

## **Will Jesus Come Again?**

**2 Peter 3:1-10**

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I want to read just two verses and we'll come back to verse 1. I want to look at verses 3 and 4. Look at them with me. In verse 3 of chapter 3, Peter says, "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.'"

Peter wants us to continue to have the hope that Jesus Christ is coming again. The Bible says we're looking for "the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." So the question is, "Will Jesus Christ come again?" And the answer, as Peter says, is "Yes." Jesus Christ, Who came the first time to suffer and die as the Lamb for the sins of the world, will come the second time, this time as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He'll come in power, in majesty, in glory, and He'll establish His kingdom for 1,000 years, which will flow into the eternal state. We as Christians believe that Jesus Christ came not only to die, but He's coming back to reign in power and glory.

2 Peter 3 was written because these skeptics—scoffers or mockers—were going to come on the scene in the last days, which we're in right now, and they're going to say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" And then their rationale was, "Since our fathers have fallen asleep, all things continue as it was from the beginning." So they felt like God would not break into history; God would not intervene in history. God wasn't going to come. And in the context of these passages in Peter, He wasn't going to come to judge sin. Not only did they reject the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, they rejected the idea that Jesus would come and that He would judge our sin.

As we've gone through 1 Peter, we saw in chapter 1 that we're standing in holiness; in chapter 2, we're standing against heresy; and in chapter 3, we're standing now in hope. We believe that Jesus Christ will come again.

So Peter gives us in chapter 3—I want to give you a little survey in chapter 3 of four admonitions, all beginning with the word "beloved." We get our word "agape" from this. It's a reminder that God loves you and I, Peter, love you. But I want you to notice them. In verse 1, he says, "beloved..."—and then in verse 2—"...be mindful." And then in verse 8, he says, "beloved, be not ignorant," and then in verse 14, he says, "beloved...be diligent." In verse 17, he says, "beloved...beware." So those are the four admonitions, and we're going to take two weeks to cover them. We're going to look at the first two this morning: be mindful and be not ignorant.

In verses 1-7, Peter says to the believers, and us as well, "be mindful." Go back with me to verse 1, and let's read down to verse 7. He says, "This second epistle..."—and this would be that he wrote 1 Peter and now 2 Peter, probably referring to his first epistle and now his second,

writing to the same individuals—“...beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure ...”—or “sincere”—“...minds by way of...”—key word—“...remembrance; 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; 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 have fallen asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’” Peter says, “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...”—verse 7—“... and the earth, which now are kept by the same Word are being kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Now I want you to notice back in verse 1, Peter wanted them to remember something. That’s a key word in 2 Peter. He wants to “stir up your pure...”—or “sincere”—“...minds by way of remembrance.” Back in chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, he used over and over repeatedly the word “remember.” “As long as I’m in this body, I want you to remember these things.” He says, “When I’m gone and I’m dead, I want you to remember these things.” He gave us his first letter, and now his second letter.

What did Peter want us to remember? Two things. He wanted us to remember, first of all, in chapter 3, verse 2, the truth of God’s Word; and then secondly, in verses 3 and 4, that scoffers would come. Go with me to verse 2 and notice this. It says, “I want you to be mindful...”—or “remember something.” “I want you to be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the Apostles of the Lord and Savior.” So, number one, remember the truth of God’s Word.

When false teachers would come on the scene and they would say that Jesus isn’t coming back, that He’s not going to return, He’s not going to judge sin—and it could be that these scoffers or the false teachers mentioned in chapter 2 are just unbelievers, not even professing to be Christians, who didn’t believe in the supernatural, who didn’t believe Jesus Christ would return. They were atheists or naturalists; they didn’t believe that God could come and break into history. They would be saying that since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning.

But where do we, as Christians, take our stand? We take our stand in the Word of God; amen? The B-i-b-l-e, yes, that’s the...”—what?—“...book for me. You guys need to go back to Sunday School. I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-i-b-l-e. I love that song. It’s not just for kids, it’s for us. How do I know Jesus Christ is coming again? Because the Old Testament prophets predicted it, and the New Testament Apostles spoke of it.

