

Title: Promise Made. Promise Will Be Kept.  
Date: 2/9/25  
Subject: The Lord will keep his promise.  
Scripture: 2 Peter 3:1 - 9

A female IRS agent in Utah called Anchorage, Alaska to track down a delinquent taxpayer. She was patched through to a ham operator in the Aleutian Islands who two hours later raised the taxpayer's home base which led to reaching the man at sea with his fishing fleet. The woman identified herself as being with the IRS and the purpose of the call. There was a long pause. Over the static from somewhere in the North Pacific came: "Ha! Ha! Come and get me!" (In *Reader's Digest*, "Life in These United States," 10/82)

There are people who are similar to the man. They feel they're out of God's reach. "You can't get me."

READ 2 Peter 3:1-9

Christians are to be marked by wholesome thinking.

Peter initially addressed the readers: "to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours." It comes across as a little business-ish compared to "dear friends." There's even more intimacy in the original language - loved ones. Peter felt closely connected to the earliest readers and leans into the relationship. He uses "loved ones/dear friends) four times in the chapter.

He has walked them through some weighty subjects and returns to the theme of giving reminders. The NIV states the reminder: "to stimulate you to wholesome thinking." Other translations emphasize the aspect of believers having pure and sincere minds. We need to keep our minds sharp.

The Milwaukee Brewers equipment semi left Tuesday for Arizona. It was packed with approximately 20,500 baseballs, 1,000 bats, 200 batting helmets, 2,000 shirts, 250 batting gloves, 400 batting practice jerseys, 200 game jerseys, 300 uniform pants, 500 pairs of socks, 20 cases of bubble gum, 60 cases of sunflower seeds. Don't forget the uniforms for Bernie Brewer and the Racing Sausages. Pitchers and catchers report this week and the full squad the 18<sup>th</sup>. That gives players, coaches and sausages 37 days to knock off the rust - get their bodies and minds focused before the first "Play ball!" of the regular season on March 27.

Christians don't have a spring training season to knock off the rust. Everyday is "Play Ball!" and we're in a continual process of knocking off the rust. We're to keep stirring our minds and focus on what's wholesome - the truth. That way we'll have a firm foundation rather than false footing.

V. 2 identifies how stimulation is accomplished. The holy prophets of the past through the Old Testament foreshadowed the first coming of Jesus and his second coming. The apostles through the New Testament give the commands of our Lord and Savior, the ethical and moral teaching and demands from God. Together we have the foreshadowing and the fulfillment. We're to listen to the entirety of God's revelation.

The focus is narrowed to Christ's second coming and the related warnings about false teachers.  
First of all, you must understand

Peter delivers some extremely important information. He says “first of all.” This is similar to the “above all” in 1:20. He repeats another phrase from that verse: “you must understand.” What follows is on a need-to-know basis and you need to know. It’s imperative. It’s not optional. It’s not if we can allocate some time, then we might get around to it. It’s urgent. It’s of primary importance. Be thoroughly familiar.

Something is going to happen in “the last days.” The Old Testament days, the first days, set the scene. The last days began with Christ’s first advent and extends until eternity dawns.

What’s going to happen?

Scoffers scoff at the idea of a second coming of Christ.

The thing to understand is that there will be scoffers, mockers. Since they follow their own evil desires just like the false teachers previously described, they either are the same false teachers or a specialized version. They live the way they want without wanting to look over their shoulder because of a possible judgment. They don’t want to be morally accountable to some supreme being. They have no use for God.

What do they do? They scoff. They make fun of what they don’t know. The specific subject is Christ’s second coming. It’s everywhere in the New Testament and hard to not see. John MacArthur (Study Bible notes) states there are 300 references to Christ’s second coming in the New Testament’s 260 chapters. Only Galatians, Philemon, 2 and 3 John don’t have specific references to it. The false teachers/scoffers were aware that Christ made a promise that he’d return and decide to deny, mock and scoff.

The scoffers train of thought goes something like this: “Where is this “coming” he promised? From the dawn of time, nothing has changed. God may have created and kickstarted nature, but he left it to do its own thing. It’s a closed universe, stable and unchanging. It’s like a clock that keeps ticking. There’s a natural cause and effect. Day follows night which follows day which follows night (ad infinitum, ad nauseum). If his “coming” hasn’t happened in the 30 plus years since his death, it won’t. He’s been gone a long time. He should have been back by now if he’d loved and missed his people. The evidence shows that he doesn’t care. It’s the same old song and dance, a long story of broken promises and empty words. It’s wishful thinking.”

