

God always keeps his promises

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[0:00] 2 Peter 3, starting at verse 1. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder where is the promise of this coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. They deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

But by the same word, the heavens and earth, that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Good morning, everyone. I hope you sleep well. Or if not, you might get some sleep in the next few minutes. I've been up in Townsville for the last 12 years, and if you don't know the place, it's quite humid up there.

And then I've been in Bathurst for the last 12 months, and there's actually no humidity. They took it. They took it all and took it to North Queensland. But there's humidity here, and so I feel myself sweating for the first time in like a year.

[1:48] This is not anything related to the passage or the talk. I'm just noticing it. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that you speak to us in the Scriptures.

It's just so great to have your Word. Lord, we pray that your Spirit might apply it to our hearts now as we read it. Father, help us to understand just the reliability of everything you say to us and what it means for our life to come and our life today.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, North Queensland, it is great. It's weird. It's got a kind of pirate town vibe to it, everywhere from Rockhampton North.

Wouldn't be surprised to see Captain Jack Black there. But the thing that I didn't like about North Queensland was the constant threat of cyclones. If you were here last night, Matt spilled the beans a little bit.

We have cyclones in North Queensland. In the year before we got there, I was speaking to the Lucases about this last night, there was a big cyclone called Cyclone Yasi, and it was devastating.

[2:51] It was very destructive, and the locals were stinging from it. Everybody had gone out and bought a generator and got it wired to their house because the worst thing about cyclones in North Queensland is you have no air conditioning for like a couple of weeks, maybe three weeks afterwards, and that matters.

If you haven't been there, that really matters. In a sense, you can get away with your health. They're pretty good at building houses and stuff now to protect people, but the lack of power and the humidity in the air after monsoonal rain is phenomenal.

We've had people sleeping at our church just to get air conditioning because their area is out.

Anyway, because that happened just before we got there, people in the community were stinging.

They were really cyclone aware, and we moved up there, and we were freaking out because as you come into North Queensland, once you get into the cyclone area, they have these signs saying, you know, be cyclone aware when you're in North Queensland.

So we were. We were vigilant. We made sure we had no rubbish or debris in our yard. We'd pull our trampoline, which was giant because we had five kids down every time there was any kind of warning of a cyclone.

You're meant to have a cyclone pack. Our mayor, Mayor Jenny Hill, used to warn us every year on radio and TV that you have to have your cyclone pack ready. What goes in a cyclone pack? Tinned food, enough water for four days, and a torch, and a transistor radio so you can hear the communication.

[4:25] So we got all that together. But the thing was, year after year, there'd be cyclones out in the Coral Sea, and they'd track close to Townsville, but year after year, they would never hit.

Only so many times you can pull an eight-metre trampoline down and then put it back together again. We got a bit apathetic. We started eating some of the food in the cyclone pack. We gave the torch to one of the kids for a camp. Despite all the talk, year after year, a cyclone just never came. And so, to be totally honest, we stopped caring.

It seemed like the talk would just never become reality. Now, I don't know if you can tell where I'm going with this. As Peter writes his second letter to the church here, and we come in at chapter three, he's not writing to get us prepared for a cyclone, but he's writing to make sure we're prepared for the day of the Lord.

Now, the people that Peter's writing to, they've come to faith in Jesus, and they've become Christians, and he just wants them to stay that way until the day of the Lord's return.

[5:39] A bit like what I asked you to pray for my kids yesterday. That's what Peter wants for these guys. It's been a long time since they came to Christ. He knows apathy is a big risk.

He knows some people are saying the day of the Lord will never come, but it's a joke. So he's writing this to say, I assure you that it's not. God has always done what he says, and he will continue to.

And I think the question for us as we read this section is, do you believe that to be the case? Do you believe there'll be a day of judgment? Does it seem real to you?

Or does it seem distant? A joke? Let's turn to verse 1 now and remind ourselves that God always does what he says he will do.

