

## Beware of the Scoffers!

### 2 Peter 3:1-4

When I was growing up, there was a song that my family often sang at church. It went like this:

“Years of time have come and gone since I first heard it told  
How that Jesus would come again some day;  
If back then it seemed so real, then I just can’t help but feel  
How much closer His coming is today.

Signs of the times are everywhere;  
There’s a brand-new excitement in the air.  
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky;  
Lift up your head--your Redemption draweth nigh!”

It has been more than four decades since I first heard that song sung; but I can say, with all honesty, that Christ’s coming is no less real to me today than it was back then. In fact, as I see the tide of Luciferian evil that is crashing down on our world, Christ’s coming is on my mind and heart more than ever before.

Sadly, though, there are Christians who have become weary of talking and thinking about Christ’s coming. There are pastors who used to preach about it often, but who now hardly preach about it at all. Brethren, this ought not to be so! As Christians, we should be living in the expectation that at any moment Christ may come, and that we will be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Our excitement shouldn’t be based upon the latest sensational claims of prophecy experts; nor should it be based upon whether we *think* that world events indicate that Christ’s return is near. Rather, our expectation should be based upon the fact that *Christ promised* to return; and one day, He *will* return!

What is the practical value of living with this expectation? Plenty! Christians who think about the coming of Jesus Christ are highly motivated to live holy lives, and to be faithful in their service to God until Christ returns. The Second Coming of Christ is not merely a doctrine to study and discuss. Like all Scriptural teaching, the teaching of the Second Coming compels us to live for God!

Now, there are many people (including multitudes who call themselves Christians) who vehemently deny this doctrine. As the years roll by, the mockers of the Second Coming are growing louder, and more vehement. In fact, it seems that the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is hated even more than the Gospel message is! But why? Why do people hate the doctrine of the Second Coming so much? That is the question that we will be answering this morning. As always, it is my prayer that through these messages from **2 Peter 3**, those of you who are saved will be drawn closer to Christ. It is also my prayer that those of you who are not saved will realise that time is running out, and that you must place your faith in Christ while you still have the chance. The title of this message is ***Beware of the Scoffers!***

### 2 Peter 3:1-4

In these verses, the Apostle Peter gives three admonitions to Christians. First, he admonishes us to...

#### I. Be mindful of the Scriptures (vv. 1-2).

In **verse 1**, the Apostle Peter is reminding his readers of why he wrote this second letter. He had already stated his purpose for the letter back in **chapter 1**; but now, he's stating it again. Let's go back to **chapter 1**, and look again at what Peter said. (**Read 2 Peter 1:13-15.**)

Peter wrote this letter to remind his Christian brothers and sisters of certain things. But of what was he reminding them? Was he reminding them of "the good old days" of the early church, and of all the things that God's people had gone through together since then? No! It is important to remember what the Lord has done for us in the past; but there is something that is even *more* important to remember! Look again at what Peter said in **verse 2**. (**Read 2 Peter 3:2.**)

Of what do we need to be "*mindful*"? Peter says that we need to be mindful of the *words* that have been spoken by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by the Apostles in the New Testament. We need to be mindful of the *Scripture*. Brethren, we need to be reminded of the words of this Book, again, and again. Why? First of all, because we have very fallible memories. Even more importantly, we still have an old sin nature. Sin blinds our minds, and causes us to be complacent and lukewarm toward God. Because of our sin nature, we easily forget the doctrines and commandments that God has given us in His Word. Just as a person must keep stirring up a fire and putting on more coal in order to stay warm, so we must have our minds and hearts continually stirred up and rekindled with God's Word, so that we might stay warm toward God.

God's Word is that with which we have to do, brethren! It is God's revelation of Himself. We who are saved were saved so that we might be empowered to serve Him from a heart of love. Yet, how can we serve Him if we don't know *how* to live the Christian life? We can't. The only way we can know and *remember* the right way to live is to read this Book continuously. If we don't read it, we will forget God's instructions; and we will lean on our own fallible wisdom, and on our own foolish understanding. We will stumble and fall, and will suffer spiritual loss.

