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The Second Epistle of Peter

*A New Creation Where
Righteousness Reigns: And
Which the Wicked Deny*

October 29, 2017

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 3

Scripture Reading: Psalm 102

The Bible has a major storyline. It develops from Genesis to Revelation, coming into clearer and clearer focus as we proceed through Scripture and the history of redemption. It is anything but a disorganized batch of old books thrown together. It begins in Eden:

Genesis 2:8-9 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. (9) And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every

tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then Eden is lost as sin enters the world and man is cast out of the temple – away from the presence of God. God’s salvation in Christ, as recorded in the Bible, is God’s work in bringing His people back to Eden. And so we are not surprised that the Bible ends (or rather “begins again”) in a new, even better Eden:

Revelation 22:1-3 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (2) through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

In this third and final chapter of 2 Peter, we are warned that in this evil age there will be, as Peter calls them, “scoffers” who mock the idea that Christ is coming again to establish His kingdom once and for all time in the new heavens and new earth. Once more then, Peter is calling us to be diligent in our knowledge of and faith in the Word and promises of God so that we will not be taken in by these false, evil teachers who we can count on to creep into the visible church.

Before we read through chapter 3, I wanted to briefly talk about two points back in chapter 2 which are rather difficult to understand in regard to specifics-

1. The sinning angels held in pits of darkness awaiting judgment, and
2. The “reviling of angelic majesties” (vs 11) as an example of the wickedness of false teachers

Now, the good news is that the main point Peter is making in these verses about angelic beings is not at all hard to see.

Alright then, look at verse 4-

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them

into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

“In their greed they will exploit you with false words.” This is what the false teachers have done and continue to do throughout the history of the church, and it is what we must always watch for now. In this case, Peter is reminding us that the coming judgment of the wicked is certain, and that history demonstrates that God deals out His justice to evil ones. It is certain and never to be doubted. He has even intervened in history to bring judgment:

- He imprisoned wicked angels and reserves them for judgment,
- He destroyed the world’s wicked in the flood,
- He wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah

These facts are conveniently “forgotten” by the wicked and are blatantly denied by the creeps who creep in among us today. So beware.

But who then are these sinning angels who God has cast into hell, into pits of darkness where even now they are awaiting final judgment? We see at least an indirect reference to this fact in the demon’s words to Christ:

Matthew 8:28-32 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. (29) And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? **Have you come here to torment us before the time?**" (30) Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. (31) And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." (32) And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.

And there is a parallel verse in Jude:

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—

Could it be that Peter means the demons? No one knows with certainty. Many people conclude that Peter is referring to a certain class of sinning angels such as the "sons of God" in Genesis 6. But we just don't know. Some kind of epic angelic rebellion must have taken place and it may well

have been before the creation of the world. After all, Satan is Satan even as early as Genesis 3.

The important point is plain. Peter, appealing to what must have been common knowledge to his readers, reminds them and us that God HAS intervened in judgment before and is going to judge these wicked angels in finality when Christ comes again. Don't doubt it.

Now, the second case we need to look at also deals with angels, specifically what Peter calls "angelic majesties."

2 Peter 2:9-12 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, (10) and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme **the glorious ones,** (11) **whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.** (12) But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,

The NASB translates "the glorious

ones” as “angelic majesties.” Apparently Peter is saying that these false teachers teach against and blaspheme even the righteous angels. Once again, here is a parallel in Jude:

Jude 1:8-10 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. (9) But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." (10) But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

Jude and probably Peter as well is referring to some event recorded in the extra-canonical (not in the Bible in other words) book of Enoch which is one of the Apocrypha, written by a Jewish source in the intertestament period (about 300BC) and attributed to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah. While that book is not inspired Scripture, these inspired authors recognize at least this event of the archangel Michael contending with the devil over the body of Moses as historical and factual.

But the primary point both Peter and

Jude are making is clear, and we will do very well to make careful note of this too:

A typical trait of these kind of false teachers is their incredible arrogance. Even archangels evidence proper humility, but not these wicked ones who creep in among us.

Perhaps, since we know that glorious angels are going to appear with Christ when He comes in judgment, these evil ones were mocking them as well as mocking the promise of Christ's return?

False teachers, these children of the devil who covertly come into the visible church to seek power and control, resemble their father in that they set themselves up as gods to be worshipped. Part of becoming mature in Christ is becoming wise in your ability to spot this arrogance. *The visible church is full of that evil arrogance today and it is vital that we see it.* Men and women, so often leaders in the church, acting as if they were the Lord themselves. Worship and church sanctuaries designed around a *man*. We must realize that all of this is very characteristic of Satan:

Genesis 3:5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing

good and evil."

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, **so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.**

The moment some preacher or other self-proclaimed teacher begins turning the spotlight on himself, behaving as if he (or she) is what "it" is all about, is the moment that person is deciding to become one of these false, wicked ones.

