

Know the Desire

2 Peter 3:4-9

Last week Kimberly listened to Pastor Josh' message with our three-year-old granddaughter sitting in her lap. After settling in to the chair together, Aleksi whispered, *"GG, my mommy says that I have a sickness."*

"Oh, I am so sorry! What kind of sickness do you have?"

"GG, I don't know."

Then Kimberly went back to listening to the sermon. After about 15 minutes, Aleksi climbed down off GG's lap and went over to her mom. She got some snacks to help her hungry tummy and Kimberly saw her speak to her mom a bit. A minute or two later, Aleksi climbed back into Kimberly's lap. She lifted her head and whisper, *"GG, the kind of sickness that I have is called a cold."*

I love that story for a number of reasons. First, it is a loving interaction between a grandma and her granddaughter. But this story it is a kind of parable to me filled with spiritual lessons.

This story tells of a little one who understands that she is sick not only because she feels the symptoms but because she believes her mommy's testimony about her condition. Too many who attend church do not know that we are spiritually sick. Many are not self-aware of the symptoms of a sinful heart and they do not believe their Father's testimony about disease has taken hold of their soul.

This story also tells of a child who not only admits her sickness, but is curious about her illness . . . curious enough to ask her mommy about its specific name. And when her mom tells her the name of the sickness, she does not argue with her mom, but believes her and then confesses the specific name of her sickness to another. **Too many of us never stop to ask our Father to name the specific sin sickness that is operating in our soul. And if we do ask God this question, we tend to doubt the diagnosis when He reveals it.** Finally, if we do become conscious about the specific sin infecting our life, our life we often refuse to confess it with our mouths.

This morning we open our Bibles to 2 Peter 2:4-9. Peter addresses the church about people who make light of the sickness of their lives and of the judgment to come. This spiritual denial has plagued mankind from the beginning of time.

"They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14 [NIV](#))

"For thus says the LORD: Your hurt is incurable, and your wound is grievous." (Jeremiah 30:12 [ESV](#))

Main Idea: God alone is on the right side of history. As followers of Jesus, we long for the appearing of our LORD Jesus. We warn those who reject Him of His soon return and we rejoice with those who love Him in the expectation of His appearing.

Our Experience with the Skeptic's Persuasion

*"2Peter 3:4 **They will say**, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.' 2Peter 3:5 **For they deliberately overlook this fact,**" (2 Peter 3:4-5 [ESV](#))*

Who are "they" of 3:4? Look back one verse.

"Scoffers who come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires" (3:3).

The last days refers to period between the first coming of Jesus to suffer in order to offer forgiveness of sin and His second coming in order to bring final judgment upon sin. We are in the last days. We have been in the last days for 2000 years. The last days will be marked by outspoken scoffers who declare that Jesus is not ever going to come to judge sin.

As believers living in the last days, we look with eagerness toward the next great event that will bring the last days to a conclusion. **That event is the coming of the LORD Jesus in power and glory. The second coming of the LORD is as central of an event in God's plan for His world as the first coming of Jesus was.** Both are of equal significance. Over and over again the New Testament writers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit urge us to think upon, to pray for, to love, to wait for, to stay awake for, to be ready for and to long for the appearing of Jesus. **The doctrine of the coming of Jesus is not a secondary doctrine, but a central one. To depart from belief in the second coming of Jesus is to depart from the gospel.**

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8 [ESV](#))

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," (Philippians 3:20 [ESV](#))

This broken world is NOT our home. Let us never live like it is!

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." (1 John 3:2-3 [ESV](#))

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen." (Revelation 1:7 [ESV](#))

"He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20 [ESV](#))

But just as the coming of the LORD brings joy to the heart of the redeemed, this day brings misery to all who refuse to believe in Jesus as Messiah and LORD.

"Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! . . . Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it." (Isaiah 13:6, 9 [ESV](#))

The NT is comprised of 27 separate books. **Did you know that 23 of those books explicitly teach about the second coming of Jesus?** Of the four that do not explicitly mention the second advent, three of those are only one chapter long . . . Philemon, 2 John and 3 John. And the fourth book, Galatians, adds several implicit allusions to this future day.

Application: Christian, let us await with eagerness for the return of Jesus! Let us wake up in the morning and think, "Today could be the day!"

Do you look forward to the day when Jesus brings an end to all that is evil and wrong in this world and establishes peace, righteousness, worship and healing on this earth?