Christian, *you will* be judged according to all that God has revealed in His Word. There are no "non-essential" doctrines in this Book. "***All scripture*** [not "some," but "all"] ***is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.***" Christian, if you refuse to believe (or to respond) to certain teachings in this Book because you think that they are "non-essential," *you will* be judged for it. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, Christians will not be condemned to hell, since Christ has already removed the penalty of their sin. However, Christians *will* lose reward for their lack of faithfulness to God in this lifetime in earth. We will be judged according to *every word* that God has given us.

### **John 12:44-48**

In this passage, Jesus was speaking to lost people. However, the *principle* of **verse 48** is the same, even for saved people. Just like the lost, God's people will be judged according to *every word* that Christ has given us. Now, as I said, the *outcome* of Christians' judgment will be completely different from that of lost people. Christians will *not* be sentenced to the Lake of Fire, because Christ has already paid our sin debt. However, we will still have to give an answer for *everything* we did in this life. We will have to look our Saviour in the eye and answer "why" we did such-and-such; and God's Word will be the standard by which we are judged. **Second Corinthians**

**5:10** says, ***“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”***

Christian, does this truth concern you? It should! Losing rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ won't be a light and casual thing; it will be terrifying, and heart-breaking! In **1 Corinthians 3**, Paul said that ***“If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”*** On the other hand, ***“If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*** Christian, imagine that you had worked all your life to build a beautiful dream home for your family. Imagine that you poured your sweat, tears, heart, and life into making the money to build that home; and then, after decades of toil, it was finally built. However, shortly after you moved into your dream home, there was a freak fire; and everything you'd worked for was lost--except for your own life. Would you glibly say, “Oh, well. It's no big deal. At least I escaped with my life!” No, you'd be devastated. Why? Because that house was where you had laid up your treasure. You had planned to give that home to your family; but now, it's reduced to ashes. Christian, if you can easily imagine being devastated by a fire that destroys an *earthly* dream home, yet you think that losing *rewards in heaven* is “no biggie,” then something is drastically wrong! Your heart's affection is in the wrong place. Do you understand how heart-broken your *Saviour* will be that your life's labour was in vain--that you have nothing to give back to *Him*, to show your love for *Him*? Scripture says that we will cast our crowns at His feet, to show our love for Him; but what if we have no crowns to cast?

Christian, we need to be reminded of God's words constantly; and we must continually allow the Lord to *judge* our hearts according to His Word. Peter knew that the Christians in *his* day needed to be reminded of these things; and that is why he wrote this letter. By the way, Peter wasn't saying these things because he thought that they *weren't* immersing themselves in God's Word. Peter was confident that they *were* measuring themselves by God's Word. How do I know? Well, look again at **2 Peter 3:1**. **(Read again.)** Peter says that he desired to stir up their ***“pure minds.”*** There is only one way that Peter's audience could have had ***“pure”*** minds; and that is by heeding God's Word. God's Word is our cleansing agent! The Bible says, ***“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”***

Peter wasn't writing to people who *didn't* know that they should be meditating on God's Word; he was writing to people who *did* know it, and who practiced it. Yet, he reminded them of this truth, anyway. That is what a good pastor does: he keeps reminding God's people of God's words--even if they already know it! In **1 John 2:21** John wrote, ***“I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”*** Christian, are you reading God's Word every day, and reminding yourself of what God has said?

Peter exhorts us to be mindful of the Scriptures. However, that's not all. Peter also warns us to...

## II. Beware of the scoffers (v. 3).

**(Read verse 3 again.)** Peter says that we need to be ***“mindful”*** of God's words; but now, in **verse 3**, he gives us an important reason *why* we need to remember God's words. We need to be ***“mindful”*** of God's words because we are going to be confronted by people who *deny* the

Coming of Jesus Christ. Christians need to fortify themselves with truth concerning this important teaching of Scripture. Let's remind ourselves of what the Lord said about His Coming.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

The Lord commands Christians to **“comfort”** themselves with the promise of the Resurrection. We should be constantly reminding ourselves, and comforting ourselves, with “the Blessed Hope” of the Rapture. By the way, the actual term “Rapture” is not used in our English Bible; but it *is* scriptural. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. (Believe me, sooner or later you will meet someone who *will* try to tell you otherwise!) The word “Rapture” comes from the Latin word *rapturo*, which simply means “to be caught up.” That is precisely how Paul describes this future event in **verse 17**, is it not? He says that the Christians who are still living at the time of Christ's coming will be “caught up” in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (together with the saints who have already died, and who have just been resurrected from their graves).