We should take careful note of Jude's descriptive phrase as he describes these kind: "*these men...reject authority.*" They "*by dreaming*" *defile the flesh and reject authority.*" What this means is that they have become their own authority. They claim to speak for the Lord but in fact as a false prophet they have not been sent by the Lord at all. God is against them and sets them aside for judgment. The visible church is full of such people today. And Peter's plea to us? *Stop being ignorant of these devices. Grow in Christ and become wise lest you be swept away with these deceivers.*

One of the reasons professing Christians get deceived by these kind and run after them is *because they have been lazy. Spiritual sluggards.* They don't want to think and if they do think they don't want to think about unpleasant things like evil. They never really engage with all of Scripture. They don't even want the milk of God's word let alone the meat. You can spot them because as soon as you start dishing out the hard yet freeing truths of Scripture, they squirm and check out. These are the unstable ones the enemy targets and many of them will never see heaven.

Let's move on now into chapter 3 of 2 Peter. Follow along as I read it:

2 Peter 3:1-18 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,

(2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

(3) knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (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."

(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.

(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.

(10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

(11) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, (12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens

will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

(13) But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (14) Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

(15) And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, (16) as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

(17) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. (18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Be Immersed in the Word

Reminders. Repetition. Our dangerous

tendency over time to forget. So Peter tells us again and again. You see his concern:

2 Peter 1:12-15 **Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities**, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. (13) I think it right, as long as I am in this body, **to stir you up by way of reminder**, (14) since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. (15) And I will make every effort **so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

2 Peter 1:19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, **to which you will do well to pay attention** as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

2 Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** (18) **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

And now again:

2 Peter 3:1-18 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,**

(2) **that you should remember** the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

How important is it that we regularly and seriously read and study Scripture? It is as important as heaven and hell. There is a darkness, a fogging that tends to come into our minds and hearts unless we regularly drive it out with the Light of Christ's truth. That darkness is dangerous because it is exploited by these agents of darkness who are all around us.

Remember the predictions of the Old Testament prophets, of the Lord Himself in the Gospels, and in the New Testament books of the Apostles. All of which are God's Word, as Peter is telling us here.

All three: OT, Christ, New Testament plainly tell us that the Day of the Lord is coming with certainty. Christ is coming again. Here are some examples:

Isaiah 13:9-13 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. (10) For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. (11) I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. (12) I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. (13) Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.

Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (31) And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:36-44 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not

even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. (37) For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) 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, (39) and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (40) Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. (41) Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. (42) Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (43) But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. (44) Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— (6) since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (8) in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who

do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, (10) when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

But along come the scoffers. And what kind of people are they able to deceive? Those who are unstable because they have not been diligent about growing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord. Such people are blinded by even the most obvious deceptions.

Now, let's leave off at this point and give serious thought to it this week.

These scoffers Peter is warning us about are NOT the pagan, unbelieving, evolutionists or atheists out in the world. Yes, such people do scoff at the truth of Christ's second coming and the end of this present world. But they are not specifically who Peter is warning us against. He is talking about deceivers in the visible church.

Now, this type could certainly be the liberal theologians who claim to be Christians but deny just about every

doctrine of Christ. No resurrection, no miracles, Christ is not God, and so on. But we are wise to these kind. They really are not difficult to spot.

But I would suggest to you that there are scoffers in the evangelical church today – many of them – who deny the second coming of Christ, the new heavens and new earth, the final judgment and so on. Oh, in their doctrinal statements they say they affirm those truths. But in practice, well, that is another thing. Let me explain:

Hebrews 11:9-10 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

And another:

Matthew 24:1-2 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Now, you would not need to look very long or far to see something quite contradictory to these Scriptures. Professing Christians, generally led by some charismatic leader personality supposedly sent to them by the Lord, are doing just about everything BUT living in tents. That is to say, their lives in practice, both as a church body and individually, in no way evidence the truth of what Peter is telling us here:

2 Peter 3:10-11 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (11) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

Good question, right? Just what sort of people ought the Christian be? What kind of life should they demonstrate? And as a local church? But what we see far and wide today isn't people and churches who live out their faith in these doctrines, but people who are building up their own earthly kingdoms and Babel-like "church" buildings, then boasting about them just as the Jews of Jesus' day boasted about the temple. But it was all coming down.

I have no doubt that it is just not that difficult to spot the wolves that Peter is warning us about here. They are self-kingdom builders. And as such, they are denying Christ. They are scoffing at the doctrine of Christ's return and the doctrine of the new heavens and earth.

Matthew 8:19-20 And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." (20) And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Understand? We must give closer attention to these things lest we be deceived and WE start living as if this world is forever. Where is your treasure? Here? Or with Christ?

