

The Certainty of the Second Coming, Part 1

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:1-4

Code: 61-23

Open your Bible, if you will, to 2 Peter chapter 3. We're about to embark in this chapter on a really great adventure. It's not the kind of chapter that you can go through rapidly, unless you want to miss some rich treasure. And so I know you'll go along at the rate that the Spirit of God kind of prompts my heart, welcoming and savoring all of the great truths that we find here.

As we come to 2 Peter chapter 3 we come to a section of Scripture that we could well entitle, "The certainty of the Second Coming," the certainty of the Second Coming. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has always lived in anticipation of His return to gather His redeemed people, one. To destroy the wicked, two, and to establish His glorious kingdom, three. And we have lived in that hope as have all believers before us, and believers after us should the Lord tarry. We live in hope, says the apostle Paul, and it is indeed the hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That hope, according to the Word of God, is a motivator. In fact, it may well be the greatest or among the greatest of all motivators for our joy, for our service, for our holiness. We live anticipating that Jesus will return, that with Him He will bring His reward to give to those who are faithful, that with Him will come eternal joy to some degree and in some way based upon the level of commitment and faithfulness we have exhibited in our lives.

We look to the coming of Jesus Christ because we know that it also relates to the incarceration, if you will, of Satan, to the reign and the dominion of Jesus Christ whom we love and serve, and to the bringing in of eternal righteousness in an environment in which sin is forever absent. So the coming of Jesus Christ is the great event, the great anticipation, the great goal, the great purpose, the great culmination of our Christian faith.

Because that is true, we have been celebrating that in great measure as we've been going through 2 Peter and 1Thessalonians on Sunday mornings. Because it is true that the Second Coming has such tremendous potential for spiritual motivation in the life of the church, it is also true then that Satan works very hard to deny the Second Coming. If Satan can effectively get the church to look away from the Second Coming, or even to deny it as a reality, then he can remove a rather significant spiritual hope, spiritual motivation.

We are not then surprised that throughout the history of the church from the time of the New Testament, it has always had...listen carefully...on its inside, skeptics who felt it was their role to

deny the coming of Christ. The church has always had to endure the denial of the return of Christ. There are those who inevitably spiritualize it away and say, "The significance of the kingdom of Christ is nothing more than Christ ruling within you, and Jesus is never coming back to this earth. It will never be any different than it is really, we'll just keep on living and we'll die and we'll go to heaven in some sort of unending cycle of human birth and death."

That kind of thing that removes this great hope, this great motivating force, is a threat to the life, the energy, the impetus, the drive, the zeal, the passion, the effectiveness of the church in the world. And lest you think that I'm talking too much in generalization, let me just give you a little bit of a feeling for where the contemporary church is taking some of its cues. If you were a seminary student any time over the last 50 years, particularly the last 25 years, and, certainly, in some seminaries even today, you would recognize some very familiar names that have influenced the theology of today.

These names have caused a great impact on seminaries, universities, therefore professors, therefore students, therefore pastors and spiritual leaders; therefore, they have impacted the church. Some of those names you may recognize, some you will not, but I say again, if you were a seminary student you would recognize them all and you maybe need to know a little bit about their influence.

First of all, a man by the name of Adolf Von Harnack, some years back, wrote a book, *What is Christianity?* In his writings, which have been extremely influential in contemporary theology, you read this, "The kingdom of God comes by coming to the individual, by entering into his soul and laying hold of it. True, the kingdom of God is the rule of God; but it is the rule of the holy God in the hearts of individuals; it is God himself in his power. From this point of view everything that was dramatic in the external and historical sense has vanished; and gone, too, are all the hopes for the future." End quote. Adolph Von Harnack is saying there is no Second Coming, there is no future kingdom. It is only a spiritual reality in the present. He rejected completely all eschatological aspects of the kingdom of God.