This teaching is a source of great comfort to Christians, for several reasons. For one thing, because of the Rapture, we Christians who live in this church age will not have to go through the terrible Tribulation period, which will begin immediately after the Rapture. Now, Christians of every period of history *must* go through different measures of tribulation and persecution for Christ during this life. Some Christians must go through *great* persecution. Yet, we who are saved during this church age have the distinct hope that we will *not* go through the *Great* Tribulation, of which we read in **Revelation, Daniel, Matthew 24**, and other places. Jesus said that the Tribulation will be a time of horrific judgment, unlike any other time since the beginning of the world. As Christians, we are not expecting to go through this time; rather, we look forward to deliverance, just before the judgments of the Tribulation begin. We can comfort ourselves with the hope that at any moment, we may be taken out of this world. We will be clothed with new, sinless, immortal bodies, and brought into the presence of Jesus Christ in heaven.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:1-10**

Paul says that God has not appointed us to **“wrath”** (the wrath of the Tribulation), but to **“obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Whether we **“wake or sleep”** (whether we are still living at the time of the Rapture, or have already died), we will all **“live together with him,”** in Heaven. This is a precious promise to every Christian; and it is important that we remind ourselves of this promise again and again. Why? Because, as Peter warns us here in **verse 3**, there are going to come **“scoffers.”** What is a “scoffer”? A scoffer is someone who criticises, mocks, scorns, and laughs at something. Peter warns that there would come scoffers in the last days, who would mock the promise of the Rapture, and of the Second Coming of Christ.

Now, before we talk about these scoffers, we need to understand a couple terms. First, we need to know the meaning of **“last days.”** What, exactly, is the biblical meaning of **“last days”**? How can we *know* if and when the **“last days”** is upon us? Let's look at a couple Scriptures.

### **Hebrews 1:1-2**

### **1 John 2:18**

According to these verses, we are already in the **“last days”**! The **“last days”** began 2,000 years ago, when God’s Son spoke to us here on earth; and it is still in progress. So, Christian, when a lost person mockingly asks you, “Are you one of those crazy ‘born agains’ who believe that we’re in the ‘last days’?”, you can unashamedly say, “Yes. We *are* in the last days. I don’t know when Christ will return, and I’m not setting a date for His return; but according to the Bible, we *are* in the last days. We *have* been in the last days since Christ was on earth 2,000 years ago, and we will continue to be in the last days until He wraps up human history!”

Now, the other word that I wish to clear up is the word **“coming.”** What does Peter mean when he speaks of the **“coming”** of Christ? Well, the word **“coming”** is translated from the word *parousia*; and it can be translated as “presence,” “appearing,” or “coming.” When this word is used in Scripture, it can refer to one of three different aspects of Christ’s coming. First of all, *parousia* can refer to the Rapture of Christians at the end of this church age. One day, Christ will “appear” in the clouds, and receive Christians to Himself in heaven. Christ will not actually *touch down* on earth; instead, He will *appear* in the clouds to those who are saved. Paul says that **“we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep.”** To us Christians who are living in this church age, the Rapture is the *parousia* to which we are looking.

Secondly, the word *parousia* can refer to the coming of Christ to earth *at the end of the Tribulation*. In this **“coming,”** Christ will actually “touch down” on earth. Jesus will descend to earth with all the armies of heaven, to destroy the armies of Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon; and His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives, where He left us 2,000 years ago. In this coming, we will come *with Him!* We will already be “with” Him, because we will have been raptured up to Heaven 7 years earlier, just before the Tribulation began!

### **1 Thessalonians 3:13**

Now, there is one more way that the word *parousia* is used. *Parousia* can also refer to the **“coming”** of the **“day of God.”** The **“day of God”** will begin *after* the 1,000-year Kingdom is complete. In the **“day of God,”** Christ will destroy this sin-cursed universe with fire, and will create a new heaven and a new earth, in which there is no sin or curse.

