

Judgement Past and Future

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Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 0 0] We're continuing our series in the book of 2 Peter, and you'll remember that 2 Peter is a letter. It's a letter written by a man named Peter, and he writes it to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire in the 60s AD.

Peter writes this letter with one desire. He wants these people to grow. We know that because he tells us at the very beginning and at the very end of the letter.

At the very beginning in chapter 1, verse 2, he tells them that he wants grace to be multiplied to them through knowledge. Multiply, a way of talking about growing. He ends the letter in the very last verse in chapter 3, verse 18, by commanding them, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And so we see that his desire for growth has two components. He wants them to grow in knowledge, and he wants them to grow in grace. We have ended chapter 2, which was all about the false teachers.

And the false teachers helped us understand why it was that Peter cares so much about this. The false teachers threaten the knowledge that they have because they're teaching things that are not true. And they threaten the grace that they have because this false knowledge is leading to poor and sinful behavior.

[1 : 1 4] We're now continuing on this morning. We're going to begin chapter 3. We are not completely done with the false teachers yet. And we're going to come up this morning with one of their objections, one of the ways in which the false teachers threaten knowledge.

In fact, we're going to be addressing this question for the next two weeks. The false teachers raise an issue in verses 3 and 4 of this chapter. They ask a question, why has Jesus not come back yet?

And if Jesus has not come back yet, isn't that clearly proof that we don't need to worry? Remember, one of the doctrines that's under attack is the idea that Jesus is coming back to judge the world.

That's part of how the false teachers are able to justify the sinful behavior that they promote. It doesn't matter what you do because Jesus isn't coming back. And so now we have this very specific objection.

Again, this is in verses 3 and 4. They're going to say, verse 4, 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.

[2 : 1 9] In other words, nothing's changed. Century after century rolls by. Jesus still has not appeared. Of course, then, your hope is false.

And so it's going to be this morning that we respond to that objection. The first response next week will be the second response. And we're going to see some of the same themes that we've seen before. We are going to see the idea of Scripture as being important, which we also saw in chapter 1, verses 19 through 21.

And the same thing we saw in chapter 1, verse 13, the importance of being stirred up by way of a reminder. And so our question is the same question as that of these false teachers. Why should we believe that Jesus is coming back?

Why do we believe Jesus is coming back? And there's a question underneath the question, which is why in the world would we trust and believe the Bible?

Why in the world would we trust and believe the Bible? We looked at a couple answers to that question in chapter 1. We're going to look at another answer here in chapter 3.

[3 : 23] And so it's with that that I invite you to turn with me to 2 Peter 3. We'll be looking at verses 1 through 7. You can turn in your phone, you can turn in your Bible, or you can turn near the end of the worship guide.

No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us in Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5, that every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 1. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.

In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Verse 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.

[4 : 30] 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.

And that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 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.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You that You don't leave us alone in this world to flail about, trying to discover what's true and what's false.

But instead, You speak to us clearly in Your Word, and You tell us everything that we need to know. You tell us what we need to know about our state, that we are sinners in need of Your mercy.

And You also tell us what we need to know about Your grace, that Jesus takes the punishment for the sins of those who have faith in Him. We ask that You would do that this morning, that You would open our eyes, You'd unstop our ears, that You would clear our minds, and that You'd soften our hearts, that we would be able to see and hear and understand and believe everything that is written about You in Your Word.

[5 : 56] We thank You that we don't have to earn these things, but instead we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. If you were here with us in December, when we were going through the book of Zechariah, you'll remember at the very end, in chapters 12 and 13, I told you a little bit from the book, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, written by C.S. Lewis in the series, The Chronicles of Narnia.

And you'll remember in that story, King Caspian was on this search for the seven lost kings of Narnia. And as he was on this search, there was a boy named Eustace who joined him, and I told you the story about how they landed on an island.

Eustace was turned into a dragon. Aslan had to come and peel the dragon skin off of him. Okay, so this is review. Now, next book, chronologically in the series, we have The Silver Chair.

In The Silver Chair, we meet Eustace again, this boy who's reformed. He's no longer the punk that he was in Voyage of the Dawn Treader, but we also meet a new character named Jill.

And Jill and Eustace are given a new mission. It's been years since the Voyage of the Dawn Treader. King Caspian is now old. We find out that King Caspian had a son, Prince Rillian, who has disappeared and been gone for 10 years.