Another very familiar writer, I remember reading quite a number of his works when I was a seminary student, is a man by the name of C.H. Dodd, who wrote one particular book called *Parables of the kingdom*. This book has influenced many contemporary theologians. And if you were to try to understand Dodd more fully, you would come to the conviction, without equivocation, that he denies any literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He states, "That since the Lord did not in literal truth return on the clouds of heaven during the '30s of the first century, to expect Him thus to return in the twentieth century is to go contrary to primitive Christianity which is true Christianity."

As a matter of fact, C.H. Dodd taught that the doctrine of the Second Coming is a myth. And I'm quoting, "The least inadequate myth of the goal of history is that which molds itself upon the great divine event of the past known in its concrete actuality and depicts its final issue in a form which brings time to an end and places man in eternity. The least significant myth is the Second Coming of

the Lord and the Last Judgment.” End quote. He taught, in fact, did C.H. Dodd that the New Testament teaching of the Second Coming is sub-Christian.

Karl Bart, a well-known purveyor of what came to be known as Neo-Orthodoxy, held to what he called a timeless eschatology in which the coming of Christ is no longer understood as a future literal return of Christ. But said Bart, quote, “It is a timeless symbol for the endless earnestness of eternity in every existential situation.” End quote. Whatever in the world that means.

Rudolf Bultmann, again well known to theological students, set out to make a life effort to quote/unquote “demythologize the New Testament.” He concluded, “Among the mythological elements in the New Testament which must be reinterpreted and, therefore, no longer taken literally are the following: heaven, hell, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Second Coming of Christ, and the future day of judgment.” Bultmann also claims to find support for his view in the writings of Paul. Paul, he admits, gave teachings about apocalyptic future events like the Second Coming and the final judgment. But, he says, “This is mythical eschatology. And so Paul must be demythologized.”

One more comes to mind, familiar to theological students, Jürgen Moltmann, another German. Moltmann, in vain...you look into his writings and try to find anything on the Second Coming of Christ that is not so totally ambiguous that it's absolutely nonsense. He is ambiguous on the Second Coming. He is ambiguous on the Day of Judgment. He is ambiguous on a future resurrection. He is ambiguous on a new heaven and a new earth. His comments are vague. His comments are abstract. His comments are imprecise. And they tell us that he is doing everything possible to evade having to even deal with such issues.

I would say this small group of men have, as much as anybody, influenced modern contemporary theology in the church. And the bottom line is they deny the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They deny the Day of the Lord's judgment. You say, “Why are you telling us this?” Because it is very important for you to understand that what Peter is dealing with in this chapter, we are dealing with today. The false teachers who were plaguing the believers to whom Peter writes are also plaguing the church today.

Then, they were denying Christ's return and judgment. Today, they're denying it again. And, in fact, if you read through 2 Peter, and you've been with us in our study, this is a climactic point in the book. We have gone through some pretty intense stuff in chapters 1 and 2, and now I believe we reach the climax of their heresies. This causes Peter to take great care in chapter 3 to handle this potentially damning and destructive denial of the Second Coming and judgment.

Now you need to remember that Peter is writing this brief epistle in an inspired effort to assist Christians to discern false teachers and to have the theological power and the spiritual resources to overcome their influence. So Peter was facing false teachers, as we do, as the church does in every

generation. And they've always been around who will deny the Second Coming and deny judgment.

So as he opens this last chapter, that is what is on his heart. The first nine verses focuses on the debate regarding the coming of Christ in future judgment. Verse 10 affirms that judgment. Verses 11-18 talk about the implications of it on our conduct. So Peter takes direct aim here at a debate, and it is an incredible passage. You're going to see things and learn things that perhaps you have never understood before, just as this passage unfolds.

Now the debate has two sides. Side one arguments of the scoffers against the Second Coming; side two arguments of the saints for the Second Coming. And we're going to do our best to see these unfold. Let's look at verses 1-9. Let me read them to you so you get a feeling for the flow of thought.

"This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Know this, first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'

"For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth, by His word, are being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

We can stop at that point. In those nine verses is laid out this marvelous debate. And while in a cursory and first reading, such as we just experienced, there may be more questions in your mind than answers. As it unfolds, it will become very clear what is happening. The antagonism surrounds the question in verse 4. And the question is where is the promise of His coming. Or, we could translate it; what has become of His promise to return? Or, to put it in a more scornful tone; where is Jesus, all of you who said He would be back?