They conclude that God is unreliable. He’s a liar, liar, pants on fire.

There have been scoffers throughout history and are many today. They scoff at the idea of God and mock those who believe. They develop systems to counter God like evolution, a universe that’s billions and billions and billions of years old. They deny the Flood. They question: “Has God really said?” They scoff at and mock God by their actions, living as if they aren’t accountable to and won’t stand in judgment before him.

Peter counters and refutes the arguments of those who scoff at the idea of Christ’ second coming.

Counter argument presented

V. 5 begins with the fantastic word “but.” At least it’s fantastic with this usage. It’s not the other shoe dropping kind from the boss, “You’ve done a nice job, but... you’ll have to work 48 hours straight.” It’s more like hearing from your tax preparer, “You were supposed to pay X amount, but... now you’re getting a massive refund.” “But” signifies a change of direction. A correction is being made to the scoffers’ logic.

But... they deliberately forget. They hit the erase function in their brain. They do so because if they spend time honestly examining the evidence as J. Warner Wallace did, their theory would go out the window. They'd realize they're going to be held accountable, and they don't want to face that truth.

Peter presents evidence that things haven't always gone on in an unchanged way. Scoffers deliberately forget that God created. By his spoken word he created the heavens, earth, Mars and Andromeda from nothing. There was no universe . . . and then there was. There was a starting point. The Lord dramatically intervened.

Scoffers attack the idea of God creating because if God isn't the Creator, he doesn't have the right to judge. But if he is the Creator. . .

The second piece of evidence is the flood of Noah's day. It was a unique thing that had never happened before. No seismologist predicted the springs of the great deep would burst forth. No meteorologist foresaw the floodgates of the heavens would open and rain would fall on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. No geographer predicted floodwater would cover the entire earth for 150 days. The people of Noah's time lived with a sense of normalcy, things would just continue as they had, the same old same old. . . until they didn't.

The Lord intervened again. The flood came as an act of judgment on people who'd become totally corrupt and evil. Every living thing on earth – people, land animals, birds - was wiped out except for those that were on the ark.

One more thing scoffers deliberately forget about how God intervened. It's hidden in plain view in their question in v. 4: "Where is this coming *he* promised?" Who "he"? The *He* is Jesus. The Son of God left heaven, became human, lived on earth, died on the cross, rose from the dead. There's no bigger interruption to the norm than that. They deliberately forget because they want to erase Christ.

Since God acted to create, judge through the Flood, and sent his Son, there's one more change to everything going on as it has since the beginning of creation. The end will come when the Lord says so. There will be a day of judgment. The heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire. This opens the way for the new heaven and the new earth. Ungodly people will be destroyed. They won't be made new. They'll experience eternal suffering and torment.

Peter turns from judgment to instill hope. He zeroes in on his audience again - dear friends, loved ones. Don't forget this one thing.

The scoffers may deliberately forget, but we aren't to forget, with deliberately or because we're distracted. READ v. 8.

The phrase has sometimes been misused. The rules for understanding language require us to note the comparison is shown by "like" and not by "equals." Some have injected the idea that a thousand years equals a day and a day equals 1000 years into the account of creation. They say each day was 1000 years, so it took God 6000 years or longer ages. This is an attempt to try to get the Bible to match the evolutionary idea of billions and billions of years. Some also use it to predict Christ's second coming. They say that even as there were 6 days of creation (6000 years) there will be 6000 years from creation to Christ's return.

Why not apply this thinking to Jonah in the belly of the fish - three days so it would have been 3000 years. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by the devil so it was really 40,000 years.

1000 years and a day aren't the same. They are "like." The figure of speech communicates that time is meaningless to the Lord. He's above time as he is eternal.

Kevin O'Leary is known for his role on TV's Shark Tank and nickname Mr. Wonderful. Time is a big deal to him. He has an extensive watch collection with some worth more than 1/2 million. He wears a watch on each wrist to display them and help him know the time in New York and other places he has business interests like Abu Dhabi. He even started a company that insures high end watches.

