

I. Introduction

- A. Growing up in a church like I did exposes a kid to some weird stuff.
- B. I grew up in an era of unrestrained Second Coming Mania. One famous preacher made me believe I'd never see my junior year of high school. There was a classic movie called *A Thief In The Night*. I saw it about ten times and it scared all us high schoolers every time.
- C. Complex wall charts of Bible prophecy adorned the churches I frequented. Before Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye struck a nerve with the *Left Behind* book and then movie series, Hal Lindsey scared us all with *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, a NYT Best Seller about the Second Coming.
- D. Every nuclear warhead lent credence to the idea that Jesus would come again any day now. We did mock "Rapture Drills" (jumping in the air). When we said our goodbyes, we often said, "Here, there, or in the air."
- E. Camps and youth groups sang *I Wish We'd All Been Ready*, and we were. We were ready to meet our Maker. Daniel's ten toes were going to come together—the European Common Market, something we Christians foresaw twenty years before it happened—and the Mark of the Beast was on its way. There was Bible prophecy in the air, and you could smell it.
- F. But something happened.
- G. The church burned out on Bible prophecy.
- H. I think it's part of a larger struggle with truth itself. The church burned out on sticking to a lot of its most important teaching, including Bible prophecy.
- I. This has happened in the past. It will happen in the future.
- J. When it comes to Christians slip-sliding away from firm convictions on the Bible, it's Groundhog Day.
- K. Eternal vigilance is the price of orthodoxy.

II. Previously in Second Peter

- A. One of the towering figures of early Christianity is a believer named Peter. Peter was an apostle, meaning a top-level leader in ancient Christianity.
- B. Peter knew that the devil would never tire of his diabolical plan to suck Christians away from truth. Always pushing. Always lying. Always tricking God's people away from a mind, heart, and soul dedicated to reality as God reveals it.
- C. So Peter writes this letter to called Second Peter. It is an enduring reminder, he says, to every church of every age. I'm writing to remind you. And to remind you. And to remind you again.
- D. Never let yourself be seduced away from the truth of God in Christ Jesus. Never stray from God's Word. Never chase after sparkly fluff that feels good but means nothing.
- E. And, especially, he says... never let anybody make you doubt the promise that Jesus Christ will come again.
- F. So I stand here today to remind you that Jesus is coming again.
- G. And I want to show you that the only reason you or anybody would doubt this is simple. My talk today has a simple premise and title:
 - 1. Your God is Too Small
- H. Let's see how Peter works this out in his book.

III. *Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming..."* (2 Peter 3:3, 4)

- A. There you go. It's just an innocent question. Just a sincere, innocent question. It's been so, so, so long. Maybe you misunderstood him. Maybe you're taking your Bible too literally. Maybe Jesus didn't mean it literally. Maybe he means something spiritual, or allegorical. I mean it's been so long, why are you still clinging to that ridiculous stuff from your grandparents' church?
- B. The second most reasonable voice on earth is the devil's.
- C. He always sounds so plausible. There's a logic to his arguments that is tough to beat. And it takes a mature level of biblical discernment to spot his lies.
- D. It's just a question: where is the promise of his coming?
 - 1. The devil loves questions without answers because they feed a cynical, post-modern conception of "truths that don't stay true."
 - 2. Our culture today is not just arguing over which view is right or which view is wrong.
 - 3. The argument is deeper than that.
 - 4. The argument today is over whether or not there is right or wrong at all. Over whether or not there is true or false at all.
 - 5. Even twenty years ago, most people would agree that some things are true and some things are false.
 - 6. Today, you get an argument about that.
 - 7. That's what makes the scoffer a scoffer.
- E. Notice that the scoffer here isn't outright denying the Lord's coming. He's just asking questions. What's wrong with that?
- F. There's nothing wrong with asking questions in the pursuit of truth. That's good and holy and healthy and important.
- G. But there is also a way of asking questions not in the pursuit of truth, but in an effort to undermine a person's faith. That's what the scoffers do.
 - 1. They are taking a jackhammer to the foundations of truth in the dark of night and doing their damage.
- H. That's one of the reasons Peter is so worried.
- I. So Peter supplies the answer to the question.

IV. *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:8, 9)

- A. Instead of mocking his delay, you should be on your knees thanking God for being so incredibly patient.

