

“Jesus is coming, Yeh, Yeh!” (9)

The story is told of the Atheist who stopped a preacher. "Do you believe in eternal life?" The preacher has no time to reply. "Well it's a load of rubbish!" shouted the Atheist. "I believe in science, evolution, survival of the fittest, and when we die, that's it! No eternal life, no great judgement, and no God!" The Atheist continues his assault against the preacher for several hours. "Eternal life! Eternal life! Ha! "It's all pie in the sky when you die." When I die that's it the end, no eternal life, no nothing." He continues, until he reaches his climax, "I will be buried six feet under when I die and that's it! Nothing! Caput! When I die I am utterly convinced that that will be the end of me!" "Well thank God for that" replies the preacher.

The last time we were together we finished **2 Peter 2** and we found that Peter had warned us in detail to be careful in regards to false teachers. And one of those warnings was about the damage these false teachers can do especially within our assemblies.

Today Peter is going to warn us about another group of people who can cause damage, but not so much on the inside but on the outside. And just like the atheist in the story, Peter is going to remind us today that Christians should expect to be mocked from those who don't believe. And when it comes to Jesus' return, we will always have people who are shouting, "Jesus is coming, Yeh! Yeh!"

Now the very fact that we know that Jesus is going to return one day should motivate us to live the kind of lives which pleases God. Jesus Himself promised that He would return one day. **John 14:1-3** "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many homes. If it weren't so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you to myself; that where I am, you may be there also."

And when Jesus made His ascension into heaven, two men reminded those who were there of the same promise. **Acts 1:9-11** "When he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. While they were looking steadfastly into the sky as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing, who also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who was received up from you into the sky will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky."

And so we hang onto that promise of Jesus that He will indeed return one day. And as we are going to see today, there will never be a shortage of people around who want to ridicule us for holding on to that promise. **I think it was Winnie the Pooh who famously says, 'I do remember and then when I try to remember, I forget.'** And so when we as Christians face ridicule about Jesus' return, just try to remember.

And the **first** thing we need to remember is that Christians should expect mockers. **2 Peter 3:1-4** "This is now, beloved, the second letter that I have written to you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by reminding you; that you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come, walking after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Peter says when we get people coming up to us and having a go about our faith concerning Jesus' return, just remember. He says remember the words spoken before the holy prophets; remember the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. In other words when these people come up to us and start mocking us because of our faith just remember that what God says is going to happen, will happen. Whether He spoke through His prophets or spoke through His apostles, God's word is sure. And when God's word says that unbelievers will come and ridicule us, you can be sure that they will and in that way it shouldn't come as a surprise to us.

**And when are we to expect these mockers? 2 Peter 3:3** "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come." Now when Peter uses this phrase **last days**, he is referring to the age of the Messiah. **Hebrews 1:1+2** "After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, in these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world".

In other words ever since the birth of Christianity, there has been and will continue to be those around us who will mock us for various reasons. Now you might wonder **why? Why do they do this, why do they go to the lengths they do to have a go at Christianity?**

2 Peter 3:3 “Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come, walking after their own lusts.”

You know I listen to the radio in my car quite regularly and sometimes there will be an interesting discussion taking place. And you can be sure that if there is ever a discussion about morals, or the state of the country, you get Christians calling in. But then you get these other people calling in to have a go at the Christians. Now why do they do that?

Well when Peter says that these scoffers come along, the real motivation behind it all is because they are walking according to their own lusts. In other words, most people know that when we talk about Jesus’ return, we’re talking about judgment. And so what these people do is make fun of us, why? Because it soothes their guilty consciences.

In fact we had a so called atheist in our mid week study not too long ago who came in and started to mock us because of our beliefs and if you watched him carefully you would have seen that every time we tried to answer a question, he just smirked. Why? Because he knew that what we were saying was true and so to deal with his guilty conscience, he smiles and denies that God exist. Why do you think the big bang theory and evolution are such a popular belief for many people today? It’s because if there is no God, then there’s no judgement and so they don’t have to deal with their own guilty consciences.

And so Peter says in his day, there were people going around saying, ‘Jesus is coming back, Yeh, Yeh’. 2 Peter 3:4 “Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Peter says the biggest argument that these people will use is that everything continues as it always has.

Now how are we going to answer these critics? What are we going to say when someone comes up to us and says, ‘Jesus is not coming back because this world is still turning and functioning like it always has since the beginning?’ Well remember what Peter has just told, he told us to remember what the holy prophets and apostles have said. Remember that God’s word is true and consistent.

2 Peter 3:5-7 “For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth formed out of water and amid water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” You see loved ones whilst we are remembering God’s word, these scoffers are forgetting. Peter says these scoffers have forgotten about the flood.

In one of the cathedrals of England there is a beautiful window through which the sunlight streams. It displays the facts and personalities of the Old and New Testament and the glorious truths and doctrines of the Christian revelation. Now what’s interesting about this window is that it was fabricated by the artist out of broken bits of glass which another artist had discarded.

You see loved ones; many people disregard the Old Testament and forget the many stories within them. But as Christians we need to remember what other people forget or disregard, we are to remember because it gives us the big picture. And so Peter says these scoffers forget, but not just forget, they wilfully forget. In other words they purposefully choose not to remember an event that proves their argument wrong.

Now like I said earlier, when that so called atheist came into our Bible study, he wasn’t interested in determining truth. He like many other people are actually trying to justify their lifestyle. Many people today conveniently ignore the evidence because they know the evidence would weaken their case. That’s why they ridicule Christians rather than dealing with it fairly and seriously.