### **2 Peter 3:12**

So, these are the three meanings of the word **“coming.”** There is the **“coming”** of Christ in the clouds, at the Rapture; there is the **“coming”** of Christ *to earth*, at the Battle of Armageddon, seven years later; and there is the **“coming”** of the **“day of God,”** when the old universe is destroyed, and the new one is created. So then, which aspect of Christ’s “coming” is Peter talking about here in **2 Peter 3:3**? Which aspect of Christ’s coming do scoffers mock? The answer is: All of the above! Scoffers laugh at *every* aspect of Christ’s coming! However, if there be one aspect of Christ’s coming that scoffers mock the most, it would probably be the Rapture. Why? Because the Rapture is the next event on God’s prophetic calendar. The Rapture is the phase of Christ’s coming that we New Testament age Christians are awaiting *right now*; and for that reason, Satan loves to use scoffers to discourage Christians from looking for their Blessed Hope.

Now, according to Scripture, there is no prophetic event that *has* to happen before the Rapture takes place. The Rapture is imminent—meaning that it could happen at any moment. Paul says that it will be **“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”** As you read the New Testament, you’ll find that the Apostles believed that the Rapture could happen in their lifetimes. They lived in constant expectation of it. As for Peter himself, he realised that Christ’s coming *would not* be in his lifetime, because Christ had told him, years earlier, that he would die a martyr’s death. Also, God had recently revealed to him that the time of his death was near at hand. Peter knew that *he* wouldn’t still be living at the time of the Rapture. However, Peter was probably beginning to wonder whether *any* of the Apostles would still be living at the time of the Rapture. Many of the Apostles had died martyr’s deaths already; and Paul was next in line for execution, too. (This was sometime around A.D. 66.) Little did Peter know that 2,000 years later, we’d still be waiting!

Now, to true believers in Jesus Christ, the delay of Christ’s coming is not a reason to despair; it is all the more reason to continue to hope, and wait. But to unbelievers, the delay of Christ’s coming is all the more reason to scoff and ridicule. **Ecclesiastes 8:11** says, **“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”** Just as the people mocked and ridiculed Noah, and hardened themselves in their sin and unbelief, and said that judgment would never come, because it had been a long time since Noah began to preach to them about the Flood, so people in this age mock and ridicule, and say that the Rapture and the Tribulation will never happen. “It hasn’t happened yet,” they say; “and it’s been 2,000 years now!” That is exactly how Peter said that the lost world would react to the preaching of the Rapture and the Second Coming. God revealed to Peter that as the **“last days”** progressed, there would come more and more scoffers who would laugh and mock at the promise of Christ’s coming. They would say, **“Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”**

Next week, we will be talking much more about these scoffers. Peter gives us a detailed description of them in **verses 3-6**. It is important that we understand who they are, and what they say, because we are surrounded by them. Scoffers are not content to disbelieve God’s Word in their own hearts: they want to turn *others* away from God, too. They will do their best to shake *your* confidence in the Coming of Christ—or, at least, to make you ashamed to talk about it. They want to shout down, embarrass, and intimidate anyone who speaks of Christ’s return.

We are living in a day when people are mocking the doctrine of the Rapture as never before. Hollywood, for example, loves to mock the Rapture. Hollywood has cranked out a plethora of movies that directly blaspheme and mock not only Jesus Christ, but the Rapture. (In 2013 alone, there were two movies that mocked Jesus Christ and the Rapture in the most vile, perverted, disgusting way imaginable: *Rapture Palooza* and *This Is the End*.) I want you to realise, though, that it is not just the *witches and atheists* who mock the Coming of Christ. There are many people who call themselves “Christians,” yet who mock the Rapture and the Second Coming. In fact, there are hordes of so-called “Christian leaders” who reject the Second Coming. Despite their “Christian” veneer, they are apostates—men who know the truth, but who have chosen to depart from it. Many of these apostate religious leaders even call themselves “evangelicals.” The name “evangelical” fools the unsuspecting into thinking that these guys are actually Christians. But

don't be fooled! Jesus said that there will be *many* false teachers who claimed to be His disciples, but who will hear Him say to them, ***“I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”***