- B. If the second most reasonable voice in the world is the devil's, the first most reasonable voice is God's.
- C. Peter stands us face to face with the Eternality of God.
 - 1. Here is the seminary definition of the Eternality of God.
 - 2. The Eternality of God is "that perfection of God whereby He is elevated above all temporal limits and all succession of moments, and possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present." (Berkhof)
 - a) *"Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'" (Isaiah 46:9, 10)*
- D. To us, time flows like a river. First this, then that, then the next thing. Not so with God.
- E. For God, all of his existence is one indivisible present. He is...
 - 1. *... the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy.* (Isaiah 57:15)
- F. He says...
 - 1. *Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* (Psalm 90:2)
- G. Time is a jail we're all locked in, but not God. To us, if a thing is five minutes away, or five days away, it's close. But if a thing is a hundred years away, it's far. We'll be dead and gone before it arrives.
- H. But not God. He says his name is I AM. I AM in the present. I AM in the past. I AM in the future. He is always just the same. All of time is present with him. The beginning and the middle and the end are before his sight.
 - 1. God is Infinite.
 - a) When you apply his infinity to space, you get Immensity and Omnipresence.
 - b) When you apply his infinity to power, you get Omnipotence.
 - c) When you apply God's infinity to time, you get Eternality.
- I. God is absolutely above and unaffected by time.
 - 1. He doesn't get old. He doesn't forget where he put you. He never is in a hurry because he doesn't need to be. He's never early, and he's never late.
- J. He is the Lord of time.
- K. There was a famous novelist named Sinclair Lewis. He was not only an atheist, but an evangelistic atheist. In a speech in Kansas City, Sinclair Lewis challenged God. He said, "If there is a God, I challenge you to strike me dead, standing on this stage, in the next ten minutes."
 - 1. And he started his stopwatch.
 - 2. And he waited.
- L. Have you ever looked through a microscope at a drop of pond water? It was one of my favorite things as a kid. The life inside that drop of water is astonishing.
 - 1. Those single cell organisms... those microscopic life forms... amazing to think of so much complex life in one drop of water.
 - 2. Imagine in that one drop of water, an amoeba, bigger than the rest. Imagine that tiny organism as the General of all the Amoeba army. Picture him standing before all the other life forms there. He boasts, "I am the greatest and the master of all I survey."
 - 3. Then imagine another life form, a paramecium, the humble king of the parameciums, rising up and saying, As you lead your army of amoebas against us tiny parameciums, remember this. There is a being massively bigger than this drop of water. A being so big it could scatter our tiny droplet universe to the four winds, and all of us with it.
 - 4. "That's impossible," the general of the amoeba army says. "It's unimaginable! I don't see any creature like that down here in our world. That's stupid! That's positively unacademic!"
 - 5. The amoeba general says, "Did you know, if we were to take an army of ten million amoebas on this side and go to war with ten million paramecia on that side, why, we could shake the whole world?"
- M. After ten minutes of waiting... after ten minutes of waiting there for God to strike him dead, nothing happened to Sinclair Lewis. He started laughing at God. He started mocking the fools who would call themselves Christians.
 - 1. A few days later, another Christian answered Lewis in the newspaper. His name was Arthur Brisbane.
 - 2. He said, "There's a little ant, a little tiny ant crawling through the deserts of Arizona. And right through the middle of Arizona, runs the Santa Fe Railroad. That little ant gets up on top of one of those big, steel-iron rails and he lifts up his hand and the ant shouts, "I am told that there is the head of this railroad by the name of W.B. Storey. I don't believe it! I don't believe he exists. If there is a W.B. Storey who runs this railroad, I dare him to come out here to Arizona and to strike me dead!"
 - 3. Arthur Brisbane said, "W.B. Storey would say, 'It's just not worth my time.'"
- N. When another famous atheist lawyer named Robert Ingersoll made a similar famous challenge, a great preacher from New York commented, "Did the gentleman think he could exhaust the Infinite God's patience in ten minutes?"
- O. The scoffers say, Where is the promise of his coming?
- P. And God answers, My coming is right on time.
- Q. Never forget it. But we do forget it. Our culture forgets it on purpose. Our culture today has hidden its face from God. This is either outright rejection or stubborn neglect. Either way it has the same effect:
- R. Casting off the yoke God, looking away from Jesus Christ, and declaring "We will not have this man to rule over us." They are without excuse.
- S. So why does God take so long?