When Peter talks about the Old Testament prophets there—of course, all through the Old Testament, not only the first coming of Jesus Christ—“Behold a virgin shall conceive and be with child and thou shalt call His name Emmanuel,” and He would be a son and a child born, “and the government shall be upon His shoulders.” So the Old Testament prophets predicted

his first Advent, His first coming. And they also saw His Second Coming.

Now a lot of Jews today stumble over Jesus being the Messiah, because they don't recognize in the Old Testament the prophecies about His coming to die—Isaiah 53 and those prophecies that said He would come and suffer and die. They only saw the Old Testament prophecies about His second Advent or His Second Coming. But both of them—sometimes in one verse, with no gap in the text, we know there's a 2,000-year gap between His first coming and His Second Coming. But the Old Testament prophets' writings, being the inspired, infallible Word, predicted His coming.

And then, secondly, notice in verse 2, "the commandment of us, the Apostles." Now I'm going to talk more about this next Sunday morning when we get to verses 15-17. A lot of times people wonder if the New Testament is as equally Scriptural as the Old Testament. Are the writings of the Apostles on a par with the Old Testament Scripture? Are they the Word of God? When Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," sometimes people are quick to point out that's only the Old Testament. But what about the New Testament? But here I think it's interesting that Peter couples in one verse that we believe in the coming again of Jesus Christ, because God spoke it in the Old Testament, and the Apostles spoke about it in the New Testament. I believe the New Testament is equally Scripture, and equally the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, as the Old Testament is.

Now why do we believe that Jesus Christ will come again? Because He said so in His Word. And that's where we stand. Nothing more important to us as Christians than to think Biblically. I don't care what the new atheists say. They mock the idea of the Second Coming. They laugh and scoff at the concept that Jesus Christ can return. My Bible promises me that Jesus Christ will come again. And guess what? I believe God's Word. Amen? Do you believe God's Word? God's Word is true, and we can build our lives upon it. Not only spoken in the Old Testament, but thoroughly given in the New Testament. Jesus said, "As the lightning that shines from the east, even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." And we can bank on that: Jesus Christ is returning.

But notice what Peter says in verses 3 and 4. He says that scoffers are also going to come. So number one, "I want you to stand on the truth of God's Word," and number two, "I want you to remember—be warned that in the last days, scoffers are going to come." I love verse 3 in the New Living Translation. It renders that "Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days, scoffers will come mocking the truth and following after their own desires." Now notice Peter says that it will happen in "the last days." What does he mean by that term "the last days"? From the New Testament, we know the last days goes from the first coming of Jesus to the Second Coming of Jesus. That's all the last days. And God's big picture and God's redemptive plan from the first Advent to the Second Coming, the Second Advent—all that period known in there as the Church Age, the time of grace, is the last days. Now I'm convinced we're living in the last days of the last days—of the last days of the last days of the last days. And the Lord is coming soon. But we don't know the day or the hour.

Now the Rapture of the church is not in view in our passage today. And when I say the Rapture of the church, I mean that event when Jesus Christ will not come back to earth, but we, as the church, the true believers, will be “caught up to meet the Lord in the air...”—1 Thessalonians 4 —“...and we will forever be with the Lord.” We will be raptured or caught up. The Greek word is “harpazo,” to “snatch up, to take up by force.” Jesus spoke about this in John 14. He says, “I’m going to go to prepare a place for you in heaven. And if I go to prepare you a place, I will come again and...”—here it is—“...I will receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” I believe that Jesus was disclosing this concept of coming back for the church, His bride, and catching us up “to meet the Lord in the air,” which, by the way, I believe happens before the Tribulation, seven years of God’s wrath being poured out upon the earth. We’re going to see Peter making reference to “the day of the Lord,” the day of God’s wrath and judgment upon the world. So I believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture when the church is caught up.