Not long ago I was thinking about my brother Jim who is battling terminal cancer. And Kimberly share a song by Steven McWhirter. As I listened to him sing about the coming of Jesus I wept with tears of hope and joy and anticipation.

*Sometimes I fall to my knees and pray
 Come Jesus come
 Let today be the day
 Sometimes I feel like I'm gonna break
 But I'm holding on to a hope that won't fade*

*Come Jesus come
 We've been waiting so long
 For the day You return to heal every hurt
 And right every wrong
 We need you right now
 Come and turn this around
 Deep down I know this world isn't home
 Come Jesus come
 Come Jesus come*

*One day He'll come and we'll stand face to face
 Come and lay it all down, 'cause it might be today
 The time is right now, there's no need to wait
 Your past will be washed by rivers of grace*

*Come Jesus come
 We've been waiting so long
 For the day You return to heal every hurt
 And right every wrong
 We need you right now
 Come and turn this around
 Deep down I know this world isn't home
 Come Jesus come
 Come Jesus come*

May we live like the 5 wise virgins with our lamps filled with oil and the wicks trimmed ready for the bridegroom to arrive! May we be awake and ready when He comes!

While followers of Jesus love the thought of His appearing, the world hates it. The mockers are offended by it. The scoffers know this doctrine motivates many to turn from the world and to bow their knee to Jesus. So they come after this truth with a vengeance.

*“2Peter 3:4 **They will say**, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 2Peter 3:5 For **they deliberately overlook** this fact,” (2 Peter 3:4-5 [ESV](#))*

What do they mean when they say, *“Where is the promise of His coming?”*

This is a pronouncement of ridicule. It is not a thoughtful interaction with the claims of Jesus and His followers. **It is a mocking laughter in the face of God and of His people specifically snorting at Jesus’ claim that He will return to judge sin and to establish His rule on the earth.**

Where does this mockery come from? **It is not a rational reason for rejecting the Gospel, but it is a willful rebellion against the LORD.** This mockery is inspired by Satan.

You can understand WHY Satan hates the message of the return of Jesus. Because at the coming of Jesus, Satan will be chained for one thousand years while Jesus reigns in glory on the earth. And then at the end of the millennial kingdom, Satan will be judged and thrown into the lake of fire where he will be condemned in torment forever and ever. **Satan hates the truth of the second coming as much as he hates the truth of the first coming of Jesus the Messiah because in both appearances of Jesus as Messiah, Satan loses BIG TIME!**

Satan inspires scoffers to focus their intellects, their talents, their resources to ridicule the truth of the Jesus’ return. What is Satan’s goal with the ridicule?

Three reasons Satan attacks with ridicule the second coming of Jesus:

1. **To keep unbelievers from fearing God.** Satan deceives unbelievers into thinking that the idea of future judgment is a fairy tale and that they will never ever ever stand before God to give an account of their lives.
2. **To persuade believers to leave the faith . . . or at least leave Jesus’ church.** Satan loves to weaken our faith in God and our love for one another. He uses cleverly devised arguments that appeal to the believer’s desire for self-rule to move God’s people away from the Gospel.
3. **To intimidate believers from being bold in our faith.** Satan wants those committed to following Jesus to be afraid. He places scoffers in our path with the clear message that standing up for Jesus will cost us in terms of respect and relationship with people in the world. He wants us to fear man more than we fear God.

How certain is it that they will they say what they say? “They will say.” Not “they might say”. God is guaranteeing that people who are inspired by Satan will confront God’s people and ridicule your belief in Jesus’ return.

Some of you may be thinking, *“No one is saying anything like this to me?”* Really. I think that they are. I believe you and I hear this ridicule on talk shows and podcasts and books and blogs and classrooms and in popular songs and movies and in churches.

Here is a test for you to determine if you have been influenced by the scoffers. When you plan your next speech for public speaking class, speak about Jesus coming back to judge sin and put an end to evil. Plan to state specifically all that Jesus says is sin . . . fornication, abortion, adultery, homosexuality, greed, false worship, anger and stealing.

Why do we tremble at the thought of doing that? You would not be afraid of saying that to God, would you? You would not be afraid of saying that to a godly mom or dad, would you? Why are you afraid of saying it in the general public? **Answer: We know the ridicule and hatred and mockery that will come to us. We know what will happen because it is already happening.**

This mocking of God’s future judgment is happening in churches that at one time preached the message of Jesus’ return with faith and boldness. The latest example this past week is the UMC.