[7 : 22] And so Jill and Eustace have one mission. Their job is to go back and find Prince Rillian. They have to recover him. How are they going to find the lost prince since no one knows where he is?

Well, Aslan, the great lion, is the one who sends them. And when Aslan sends them, he gives Jill instructions. He gives her four signs that she has to remember, four signs that will help her to find Prince Rillian.

These are the only things she has to operate by. And so after Aslan has given her the signs, he also gives her this exhortation, this warning. He says this, but first, remember, remember, remember the signs.

Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night. And when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs.

And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain, I have spoken to you clearly. I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear.

[8 : 38] As you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look when you meet them there.

That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs.

Nothing else matters. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters. That is similar to what Peter is telling these people in this church here.

We have already seen this theme in 2 Peter 1, verse 13, where he tells them, I think it is right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder.

Now, chapter 3, two chapters later, we see almost identical language in verse 1. I am writing to you, beloved, in both of them. I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.

[9 : 45] Why is reminder so important? Why do they have to remember these things? Well, we know in the silver chair why the remembering is so important.

It's the only way they're going to find Prince Rilian. If they don't remember, they will be lost. Here, in 2 Peter 3, it's something similar. Memory is so important because it is their protection against the false teachers.

Remember I told you at the very beginning, the false teachers are raising this objection to Christianity. They're raising this objection to Jesus' return, which is that he hasn't come back yet, therefore he won't.

They are telling them something false. We see this again. This is verses 3 and 4, that they give this false teaching. They ask this question, especially in verse 4. They will say, where is the promise of his coming?

In other words, why hasn't Jesus returned? For all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. Nothing's changed. The earth continues to move around the sun.

[10 : 50] Rulers continue to come and go. Companies continue to rise and fall. Families continue to give birth and to die. Nothing is changing.

Of course Jesus isn't coming back. And we're told what their problem is in verse 5. For they deliberately overlook this fact. Why is it so important to remember?

Because that's the opposite of what the false teachers are doing here. They are deliberately overlooking the things that they know. And so their protection here, the protection of these people receiving this letter, is that they would remember.

That they would be the opposite of the false teachers. They would hold fast to what is true. We've talked about this fact before, that when we look at this letter, our situation is not the same as their situation.

They were dealing with false teachers in their midst who were refuting Jesus' second coming. Our situation is not the same because I am not aware of anyone in this church who is actively functioning as a false teacher and telling people at Cheyenne Mountain that Jesus is not coming back.

[11 : 56] And so what do we do when we find ourselves in a different situation than those of the original audience? When they are given a negative, that doesn't apply to us. Remember the principle, the application principle that we got before.

We look for the positive and we embrace it. False teachers are forgetting. We remember. And so we hold fast to these things that the false teachers are deliberately overlooking.

We are going to have, remember I told you that Aslan gives Jill four signs. It just so happens we are going to have in this passage four signs as well.

Four things that these people need to remember to protect themselves from what the false teachers are telling them. To know that although he has not yet, Jesus will indeed come back.

So our first sign here is actually going to be the foundation of all the other signs. It encompasses all the others. And we find it here in verse two.

[13 : 02] At the very end of verse one, we're told he's stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, verse two, that you should remember. So we're told the first thing he wants to stir up in them, they should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Now, this is a way of talking about what we would now refer to as the Bible. In verse two here, the predictions of the holy prophets, that's a reference to what we would call the Old Testament.

So that we remember God's teachings in the Old Testament. Remember the New Testament has not been fully formed at this point. But we understand what he means here by the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

That is, there are apostles who are communicating what Jesus taught. So that would be what we now refer to as the New Testament. You are to remember the Old Testament and the New Testament.

That is your first sign. That is the first thing that you have to hold onto. This is the keystone to everything that's going to come after in the letter, the next three signs.

[14 : 08] And so the question that rises at this point is, do we trust the Bible or not? Whatever happens, whatever comes, do we believe that it's the word of God?

The second question would be this, not just do we trust it, do we know it? Do we know it or not? And that raises another question that I want to discuss for a little bit, which is this, why do we trust the Bible?

Why is it? It's that it's something that we have confidence in, that we believe in. We saw a couple reasons when we were in chapter one. And one of the reasons, the first reason I told you we trust the Bible is because of eyewitnesses.