So I said last night, look for the theme of the word in this passage. I think as much as this passage is about the day of the Lord, it's about God doing what he says he will do. So Peter wants to wake his readers up with God's word.

[6:49] I'm reading from the NIV 2011 version. We have all kinds of versions at our church, and for somebody who's a bit OCD like me, it really kills me. I've only been there for 12 months, but I'm like, come on guys, let's get on the same.

Anyway, I'm going NIV. Sorry about that. I'm now that person. Chapter, Amen. I'm speaking on, at another camp later in the year, on the doctrine of the word of God.

And I just want to assure you, there is no perfect version. So just calm down over there, right?

Anyway, Matt's the one who asked me to speak, in case you're wondering what I'm doing here. Peter wants to wake his readers up with God's word. Have a look from verse 1. Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I've written both of them, as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.

So we're coming in partway through a letter. You guys have been looking at this in church. It's chapter 3 of 3. And Peter's just spent a bit of time warning his readers about false teachers in the previous chapter. But we're also, we're coming in partway through a relationship, just by starting this letter.

[8:03] He calls them dear friends in my translation, and he'll do that three times in this chapter. But the version that we heard read, it used the term beloved, which I think is actually more accurate, if I can give you that.

Because the people Peter's writing to, they're beloved of him, but they're also beloved of God. They're believers. He's writing to Christian brothers and sisters that he's written to before, and he cares about.

He has a relationship with these guys. He's got money in the game, right? He actually cares about them. He wants their relationship with God to last. And we find out his purpose in writing is to stimulate them to wholesome thinking.

Or rather than stimulate, the word means to wake fully or arouse. You know, like, I had my wisdom teeth out a few years ago, all four at once, and I had the twilight option.

Go the general option, that's my advice to you. But in order for me to come out of that daze, I needed to be stimulated. I needed to be awakened. I needed to be fully aroused. And that's what Peter's saying that he's writing to them for.

[9:09] They might become fully aroused. He wants them to wake fully to wholesome thinking. And by that, we find out in verse two, he means he wants them to lock in to the things God said, to God's word, to the scriptures.

So like a punch drunk boxer is aroused with sniffing salts when they've copped too many blows to the head. Paul wants these guys in their malaise, in their potential apathy, to wave the sniffing salts of God's word under their nose so they might be aroused.

You get what he's wanting for them? In this context, the words that he's talking about are the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets. In the context of this letter, the words he's specifically talking about, though, that the holy prophets have spoken, are the words to do with the day of the Lord.

You guys would have heard the term the day of the Lord before. The day of the Lord terminology has its origins in Amos, who's a prophet in the Old Testament. In chapter two, verse six or 16, one of those two, in the Old Testament, Amos speaks about the day of the Lord.

800 years before this letter's written. And then since Amos chapter two, the prophets have spoken about it many times, Malachi being the last, who spoke about the great and terrible day of the Lord.

[10:34] So this notion of the day of the Lord, a day of final judgment, it's big in the prophets. Peter wants them to be aroused from their spiritual apathy by recalling that God's actually spoken about the day of the Lord, about returning to judge for quite some time.

But he's not just waving the prophets under their nose, he's waving the words given by the Lord Jesus through the apostles under their nose as well. That's the command to live for him in light of the coming of the day of the Lord.

What I love about this, as somebody who was quite cynical of the Bible when I first started checking out Christianity, is that, notice in this verse, the apostle Peter, he's putting the words of his peers, the words of the other apostles, on the same level of authority as the prophets.

Did you notice that? For him, it's all God's word. He's trying to be fully awakening these people with all of God's word. He wants them to be stimulated to understand the truth that judgment is coming.

How do you wake yourself up when you're feeling a bit sleepy? I'm working at home quite often these days. We don't have an office where I work now.

[11:52] So I find it easy to get there. There are a lot of sleep options in my house. We set it up that way. But I can't afford to do that. I have to actually be at my desk concentrating writing. So to wake myself up, I'll get up and I'll go for a walk.

