

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 7 March 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Deeds of the Scoffers

2 Peter 3:3-7

In the U.S., there is a famous “evangelical” leader named **Rob Bell**, who, in the last decade, has had a huge impact on the thinking of people all over the world. Up until 2012, he was the pastor of a church called Mars Hill Bible Church, which, at the time, was one of the fastest growing megachurches in America. Today, he is an internationally-known author and speaker.

Now, what do you need to know about Rob Bell? What you need to know is that Bell rejects every foundational truth of God’s Word. He says that the Apostles did not “claim to have the absolute word from God.” He denies that the Bible is really God’s Word. He denies that hell is a real, literal place. He refers to hell as a mere poetical expression of things that we experience in life. He calls the Bible’s teaching of a literal, burning, eternal hell “misguided and toxic.” He denies that Jesus is the only Way to heaven: therefore, he denies that it is the mission of Christians to try to convert people to the Lord Jesus.

Rob Bell delights in mocking those who actually believe the Bible. At every turn, he glorifies doubt of God’s Word. His wife, Kristen, is proud of her unbelief, as well. She says, “I grew up thinking that we’ve figured out the Bible, that we knew what it means. Now I have no idea what it means, and yet I feel like life is big again—like life used to be in black and white, and now it’s in colour.” As for her husband, he is the grandson of born-again Christians who believed that Jesus is the only Way of salvation. Yet, though he *knows* the truth of salvation, he rejects it. In one of his extremely popular books, Bell tells about a painting that hangs on the wall in his grandmother’s house. It “depicts heaven as a shining city,” on the other side of a dark, burning, bottomless canyon (representing hell). However, stretching over this canyon is a bridge shaped like a cross, upon which people are passing over the canyon to safety, and into the shining city. To this man’s grandparents (and to every true Christian), this painting is a beautiful picture of the salvation that Jesus has provided by dying on the cross for our sins. Yet, Bell confesses that he never liked seeing that painting. He says that it always gave him and his sister “the creeps.”

Should we be surprised that this painting gave Rob “the creeps”? No, we shouldn’t. The Bible says that ***“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*** The Bible’s teaching of hell, and of God’s judgment upon our sin, *should* be scary--to those who are unsaved! Fear of God’s judgment *should* drive sinners to run to God for salvation. Tragically, though, Rob Bell, and many others like him, will not come to Christ that they might have life. Though Bell calls himself a Christian, he is lost, and in spiritual darkness. In his darkened mind, every Bible truth is turned upside down. For example, Bell once hosted a special night at his church, which he called **“Doubt Night.”** (Sounds uplifting, doesn’t it?) He encouraged the people to write down whatever doubts they had about God, Jesus, and the Bible; yet, instead of dispelling their doubts with sound answers from Scripture, they *celebrated* their doubts! Bell says that “questions bring *freedom*,” and that “questions, no matter how shocking or blasphemous.....are rooted in *humility*.”¹

My friends, the Bible says just the opposite. The Bible says that doubt of God’s Word is not humility, but pride and rebellion against a God. Satan’s first words to man were, ***“Yea, hath God said?”*** That first seed of doubt was man’s ruin! The Bible says, ***“But without faith it is impossible to please him.”*** The Bible says, ***“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”*** The Bible says, ***“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable,***

¹ All above quotations and references are taken from “Rob Bell’s New God” and “Beware of Velvet Elvis,” by David Cloud.

and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” That penalty for unbelief is eternal death in hell!

Sadly, Rob Bell is what the Bible calls a “scoffer.” As we saw in our Scripture last week, the Apostle Peter warned that there would be many scoffers in the last days, who would mock the Second Coming of Christ. This morning, we will learn more about these scoffers. As we do so, we will also see what God’s plan for the last part of human history is. The title of this message is *The Deeds of the Scoffers*.

Read 2 Peter 3:3-7.

According to this passage of Scripture, scoffers deny three things. First of all...

