

Last week we showed a video trailer to an upcoming TV show. I want to make sure that you understand our intent. We intended to show yet another example of how far the “church world” has gone in accepting false teaching or lifestyles of teachers that don’t match the normal Biblical standard of living. In no way would we or did we intend to draw attention to the race or even the names of those on the video clip. Personally I try to be very sensitive about what we use in our services, promotions and media ministries. For the record we love all races and heartily welcome and celebrate all who call this church their home.

At an intersection, the green light changes to yellow;  
At the theater the house lights flash;  
In the Battalion Tactical Operations Center a Warning Order comes down from Brigade;  
At the airport terminal the boarding call comes over the intercom;  
At a railroad crossing the lights begin to flash;  
In a small Midwestern town the tornado siren screams;  
On the football field the two minute warning sounds;  
In the cargo bay of a C-140 a red-light comes on;  
In the Desert of Judea, a voice of one calling in the wilderness is heard declaring, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

What do each of these have in common? They are signs or warnings that we need to prepare ourselves for what is about to happen.

*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> 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 3:1-7 NKJV*

Here’s the good news. Peter takes a break from writing words of warning about false teachers and begins again to encourage the church. The transition word is “beloved,” and it represents a much softer tone. Really what Peter is doing is bringing the readers back to a critical theme for Christians.

He is reminding them that we are to be alert and pay attention to our faith because Jesus Christ is returning. Again think back or go back and read the beginning of this epistle and you will find that he started out trying to help them prepare for Christ coming.

<sup>10</sup> So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. <sup>11</sup> Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I will always **remind** you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. <sup>13</sup> And it is only right that I should keep on **reminding** you as long as I live. 2 Peter 1:10-13 NLT

After some powerful and passionate words about the false teachers threatening to tear down the work that Peter had started in them he goes back to encouraging them to stay steady and stand strong in their faith. Their hope, in the midst of persecution and a culture that didn't accept them or their message was to believe in the return of Christ and the promise of heaven.

It is no different for us today. The closer you follow Christ the less you will fit into the culture around you. It's okay. Christ faced the same thing when he was on this earth. Let's pick up our crosses and follow Him as we continue and face the end of our journeys on this earth.

Here are three very practical suggestions.

### **Be mindful of Christ's return: Don't forget it!**

Remember that Peter was aware of his impending death. His concern for false teachers was centered around the fact that he knew as soon as he was gone there would be the potential of false teaching and teachers arising that would tear down everything he taught.

One of the things he was most aware of was those waiting for him to be gone so that they could tear away at the fabric or doctrine of the notion of a final judgment.

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

There was once a young Shepherd Boy who tended his sheep at the foot of a mountain near a dark forest. It was rather lonely for him all day, so he thought upon a plan by which he could get a little company and some excitement. He rushed down towards the village calling out "Wolf, Wolf," and the villagers came out to meet him, and some of them stopped and visited with him for a considerable time. This pleased the boy so much that a few days afterwards he tried the same trick, and again the villagers came to his help. But shortly after this a Wolf actually did come out from the forest, and began to worry the sheep, and the boy of course cried out "Wolf, Wolf," still louder than before. But this time the villagers, who had been fooled twice before, thought the boy was again deceiving them, and nobody stirred to come to his help. So the Wolf made a good meal off the boy's flock, and when the boy complained, the wise man of the village said:

*Moral of Aesops Fable: A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth.*

The wolves of Peter's day were planning to attack God's sheep in the wake of Peter's death. And he knew it. It is amazing given his former tone regarding false teachers that he addresses this possibility in a much different manner. Peter is not raving about the second coming like some may do. He is not trying to scare anyone or upset them by doom or gloom but he is straightforward. He is trying to stir up their pure minds. Not only does he compliment them but he also is simply reminding them not to forget it.

Jesus is coming back. We do not know the day or the hour but we need to keep a strong belief in this eternal hope. Peter is not asking anyone to keep looking at the sky in fright and fear.

He simply claims that God created the world and that as Creator, one day He will pull the curtain down on this world when has had enough of its rebellion.