But that’s not what Peter’s talking about. He’s talking about the Second Coming, which is seven years after the Rapture, after the Tribulation, when Jesus Christ—Revelation 19—comes back, and we come back with Him—the church—riding on a white horse, and He comes back King of kings and Lord of lords. He comes back in power and He comes back in majesty. He comes back not as the Lamb Who dies for sin but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah to judge for sin and to sit on the throne of David. So just as surely as He came the first time, He will, indeed, come the second time. But they are mocking that idea: that Jesus is coming, that He will judge for sin.

I remember years ago seeing Billy Graham interviewed on TV before a crusade he was holding, and he would always take questions from the reporters. And one of the reporters asked, “Dr. Graham, do you believe that Jesus Christ is going to come again? Do you believe in the Second Coming?” And Billy said, “Yes, the Bible teaches that. I believe that.” And then the reporter went on to mock the idea that Christ would come again. He said, “Dr. Graham, you’ve been preaching for years that He’s going to come, and He hasn’t come yet. And preachers before you. And preachers before them. For generations they’ve been preaching that Jesus is going to come, and He hasn’t come. And you still believe Jesus is going to come?” And I’ll never forget Billy’s answer. He said, “You know, you, my friend, have just fulfilled Bible prophecy.” And he actually opened his Bible to 2 Peter 3:3. “Knowing this first, that scoffers will come...and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’” And Billy pointed out that this is what the Bible predicted: that in the last days people would deny that Jesus Christ would come to judge the world.

Now I believe there is a little insight into why they make this denial, and it’s at the end of verse 3. They’re “walking after their own lusts.” They don’t want Jesus Christ to come and cramp their style. “There’s a good party this Friday night. I don’t want Jesus to come back yet. I’m havin’ fun, doing what I want to do, and if Jesus Christ comes back, I’m goin’ to have to give an account to Him. I’m gonna be judged for my sin. I don’t want to believe there’s a God. I don’t believe I’m accountable to God. I don’t want to believe He’s gonna come back and judge for sin.” So they are willingly ignorant. They don’t want to believe, because it doesn’t accommodate their sinful, lustful lifestyles.

I want you to notice their argument in verse 4: “Since our fathers have fallen asleep,” or “died.” Now the fathers probably refer to the Old Testament patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. These guys go way back to the Old Testament. It could be he’s talking about the early Christians or other people. But he probably goes back to the Old Testament fathers. They’ve died. And what he says is that everything continues uniformly, consistently, without interruption; nothing has changed.

Now this argument has a name. What it’s called is “uniformitarianism.” What it means is that the cosmic processes of this present and future can be understood solely on the basis of how the cosmos operated in the past. God is not going to break into history and interrupt natural laws in the process of time. Today we call them the “new atheists.” There is no God, so there’s no miraculous. They reject the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin, which I believe the Bible teaches. They reject the idea that God was in Christ, that He was the God-man, that He lived a sinless life, that He died a substitutionary death, that He was buried and rose from the dead—dead people don’t come back to life, so Jesus didn’t come back to life, let alone ascend back into heaven—and He’s certainly not coming back—that would be supernatural and there is no God, so it ain’t gonna happen. So they teach this concept that everything continues according to natural laws.

We were just doing the Q and A for Christmas that is going to air on the radio and we put it on our website. We were talking about the virgin birth. Some listener wrote in and asked the question, “Do you believe in the virgin birth? Could God actually bring about a virgin birth?” My answer was simple. “Yes. If there is a God, is anything too hard for God? Is anything impossible for God?” What’s the answer? “No.” There are a lot of things too hard for me. My wife will ask me to fix the faucet, and I say, “No. That’s too hard for me. Get a plumber.” She’ll ask me to take out the trash, and I say, “That’s too hard for me.” I’m kidding.

But there’s nothing too hard for God; amen? Is it too hard for God to have the Holy Spirit bring about a conception miraculously in the womb of a virgin? Is it too hard for God to create in that womb the perfect God-man, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man in one person? No; it’s not too hard. So the argument really doesn’t hold water. If you believe in God, all things are possible with God. But their argument was that everything continues as it was from the beginning. No interruptions.

