

Sermon Brief

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November 20, 2022

Text: 2 Peter 3:1-7

Title: “Where is this Coming?”

Subject: False teachers deny the second coming.

Complement: The second coming, and divine judgment, will occur.

Textual Idea: The false teachers deny the second coming, and by doing so, divine judgment.

Sermon Idea: Hold on tight to the promise of Christ’s return.

Interrogative: How tight is your grip on God’s truth?

Key Points:

1. Christ-followers: never stop remembering the truth about Christ’s return. (vv.1-4)
2. Mockers: remember God created and can/will destroy this world in judgment. (vv.5-7)

What do I want people to know? I want people to know that Jesus will return to judge the world and that believers must hold on tight to biblical truth if they are to stand firm.

What do I want people to do? I want people to (1) recommit to deep intake of God’s Word, (2) strengthen their apologetics,” (3) praise God by appreciating His creation.

What need am I addressing? I am addressing the need for avoiding walking the way of false teaching.

“Where is this Coming?”

2 Peter 3:1-7

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So has anyone here ever done **(LCD) bull riding**? Even a mechanical bull? I can't imagine how hard it is to do! One article I read said that the G-forces involved in a violent bull riding session is equivalent to that in an Indy-car crash when it's going 200mph or the full impact of a heavyweight knockout punch! It's crazy! In light of that, holding on the right way is essential or you have no chance. One site advised this, **(LCD) “Bull riders have to have a tight grip which requires a lot of upper body strength, they have to have strong leg and core muscles to squeeze tight against the bull, they have to know how to fall correctly, and they have to be able to get to their feet and run for protection as fast as they can.”** Phew! Lots of training and discipline or no chance baby!

We're in a sermon series on **(LCD) 2 Peter** in which we're considering the apostle Peter's warning against false teachers. Much like bull riding, living as a Christian in this post-modern world is like living as an alien in a strange world. If our faith is going to survive, we've got to learn how to hold on tight to sound doctrine. The world and its philosophies are kicking and tossing us around and it's easy to fall. So our question for today is this, **(LCD) how tight is your grip on God's truth?** That was Peter's concern in the pagan context he was living in, and it's our concern today too. Let's take a look. 2 Peter 3:1, *“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. 3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”*

Before we dive into this passage, let's remind ourselves of the **(LCD) flow of Peter's letter**. Chapter 1 focused on avoiding the corruption of the world, pursuing godliness and trusting in the Word of God as passed down through the apostles. Chapter 2 shifted to a focus on the false teachers who taught that divine judgment was not coming. On the contrary, Peter taught that God will judge the world, rescue the righteous and judge the ungodly. Now, in chapter 3, he is going to shift back to focusing on exhorting the believers in Jesus. We note this shift by the first word, “dear friends.” Actually, the Greek word here is “beloved” meaning the family of God. We'll see this word three more times in chapter 3. Peter knows these people are being “bucked hard” by the culture and he is trying to encourage them as he has before. He says this is his second letter to them. Scholars debate whether he's referring to 1 Peter or some lost letter; either way, Peter is concerned enough about their remaining faithful to Christ to take the time to write them.

The letters he's written were meant as reminders to "stimulate them to wholesome thinking." I love the word for "stimulate" here. It means to "wake up; stir up." It's used of the disciples waking up Jesus in the boat during the storm. He doesn't want them to become complacent in the stormy pagan world with its pagan ideas. Wake up! Be alert to the false teaching and ideas that are circulating all around you! Again, **(LCD) hold on tight to God's truth with great vigilance!**

The same is true today. I went to see the latest Marvel movie, "Wakanda Forever," last week. It was interesting watching it at the same time as I've been reading this book, **(LCD) "Strange New World,"** as part of Wednesday Night Live. This book has sharpened my mind against unbiblical ideas and worldviews. Sure enough, watching "Wakanda Forever" through the lens of a biblical paradigm was profound! This movie is FULL of worldly, humanistic ideas and worldviews like radical feminism and Marxist ideas of oppression. I'm not sure I would have picked up on these false ideas had I not been reading this book. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to tell you what movies you can watch or not watch; I'm just saying that we need to stay awake to false ideas or they'll seep into our minds and mislead us. So again, **(LCD) how tight is your grip on God's truth?**

How are they going to keep "wholesome, pure" in their thinking? Verse 2, "*I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.*" This is a return to some of the points that Peter made in chapter 1 like in verses 20-21, **(LCD) "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."** The Scriptures are reliable because they are divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. They aren't human works like some would have us believe. They are the Word of God and carry authority and legitimacy.

Peter is calling them to recall these words, the Scriptures, including both the Old Testament and what we now call the New Testament that came through the apostles. I want to come back to this at the end of the sermon, but suffice it to say, **(LCD) how tight is your grip on God's truth?** Seriously? I received a wonderful video this week from a woman who used to attend here years ago. In the video, she testified to how God has radically rescued her from alcoholism and saved her marriage. What changed? She said that at her lowest point, she reached out for help and made a commitment to read the Bible daily and deeply. After about six months of this deep intake of God's Word, she noticed a change in her heart and mind. God's Word is powerful!

Peter knew this too and so he exhorts them to remember the words spoken in the past – the Scriptures. In particular, he wants them to be aware of what they say about one particular false teaching we find in verses 3 and 4, "*Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything*

goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” The false teachers have been ridiculing the Christ-followers for believing in the second coming of Jesus. They ridicule it because they look at the world and it seems as if nothing has changed since the beginning. Seasons come and go, the stars go round and round, there’s no great, divine intervention breaking up the natural flow of the universe. They also speak against it because they follow their own evil desires. In other words, if there is no return of Christ, then there’s no future judgment, then I can do what I want. As a result, they ridicule those who say that Christ is returning.