Peter talked about, remember this is, I believe verses 19 through 21 of chapter one, these are the things we saw. He saw them. He witnessed them. Remember I told you that the book of Luke, the gospel of Luke, begins by talking about eyewitnesses.

The second reason, if you can go back all the way to chapter one, was not just eyewitnesses, but fulfilled prophecy. We have seen that what the Bible says would happen has come true.

[15 : 19] And ultimately, we've seen that in Jesus Christ. And so those are two reasons we trust the Bible. I'm going to give you now a problem with those reasons. Those are good reasons.

They're just not the ultimate reason we trust the Bible. And I want you to think about that with me for a second. If we have to appeal to another authority to say that the Bible is true, we're actually saying that that authority is the ultimate authority.

If eyewitnesses are what make the Bible true, ultimately, then really we trust eyewitnesses. We don't trust the Bible. So eyewitnesses are good. They're just not our ultimate authority.

In fact, as Christians, we believe that the Bible is our ultimate authority, which means that we can't subordinate it to anything else. We don't subordinate it to eyewitnesses. We don't subordinate it to fulfilled prophecy.

Those things are good. They are means that God uses to give us confidence. They are not our ultimate authority. The Bible actually establishes itself as our ultimate authority.

[16 : 19] That, however, raises some other questions, some other problems. Is not this circular reasoning? In other words, isn't this a logical fallacy to say the Bible is our ultimate authority because the Bible is our ultimate authority?

Well, if we leave it at that, we might fall into that. However, we have to consider a few other things. First of all, we have to have some sort of ultimate authority. Everyone has an ultimate authority.

By its very logic, by its very definition, there's nothing higher that you can appeal to than an ultimate authority. We cannot escape, in other words, the fact that there's going to be some type of circularity there.

And so everyone in the world has to choose their ultimate authority. Right now in our culture, we're being told that our ultimate authority are our feelings and our emotions. There's nothing that we can do to disprove that.

There's nothing higher to appeal to, right? I can just state this is the way I feel, therefore, it's true. Everyone, in other words, rests in some way on absolute faith.

[17 : 25] You can't escape faith. Everyone has it. Even logic and reason have to rest on things you can't prove. And so that's part of our answer to the objection of circular reasoning here.

We have the Bible as an ultimate, absolute authority. Everyone has an ultimate and absolute authority. And so at some level, every absolute authority has to authenticate itself.

And it has to be self-authenticating. It can't rely on other things to verify it. This is the way people talk in our culture, by the way. They don't think that they need to say anything else other than I feel this way, right?

That authenticates itself. The discussion is over at this point. We talked about that a couple weeks ago. And so really, the question is this. If we all have ultimate and absolute authorities, that there is no higher appeal than which absolute authority do we trust?

And why is the Bible the one that we choose? Because think about it. There's all kinds of claims to be absolute authority. There are other religions that claim to have absolute authority.

[18 : 34] There are other religious books that claim to have absolute authority. Is it not then, the objection will be somehow arbitrary that we've happened to choose the Bible over these others?

Did we just throw a dart against the wall and it happened to hit the Bible? The answer is no. And we could go for several hours on epistemology and philosophy, but I'll explain it to you simply like this.

I want you to imagine that you have a variety of boxes of match boxes. Each box says that it contains matches in it.

Okay? So that's a claim. Let's say that's similar to the claim of absolute authority. Now it's helpful that the box says it has matches in it. That gives us some guidance.

That's worth something. It's not worth everything. Can the match box authenticate itself? In other words, if I strike it, will it light?

[19 : 37] The Quran claims to be a word from God. It's like a box on the outside that says it has matches. Can it deliver on that claim?

The Book of Mormon claims to be a word from God. Can it deliver on that claim? How do I know? I have to strike the match.

So when we come against the claim that something is true, it's not just the claim that matters. It matters whether it can back it up. So if I'm striking and nothing lights, it doesn't matter what it says on the outside.

If, however, I strike it and it does light, that match has authenticated itself. It needs no other source.

It has shown by its very action, its character and its quality that it is a match with power. Brothers and sisters, we believe in the Bible as our absolute authority because when we strike it, it lights.

[20 : 47] And when we strike other claims to have authority, we find that they fail. And so it is not that we are people who have blind faith.

And it is not simply that God's word claims to be from him, although it does and that matters. but because it also delivers on that claim.