But Peter says the flood is evidence of the certainty of God's word. What happened with Sodom and Gomorrah is evidence of the certainty of God’s word. Peter reminded us of those events back in 2 Peter 2:5+6 “If he did not spare the ancient world, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world, and if he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when he condemned them to destruction, having appointed them to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly.”

Peter says by God's word, the world was once destroyed by water. And in 2 Peter 3:7 he says, “By the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, by being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly”.

Peter says the same word that promised and carried through with the promise about the flood, is the word that promises and will carry through about the Lord's coming and the fire to accompany it. In other words since God kept His first promise to destroy the world with water, we can expect Him to keep His present promise as well.

Now again these scoffers may come along and say, 'Yes but, it has been so long since that promise was made.' And in one sense they might be right, it has been just over two thousand years since the promise of the Lord's return and the world's destruction was made.

But again to answer that question we need to remember **something else**, we need to remember that God is not affected by time. **2 Peter 3:8 "But don't forget this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"**.

When Raphael died at thirty-seven years of age, they carried his marvelous painting, "The Transfiguration," which was only half finished, in the funeral procession as a symbol of the incompleteness of life and the brevity of time. We all know that our time on earth is short, we all know that time dominates our lives every day whether we like it or not.

But loved ones, God is not man and He is not controlled by time as we understand it. Peter says with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Now sadly this is one of those passages which has been used and abused and taken out of context over the years.

Some people have homed in on this verse to make it mean something it was never meant to mean. But Peter is simply reminding us that time is irrelevant to God. And so while it may have been just over two thousand years since this promise of Jesus' return, to God that is no different from two days. **Psalm 90:4 "For a thousand years in your sight are just like yesterday when it is past, like a watch in the night."** In other words another two thousand years could pass, and God's Word would not be weakened at all.

Let me give you a couple of examples of time as God understands it. In **Genesis 12:3** God says to Abraham **"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you. All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you."** It was two thousand years before God fulfilled His promise to Abraham in terms of all the families of the earth shall be blessed through him.

God says to the serpent in **Genesis 3:15 "And I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; her offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her offspring's heel."** It was at least four thousand years before He fulfilled His promise to the serpent in terms of putting enmity between your seed and her Seed. He's speaking about Jesus and that He shall bruise the serpent's head, which He fulfilled at Calvary.

And so since God kept His promise about the first coming of Christ, we can expect Him to fulfil the promise of His Son's return. And when people ask us when Jesus is coming back, we can simply take them to **Acts 1:7 "It isn't for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set within his own authority"**.

**Justice Gray of the Supreme Court once said to a man who had appeared before him in one of the lower courts and had escaped conviction by some technicality: "I know that you are guilty and you know it, and I wish you to remember that one day you will stand before a better and wiser Judge, and that there you will be dealt with according to justice and not according to law."**

That day is coming loved ones, we don't know when it's coming but because God's word says it's coming, we believe it. People may ridicule us and tell us that this Jesus promised years ago that He was coming back, **where is He?** Just remember God's word is sure, remember God is not governed by time.

And **finally** Peter says there is one more thing we need to remember, remember that God is patient. **2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some count slowness; but is patient with us; not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"**.

Peter says these mockers believe that the Lord is slow concerning His promise. It has been just over two thousand years since the promise was made. Now while some people may think that the Lord is slow in coming back, we can be sure that He is slow for a reason. Peter says, **'He is patient with us not wanting anybody to perish'**.

You see loved ones, although God is a just God, He is also a merciful and loving God.

Our life is like the dial of a clock. The hands are God's hands, passing over and over again, the short **Hand of Discipline** and the long **Hand of Mercy**. Slowly and surely the **Hand of Discipline** must pass, and God speaks at each strike; but over and over passes the **Hand of Mercy**, showering down sixtyfold of blessings for each stroke of discipline or trial; and both hands are fastened to one secure point, the great, unchanging Heart of a God of Love.

While God's justice requires judgment and eternal punishment of all the ungodly, God's love and mercy is willing to give them time to repent. This explains the Lord's delay in returning loved ones; He has given every generation that has lived during the last two thousand years time to repent. And in that way He has been patient with everyone, He's is hoping that people will repent.

There are going to be many people like the man who drove over the **Forth road bridge in Scotland**. As he entered the bridge there were speed restriction signs which said, **30 mph**. He decided to drive over at **50 mph**. The police pulled him over at the other end of the bridge and asked him **if he saw the speed signs**, to which the guy said **yes**. The police asked him **what did the speed signs say and the man replied 30 mph, so why were you doing 50 mph?** asked the police to which the man replied, **'Because I didn't expect to meet you on the other side'**.

And many people are going to be like that man; many people are not expecting to meet God on the other side. And if you're not a Christian this morning and you're wondering **when is Jesus coming back?** That's the wrong question; the Bible doesn't answer that question. The real question which the Bible does answer is this, **why on earth would God be patient with me and want anyone to come to Him?**

I don't care where you are from, I don't care what your background is and all the ungodly things you've been involved in. God says, you will meet Me on the other side but the reason I've not come back today is because I'm giving you one more chance to come to Me today. And you come to Jesus today by repenting, by turning away from the world and its sinful ways. You come to Jesus by following Jesus and His words today.

The Bible tells us that God sent His Son to die for your sins. The Bible also tells us that God has delayed the sending of His Son a second time, to give you time to repent. Peter says remember God's word is sure, remember God is not governed by time and remember that God is patient with you and He wants you to come to Him today.