Peter, then, answers them head on in verses 5-7. He points out their willing ignorance. And there are three things that they are willingly ignorant of. Notice verse 5. He says, “For this they are willingly 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...”—verse 6—“...that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now...”—verse 7—“...by the same Word of God are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Now I want you to notice these three things that Peter points out they willingly, and in their economy, consistently—by the fact that they didn’t believe in the supernatural—rejected.

Number one, that God created the world by His Word. Peter says, "Have you forgotten that God created the universe? That He sustains the universe? That He can intervene in His universe?" The New Living Translation of verse 5 says, "They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the Word of His command and that He brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water." You can read about it in Genesis 1. God "created all things by the Word of His power." Two key words there: "word," which speaks of God's fiat, or that He can speak things into existence by the power of His Word; and then "water." God created water and then he brought out of the water, earth, and then He separated the earth from the water above the earth. He made the firmaments. It's all described there in the book of Genesis.

Peter believed in creation. We're going to see in the next verse that Peter believed in a world-wide flood, as well. He believed what the book of Genesis taught. He's standing on the Word of God. So what he's actually arguing here when he speaks about God creating by the "Word of His power" is that the same sovereign creator is the judge, and He can change natural laws at any time. He instituted them, He created them, and He can intervene in them. If God can speak the entire universe into existence by the "Word of His power," don't you think He can speak it out of existence by the "Word of His power"? Don't you think God can intervene and bring judgment to the world? The answer is "Yes."

Notice the second thing they are willingly ignorant of. God has intervened in His universe in the past. Not only did He create the universe, but He also destroyed mankind and living things from off the earth. We see that in verse 6. "Whereby..."—that is, by the water mentioned at the end of verse 5—"...the world that then was..."—"the world before the flood"—"...being overflowed with water, perished." Now what perished was not the world but the people who were in the world. And the word "world" there in verse 6, *cosmos*, is actually referring to sinful mankind. God sent a flood, and you know the story in the book of Genesis. God told Noah to build a boat. And he built this big boat, and he took all the animals onto the Ark. And those who weren't on the Ark—and the flood came—and I'm making a long story short—and God wiped out all flesh upon the earth. Only eight people—Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives—were spared.

Now this is what these mockers, these scoffers, forget: God did it in the past, and God can do it in the future. Amen? Now I realize that people may not believe the story of Noah. It's funny how we'll get our little kids' bedrooms and decorate them with the Ark and the animals and all a happy story with the rainbow in the sky and everything, but we don't realize that's a story of judgment, of God destroying the earth. It's like, "Pleasant dreams, little Johnny. Just keep your eye on that Ark and remember that God can destroy the world."

I actually believe that in history, God wiped out all the wicked people on planet earth. He only saved Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives. He started all over with eight people. And Peter's arguing saying that he did it before, and He can certainly do it again.

Here's a third note and it's in verse 7. God will destroy the world by fire. You know, God gave us a rainbow. Some of you saw rainbows on your way to church this morning with the sun and

the rain, the beautiful sky outside with the storms. You know what God is saying in that rainbow? "I will no longer ever again destroy the earth by a flood." Right? Is that what He said? But guess what? He didn't mention fire. He said He wouldn't do it by flood, but Peter says He's going to destroy the entire universe—and I do believe, the entire universe—with fire. Notice verse 7. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word..."—the same Word, verse 5, which spoke the worlds into existence, the same Word which brought water and a flood upon the antediluvians, the same Word right now that will one day destroy the earth by fire—"...are kept in store..."—it's on reservation—"...reserved unto fire against the day of judgment..."—notice that—"...and perdition of ungodly men." Notice in your Bible you actually have the word "judgment." And "perdition" means judgment "of ungodly men." Yes, God is a God of love. And we're going to see that in a moment. Yes, He is long suffering. Yes, He is patient. But He is also holy and righteous. God hates and judges sin.