I. Scoffers deny that the world was created by the Word of God (vv. 3-5).

A notable characteristic of end-time scoffers is that they deny the Bible’s account of creation. In a few moments, we’ll take a closer look at this characteristic. First, though, I would like to point out some other characteristics of scoffers, which go hand-in-hand with their denial of creation.

To begin with, Peter says that the scoffers of the last days would “*walk about in their own lusts.*” By the way, Peter isn’t necessarily talking about “secular” scoffers; he’s talking about *religious* scoffers. He’s talking about people who have a “*form of godliness,*” but who deny “*the power thereof.*” Peter just spent all of **chapter 2** talking about the apostate teachers who were already around in *his* day; and now, in **chapter 3**, he is talking about *end-times* apostates. Just like apostate teachers, the end-times scoffers (though they may call themselves “Christians”) are not spiritually minded: they are sensually and worldly-minded. They are controlled by unlawful, lustful desires. They love the sinful things of this world instead of God. They love money and material possessions. They love fornication, pornography, adultery, and sodomy; and their minds are continually thinking on these things (though they may hide it from others). They pride themselves on their “tolerance” of wicked behaviour. Meanwhile, they call *real* Christians who stand against fornication, adultery, sodomy, and other wicked sins, “narrow-minded.” They love fleshly literature, theatre, movies, and media; and it doesn’t bother them in the least to hear their favourite celebrities use filthy, profane, and blasphemous language. They love ungodly music; and they style their “Christian” music after the world’s satanic rock beat and sensual performance style. They love to smoke, and drink alcohol, and have cocktail parties. They do all these ungodly things; yet, they call themselves “Christians.” They are even audacious enough to host “Christian” cocktail parties! (Don’t laugh! Many apostate churches today are hosting “Christian” cocktail parties these days!) They are full of lust; and they love pleasure and partying, instead of the things of God. Let’s look at Jude’s and Paul’s description of them.

Read Jude 14-19.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

The Bible says that when a person truly places his faith in Jesus Christ, and is saved, the Spirit of God comes into that person’s life, and effects a conversion—a change. Though the old, sinful nature is still present in the Christian while he is still in this mortal body, the Holy Spirit imparts to the Christian a new nature—one that is created in righteousness. A true Christian certainly *can* sin; but because of his new nature, which is generated by the Holy Spirit, it greatly *bothers* him to sin. A true Christian is compelled by love for His Master to shun lust and worldly pleasures.

Read Titus 3:3-8.

We who are saved are not saved *by* our good works: we are saved by the grace of God alone. However, God *has* saved “unto good works.” In fact, the call to salvation is *inseparable* from the call to a life of service! In his book *The Insanity of God*, a former missionary to Somalia, who goes by the pen name Nik Ripken (for security reasons), tells about the night he was saved. He was sitting at his post on his night shift in a Kraft cheese factory, when he sensed, in a powerful way, that God was saying, “Nik, are you tired of running? Nik, are you ready to stop running, and serve me?” The voice was so distinct, that it was almost audible; and it was startling! Up to this point, Nik knew the Gospel, but hadn’t responded to it; but that night, God got hold of his heart. Here is how Nik described it: “I didn’t realize that it was possible to question, or even ignore, the Holy Spirit. I was so surprised by what was happening that, all by myself in the back of that food factory, I made what seemed like the only possible response:... I gave God my life. And because I had never been told anything different, I simply assumed that a person could be *saved and called to serve God* in the very same moment. That’s exactly what I believed was happening to me. I answered God’s voice, and I put my life in His control.”² My friends, God doesn’t always reveal a *specific* calling (such as the call to the ministry) at the moment of salvation; but He *does* call a person to *serve Him with his life* at the moment of salvation. A person who claims to be saved, yet who doesn’t feel obligated to serve God with his life, has not been truly saved! True Christians know that they have been called to salvation so that they may *obey God*.