Arrogantly, they deny the Day of Judgment; they deny the return of Christ. They doubt the truthfulness, therefore, of the written Word of God which they have read, by the way, because these false teachers, as we've noted in the past, are in the church. They know the Scripture. They are denying it. They are also denying the spoken word of the apostles, which they have heard and which has been passed down to them, and the writings of the New Testament that are not yet compiled into the canon of the text, which we now have. So they are denying what has been written and what has

been said.

They know what the Scripture says. They have been in the church. They have been around certainly long enough to know the familiar sayings of Jesus. And they know, for example, in Matthew 10:23, Jesus said, "Whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next, for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes." They knew that. They knew Jesus claimed that He was coming. They were also familiar with Jesus' diatribe against the religious leaders in Matthew 24, and they were familiar with the text, verse 3.

The disciples said, "Tell us when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age." They knew that Jesus said, in verse 29, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."

They knew Jesus said that. They knew what he said in Verse 42. "Be on the alert, for you do not know what day your Lord comes." They knew that Jesus said, in John 14, "I'm going away to the Father's house to prepare a place for you. And if I go I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also." They knew the testimony of the angel given in Acts 1 who said, "This same Jesus who is taken from you shall so come in like manner as you've seen Him go." You saw Him go literally, physically, that's how He'll come. They knew all of that.

But so do the modern mockers. So do the modern skeptics. They know that's in the Bible. They demythologize that. They call it a myth and excise it out of the Scripture. They explain it away. They spiritualize it. There's no question at all that Jesus said He was coming back. That's replete in the gospel record. There's no question that the New Testament writers believed He meant what He said. But these mockers and these scoffers who sarcastically say, "Where is Jesus? Isn't He supposed to be coming back?" they knew full well that He had said that. This is an outright denial of the teaching of Christ, the teaching of the apostles.

Now, there argument takes three forms. And we're going to deal with their argument tonight, and then we'll deal with Peter's rebuttal next time. Their argument takes three forms, follow this. First one is argument by ridicule, argument by ridicule. Verse 3, "Simply knowing this first that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking following after their own lusts and saying 'Where is the promise of His coming?' " The first statement I want you to notice. Mockers will come with their mocking. That's what he says.

Now this is the...this is the common ploy, which I will call intimidation by sarcasm, scoffing, mocking, ridiculing. "You're not one of those fundamentalists, are you? You're not one of those Bible bangers,

are you? You're not one of those anti-intellectual people who just take everything at face value; you're not a non-critical thinker, are you?" And, you know, this kind of intimidation can work in this particular issue because it's an emotional thing. This kind, ridicule, mockery, sarcasm, intimidation by ridicule, basically works on people who are emotionally unstable, who are emotionally involved. You say, "Is that relevant?" Very.

Let me remind you of something. In the early church, they believed that Jesus was coming back very soon. You remember the questions of the disciples? "Will You at this time bring Your kingdom?" Right? And the question of the disciples, "What is the sign of Your return?" They believed it was immediate. In John 14 when Jesus said, "I'm going away and I'm going to come back and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also. But before I come back I'm going to go to the Father's house and get your room ready." And they believed it would be very soon. They tended to think it would be in their lifetime.

Peter, of course, knew it wasn't going to be in his lifetime. He knew that for certain. You say, "How do you know?" Because Jesus told him it wouldn't be in his lifetime. You say, "When did He tell him that?" Look at John 21. In John 21 verse 18, Jesus says to Peter, "Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished." In other words, you did exactly what you wanted. "But when you grow old, you'll stretch out your hands." Mark that little phrase there in verse 18. It's used in extrabiblical literature to describe crucifixion. "You're going to get crucified." And he did.

And someone else is going to gird you or tie you down and bring you where you don't want to go. Now look at verse 19. "Jesus said this, signifying by what kind of death Peter would glorify God." Peter was told you're going to die, which means, "Peter, you're going to die before the Lord returns, before I come back." So Peter knew that he wasn't going to live till the Second Coming. He wasn't going to be around until the return of Jesus Christ, because he had a specific word.