Illustration: UMC at her General Convention this week voted overwhelmingly to affirm self-avowed, practicing homosexuals to be ordained as pastors in their denomination. This 93% who voted in favor of this who now is included the “they” of 2 Peter 3:4.

“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”” (Revelation 22:12-16 [ESV](#))

Our Perspective of History

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

The mocker’s argument is this, *“All the people who believed God in the OT (the fathers) all died without God’s promise of the Messiah’s coming in judgment being fulfilled. So why should we believe that Jesus will come at all?”* They say,

“All things are continuing without God’s intervention as they were from the beginning. Tomorrow will be exactly like today. God is outside of human history and not inside it. Stop waiting for Jesus’ return!”

The mocking idea is simple: **If God has not yet fulfilled His prophecies about a day of judgment after all these years, it is ridiculous to believe that God will fulfill His promise now! The promise is a ruse to control us!**

Peter says, “There is a problem with that argument.”

*“5 For they **deliberately overlook** this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.” (2 Peter 3:5-7 [ESV](#)).*

Peter says, *“It is not true that all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of time. The scoffers “deliberately overlook” the facts of human history. They do not want to believe in God so they do not let themselves think about God’s past actions. There are two historic events at the very beginning of human history that show us that God acts inside human history. **Consider the beginning of creation and consider the flood in Noah’s day.**”*

Creation: Without God’s divine action there is no explanation for why there is something instead of nothing. Tell me how did the universe come into being? How do you account for this physical universe? If we believe that physical matter is eternal, then we are placing our faith in the god of materialism rather than the God who created. **How is it reasonable or scientific to simply assert that physical matter is eternal . . . that it had no beginning.**

Creation by its existence and by the intelligence of its design shouts that there is a God who stepped into human history to bring it into being. **And if God stepped into human history at the beginning of time to create the world, should we not listen to Him when He says that He will step into human history at the end of time?**

The Flood: All things have not simply continued as they have from the beginning of time. God has stepped in to human history with His righteous response to evil. Exhibit A is the flood. Noah preached about the flood for 100 years and people mocked him that God’s judgment would never happen . . . until one day God sent the rain.

Some may argue, “Well, the flood really did not happen. So Peter is only using a fairy tale to defend another fairy tale.” But did you know that the ancient story of the flood is preserved in cultures all over the world. Anthropologists have recorded ancient flood legends from the ancient Babylonians, [Native Americans](#), Australian Aboriginals, Aztecs, Romans, Greeks, Chinese, Mayans, Inuits, and many others. Further, these stories share many similarities to the Genesis story, including an angry god and people who survived the flood in a boat.

For instance, the Apache people refer to the ancient flood and the *tus*, a gigantic floating vessel, provided by God, which was sealed watertight with gum from the pinion tree. A few people entered the *tus* and thus escaped the flood that “completely submerged the earth for twelve days.” The Apaches remember the vessel landing on a hill and the sending of birds, including a pigeon (named Agocho) to inspect the flooded world (Curtis, E. S., *The North American Indian*, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1907, pp. 27–28).

The first century Jewish historian Josephus asserts, “All writers of barbarian histories make mention of this flood and of this ark. Among whom is Berosus the Chaldean, Hieronymus the Egyptian, also, who wrote the Phoenician Antiquities, and Mnaseas, and a great many more, make mention of the same.” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 1.3.6).

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Genesis-flood-proven.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/flood-legends.html>

George Catlin, a widely traveled American painter and author, summarized his research this way: “Amongst one hundred and twenty different tribes that I have visited in North and South and Central America, not a tribe exists that has not related to me distinct or vague traditions of such a calamity, in which one, or three, or eight persons were saved above the waters, on the top of a high mountain” (*O-Kee-Pa: A Religious Ceremony and Other Customs of the Mandans* J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1867, pp. 1–2).

At the flood, God stepped into human history to bring judgment on sin. It is simply NOT TRUE that everything in human history has happened one day after another without God’s direct intervention.

7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.” (2 Peter 3:5-7 [ESV](#)).

When Jesus speaks of His second coming, He also points back to the flood in Noah's day as a reference.