True Christians desire to *shun* lusts and worldly pleasures. In contrast, scoffers (though they may profess Christianity) have no qualms about indulging in sinful lusts. They lap up sin as a hog laps up slop; and when true Christians question them about why they have no apparent desire to please God, scoffers often twist the meaning of **Matthew 7:1**, and say, “Well, *Jesus* said, ‘**Judge not, that ye be not judged**!’” They don’t like anyone rebuking them, or suggesting that they are doing wrong. As King Solomon put it, “**A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke**” (**Proverbs 13:1**). Scorners live their lives according to the Burger King slogan: “Have it your way.” It’s not wrong to like your *burger* a certain way; but it *is* wrong to *live your life* your own way, in defiance of God’s laws. Tragically, that is the way that most professing “Christians” in our world live their lives. They have a “*form of godliness*,” but they “*deny the power thereof*.” I can’t think of a more poignant example of this fact than in a statement that Rep. Jerry Nadler made in a hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives last week. A representative from Georgia had dared to state to the Congress that it is an offence to a holy God for a man to wear women’s clothing, or for a woman to wear man’s clothing. He also said that “whenever a nation’s laws no longer reflect the standards of God, that nation is in rebellion against him, and will inevitably bear the consequences.” Rep. Nadler replied to him, “Mr. Steube, what any religious tradition describes as God’s will is no concern of this Congress.” *That* is the attitude of apostates and scoffers! They say “no” to God’s will, and to God’s laws.

Scoffers want to live life *their* way. By the way, this “have it your way” thinking can easily rub off on Christians. Many Christians balk at God’s clear commands for their Christian life, because to one degree or another, they have bought into the “have it your way” philosophy. They don’t feel the need to read their Bible daily, or to spend any real time in prayer, or to be committed to a Bible-preaching church, or to give to God, or to be involved in missions, or to tell anyone else about the Lord, or to make God the centre of their heart’s affections, or to make His will the basis of every decision. Why? First, because they are obeying their fleshly desires. Secondly, because they have listened to scorners, who say, “Don’t waste your life serving God. That’s dumb!” This is why God warns His people not to keep close company with scoffers. God says, “**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.**” Don’t let the thinking of scoffers rub off on you, Christian!

² Nik Ripken, *The Insanity of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), p. 31.

What else characterises the scoffers of the last days? Well, let's go back to our Scripture. (**Read 2 Peter 3:4.**) According to this verse, the scoffers of the last days would be what we know today as “**uniformitarians.**” Now, what is a “uniformitarian”? Simply put, a “uniformitarian” is an evolutionist. Uniformitarianism was a philosophy that unbelieving geologists dreamed up back in the 1700's and 1800's, as they were attempting to explain the age of the earth and of rocks (apart from the authority of the Bible, of course). Their ideas later became the basis of the theory of evolution. Uniformitarians say that “the present is the key to understanding the past.” In other words, they say that the processes in nature *that we see today* have always been. As they look around them, they see death in men and animals, and decay in the universe in general. Therefore, they assume that death has *always* been part of nature. They assume that there could never have been such a thing as immortality, or Paradise, or a Garden of Eden. Uniformitarians deny that there could have ever been a time when men lived hundreds of years, or that there could have ever been a worldwide Flood. Why? Because we don't see these things happening in nature today; therefore, it could never have been. Even though scientists are constantly finding fossils of *sea* animals on *mountaintops*, thrown together with fossils of animals from every kind of climate from all over the world—and even though it appears that these fossils were all quickly buried by an incredible amount of water--and even though it appears that whole mountain ranges were formed by a massive disaster that ripped the continents apart—uniformitarians still insist that there could not have been a worldwide Flood. How do they know? Because they *know* that evolution *must be* true. Evolution is their *faith*. They place *their* faith in the wild guesses of the “experts” and “scientists.” “Nothing has ever changed,” they say. “Everything has always been the same as it is now. The earth has been around for millions of years; and it will continue on for millions of years.”

This is the way that uniformitarians think; and this is exactly the description that Peter gives us here in **2 Peter 3:4**, as he talks about the scoffers of the last days. Peter is giving us a perfect description of evolutionists. Evolutionists believe that “***All things continue as they were from the beginning.***” Brethren, what we have here is a prophecy. In this verse, God was informing the Christians of Peter's day of what evolutionists would believe 1,800 years later! Long before Charles Darwin was born, God gave us warning to beware of the uniformitarians!