But in that same text of John 21, Jesus said to Peter something else. Peter, having heard that, got the message. Then he saw John and he said, "Well, what about him? What about him?" To which Jesus replied, "If I decide that he lives till the Second Coming, it's none of your business." All right, but it did leave the thought. Maybe John is going to live to the Second Coming. And so, there were some in the early church who believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime. Why not?

Their hearts were filled with anticipation. In fact, as you read through the epistles, there's a certain expectancy. You hear the apostle Paul say, "We shall not all sleep," right? First Corinthians 15:51, he includes himself. Doesn't say "they" or "them" that happen to be alive in the far-beyond when it happens. "We shall all be changed. The trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." We remember, don't we? First Thessalonians chapter 4, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep that you may not grieve as do the rest who

have no hope, if we believe Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”

Then he goes on to say, “Then we when Jesus comes who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air,” and so forth. There’s no question there was a high level of expectation that Jesus would come in their lifetime. One other text, James 5:8-9, he says, “You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” That’s James 5:8. They were living in expectancy. They were living in anticipation. The Lord didn’t tell them when He was going to come. They assumed it would be in their lifetime.

Now, remember our study of 1 Thessalonians? I don’t think there’s any church in the New Testament that was more expectant than the Thessalonians. In chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians he identifies their steadfastness of hope in the Lord Jesus. In verse 10, he says they were waiting for His Son to come from heaven. And then in chapter 2 verse 19, he says that you are my joy in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming. And then in chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians in verses 1-2, “As to the time and epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you, for you yourselves know full well the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” So they were living in anticipation of His return.

Now remember, the Thessalonians had a problem. What happened? Some of their number began to what? Die. And they began to die. They call it falling asleep because they knew it was temporary. And as they began to die, the Christians became very distressed because they had thought that everybody would sort of be alive and Jesus would be right back. And they began to grieve. And they began to be worried about those that died. Would they miss the Rapture? Would they miss the return of Christ? Would they miss the kingdom? Would they miss heaven? And it was those kinds of questions and queries in their minds that prompted Paul to write as he did in 1 Thessalonians and also in 2 Thessalonians.

Why the delay? And so there were many Christians who had expected the Lord to come quickly. And when He didn’t come...mark it...they got emotionally involved; they became disappointed. They didn’t understand it and their friends were dying. And when the mockers came and began to ridicule them, it was effective when it hit those that were emotionally upset. “Where is Jesus Christ, you guys? Isn’t He supposed to be here? I mean, shouldn’t it have happened long ago? I mean, people are dying off over here.” Capitalizing on their emotional disappointment and their sort of personal trauma, this particular ploy became effective.

So Peter says to them, “Know this,” you’ve got to understand some things. You’ve got to understand how the scoffers are going to work. You’ve got to understand how they’re going to operate. I’ve got to warn you about their plan and their M.O. First of all, he says, first of all...by the way, that is not the first in a list of things, that’s the preeminent, that’s the priority thing. “It is a priority that you know how they are going to try to steal your hope,” because if they can steal your hope they can feed your flesh

and they can take away your motivation and your joy.

Peter knows how critical a strong confidence in Christ's return is. Boy, when he gets to verse 11-18, he really lays out the practical impact of believing in the return of Christ. And so, Satan works very hard to take away that hope. You show me a liberal theologian, you show me one who doesn't believe in the truth of the Scripture, and I'll show you someone every time who denies the Second Coming of Christ. So Christians need to know that Satan is going to make the effort to mock the Second Coming.

Here we are, sitting here two thousand years later, and when the mockers come along and say, "Hey, folks, where is Jesus? Where is He? I mean, the folks back in the 1st century were upset that He wasn't around. Here you are two thousand years later, don't you think the whole thing is a hoax?" And just maybe there are some folks who have been distressed enough in life and burdened enough in life and disappointed enough in life and longing for the coming of Jesus Christ, and it hasn't happened. That maybe this is pretty intimidating stuff.