It authenticates itself. The match shows itself to be a true match. It needs nothing else. God's word shows itself to be from him.

It needs nothing else. God's word is enough. It is an absolute authority and so it appeals to nothing else.

It shows itself to be true. Many books claim to speak for God. Only the Bible goes into flame when we strike it.

[21 : 54] If you are not a Christian, you doubt whether the Bible is true or not. Strike the match. Test it.

Francis Schaeffer said, as I've quoted many times, that the Bible fits the hand of reality like a glove. And so what is the flame that the Bible gives us?

Well, it says what it does, what it says it will do. The match box says there matches, the matches light up. It delivers on its promises and so its promises are things like these.

Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Bible pierces to the deepest level of people's hearts. If you're a Christian, you've experienced that and you know that. You have seen the match light. We're told in Psalm 119 that the Bible is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

[23 : 03] It has delivered on that promise. If you're a Christian, you know that it has protected your path and it has shown you the way to go. I said at the very beginning of this sermon that Proverbs chapter 30 verse 5 tells us that every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. If you're a Christian, you know that is true. We're told in Psalm 19 that the Bible is more precious than gold, even fine gold.

And it is sweeter than honey, even the honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. the Bible does what it says it will do.

It is not just a matchbook because there are many boxes of matches in this world, but the matches actually light. Why do Jill and Eustace trust the signs?

Why do they believe them? They believe them because they trust Aslan. Aslan has done what he said he would do.

[24 : 09] Remember, he is the one who freed Eustace from the dragon skin. He is the one who has demonstrated his power. And so, of course, he is to be trusted.

Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us. We have seen God's power through his word authenticating it as our ultimate and absolute authority.

And so, we also trust what he tells us. Other religious texts claim to be from God.

The Bible actually delivers. And so, there is no higher authority to which to appeal.

Our first sign then is this. What are we to remember? Verse 2. The predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

[25 : 13] That is the foundation that every other sign rests on. Nothing else that I'm going to say or Peter is going to say here in this section really matters until we've decided whether we believe the Bible or not.

If we do, then we have three other signs that help us understand why it is that Jesus is indeed coming back even though he has not yet.

so our first sign was this. Our first sign is to remember the scriptures. We have our second sign, however, in verse 5. What is it the false teachers deliberately overlook?

They overlook that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God. They overlook that God was so powerful that he created the heavens and the earth out of nothing.

That's how powerful God is. He made the world. Why do we believe that Jesus is coming back?

[26 : 28] Well, in part because God has that kind of power. And so that is that simple explains itself.

Of course he's able to do that. He made the world. What can he not do? How do we know he made the world through his word? Because his ultimate authority, the Bible, tells us.

That's sign 2. Sign 3, verse 6. God didn't just create the world and by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

Okay, God created the world. Guess what he also did? Genesis chapter 6 through 9. God destroyed the world in a flood. And he destroyed the world in a flood as part of his judgment on man because of his sinfulness.

So, why do we believe that Jesus is coming back again to bring judgment to the world and salvation to the righteous? Well, first of all, he's that kind of God. He's powerful enough, right? He created the world.

[27 : 30] Second of all, guess what? He's done it before. It's not just that he's powerful enough to create the world, he's powerful enough to judge the world. He's demonstrated that. He's also demonstrated that he's willing to do it.

God's not afraid of judgment. He doesn't shy away from it. In fact, he brought it. He's already done it. He has demonstrated his ability and his willingness to judge.

God created the world. He's that powerful. God judged the world. He's also that powerful. So, that's sign 1, sign 2, and sign 3.

Sign 4, verse 7. Right now, we're focusing on things that have happened in the past. Sign 4, and verse 7, tells us what's going to happen in the future. God judged the world then by water, verse 7, but by the same word.

By the way, notice the emphasis on word here throughout. We're told in verse 5, everything was formed by the word of God. In verse 6, by means of these, the world was alluished.

[28 : 33] And then 7, by the same word, the same power, in other words. God's proved his power in the past by his word. What's he going to do with his word in the future? Well, that heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

How do we know that Jesus is coming back even though he has not yet? Because he's told us. He's told us and we trust him.

We trust him because his word is our ultimate authority and we trust him because he's demonstrated his power in the past and so we should have no doubt that he will demonstrate it in the future.

In fact, John tells us about this in John chapter 5. He gives us a picture of what this is going to look like. Jesus is going to come back. He's going to judge the world. We're told at the very end, John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29.