Now, let's return to the characteristics of the scoffers. Another characteristic of scoffers is that they deny that God created the world by His bare word. (**Read 2 Peter 3:5 again.**) Scoffers are willingly ignorant of the truth of Creation. This doesn't mean that they haven't *heard* the truth of Creation; they simply choose to suppress it, ignore it, and push it out of their mind—and out of other people's minds, if they can. They refuse to believe that God created the world out of nothing, in six literal days. By the way, Peter is speaking specifically of the second and third days of creation, here. Peter says that God created “***the heavens***” (this happened on day 2); and he also says that God created the earth “***standing out of the water, and in the water.***” This happened on day 3, when the dry land appeared from out of the sea. The chemical matter that would make up earth was in the water for the first 2 days; but on day 3, the earth matter came together into one place, and stood apart from the water. Let's look it up in **Genesis**.

Read Genesis 1:6-10.

Why don't the scoffers like the Bible's teaching of a literal, six-day Creation? Why do they find it so offensive and threatening? Because if the Bible's account in **Genesis 1-3** be literally true, then Adam really was created perfect and immortal. It means that death really *is* the consequence of man's choice to sin against God. It means that man really *is* fallen, and separated from God. It means that mankind really *is* under God's judgment, and is condemned. It means that God really meant what he said in **Romans 5:12**: “***Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.***”

Once again, it is important to realise that Peter is talking about *religious* scoffers, here—not complete atheists. Peter is talking about people who *do* believe that there is some kind of “god,” and some kind of “creation.” How do I know that these “scoffers” are people who profess religion? Because they use religious terms. (**Read verse 4 again.**) Do you notice how the scoffers refer to “*the fathers*”? “*The fathers*” is a biblical term. Atheists don’t talk this way! The “*fathers*” whom the scoffers acknowledge are either the patriarchs of the Old Testament (the fathers of the Jewish nation), or the early leaders of the church age (such as Stephen, the Apostles, etc.). Regardless of which set of “fathers” they are talking about, these scoffers are people who claim to have a *Judeo-Christian* heritage. They claim to be spiritual descendants of “the fathers.” They are professed “Christians” (or, perhaps, followers of Judaism). They have an outward *form*, or appearance, of godliness—just as the leaders of many Western governments still begin their legislatures with prayer, yet pass abominable laws, which mock God. Whatever “god” the scoffers claim to worship is not the God of the Bible; and the “*creation*” that they speak of not the creation of the Bible. They are uniformitarians. They are evolutionists. They believe that a “god” (however they conceive of “god”) created the world through evolution, over millions of years. They like this idea, because it means that death, and “survival of the fittest,” has always been part of creation—which also means that death is *not* a judgment from God upon man’s sin. They do *not* like that idea of **judgment!**

We’ll talk more about this momentarily. But for now, let’s look at the second thing scoffers deny.

II. Scoffers deny that the world was once judged by the Word of God (v. 6).

(**Read verses 5 and 6 again.**) In **verse 6**, Peter starts out with the word “*whereby*.” The word “*whereby*” simply means “by which.” This pronoun “by which” is referring to “*the word of God*,” which Peter had just mentioned in the previous verse. So, what is Peter saying, then? He is saying that it was “*by*” the word of God that God created the heavens and earth; and it was also “*by*” the word of God that He caused the world to perish with water.

Think of this! The same all-powerful, infinite God who spoke the world into existence by His word also *destroyed* the world with the waters of the Flood, by His word! It was all done by the same word of God. By the way, God’s Word is available to *you* in this Book, Christian! If God’s Word was powerful enough to create the world from nothing, and to destroy the world, it is also powerful enough to help you to live a victorious life of service, and to destroy sin in your life!