One of my jobs as a pastor is to warn you of these false teachers. Allow me to give you some examples of the blasphemous things that false teachers today are saying about Christ's Coming. Take **Tony Compolo**, for example. **Tony Compolo** “rejects the doctrine of Christ's imminent return. He calls it ‘a weird little form of fundamentalism.’<sup>1</sup> According to Compolo, “That whole sense of the rapture, which may occur at any moment, is used as a device to oppose engagement with...the political and economic structures of our age.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Compolo thinks that Christians who believe in the Rapture simply don't want to live in the real world, because they don't have any solutions to the world's problems. For that reason, they are a danger to society!

**Brian McLaren** “mocks the ‘fundamentalist expectations’ of a literal second coming of Christ, with its attendant judgments on the world, and assumes that the world will go on like it is for hundreds of thousands of years.... He calls the literal, imminent return of Christ ‘pop-Evangelical eschatology’... McLaren says that the book of Revelation is not a ‘book about the distant future,’ but is ‘a way of talking about the challenges of the immediate present.’<sup>3</sup> In other words, McLaren doesn't believe that the Bible should be taken literally: it is merely a book that we can twist around to make it say what we want it to say, to fit into the kind of world that we want to build.

**Mark Driscoll** “mocks the idea of a Rapture for believers, and a one-world government with an Anti-christ who makes people wear a mark to buy, sell or trade....Driscoll mocks the imminent Rapture. He claims that the Rapture doctrine is evidence of the sickness of...Christians, and mocks those who have the goal of leaving ‘this trailer park of a planet before God's tornado touches down on all the sinners.’<sup>4</sup> Driscoll also “calls dispensationalists ‘nutty, Christian, end-times-prophecy Kaczynskis.’<sup>5</sup> By the way, Ted Kaczynski was a terrorist who murdered 3 people, and maimed 23 others. According to Driscoll, those who believe in the Rapture are terrorists!

Men who say such things may call themselves “evangelical Christian” pastors; but they are heretics and apostates. They do not know the Lord. There are many more of them, as well—people like **Rob Bell**, and **Rick Warren**. Every one of these people use biblical terms that sound “Christian” on the surface; yet, they deny the true Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Many of them even deny that there is a real heaven and hell. Don't listen to these voices, Christian! Don't let them dishearten you, or cause you to be intimidated to warn people of the coming judgment. Listen to the voice of our Saviour. Jesus said, ***“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*** Before we close this morning, let's look at one more Scripture about Christ's Coming.

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1 David Cloud, “Hating the Rapture” (Port Huron, MI: Fundamental Baptist Information Service, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org), June 7, 2011).

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

## 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

**Conclusion:** What was the last thing that Paul said in **verse 57**? He said that God gives us the **“victory”** through our Lord Jesus Christ. We who know Jesus Christ are on the winning side! When the world accuses you of being an “end times nutjob,” or of just wanting an “escape hatch” from this life, or of not having any solutions to the world’s problems, or of not wanting to deal with reality, remember the promise of the Saviour. He has promised to deliver us. *Jesus Christ* has the answer to the world’s problems; and He has revealed Himself in this Book. The solution to the world’s problems is not better education, or fighting poverty, disease, and injustice through political processes. The answer to the world’s problems is the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Only the Gospel can transform the hearts of men. As far as peace is concerned, there will be *no* peace between nations until Christ returns to set up His Kingdom. We who know Christ will have a part in that Kingdom. But until then, be strong! Don’t be intimidated by the scorners. David said, ***“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”*** Proclaim the Gospel without fear. Warn the lost that Christ’s coming is near, and that if they do not receive Christ, they will be left behind to face the judgment of God! In the meantime, keep looking up! Your redemption draweth nigh!

To those of you who haven’t repented and placed your faith in Christ, I would ask: “What are you waiting for?” Christ could come at any moment! Before this worship hour is over, the trump of God may sound. If so, the true Christians will be caught up in the clouds, and you will be left behind to face the horror of the Tribulation. Worst of all, this may be your last chance to repent before passing out of this life, and facing the *eternal* judgment of hell. Please don’t wait! Repent of your sin, and receive Christ today!