I'll have coffee. Probably eight out of ten times, I'll go to the fridge and eat something, which is reflected in my stature at the moment. All those things, I'm just trying to do so that I kind of snap out of it, you know, come and sit back at my desk, feel refreshed.

Peter's doing that with the word of God. He wants to stimulate them, wake them from their sleep. Now I want to ask you, are you spiritually sleepy?

Or are you stimulated like somebody who's had sniffing salts waved under their nose? I mean, let's be honest. It's very hard not to be spiritually sleepy in our culture, in our society.

Ninety percent of our country just gets on with life. You know, we work as though this world is all we'll ever experience. There's no tangible mention of God in the experience of most Australians everyday life.

[13:05] We focus a lot on work, on sport, on the kids. I mean, family's such an important thing, isn't it? It's very easy to sleep and to slumber.

It's very easy to find yourself thinking, I'd be interested in that if I could be bothered, but I couldn't really be bothered because I've got so many other more important things going on in my life.

There's about, I reckon, two or three years when you first come to Christ if you go through that

process, if you haven't been raised in a Christian family where you might be passionate, where you might be filled with zeal like the psalmist going to the temple and then the malaise sets in and, you know, sometimes you have kids, sometimes you have sickness and it's all like little shots of anesthetic and before you know it, you can barely open your eyes to the reality that the day of the Lord is coming.

Peter says here the key to that not happening, the key to being fully stimulated, the key to being fully awakened is to recall the things God said in the scriptures, especially about the day of judgment and how to live for him.

If we wave that before our eyes, it'll be like a cold bath. It'll be like a, I guess if the world's like a slow drip anesthetic, the word of God will be like a slow drip adrenaline, just keeping our eyes open to the truth that the Lord is coming back.

How do you go at recalling things God said in his word to keep yourself awake? Do you engage with it each day? If I said to you, what are you reading in your Bible at the moment over morning tea?

[14:57] I won't, don't worry. I know there's a lot of pressure associated with that, but I'm giving you time to think of something just in case I do. I've got five kids, I ask them that question, I can tell when they're lying. They just say what I'm not reading just in case I ask them about it.

Do you engage with God's word? Do you remind yourself of the coming judgment? Do you remind yourself daily of how you ought to live in light of the reality that the Lord is in fact returning?

I can say in my life there are lots of things I don't do that I should do as a Christian. Matt mentioned last night that I'm not some mythical creature.

I don't know if people were thinking that, but I just want to let you know that there are lots of ways in my life that I fall short in my faith and there are lots of frustrations and there are lots of things that I've been battling with since I became a Christian that I feel like I've made zero progress on.

But there is one thing that I do do, I'm not trying to flex here, but I try and read the Bible each day. Now I don't hit 100%, right?

[16:04] Yesterday morning I only read it with the kids, I didn't read my own, that's my day off, sometimes I get lax on that day, right? But I do generally try and read the Bible every day.

And I'll tell you what, if I didn't, I would be passed out. I would have fallen away. Because the world is shooting me with anaesthetic every single day.

And without the word of God I would be asleep to the reality that the Lord is in fact going to return. Every day I wake up twice, once with coffee, with Kath.

So we've got this thing, when we were at Bible College, Peter Jensen's wife gave a talk to the Women's Chapel about how Peter made a coffee for her so that they could sit up and read the Bible each morning.

And then Kath came and said, oh, Peter makes a coffee for his wife every morning, you should do that for me. So we started doing that and it was really helpful until I realised if I pretended I was asleep, Kath would get up and make the coffee.

[17:12] So that happens more often than not now. But we have the coffee to wake up and then we read the Bible and we wake up again to the spiritual reality.

of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I guess if there's application for the first point, it's are you waving the sniffing salts of God's word under your nose each day to arouse you from spiritual apathy?