Now, just as scoffers don’t like what the Bible teaches about Creation, they also do not like what the Bible teaches about the Flood. They choose to be ignorant of it. Now, remember—Peter isn’t talking about complete atheists, who deny God’s existence. He is talking about *religious* scoffers, who claim to believe in God. Religious scoffers existed in Peter’s day; and they exist today. We are surrounded today by people who profess to be “Christians,” yet who deny the biblical account of Creation and the Flood. The so-called “Christians” who deny that God created the world in six days usually deny that there was a worldwide Flood, as well. They say, “Well, the Flood is just an allegory. It’s not literal.” Perhaps they’ll even go so far as to say, “Well, there was a *local* flood in the Mesopotamian Valley, which caused great destruction; but it wasn’t a worldwide Flood.” Either way, they deny the clear teaching of God’s Word.

So, what do we know so far? We know that scoffers deny a literal, six-day Creation (which also means that they deny that death is the result of sin); they deny the reality of a worldwide Flood; and last, but not least, they deny the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ. Yet, should we be surprised? It is only *natural* that people who deny the Bible’s teachings about the origin of man, and of sin, and who deny the reality of the Flood, would also deny the reality of Christ’s Second Coming. Why? Because in all these things there is *judgment*. **Death**, and the **forfeiture of Paradise**, were God’s judgment upon man for choosing to live independently of Him. **The Flood**

was also God's judgment upon mankind, for his great wickedness. Likewise, the **Coming of Christ** (in the Rapture) will mark the beginning of a seven-year period of tremendous judgment upon the world, which would leave no flesh alive if God did not cut it short. **The Second Coming** of Christ to earth (at the Battle of Armageddon) will be a day of horrific judgment, as well. From the northern to the southern end of Israel, the blood of the world's armies will flow so profusely, that in places it will be as high as a horse's bridle! Do you see why scoffers hate the Bible's record of the Flood? The record of the Flood reminds us that God has promised to bring judgment upon the world *again*.

The scoffers may pooh-pooh the Flood, and scoff it, and mock it, and call it a fairy tale; but the rocks and the fossils cry out that this world was once covered with water. Far more importantly, *this Book* bears testimony that this world was once covered with water.

Read Genesis 7:11-23.

For 120 years, the world had been warned that the Flood was coming. The people laughed, and jeered, and called Noah crazy. However, there finally came a day when God shut the door. From that point on, their doom was sealed. Seven days later, God caused the fountains of the deep to erupt all over the world; and continents were ripped apart. The enormous oceans of water that had once lain *under* the land came *above* the land; and the continents began to sink beneath the waves. At the same time, the incredible amount of ash in the atmosphere from the thousands of volcanoes that were erupting caused torrential rain to fall. Huge tsunamis crashed over the land; and soon, all the land was covered by miles of water, and all life was snuffed out. Undoubtedly, as all these horrible things were beginning to unfold, the people beat on the side of the Ark, and begged Noah to let them in; but it was too late. The day of judgment had come. Every breathing thing perished—except for those who believed God's word, and received His salvation.

Scoffers deny that the world was created by the Word of God. They deny that the world was once judged by the Word of God, and perished with water. But there is something else they deny.

III. Scoffers deny that the world will be judged *again* by the Word of God (v. 7).

(Read verse 7 again.) In this verse, Peter reminds us that this present universe is heading toward a definite end. Someday, the heavens and the earth will pass away. When that day comes, the world will not perish with water, as it did in the days of Noah; it will perish with fire. Let's look at a couple Scriptures, and see what order of events will lead to the end of history.

Read Revelation 19:11-16, 20 and 20:1-15.

When Christ returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation, will set up a glorious Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. The saints from all past ages (from the Old Testament age, the church age, and the Tribulation) will have all been resurrected by this point; and they will reign with Christ in His Kingdom. During those thousand years, Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit; and the descendants of the believers who survived the Tribulation period will multiply on earth. It will be a time of universal peace. Christ will rule the whole world, and will put down all rebellion.