Time isn't a big deal to God. He isn't looking at his watch, tapping his foot, thinking times a'wastin', gotta keep things moving along. He has all the time in the world.

Scoffers want to portray the reason for God's seeming inactivity is he is indifferent. He's dilly dallying around, taking his sweet time, dragging his feet because he just can't work up the gumption to do something. They misunderstand God's reasoning.

What's the hold up with God bringing in the final act? What could be more important than the passage of time? How about salvation? Salvation of people. God is loving and compassionate. He doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. Repentance means people change their way of thinking as to how they can get to heaven and accept God's way as the only way.

It's not as some say that everybody is going to make it to heaven. If that's the case, why is God waiting? Act now already. Why even put people on earth to begin with? Sure, there are good things, but why subject people to an existence where there's also pain and suffering? There's no point to it or for anything past Christ's crucifixion or maybe even from the dawn of eternity since God came up with the plan before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Just put everybody in heaven to begin with.

The Lord has his plan. "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people" (Titus 2:11). God "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:16-18).

God made provision for all people but it won't be forced upon them. He doesn't want puppets. He wants people who will choose to respond to his offer of love. People are free to make their choice.

God is patient. The idea is repeated in v. 15 - the Lord's patience means salvation." V. 9 reads "he is patient with you." Who is the you?

It could be people who don't know Christ as Savior. God is waiting for those who are indifferent antagonistic, unaware. He wants them to be saved. Yet, people "show contempt for the riches of his kindness,

forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead *them* (orig. "you") to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

It could be to those who are Christians. The letter is addressed to fellow believers, brothers in Christ. The Lord is patient with those who are supposed to be telling the good news to those who don't know Jesus as Savior. He's waiting for us.

God waited patiently while Noah built the ark (1 Pet 3:20). It wasn't because of the immense nature of the construction project. It allowed time for Noah to proclaim God's deliverance to people. The same for us.

There'll come a time when God's patience will wear out and he'll no longer wait. Time will be done. Connect that with God not wanting anyone to perish. I wonder if that means there's coming a time when the last person who is willing to be saved will be saved and there's no one else who wants to be saved.

Robert Ingersoll was nicknamed "The Great Agnostic." He questioned the existence of God and pronounced that if he did, He was a cowardly, bloodthirsty, vengeful tyrant. He had an infamous "sermon" titled "What must I do to be saved?" in which he mocked and ridiculed Christianity.

In a debate with Dr. Joseph Parker, Ingersoll mercilessly attacked the Bible's truthfulness. He profanely denied Christ's deity and work on the cross. Near the end of his presentation, he paused, looked heavenward and threw out his challenge: "I have just vilified, assailed and profaned the name of Almighty God; I challenge You, if You exist at all, I call You to strike me dead upon this very spot." Then he nonchalantly walked to his chair. He pulled out his watch and added, "I will give You five minutes." As the hushed and stunned crowd waited, he confidently announced the remaining time...four minutes left...three minutes...two minutes...one minute. When the five minutes elapsed, he triumphantly stood as many in the crowd burst into thunderous applause. He returned to the podium for his closing remarks. When he concluded, he smugly motioned to Parker to try to refute his arguments.

The preacher slowly moved behind the podium. He addressed the audience and soundly countered Ingersoll's positions. He concluded by turning to Ingersoll: "And did the good gentleman think he could exhaust the patience, frustrate the grace, and thwart the infinite mercy of the eternal God in just five minutes?"

We come back to v. 1 – stimulate each other to wholesome thinking. Why do we need to do that? So we won't scoff and think that since Jesus Christ hasn't come back yet, we have lots of time to live anyway we want and then at the last moment, get ready and get cleaned up for him. We need wholesome thinking so we'll be prepared, will love him more, and to increase our confidence and hope in him. Tell others while there's still time. Understanding God's perspective enables us to endure trials, as we see the wicked seemingly prosper while the godly suffer, knowing there's a coming judgment in which all people will give account to God.

What should we think about? Christ's life and death. Christ's loving actions toward his body, the church. About who we are in Christ. That he's coming back and is preparing a place for us so we can be with him forever. He will judge evil. God is never late. He's always on time. The Lord isn't slow in keeping his promise.