And maybe they're going to say, "Ah, maybe it's just a spiritual thing and the kingdom comes to your heart, and that's it. And we just live our life and die and then go to heaven and there isn't ever a coming of Christ and there's never a kingdom and there's never a time of real reward, and there's never a time of judgment. We'll just kind of pass that all off."

So Peter puts it in perspective. He says, back to verse 3, "In the last days." I need to comment on that phrase, it's a common New Testament phrase and a common New Testament idea taken out of Isaiah 2. It refers to the era since Christ came the first time. It refers to the New Testament age. This is the last days. It just means the time of the New Covenant, the time after Christ, the entire time from the first coming to the Second Coming. Had we time I would take you to passages. You might want to note them, Acts 2:17; 2 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18-19; James 5:3; Jude 18. There's a few examples, if you didn't get them all they're on the tape.

But, repeatedly, in the New Testament the phrase "the last days" refers to that entire period of time from the decisive event of the arrival of Messiah to His return. It is all the last days. It is all the last days. And I love what J.N.D. Kelley says in his commentary on 2 Peter. He says that this entire age is to be marked, quote, "by the emergence of saboteurs of sound religion." End quote. And the saboteurs are out there trying to sabotage the Second Coming. And they've been doing it since Christ came throughout all the last time.

Now, would you notice again, in verse 3, Peter says, "Mockers will come." Future tense, this is prophetic. But because he is prophesying very much the same words as in Jude 18, "In the last time there shall be mockers." Jude says it that way. Because he is prophesying, he is saying that from now on throughout the last days this is going to be true. Now, that doesn't mean that he's saying it's not

true then. We know it was true then.

You remember in Matthew 24 that the Lord said this would happen also. The first thing the Lord says in response to their question in verse 4 is, "See to it that no one misleads you about My return, for many are going to come in My name saying I'm Christ and mislead many." Down in verse 11, He says, "Many false prophets will arise and mislead many." Over in verse 23, "There are going to be some coming saying, 'Here is Christ, and there is Christ,' and false Christs and false prophets arise and show signs and try to mislead if possible even the elect." I'm telling you in advance. A lot of false doctrine, a lot of false prophets.

So Peter echoing, as it were, the words of our Lord says it's going to come, but he's not denying that it exists right then. In fact, it's not even new. You want to go back into the Old Testament and you can find those who mocked God. You can go back into Isaiah 5 and hear that terrible mocking of verse 19. The sinners say to God, 'Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work that we may see it, let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass that we may know it.' "

The prophets said, "God's going to judge you." And the mockers said, "Well then, let Him have at it. Let Him do it. Hurry up, God, if You're really there and You're going to judge us, let's see You do it." They shake their fists in God's face, mocking the prospect of judgment. No, that isn't anything new, it's always been around. There have always been those who mocked the threat of judgment, mocked the promise of judgment. Nothing new at all.

So, says Peter, "in the last days mockers will come with their mocking." By the way, he takes a strong Hebrew form, puts it into the Greek, mockers with their mocking, a very strong form to emphasize what they do. They attempt to attack the reality of Christ's return, Christ's judgment by ridicule. It isn't an intellectual argument; it's an emotional one. It's not a strong logical argument; it is really simply intimidation of something that is ridiculed as a silly belief for weak, non-intellectual minds. It plays on disappointment. That still works today on some who are intimidated by the so-called intellectual elite who will deny the return of Christ.

But notice the second argument. They go really beyond this. And this is an argument they don't want to make but it's an argument that Peter makes for them. What is really interesting is the argument from morality, verse 3. The end of the verse says, "These mockers who will come in with their mocking are following after their own lusts." Now, friends, here's the true motive. Here is the true motive. "Following after" is "walking." This is their life style.

Walking means the course of conduct, the course of life style. They are walking after their own *epithumia*. What is that? Passion, sexual desire. Now, by the way, we've already met these false prophets and do you remember what characterized them? Go back to chapter 2 verse 2 for a moment. In chapter 2 verse 2 it says, "They follow sensuality." They're sensual. Verse 10, it says,

“They indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires.”