However, at the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be released from prison for a brief season; and God will permit him to influence mankind once again. God will let Satan have one last chance to try to overthrow him. In a short time, Satan will gather a huge army of willing rebels. These will be people who were born during the 1,000 years, and who never truly submitted to Christ in their hearts. This army of rebels will march against the land of Israel one last time, and will lay siege against the city of Jerusalem, where Christ is sitting on His throne. Of course, Satan will be no match for the Lord Jesus Christ; God will destroy his armies with fire from heaven.

After this, three things will happen. First, all those who were born during the thousand years, and who placed their trust in Christ, will receive their glorious, resurrected bodies. Secondly, the unsaved of all ages will receive *their* resurrected bodies, which will be fit for eternal destruction. God will then judge the unsaved. Every unsaved person who ever lived will be brought from out of the prison cell of hell, and will stand before the Judge of the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of this judgment will *not* be to determine whether they will go to heaven or hell, because the sentence of hell will already be assured. The purpose of this Judgment will be to determine *what degree of torment* the lost will receive in the Lake of Fire. Because they rejected Christ's free gift of salvation, their sins will be held against them; and they will be judged for every sin they have ever done. They will then be cast into the Lake of Fire. Satan himself, and all his demons, will be judged, as well, and cast into the Lake of Fire. And what will come next? The greatest inferno of all time! The universe that we now know will be no more. Jesus said that **"heaven and earth shall pass away."** Peter said that **"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."** Peter also says that in the **"day of God,"** the **"heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."** In **Revelation 21**, John says that the **"first heaven and the first earth"** will pass away. It will literally be *the end of the world!*

Read Revelation 21:1-3.

All our lives, we have heard about what the evolutionists call "the big bang." Now, we who are saved know that the "big bang" is an absurd fairy tale; however, there *will* be a *real* "big bang" one day! The Bible says that one day, the heaven and earth will pass away with a **"great noise"** (a "big bang")! After the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ, and after the Great White Throne Judgment of the unsaved, God will melt the elements of our universe with tremendous heat. This sin-cursed universe will be completely dissolved! But then, after the old heaven and earth are done away, God will create a *new* heaven and a *new* earth. It will be a perfect universe, uncontaminated by sin. All God's people from every age of history will be in their resurrected bodies; and they will live with God in the new heaven and new earth, forever and ever.

Right now, this universe is sin-cursed; but it won't remain that way forever. God is holding this degenerating universe together *until* the day when He will destroy it all with fire. He will create a new heaven and new earth for the righteous; but the ungodly will be removed from God's presence eternally. Brethren, this is why scoffers mock the promise of Christ's coming. *They don't want to believe that they will be judged.* Apostates and scoffers don't like the Bible's teaching about Creation, and the Fall of Man, and the Flood, the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Second Coming, and the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ, because they know that if all these things be true, then human history is being directed by God toward a final conclusion—at the end of which they will be **judged.**

Proverbs 19:28 says, **"An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity."** Why does an ungodly person scorn judgment? Because he loves his iniquity, and doesn't desire to turn from it. As the verse says, he **"devoureth iniquity."** He laps up sin greedily; and as he does so, he becomes increasingly hardened in his sinful ways, and increasingly scornful of the idea that he is headed toward judgment. However, be that as it may, God *will* judge those who reject Him, and *will* sentence them to an eternity of separation from Him. God doesn't *desire* for this to happen, though. **Second Peter 3:9** says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. My friend, God loves you. He sent His only begotten Son to earth to die for you, and to pay the price for your sins, so that you might be saved. If you have never asked Him to save you, I urge you to do so today!

Conclusion: Perhaps you've never really thought much about judgment; yet, the Lord is speaking to your heart about it right now. Maybe you accept that there is a hell, and you acknowledge that God will send *some* people there; yet, you've never thought that *you* deserve to go there. Maybe you've always thought that you are a basically good person. If so, I'm here to tell you that our sin has earned us all eternal death in hell. The only way to be saved from God's judgment is to humble yourself, admit that you can't save yourself, and place your faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Turn your life over to His control!

Perhaps you are saved, but you aren't setting your affections on things above. If so, I urge you to talk to the Lord about it! Ask Him to close your ears to the scoffers, and to turn your heart to Him, and Him alone!