He's actually telling us in verse 7 that this is the end of the world. In verse 10, he talks about "the heavens passing away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." In verse 12, he says, "We are looking for and hastening 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." In Revelation 21, John says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." God is actually going to wipe out the entire universe, the entire cosmos. Everything that is seen is temporal. And only "that which is not seen is eternal." And if you're living today for only what you can see, you're going to lose everything.

And what are you living for? Are you living for what you can see, what you can touch, what you can feel? Or are you living for God? Are you living for eternity? Are you living for the eternal? Everything that you can see is going to be taken away. It will pass away. Jesus said it like this. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall never pass away." Are you living for that which is eternal? So we look for a new heaven and a new earth, so we shouldn't be materialists. We should be spiritually minded, living for God.

But not only did Peter say, "Beloved...be mindful," I want you to notice, secondly, in verses 8-10, Peter said, "Beloved, be not ignorant." Notice it in verse 8. "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..."—verse 9—"...to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come..."—how?—"...as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be..."—here it is again—"...burned up."

So if you get a new car and you get a scratch in it, don't worry; it's gonna burn. You go, "Yeah, Pastor John, but I want it to stay nice 'till it burns." I used to hate that when I'd get something new and it would break and my friends would say, "It's all going to burn." "Yeah, but I don't want it to burn yet. I want it to stay nice 'till it burns." But everything we see is temporal. It's all gonna burn.

It's amazing here where Peter says, "Don't be ignorant." Now Peter answers the question, in verses 8-10, "Why hasn't Jesus come back yet?" He's not so much saying until he gets to verse 10 and affirming He's coming. He's actually dealing with the question, "Why is He waiting so long?" Have you ever wondered that? It's like, "Lord, have You seen the election in America recently? Why don't You come back? You know what's going on and what's happening. Have You seen the corruption in the world? Lord, come."

And Peter gives us two reasons why God tarries. You see them in the text. First of all, verse 8, God is eternal or God is timeless or God is outside time. In other words, God's not governed by time. Notice it in verse 8. He says, "Don't be ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day."

Now don't make the mistake that a lot of people have made in thinking this a formula to figure out when Jesus Christ is coming back. "Okay. Let's see. One day is like a thousand years. A thousand years, one day.... Okay, Jesus is coming back in the fifth year, in 1988. Eighty-eight reasons why Jesus is coming back in '88." This is not a formula. And we don't try to figure out when Jesus is coming back based on this. You know what it's basically saying? It's saying that God is eternal, that God dwells outside time. You know that God doesn't have a watch on up in heaven? He's not looking at His watch thinking, "Oh, we gotta get this thing going. The Second Coming's late getting started." He's not looking at a calendar. God is in control, but God dwells outside the time and space domain.

One of the reasons God is timeless is because God is omnipresent. That means there's nowhere in the creation or the cosmos where God is not present all the time, fully there. You can't go anywhere where God is not. And God is eternal. Time begins and time ends in God. God dwells outside time. So we're freaking out. "Wow. It's been like 2,000 years. Lord, You promised to come. Why haven't You come? What's going on? Things are getting really bad down here, in case You haven't noticed." And then Peter says, "Calm down. Cool your jets." That's actually in the Greek right there. The Greek word "cool your jets." Calm down. God is eternal. He's not sweatin' it. He's not worried about it. He's in control. He knows what He's doing.

And then, secondly, God is longsuffering, verse 9, or merciful. He suffers long. Notice it in verse 9. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness..."—Why hasn't He come? Slacker—"...But He is longsuffering..."—here's the answer to why God has waited so long to come—"...He is longsuffering..."—or "patient"—"...to you and I..."—here we see the heart of God, verse 9—"...not willing that any should perish..."—that word "any" means any; God doesn't want anyone to perish—"...but that all should come to repentance." So the way not to perish is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Now this is an amazing statement here where it says the reason God has waited so long is because God is patient. God is longsuffering. God is merciful.