Verse 13 says, “that they are stains and blemishes, they revel in their deceptions, they revel in the daytime. They are perverted in their conduct and they’re so flagrant they do it during the day. Verse 14 says, “Their eyes are full of adultery.” I told you what that meant. They can’t look at a woman without, literally, seeing her as a sexual partner. They never cease from sin. Down in verse 18 it says, “They entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality.”

You see, false teachers who know not the truth and know not God have nothing to restrain their flesh. And so they are brute beasts who are driven by passion. They deny, they mock the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Why? Because they want to pursue sexual, sensual pleasure without accountability, without retribution, without consequence. That’s the bottom line. Their mockery is built on their morality. You see, they want an eschatology that fits their conduct. All moral perversion among religious people must have a theology to permit it, right? So they develop a theology to permit their perversion.

Listen, if you believe in the Second Coming and you believe the Lord is coming back, and all of us are going to give an account for our lives and we’re going to be rewarded on the basis of what we’ve done, and certain things in our lives are going to be burned up, and if you believe God is going to reveal the secret things of the heart, as 1 Corinthians 4 says, then John is right.

Whoever has that hope in himself purifies himself, right? Because when He comes I want to be pure. But if I don’t want to be pure, if I want to live my dissolute passionate life, then I’ve got to get rid of any future accountability. So I talk a lot about grace, and I talk a lot about the inward kingdom, but I don’t ever talk about judgment and accountability. I don’t talk about God being a righteous judge who demands holiness and who chastens sin.

You see, the hope of the return of Jesus Christ means we have an ultimate point of accountability for how we live. Let me give you something you might not understand at first, but think it through. I believe that liberal theology is not the product of intellect; it is the product of immorality. It is the direct child of passion. It is an effort to deny spiritual accountability.

Michael Green said, “Anthropocentric hedonism always mocks at the idea of ultimate standards and a final division between the saved and lost. For men who live in the world of the relative, the claim that the relative will be ended by the absolute is nothing short of ludicrous. For men who nourish a belief in human self-determination and perfectibility, the very idea that we are accountable and dependent is a bitter pill to swallow. No wonder they mocked.” End quote.

They want to ignore the inexorable law of Romans 1:18, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness. This shows up nowhere more clearly than in evolution. Notable

evolutionist and denier of divine creation, divine intervention, and divine judgment was Aldous Huxley, the grandson of Thomas Huxley.

He wrote *Confessions of a Professed Atheist*. Listen to what he said, most insightful. This is Aldous Huxley, the brother of Julian. He wrote this. "I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he should personally not do as he wants to do.

"For myself," writes Huxley, "as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously a liberation from a certain political and economic system," listen to this, "and a liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom." End quote.

Evolution is not the child of science; it is child of sexual liberation. It is not produced by people who have come to it purely from the intellectual. It is produced by people who wanted no meaning to culture, no meaning to behavior, no judgment, no accountability, no God so they could live any way they want to live. It's a moral issue, not an intellectual issue. There is the real reason for believing in atheism, evolution, or liberal theology. Eliminate accountability, eliminate judgment. And if you believe in God, then God is a loving God who just sits up there and smiles at everything.

You have to deny that God will judge sin if you're going to free yourself up to sin to the max, right? Don't kid yourself for a moment, these people parading themselves around as intellectuals are not intellectuals, they are moral midgets. They want liberation for sexual freedom and they want an accommodating philosophy. So underneath their denial of the return of Christ to judge is the love of lustful passion and they want that without accountability. There's the argument from ridicule, the argument from morality.

One other one, I'm just going to touch on it. Next week we'll see how Peter deals with it. The argument from uniformity; I love this. I wish we had time tonight. If we could stay till midnight we'd have a ball, but we can't. Verse 4, this is the argument from uniformity. Here's their big argument, verse 4. Now we're going to get intellectual. We passed the ridicule and the emotional argument. We've gone through the moral argument, now we're coming to their best shot intellectually, okay?