He's going to be the righteous who are going to go to be with Jesus. He's going to be the unrighteous who are raised to judgment. There's going to be two places where people go at the end of the world. Salvation, judgment.

[29 : 42] It's the same thing that we're told here. God judged the world in the past through water. He is going to judge it in the future by fire. And when that judgment happens, there will be, end of verse 7, the destruction of the ungodly.

And so, the question that this passage leaves us with is this, will you be destroyed or saved? There are only two options.

This is similar to what we looked at, identical to what we looked at in our confession of faith this morning. Will you be destroyed or will you be saved? Those who are saved are those who have repented of their sins and they have faith in Jesus Christ.

They recognize that they have no hope outside of God's mercy that he's expressed through Christ. That when Christ came and lived as a man in this world, he lived the perfect life that we should have lived and he credits that to our account.

He died the death that we should have died and he took the punishment that we deserve. Those that have faith and follow after Jesus in that will be saved.

[30 : 52] Those that do not will face, verse 7, the day of judgment and the destruction of the ungodly. In other words, as I said earlier this morning, hell is a real place people are going there.

Heaven is a real place people are going there. The question is this, which one will you be? The application of this passage for Christians is this, remember.

Take hope in the authority of the Bible. Take hope in what God has done in the past. The application for non-Christians is this, not remember but repent.

Tremble because of the authority of the Bible. it is a more solid and firm ultimate authority than anything else to which you can turn and you cannot escape faith.

Everyone has faith in something. The question is whether the object of your faith will deliver or not. So we know that Jesus is coming back even though he has not yet.

[32 : 17] How is it that we remember? Jesus tells us in John chapter 10 he says, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. Jesus tells us that his sheep will hear his voice.

How is it that we know ultimately and recognize that the Bible is our ultimate authority? It's because Jesus' sheep know what he sounds like. And John goes on to tell us after that passage in John chapter 10 tells us in John chapter 14 that Jesus is going to send the Holy Spirit and then in John 16 he makes this radical statement Jesus does.

He says it's better that Jesus would leave so that we could have the Holy Spirit. Why? There's a lot of reasons. One of them is it's the Holy Spirit that allows us to hear the shepherd's voice.

1 Corinthians chapter 2 says it's the Holy Spirit that allows Christians to understand the Bible. He uses this phrase helping those who are spiritual understand spiritual things.

[33 : 34] In other words those who have the Holy Spirit can understand what God's saying. For those without it it is nonsense to them. That's essentially what Paul says 1 Corinthians 2 is about verses 10 through 16.

And so it is not that we are great people who know how to listen but it is that we have a great God who knows how to speak.

and he knows how to speak to his sheep. He sends his spirit that they would know and recognize his voice. In other words it is by God's spirit that we're able to see the match light.

If you're familiar with the story of the silver chair you know that Jill does a great job at the very beginning of the book remembering the signs.

And then she begins to forget. She forgets to review them and repeat them to herself. And so she gets confused at times.

[34 : 40] She believes that she misses some signs. She doesn't heed Aslan's warning to constantly be repeating it to herself. But as you look back over the book you see that despite Jill's imperfections and mistakes Aslan is still guiding them.

They still end up where they need to be and it is the fourth sign that she does not miss. The fourth sign is that they will know they have found the prince that they're looking for, the lost prince because he is the first one who will ask them to do something in Aslan's name.

When it matters most, they trust the word of Aslan despite all appearances. Brothers and sisters, God has commanded us to remember what he has told us in his word.

We will not do it perfectly. But our faith and hope and trust is not in us as the sheep but in Jesus as our shepherd who speaks to us and gives us his spirit so that we hear and know and understand.

What is important, what matters is that we recognize and know and follow the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[36 : 11] Why should we believe and trust that Jesus is coming back again to judge the earth? We trust it because of this. my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are our good shepherd and our hope is in you and your voice, not in our abilities as sheep.

we ask that you would use your word to give us tremendous faith and hope and trust and confidence in you that we would believe what you have told us and we would remember it no matter what.

We praise you that we don't have to stir this up in ourselves. We don't have to work these things in our hearts because we know that you are the gardener who's at work. We ask that you would do it, that you would do that work in us and that you would conform us more and more into the image of your son.

We once again praise you that we don't have to earn these things but instead we ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.