I got saved in 1971. And in 1971, I was praying for Jesus Christ to come back. Out of curiosity, how many of you were saved after 1971? Aren't you glad that the Lord didn't answer my

prayer? You would have been left behind. I'm like, "Oh, Lord Jesus, please come. I read Hal Lindsey's book *The Late, Great Planet Earth*." I knew I was going to be raptured any minute. "Lord, just please come." But He saw that you were going to be saved. He was loving and patient and kind and waited for you to get saved. You know, there have been people saved every week over the last several weeks here in our church. What if Jesus had come a month ago—you wanted Jesus to come so badly when you got that bill you couldn't pay, and you wanted to get raptured right there on the spot. He said, "No. There are some people who need to get saved. There are some friends who need to come to Me." We're anxious for the Lord to come, but every day He tarries, more people get saved. More people are going to be in heaven. But we need to relax. We're going to get there. Everything's going to be cool. But there are people that God wants to get saved.

Now this statement, "not willing that any should perish," is not a decree of God. It's a desire. Some have falsely interpreted that to teach what's called "universalism," that everyone will be saved. God wants everyone saved. Everyone's going to be saved. That's not what it's saying. It's saying God's heart is—God's desire is that everyone would repent. And people aren't going to be saved unless they repent and believe in Jesus Christ. The only way for you to be saved is to turn from your sin and to trust, in faith, in Jesus Christ. God is not going to save you against your will. God's not going to save you if you don't repent and believe in Jesus Christ. He wants you to be saved. He wants you to go to heaven. He wants you to believe, but He's not going to save you against your will. He's not going to take you to heaven screaming and shouting and resisting Him. You must obey and surrender to Him.

But God is longsuffering, which literally means that God puts wrath afar off or far away. We might translate that phrase "a long fuse." Ever known anybody who has a short fuse? They just blow up real quick. You light them and they just blow up real quick. God's long fused. God's wrath has been put far away, so He patiently and mercifully waits for you to be saved so that He can take you to heaven. But you must repent.

And then I want you to notice, in conclusion, verse 10. Thirdly, Peter gives the assurance that the Lord will come. And that's really what he's doing. He's just telling them flat out that "the day of the Lord will come..."—and how's it going to come?—"...as a thief in the night..."—and what's going to happen when He comes?—"...the heavens shall pass away with a great noise..."—and all of the stars and the galaxies and the sun and the moon and all of the heavens (but not the heaven where God dwells, but the universe) will pass away with a great noise. That's radical—"...and the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Now what's the "day of the Lord," verse 10? "The day of the Lord" is a reference to God's judgment. It's not just a single, 24-hour day or period. It could be the whole Tribulation. And it culminates with the Second Coming. And some believe it goes on into the Millennial reign of Christ. But "the day of the Lord" is basically used in the Bible for a day when God comes to judge and punish sin. So number one, God is eternal. Number two, God is longsuffering. But number three, God is holy. And because God is holy, He's righteous. And because He's

righteous, He judges sin. We want God to wink at sin. We want God to forget sin. We want to talk about the grace of God and the longsuffering of God and the mercy of God and the patience of God and the kindness of God—those things are all attributes of God and awesome—but God is also holy. God is righteous.

You know, one of the things that people like to reject today in our modern world is the holiness of God. And if there's anything that God wants to be known by, it's that He is a holy God. Because God is holy, He hates and judges sin. So Christ must return to deal with sin and bring retribution, to right all wrongs and to set things straight. You ever look around at the world and think that it's just not fair or right? It's so unjust. God is going to come someday, and He's going to right all wrongs. And He's going to put an end to sin and ungodliness and wickedness. He's going to come to judge, and the universe we know is all going to be destroyed. The elements are going to melt with a fervent heat. So this holy God is coming to judge.

So Peter is saying, "Yes, Jesus is coming. Christians believe it. Scoffers laugh at it. God guarantees it," verse 10. It will come, and it "will come as a thief in the night." The thief-in-the-night concept was used by Jesus, by Paul. It's used by Peter. The idea is that it comes unexpectedly. The world's going to go on eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, acting like everything's just fine. Everything's okay.