This is their best shot. Verse 4. "Where is the promise of His coming?" Ah, here comes their intellect, "For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." That's their argument. Well you say, "What are they saying?" They're saying Jesus will never come. Why? Because He never has. Everything just...it's like saying, "I'll never die. I never have."

The false teachers are capitalizing on this revisionist history. They're rewriting history. They use the emotional argument and then they use the moral argument and now they use the philosophical, intellectual argument and they become revisionist historians. And this is what they say. "Well ever since the fathers fell asleep." What do you mean by that? Who are the fathers? Some say the fathers of the Christian faith. It could be. It could be they're talking about first-generation Christians that have died. That's pretty remote.

Every time you see the term "fathers," every New Testament reference to "fathers," elsewhere in the New Testament, refers to the Old Testament patriarchs. And that's what they're really saying. They're going back...follow my thought...they're going back to Genesis and saying, "Look, everything's always gone along the same, since the patriarchs. Go way back to the very beginning. Everything is just going along the same."

You will note Romans 9:5, Hebrews 1:1 references to the fathers. That definitely mean the Old Testament patriarchs. They're not arguing from a recent argument; they're arguing as far back as they can reach to show uniformity, to show immutability, nothing ever changes, continuity, gradual unchanging process. So they're really saying, "Ah, cataclysmic events don't happen; they just don't happen. Things like great divine intervention and judgment, that doesn't happen.

Ever since the fathers fell asleep," you remember that's a New Testament term for death. In fact, a cemetery comes from the Greek word "sleeping place," which was the optimistic name given to graveyards by Christians. So since the first people died, since the patriarchs died, follow this statement verse 4, "All continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." This is their intellectual, philosophical argument.

Listen to this. It is the argument of uniformitarianism or immutability. This is the philosophy of the sinner. And what comes from it that we know most in our society? Evolution. Evolution is uniformitarian. What does evolution say? Everything moves along, inexorably, at exactly the same pace. There's no God, there's no change, there's no judgment, there's no nothing, everything goes exactly like this.

And you know what they say? They say, "We watched it and it went like this, and so it's always gone like this. And when it got started here and ended there, it took this long. So if we keep going back at the same pace, the same pace, the same pace, the same pace, then everything is five billion years old. That's uniformity, uniformitarianism. It is the philosophy of constancy. Satan invented it real early, real early.

Now you know uniformitarian evolution as the brainchild of Thomas Lyle, first of all, followed by Darwin, followed by Huxley. But that came along way before those guys. Those guys are nothing but

Johnny-come-latelies. That thing was well developed right here in 2 Peter 3. What they're saying is this. The *parousia* is impossible. Jesus will never come; there will never be catastrophic judgment; there will never be intervention from God. There never has been; there never will be. There aren't any catastrophes; there aren't any miracles. It's just natural process, natural process, continuity.

They would deny catastrophic creation in six days, even though the Bible says that. And they just demythologize that. They deny that the sun stood still, which means the earth stopped revolving in Joshua 10 and nobody fell off. They would deny 2 Kings 20, that the shadow on the sundial went backwards. They would deny that the Red Sea parted. They would deny that God ever stepped in to judge. So why would we expect Him to?

By the way, the longer the Lord delays His judgment, the more secure the mockers feel about their view of history. The world is very stable. It's a closed system governed by fixed laws. And in effect they say, "You can't believe the Bible; the words of the Bible are unreliable." Sensual sinners find their only hope for sin without fear in this false confidence. This is really important.

They look at their little piece of time and they make conclusions about all of history. From a few unchanging years they conclude there never has been a change. Self-delusion, intellectual mind games for the sake of passion, denial of Scripture truth, evolution is the devil's tool to accommodate the immorality of sinners who will not come to God. This is devastating. If Satan can get people to believe in evolution, he has cut them off from effective evangelism.

Listen to me. One of the things you learn if you study the book of Acts, and I'm going to give this to you quick and it may be the most important thing I've said tonight. One of the things you learn if you study the book of Acts is this, whenever the apostles evangelized those people with a Jewish background, they always used the Scripture. You can start in Acts 2, Acts 7, Acts 8, Acts 10.