What does not forgetting it mean? It means we should make it a part of our weekly if not daily worship and give ourselves to careful and quiet preparation for that inevitable day.

### **Believe the message: Don't forsake it!**

*“. . .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 3:2 NLT*

Peter is totally aware that the Word of God is strong enough to hold the church in an ongoing belief mode till the victorious return of Christ. His admonition is based on not forsaking the Word of God in the last days.

One writer suggested that he made a triple-braided cord that unites his understanding of the Second Coming in God's objective words rather than merely in his subjective experience. In other words he is saying to us, especially because we now hold in our hands the whole Word of God, don't forsake it.

#### **a. The prophetic word**

Many places in the Old Testament a final day of punishment and judgment is predicted for deeds we have done in the flesh.

*Look! The LORD is about to destroy the earth and make it a vast wasteland. He devastates the surface of the earth and scatters the people.<sup>2</sup> Priests and laypeople, servants and masters, maids and mistresses, buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, bankers and debtors—none will be spared.<sup>3</sup> The earth will be completely emptied and looted. The LORD has spoken!*

*<sup>4</sup>The earth mourns and dries up, and the crops waste away and wither. Even the greatest people on earth waste away.<sup>5</sup> The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted God's instructions, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant.*

*Destruction falls like rain from the heavens; the foundations of the earth shake.<sup>19</sup> The earth has broken up. It has utterly collapsed; it is violently shaken.<sup>20</sup> The earth staggers like a drunk. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for the guilt of its rebellion is very heavy.* Isaiah 20 NLT

The world will someday come to an end. Even non-believing scientists also believe that the world will someday come to an end. The difference is that Peter and the Bible suggest strongly that all of this will happen one day when God finally says, “I’ve had enough.” He will give the word to His Son and the judgment will begin.

### **b. The Incarnate word**

Peter also appeals to another word that has been spoken about the return of Christ. Jesus gave clear commandments about His return. He tells us to prepare in Matthew 25 with three parables: the ten virgins, the ten talents and the final separation of sheep and goats. At the end of the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus says, “*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* (Matthew 25:13) At the conclusion of the ten-talent parable, He declares that on that day God will, “*cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.*” (Matthew 25:30)

By far His most direct statement about the Day of Judgment is found in His teaching about the sheep and goats. “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. (31)

What He will do on that throne is judge the living and the dead. He will divide the “sheep from the goats.” He will separate those entering Heaven from those cast into the eternal, conscious state of punishment in Hell. These are Jesus’ own words and should serve as a daily reminder to us that we should never forsake this teaching.

### **c. The apostolic word**

The apostles weighed in on the return of Christ. Above all remember that the disciples stood watching on the day Jesus ascended into Heaven in a cloud. It was the apostles who stood staring until an angel came and said in essence, “Why do you look into Heaven? He will return just as He came.” (Acts 1:11)

The prophets prophesied about it. Jesus promised it and gave commandments about it and in light of all of that the apostles were never ashamed to teach it.

There is one last warning and admonition to these early Christians.

### **Bear the mocking: Don’t follow it!**

I really feel at times for the generations coming behind me in ministry. They are victims of so much questioning and even skepticism. There have always been scoffers and people who question everything.

*“ . . . knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> 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 3:3-7 NLT*

Scoffers will come. Let me rephrase that, scoffers are here. There are two things that stand out here that we should be aware of.

**We will always face ignorance:** Peter says that these scoffers were “walking according to their own lusts” and that they were asking ignorant questions. What makes them ignorant? Among other things it is the willingness to not take the words of Jesus and the apostles by faith that they are true. When people want to do their own thing “according to their lusts” they will make up any excuse they can to avoid the Word of God. They were dead wrong in their assumptions that God doesn’t deal with the people of the earth and He says so by evoking the story of the flood. The people around you that tell you how you live doesn’t matter are false teachers. They should be avoided at all costs.