"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left." (Matthew 24:36-40 [ESV](#))

We often hear politicians and cultural influencers speaking about being on the right side of history. Everyone presumes that the future will ultimately show how good, moral and right that they are and how evil, immoral and foolish their opponents are. Everyone thinks that they are on the right side of history.

If you wish to be on the right side of history, then follow the LORD. For the LORD controls human history. And at the end of time, He will reveal Himself and His righteousness in glory and power. His truth will triumph! And all the scoffing and vain ideas of man will be shown for what they are. Empty, false and tragic.

Truth: God does not react to human history; God ordains human history.

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11 [ESV](#))

Truth: God is moving all human history to one glorious conclusion . . . the vindication of God's righteousness in judgment and the display of God's love in salvation.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:31-34 [ESV](#))

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels . . . And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’” (Matthew 25:41, 46 [ESV](#))

Our Confession of God’s Person

*8 But do not overlook this one fact, **beloved**, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2 Peter 3:8-9 [ESV](#))*

“Beloved” We tend to believe the people whom we think love us. Peter wants the readers to know that his warning against false teachers and skeptics is not from a selfish heart but from a loving heart. God loves us. This is why He gives us His Word. This is why God gives us warnings about a judgment to come. This is not God delighting in the demise of His image bearing creatures. This is God reaching out to you and to me to rescue us!

Why does God do what God does? Why does He wait to fulfill His promise of a Messiah to come?

The answers are found in God’s very Person. If we know WHO God is, we will better understand WHAT God is doing. Peter points us to four qualities of the LORD that help us understand His workings in human history.

--God’s righteousness -- *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise . . .* The LORD is not passive or dismissive about the evil in this world. He does not yawn with disinterest when He sees mankind sin against His Name. The LORD’s righteousness will prevail and His justice will be vindicated.

--God’s eternity -- *with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* The LORD’s sense of time is totally different from our sense of time. What is a long time for a Person who has existed for all eternity past? In my short 60 years, my sense of a long time has changed. When I was 5 years old, I thought a week was an eternity.

--God’s patience -- *but is patient toward you,* The LORD is not impatient or antsy about His kingdom program. He is moving at the exact speed that will bring Him the most glory.

--God's mercy -- *not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

The purpose of God's delay is to keep the door of the ark open one more day.

When the door of God's salvation closes, the door of God's judgment opens.

When the rain of God's judgment begins to fall, it will be too late to get into the ark. God is waiting one more day for more sinners to be rescued from the judgment that is coming.

At the cross we see the righteousness and mercy of God wed together. God's righteousness demands the punishment of the cross to satisfy sin's punishment. God's mercy lovingly offers the suffering Son as the hope of forgiveness and deliverance. We are only prepared for Jesus' second appearing when we receive the benefit of Jesus' first appearing.

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7 [ESV](#))

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief," (2 Peter 3:10 [ESV](#))

Application: The LORD Jesus is coming at a time and moment that we do not expect. Let us stay awake for it!

("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!")" (Revelation 16:15 [ESV](#))

Illustration: Lord, is today the Day? Help me to live as though it is!

Main Idea: God alone is on the right side of history. As followers of Jesus, we long for the appearing of our LORD Jesus. We warn those who reject Him of His soon return and we rejoice with those who love Him in the expectation of His appearing.

Conclusion:

"They will say". Peter knows that scoffers have a strong influence on many inside Jesus' church. Friends, the voices that we listen to deeply influence us. No one gives an ear to false teachers without endangering his/her soul. That is true

of the music podcasts we listen to, the movies we watch, the books and blogs we read. We are all vulnerable to believing well-crafted lies.

God tells us plainly, ***“They will say . . .”*** From the beginning of time, Satan has inspired myriads of talkers who cast doubt on the truthfulness of God’s promises. The devil is aggressive in enlisting some of the most eloquent, winsome, intriguing, and captivating people to be his microphone to persuade our hearts and minds away from the LORD. God predicts with absolute certainty ***“They will say . . .”*** There is no question as to whether false teachers will try to feed unbelief in us. ***“They will say.”*** The only question yet to be decided is, ***“Will I listen to them when they say what they will say?”***

Let us be a people saturated in the Word of God!

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.” (Psalm 1:1-4 [ESV](#))

Our Experience with the Skeptic’s Persuasion

Our Perspective of History

Our Confession of God’s Person

- God’s righteousness
- God’s eternity
- God’s patience
- God’s mercy