You know, I was surprised at the way people reacted learning that Donald Trump's going to be the next President of the United States. You'd think it was the Second Coming. "Wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth." "It's the end of the world! Donald Trump, the President of the United States! Oh, God!" Oh God is right. You think the world is coming to an end? You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Jesus Christ is coming back. And when He does, He will judge and make war. John says His eyes were "like a flame of fire, His hair was white as snow..."—speaking of His holiness—"... and out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword, and His feet were like polished brass"—the metal of judgment. He's coming back in glory and majesty.

I never approach Christmas without going beyond the manger of Bethlehem to His Second Coming. He came in humility. He came in lowliness. He came to die upon the Cross. He was rejected and despised. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." When Jesus Christ comes back the second time, every eye will see Him. The world will mourn and weep for Him.

Peter is saying to these mockers and scoffers, "Have you forgotten that God created the world by His power and His Word? That God sustains the world? That God destroyed the world once before, and He can do it again; not by water but by fire? Have you forgotten that God is eternal? He is not bound by time; He's not looking at a watch. Have you forgotten that God is loving and longsuffering, and He's waiting for you to come to repentance?" But the day of the Lord will come, and when it comes, it will come unexpectedly. It will come like "a thief in the night." Thieves don't call you up and tell you they're going to rip you off; right? "Hi, this is your

local burglar, and I want you to keep the back door open, because this Saturday night, I understand you will be gone, and I'm going to rip you off, so could you just leave the light on and the back door open?"

I remember years ago that it was a hot summer night, and we had the windows open in the bedroom, and in the middle of the night, like 3:00 o'clock in the morning, I heard this "Err, pop." It was four times. Four times I heard this squeak and a pop. I thought, "That is the weirdest sound I've ever heard." I get up in the morning and go to get in the car—this is in the day of hubcaps—and all four of my hubcaps were gone! And I'm thinking, "I lay in bed listening. It took a few minutes to go around the car and pop each hubcap off. I could have had him by the throat!" I'm still ticked off about that. I could see it in the newspaper now: "Pastor chokes hubcap thief." I thought, "I can't believe I just lay in bed listening to that! This is so insane!" Now I don't think anybody has hubcaps anymore, but if I ever hear that sound, I'll know what it is. And if you're a hubcap thief, I'm gonna get yah! So don't think you're going to get away with it again.

But when the Bible uses that concept of "thief in the night," it's saying you won't expect it. You won't know it. You're going to be unawares. You're going to be caught off guard. Jesus Christ is coming.

Now it's not in the text, but I want to close with this thought. Are you ready? Be mindful. Be not ignorant. Be ready. You say, "Well, Pastor, how do I get ready?" You repent. What does it mean to repent? It means that you change your mind and that you turn from your sin and then you follow the Savior. You realize, "I'm a sinner." You repent by turning from your sin, and then you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, Who died on the Cross for your sins. The only way for you to be saved and to be ready for the end of the world is to repent of your sins and to put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Now if you're here this morning and you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ, that's what you need to do. I believe the world's gonna end. I believe the world's gonna be destroyed. I believe Jesus Christ is coming back. Are you ready? Have you repented? Did you trust in Him? Have you been born again? Are your sins forgiven? Do you know that if you died today you would go to heaven? Do you know beyond any shadow of a doubt that you will go to heaven when you die? If you don't, then get right with God today.

And I believe that now is the acceptance time. I believe that "today is the day of salvation." The Bible says, "If you hear God's voice, don't harden your heart." Remember that "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." No one gets to heaven by being good. No one gets to heaven because you go to church. No one gets to go to heaven because they've been baptized. No one goes to heaven because they reform and begin to live a good life or just begin to believe in God. You must be born of the Spirit of God. What is a Christian? A Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. It's not a religion. It's a relationship.

If there's any question in your mind that you are a child of God, then make sure today that you trust in Jesus, that you receive Him as your Savior, that you put your faith in Him. The Bible says that "By grace you have been saved, through faith, not of yourself. It's a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." God wants to save you, and He wants to give you this as a free gift. But you must open your heart and trust Him as your Savior. I'm going to give you the opportunity to do that right now.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Every head bowed and every eye closed, and Christians are praying.