**There will always be those who willfully forget.** It is amazing to me how willingly we are as humans to forget the Word and the promises of God so that we can experience the here and now. It is destructive and devastating. We rip apart our lives because of selfish and self-centered behavior. What is the answer? What are our alternatives?

The point of this whole sermon is that we don’t forget that Jesus is coming back. He is coming back to judge us for how we have lived our lives on this earth. We are going to be rewarded if we have done it God’s way.

Those who believe in the second coming of Christ have an attitude of eager anticipation. It’s the same word that was used to describe Cornelius when he sent for Peter and was waiting on his front doorstep to greet the one who would tell him what to do to be saved. Christians should be eager for Christ to come. And the knowledge that He is coming should make a difference in the way we live.

There’s an old saying that assures us “While the cat’s away, the mice will play.” I guess that’s right. But it also stands to reason that a sure and certain knowledge that the cat is coming back at any moment will tend to keep the mice from becoming too crazy.

Maybe the reason that so many of us have trouble living holy and blameless lives is because we tend to forget that He’s coming back. Peter reminds us of this fact. He also reminds us of the vital connection that such a doctrine has to our every day lives. *“Therefore, beloved, looking*

*forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless." (II Peter 3:14).*

Yes, Jesus ascended into the heavens nearly 2000 years ago. While we realize that He's always with us, it can seem that He's far, far away. The gulf that seems to separate us makes it hard at times to truly live for Him. But we must forever remember that He'll be back.

A number of years ago, Alexander Campbell had a conversation with Robert Owen who was a prominent atheist. Mr. Owen said, "There is one advantage I have over the Christian. I am not afraid to die. Most Christians have fear in death, but if some few items of my business were settled, I should be perfectly willing to die at any moment."

Bro. Campbell responded, "You say you have no fear in death. Have you any hope?" After a solemn pause, he answered, "No." "Then," Campbell said, pointing to an ox standing at a distance, "you are on a level with that brute. He feeds until he is satisfied, and stands in the shade, whisking off the flies, and has neither hope nor fear in death."

For those who are ready for the second coming, there is hope and that day will be a great day. But for those who are not ready, that day will be a sad day. Since we don't know exactly when that day will come, the only way to be ready for that day is to be ready all the time. Today/this morning, are you ready for Jesus to return?

1. God won't ask what kind of car you drove, but will ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.
2. God won't ask the square footage of your house, but will ask how many people you welcomed into your home.
3. God won't ask about the fancy clothes you had in your closet, but will ask how many of those clothes helped the needy.
4. God won't ask about your social status, but will ask what kind of class you displayed.
5. God won't ask how many material possessions you had, but will ask if they dictated your life.
6. God won't ask what your highest salary was, but will ask if you compromised your character to obtain that salary.
7. God won't ask how much overtime you worked, but will ask if you worked overtime for your family and loved ones.

8. God won't ask how many promotions you received, but will ask how you promoted others.
9. God won't ask what your job title was, but will ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.
10. God won't ask what you did to help yourself, but will ask what you did to help others.
11. God won't ask how many friends you had, but will ask how many people to whom you were a true friend.
12. God won't ask what you did to protect your rights, but will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.
13. God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived, but will ask how you treated your neighbors.
14. God won't ask about the color of your skin, but will ask about the content of your character.
15. God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words, but will ask how many times they didn't.

The fact is He is coming back. . . we should remember and celebrate it every day.

### **Video End. . .**

From my perspective, people in business are much less likely than preachers and teachers to reject the Bible's repeated words on coming judgment. Perhaps this is because they live in a world where bills must be paid. Often preachers and teachers are too far removed from what it really takes to keep something afloat. Business people are not surprised that one day God will oversee a day of accounting. One day a line will be drawn at the bottom of the page, and on that day no one will be able to fib or fudge the numbers. Peter's logic makes sense to the average business man or woman. There is a day coming when we will be "paid" for our time on earth.

While going through some of my dad's sermons this morning I found these words:

"Fundamental principles God hungers for: Faith - Believe Him, Faithfulness to Him, Fellowship with Him."

Let's pray together. Lord what a day that will be when you return. Help us to live our lives in expectation.