Scoffers and mockers still attack God’s people even now. Some examples are **(LCD) those who adhere to Uniformitarianism which teaches that the earth has developed “uniformly,” that is operates in a closed system of natural laws that don’t allow for supernatural interventions (this is the same argument made by the false teachers in Peter’s day); Materialism which teaches that the physical universe is all that exists; Atheism which states that there is no Supreme Being we’re accountable to; and Liberalism which says the Bible needs to be “demythologized” of the supernatural.** All of these find that supernatural claims to things like the return of Christ are ridiculous.

Peter replied to the false teachers who ridiculed the idea of God’s direct, supernatural intervention in the world by making three important points in verses 5 to 7. First, verse 5, *“But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.”* His first point is that the creation, which seems to go on endlessly and naturally, is not eternal, or even natural. It has a supernatural starting point that began with God’s word - that same word that he’s telling them to recall and remember, the powerful Word of God. That is the clear teaching of Scripture. **(LCD) Psalm 33, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”** God’s creation should cause us to humble ourselves before Him, revere Him; not mock and ridicule Him. The same point is made in the New Testament, **(LCD) “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”** God created the world out of nothing! In other words, the world is at the mercy of God. It is not self-perpetuating even though it seems like it is on autopilot.

This is the clear truth of Scripture, yet the false teachers, who claim to honor God, “deliberately forget” this truth. Now this is a debatable translation of verse 5. Look at how the New American Standard Bible translates it, **(LCD) “For ^[b]when they maintain this, it escapes their notice...”** This is a literal translation of a word that means “escaping notice.” If this literal translation is right, then the false teachers aren’t purposefully forgetting what Scripture teaches, they’re just missing the truth accidentally. But notice the footnote, ^[b] *Or they are willfully ignorant of this fact, that.* This is more in line with how the NIV translates the word here. In light of how the false teachers are portrayed in 2 Peter as deceivers, I think the NIV is correct here. These people willfully

ignore passages of Scripture that they don't agree with or that would challenge them to repentance.

The same is done today. People will take clear teaching about things like sexuality, and twist or downright ignore passages that would challenge them on it. Or as I've shared before about radical feminists who claim that Paul was a misogynist so we can just ignore what he says about women. These are modern examples of "deliberately forgetting" what God says. We can be guilty of this too. We all need to be honest with ALL the text, not just our favorite parts!

Well, back to Peter's argument here, he says that the false teachers deliberately forget that God formed the universe from water and by water by His Word. This sounds strange to our modern ears, but this fits the Hebrew concept of the universe as I've shown before with **(LCD) this diagram**. They believed that God lived above creation in the highest heaven or the third heaven it was called. In Genesis 1, we read that God hovered above the big blue waters of chaos and brought order. He did this as in verse 6, "And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water... And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear."" Notice, "God said." God's powerful Word creates and orders the universe. He creates a vault, a space between the waters. And then in verse 9, God speaks again, and dry land appears. This is what Peter means in verse 5 when he says, "*the earth was formed out of water and by water.*" Point being that the universe isn't eternal, nor natural – it had a supernatural starting point.

Secondly, verse 6, "*By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.*" This is referencing something else in Scripture that the false teachers are deliberately forgetting. What is it? Right, the Flood! Looking at **(LCD) the diagram** again, Peter is saying that God allowed the waters that had been separated to come forth and re-cover everything – starting from scratch. He's reminding them that contrary to their claim that nothing has changed since the beginning, the continuity of earth's processes did change with the Flood. By the Word of God again, he used the same waters he created the world with to destroy it. Why? Because it had become contaminated with evil. Point being that they've conveniently forgotten that things haven't gone on unbroken since the beginning.

Finally, verse 7, "*By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*" Just as God intervened once with water in order to cleanse and judge the world, so He's going to do it again by fire in the future. You can picture his argument **(LCD) this way: as three great periods in human history**. As one commentator said, Peter presents linear history punctuated with divine judgment. The Bible teaches that God created the original world by His Word. He then intervened with a judgment by water. He then restored the cleansed world and established the heavens and the earth as we know them now. But there is another divine judgment coming and it will be by fire. The result will be a restored new heavens and new earth. We'll be talking more about all that over the next two weeks.

The bottomline takeaway for today is pretty straightforward, **(LCD) how tight is your grip on God's truth?** Scripture is a treasure for those who believe it. Do you? It is effective for those who drink deeply of it. Do you? I'd like to encourage you with three 'S's this morning: store, study, and share. Earlier we watched a video of our Israel trip and we saw **(LCD) pictures of the Qumran caves**. Here is one. In these caves were found thousands of fragments and whole manuscripts of God's Word. They were treasured and stored up. I pray that our hearts would be caves containing stores of the treasures of God's Word! That's the first step in having a tight grip on God's truth.

Secondly, study. Why not flip from social media and news to things like **(LCD) Sean McDowell's apologetics website**. There is so much good material out there to equip us to have a tight grip on God's Word. I encourage you to make the time to solidify what and why you believe what you do. Otherwise, you'll be bucked into worldly ideas.

Lastly, I'd like to end this morning by showing you a delightful interview I did with one of our sisters who loves to share God's Word, Judy Smith. A few years ago, we did a seminar on how to share God's Word with others. Judy attended and took it to heart. Since then, she's been sharing God's Word prolifically. Nothing will sharpen your grip on God's Word more than sharing it with others. Listen and be inspired by Judy's example.

(Video of Judy)