- V. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:8, 9)
- A. Anyone who mocks God for the delay of his return is making a tragic and fatal mistake. They are shrinking God, and that's probably not a good idea. So let's take this as a three-part warning, based on the three words I've underlined.
1. Long-suffering
 - a) How would you like to live in a universe where God stomped on evil as soon as it happened? How long would YOU last?
(1) If your God is small enough to follow a timetable you approve of, your God is too small.
 - b) One of the reasons Christ hasn't returned yet is because you're not saved yet... or maybe it's your son or your grandmother or a neighbor or a friend.
 - c) This is the patience of God on display.
 - d) And it is a patience we should all fall on our knees and thank God for.
 - (1) Martin Luther could not understand how God could be so patient with the world. He said that if he were God and the world had treated him as it treated his Son, he would have kicked the wretched thing to pieces.
 - (a) I'm glad that Martin Luther was not God.
 - e) Every day Jesus waits is another opportunity for people you love to be saved, and to mock that, or to turn that into an accusation that God doesn't keep his promises... that's playing with lightning bolts.
 2. Perishing
 - a) God is not willing that any should perish.
 - b) That perishing refers to divine retribution. It refers to the Judge of the Universe balancing the scales of justice by paying back evildoers and sinners with exactly what they have coming.
 - c) That is what Peter means by the word Perish.
 - d) This is not God's Plan A for anybody. He is not willing that any should perish. He doesn't want to punish anybody for their sins. But he will, if he has to, and he has to, if they have not taken shelter under the blood of Christ.
 - e) Jesus used the same word in John 3:16 — whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.
 - f) Of all the major doctrines of the Bible, this is one of the most objectionable. This makes Christians an easy target for haters.
 - g) But the question is always and forever What does the Bible say? This is our source. It is all our source. And it is our only source. This book of God is the supreme rule for faith and life.
 - (1) Some people teach that after a person dies, they have another chance to be saved. Someone asked me about that just this week. I might want it to be this way, but it's not in the Bible that way.
 - (a) The Bible says, *"It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment."* (Heb 9:27)
 - (2) Some people teach that there is no hell. I might want it to be this way, but it's not in the Bible that way.
 - (a) The Bible says, *"But the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."* (Psalm 9:17)
 - (3) Some people teach that if there is a hell, it is only temporary, and that those who do not know Christ are snuffed out like a candle. I might want it to be this way, but it's not in the Bible that way.
 - (a) The Bible says, *"It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched..."* (Mark 9:43)
 - (4) Some people teach that people can be saved not only by Christ, but that Christ saves all true believers of all religions. I might want it to be that way, but it's not in the Bible that way.
 - (a) The Bible says, *"There is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12)
 - h) The question is What does the Bible say? What is in the inspired script?
 - i) All the world can stand against us, but if we stand with the Bible, we stand with REALITY, which makes the devil puke, and makes his minions rage.
 - j) The word perish is in this verse because it is the destiny of a lost soul, according to the Bible, no matter what human wisdom may say.
 - k) In the words of Jesus himself,
 - (1) *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."* (Matthew 7:13)**(2) If your God is small enough to look the other way at the evil in the universe, your God is too small.**
 - l) To scoff at the second coming is to scoff at the patience of God, and to mock the justice of God and to deny eternal condemnation from God... to scoff at the second coming is therefore to light the fuse on your own self-destruct sequence.
 - m) Your God is too small.
 3. Repentance
 - a) God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
(1) If your God doesn't take every possible righteous step to draw all people to himself, your God is too small.
"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." (John 12:32, NKJV).
 - b) Repentance is one of the most abused words in the Bible.
 - (1) It doesn't mean to change your life. It doesn't mean to improve your behavior. It doesn't mean to stop being a sinner and start being a saint. It doesn't even change your intention and desires and appetites, because all of these things are utterly impossible for a walking zombie who is dead in their trespasses and sins.
 - c) The root word means to change your mind, and...

- (1) The core idea of repentance means to turn away from every alternative hope for salvation and, in so doing, to turn to Jesus Christ alone. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:9)
- d) Repentance is another word for being saved. It means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to receive him, and to trust him, and to stop trusting anyone else.
- e) God wants all people saved. He draws all people to himself. But he won't force anybody. He won't override anybody's choice, but he wants all people saved.
 - (1) That's why we do evangelism.
 - (2) That's why we persuade people.
 - (3) That's why we invite people to receive Christ.
 - (a) And why I ask them to look up at me.
 - (4) That's why we give our money to gospel missions around the world with the Great Commission Fund.
 - (5) That's why we say, Welcome to God's Family.
- f) The stakes could not be higher.
- g) Every person born into the world has two — count 'em — two countdown clocks hanging over their heads ticking down to zero.
 - (1) Countdown clock 1: the day of your death.
 - (2) Countdown clock 2: the day of the Lord's return.
- h) Whichever happens first, it's game over.
 - (1) This is why we preach.
 - (2) This is why we serve.
 - (3) This is why we pray.
 - (4) This is why we teach.
 - (5) This is why we study.
 - (6) This is why we give.
 - (7) This is why we gather.
 - (8) This is why we scatter.
 - (9) This is why we grow.
 - (10) This is why we love.
- i) We do all these things because God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and faith in him... and that day of patience will not last forever.

VI. Conclusion

- A. If you sense an urgency in my message today, you're right.
- B. There was something urgent about the way I grew up in the church. All that Bible prophecy. All that Second Coming teaching with all those charts and all those headlines... All that scary stuff. It might have been over the top in how it was presented... but in its main outlines, it was biblical, and therefore it was true and it is true today. And it lit a fire in me.
- C. Jesus Christ is coming again. May be morning, may be noon, may be evening, and may be soon.
- D. No human knows the day or the hour.
- E. I'm excited for that day... I just want us all to be ready.