In Acts 2 Peter preaches out of the Scripture. In Acts 7 Stephen preaches to the Jews out of the Scripture. In Acts chapter 8, Philip finds a man in his chariot reading Isaiah, and he explains the Scripture. In chapter 10, a man named Cornelius, a God-fearing man, and Peter goes to him and he teaches him about Christ out of the Scripture. What does that Scripture refer to? What Scripture? Old Testament.

Evangelism of those people who had the Scripture is always based upon the Scripture. When Paul went to the synagogue, he reasoned with them how? Out of the Scripture. But, listen carefully to this. Whenever the gospel was preached to pagans who had no Scripture, evangelism was based on creation, on the God of creation. Let me show you that just briefly, Acts 14. Listen carefully to this.

In Acts 14 verse 15, it says this. Here is Paul, he is preaching to a bunch of pagans who think that he is Zeus and Hermes, he and Barnabas, just outright pagans, no Scripture. This is what he says. How

is he going to approach them? How do you evangelize a bunch of pagans who don't even have the Scripture? "Men, – " verse 15 "why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you and we preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things."

Now, how is he going to get to them? How is he going to approach them with the gospel? Is he going to go to the Old Testament? No, they don't have the Old Testament. So what does he say? "We speak about the living God who," did what? "Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them." You see that? You always approach the pagan from the viewpoint of how can you explain creation?

In chapter 17 he's on Mars Hill with a bunch of philosophers, a bunch of pagan intellectuals. How does he approach them? Scripture? No, they don't know the Scripture. They don't know anything about the Scripture. So down in verse 23, he says, "Let me tell you about the God you don't know." Here's the God you don't know, verse 24, "The God who," what? "Made the world and all things in it, He is Lord of heaven and earth."

Now, I want to show you one other text that's fascinating to me, Revelation chapter 14, verses 6 and 7. In Revelation 14:6 and 7, listen to this, "I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven and he had the eternal gospel." Oh, what is this? "An eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, not to people who had the Scripture, but to every nation, tribe and tongue and people," to the pagan world.

And what does the angel preach when he preaches the eternal gospel? How does he approach the pagans? This way, "Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come and worship Him who," did what? "Made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water." You always approach the pagan from the viewpoint of creation. So what do you think Satan wants to convince the world about? Evolution, because then you've got no evangelistic starting point. You've got no entree, you've got no open door, you've got no access.

If Satan can make everybody believe the lie of evolution, which I say again is not come to by intellect but by a desire for freedom to sin, then he can significantly hinder the evangelism of pagans. And believe me, dear friends, we live in a pagan nation. We have to approach our pagan society that we live in from the standpoint, "Look at the world around you, doesn't it make sense that there's a God, and I want to tell you who that God is." That's the way you evangelize pagans.

But if pagans are all convinced that all of this came out of nothing, that the formula for everything is nobody times nothing equals everything, you're stuck. There's no bridge. The false teachers follow three avenues then of attack: ridicule, morality and uniformity. They use those things to deny the Second Coming of Christ to judge the world.

He's not going to come. They ridicule that idea. They don't want the thought to enter their minds. It might crimp their sinful style. And so they intellectualize, philosophize and come up with uniformitarianism. And those are their best shots, folks, and if you want to know what Peter says in return, you'll be here next Sunday night. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You for this clear word of insight into the strategies of the mockers and the scoffers, the enemy of our souls. Thank You for what Peter has given to us. And may we remember that he said, "Know this, first of all," understand the ploy they're using. Be aware of it; be alert to it so that we don't become victimized by it.

We trust Your Word, we believe Your Word, we will not be intimidated by the ridicule. We will not fall victim to the liberationist lifestyle of those who want no accountability. And we will not succumb to the absolutely foolish, ridiculous logic of evolutionary uniformitarianism. Lord, we will stand by Your Word, by Your truth. Thank you for the confidence we have in it. For Christ's sake, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).