given in Romans Chapter 12.

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed **by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)*

We need our minds renewed, transformed from their fallen state to a redeemed state. Scripture renews our minds. Scripture purifies our minds. So Peter is addressing this to folks who have been purified by the truth.

Have you been purified by the truth? Do you understand that in your natural state you are a sinner condemned to an eternity in Hell? Do you realize that every sin, no matter how trivial, must be judged, and the sentence is eternal death? The wages of sin is death and it is the wage you have earned. Do you understand that God loves you anyway? He proves his love in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus did all the work and all you have to do is accept the sacrifice Jesus made for you. Repent of your sin, which is a Biblical way of saying that you have to plead guilty and turn away from them, and then turn to Jesus. Confess Him as Lord; believe He was raised from the dead and you will be saved.

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, if you have trusted your eternity to Him, and Him alone, then your mind has been purified, but you need reminders. We all need reminders, because we tend to forget. We get complacent. We tend to get led astray. Peter is reminding us to focus on the cross and he is reminding us to remember our blessed hope.

Why? Well, he’s going to tell us. Verse 3:

... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to 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 creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

Christian, have you heard any scoffers lately? You can’t not hear them; they are everywhere. Sometimes they sound pretty benevolent, or condescending. “It’s okay if you believe, but it’s just not for me.” Sort of like “Oh, it’s so cute that you still believe the Bible. But you’ll grow up someday.”

Others can be pretty nasty: “Only imbeciles would believe that fairy tale. Science has proven the Bible wrong countless times.”

No it hasn’t. Science proves itself to be wrong all the time, but the Bible will not be proven wrong because it is God’s pristine truth. Oh, our interpretation of what is written might be in error, but not the Bible itself.

Sadly, many of these scoffers have degrees from Christian seminaries. Many of these scoffers are filling pulpits across the land. They are writing books. They have TV and radio programs. They are quite convincing, quite compelling.

I find it interesting that Peter quotes them as reciting what we would call the principle of uniformitarianism. "All things continue as they were." Everything remains the same. It is an steady-state assumption upon which much of modern geology and much of modern biology is built. One cannot directly apply empirical science to events that happened in the past, so the assumption is that the earth was formed by processes we can observe in the present. That is, the earth's features were formed by processes of uplift and erosion that took place gradually over many billions of years. It's a really slow process because all things continue as they were. And God, they say, has nothing to do with it.

Folks, God has everything to do with it. This universe was created by Almighty God. It has a definite beginning and it will have a definite end. Things have not always been the same as they are now and the world as we know it will not always be. God has left His imprint on all of creation. There is no excuse for ignoring it. There is no excuse for ignoring Him. There is no excuse for ignoring His precepts.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, (Romans 1:18-20)

Why do men suppress the truth that should be obvious to all? John tells us in chapter 3 of his gospel:

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

The hard truth, which way too many folks are afraid to face, is that in our fallen state, we really, really like our sin. Wait a second, don't be pointing your finger now. I'm talking to you! Don't you have a favorite sin? (Probably way more than one!) Be honest! Perhaps it is one of those secret sins that nobody else even knows about and you pretend it's no big deal. But it is a big deal. Every sin is a big deal to God. If you're really honest, you don't want to give it up.

Well, if you pretend that there is no God, if you pretend that there is no higher authority that will hold you accountable, well then, you won't have to give up your favorite sin. You can decide what is right and what is wrong for yourself. You can do whatever your sinful little heart desires.

In a very real sense, that's what got Eve and Adam in trouble in the garden!

You can pretend that your sin has no consequence if you can force yourself to be willfully ignorant. And that is exactly what the scoffers do.

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, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. (2 Peter 3:5-6)

Did you know that evidence for a world-wide flood is absolutely overwhelming? The earth's features are much more easily explained by catastrophism than by

uniformitarianism. My undergraduate major was biology with a minor in physical science. and I remember talking with one of my geology professors who was really struggling to maintain his belief in uniformitarianism. He saw evidence of catastrophism all around him. He saw evidence of Noah's flood. He recognized that the earth's features were formed, not by slow erosion and uplift, but by cataclysmic events of water, fire and ice and it really troubled him, because he did not want to believe in God.

God has left His imprint on this universe. God has left His imprint on this earth. And God has given us His special revelation in this Bible. From this Bible, we learn that all things do not continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

God has judged the world before. Don't gloss over the horror of Noah's flood. Estimates of the pre-flood population of this earth range from 750,000 to over 4 billion people and of those, only 8 were saved. Why?

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

God has judged the earth before. Do you think the attitudes of fallen, unregenerate humankind has changed in our day? Of course not. God will judge the world again. Last time the judgment was by water. Next time, it will be by fire and it will happen when Jesus returns.

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. (2 Peter 3:7)

The universe was created by the word of God.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

And in the New Testament, we learn that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was the Agent of creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

Not only is Jesus the Agent of creation, He is also the sustainer of the universe. The writer of Hebrews tells us that God ...

*... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the worlds**; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and **upholding all things by the word of His power** ... (Hebrews 1:2-3)*

When God said "Let there be light", it was Jesus doing the speaking. And He is preserving the heavens and the earth by the word of His power. He will continue to sustain it until He returns. This universe is reserved for fire. That fire will come on the great Day when Jesus comes back. The Day of the Lord. The Day of Judgment. Behold, He comes!

Turn to 1 Corinthians, Chapter 15.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall

be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)

You see the question is not, "Will the Lord come?" Jesus is coming! That is God's promise, and God cannot lie. The question is not "When will He come?"

"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. (Acts 1:7)

The question is, "When He comes, will you be ready?" Will you be found willfully ignorant of the truth? Will you ignore the light and love the darkness because your deeds are evil and you love your sin? Or will you come to the Light?

But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:21)

Friend, I pray you have come to the Light. You need to receive that most precious gift that is Jesus Christ.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)