If you are not, wrestle yourself back into that habit. Pray to God that he'd help you to get back into it. Peter wants his readers to awaken by recalling God's word.

But it's more than just spiritual apathy he's concerned about. There's spiritual attack as well from verse 3. There are people who ridicule what God says. Have a look from verse 3.

It says, Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come scoffing and following their own evil desires. To scoff at something is to mock it, to ridicule it.

[18:15] Like last night when Matt said Jason's a Dragons fan, I could hear the scoffing permeate through the room. In the last days, that is the time between Jesus' first coming and the day of judgment, people will ridicule God's word.

They'll ridicule the idea that there will ever be a day of judgment. They won't even look into it. They won't see its history. They'll just ridicule it. Like none of you guys here probably know, the Dragons have won 11 premierships in a row and they're quite a noble team to support.

It's not a joke. There's actually a very reliable and anchored history to the scriptures. The most robust document that we have from ancient history.

Yet people will mock it without regard for any truth and their lives won't be altered by it. In fact, they'll just follow the end of verse 3 says their own evil desires and why wouldn't they?

Because they don't believe there'll be a judgment from God. So why wouldn't they? Look what they'll say in verse 4. Where is this coming he promised? So the question isn't about the coming the question is about the reliability of his promise, isn't it?

[19:23] Where is it? He's not coming is what they're saying. There'll be no great and dreadful day of the Lord. The Lord's not intervening. He spoke about it 800 years ago through Amos and nothing has changed since he first spoke about it.

In fact, they say in verse 4, ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. Have you seen any signs of the Lord coming back?

Like how long have you been on this earth for? Like 10 years? 20? 30? 100? Has anything changed they say? God's not intervening.

He hasn't since he made the world. Which is interesting language because it suggests that people doing this mocking, they're not atheists, they believe in some kind of creator, not an interventionist one, but they're saying since the creator created the world, nothing's changed.

According to them, the idea of a great and terrible day of the Lord is preposterous and their reason is because he's never intervened before. Why would we think he would in the future?

[20:32] Peter says to his readers, this is what you're up against. Not just your own apathy but this external attack as well. People saying God won't do what he says he'll do.

A bit like the weatherman in North Queensland telling people in Townsville a cyclone's coming. What a joke, right? Do you know what the standard response to people in Townsville when a cyclone is tracking in in the Coral Sea is?

The standard response is it'll probably drift south. That's what we say. Because it just never comes. It's a joke, right? So, I've just been through a basic course in Christianity back in Bathurst.

It's called Christianity Explored. If you haven't heard of it, it's really good. I've been doing it for a long time now and they're just about to release an updated version on March the 12th.

So, this current course that I'm doing is the last time I'll ever see Rico in his kind of early 2000s dress attire anyway. It's a great course.

[21:38] I love it. People have become Christian through it. Lots of people haven't but it's actually really, I found it really helpful to explain the gospel. Anyway, one of the questions we got to last Tuesday night was, do you believe in hell?

Do you believe in eternal consequences for rejecting God? This is non-Christian people in the room. Do you believe there's a thing called hell? And, a lot of people don't.

They actually genuinely don't believe that such a thing could exist. They've seen nothing in their day-to-day life to suggest there'll be judgement. Some of them will talk about Little Nicky, the Adam Sandler movie which makes a mockery of the whole thing.

For those of us that are older, we'd have the Looney Tunes, right? That make a mockery of it. Do you think hell's real? Do you think there are eternal consequences for rejecting God?

Even for Christians. Have you, and I've been up in Queensland for more than a decade so I'm a bit warped with my thinking. No offence. Your people are really strange.

[22:51] But there's a guy in Townsville who stands opposite Stockland and he waves a sign Stockland's the Myers and it says repent and believe for judgement is coming.

And we talk about it at church and it's a bit of a joke, right? And we kind of feel sorry for the guy. You ever seen that sort of thing? Is it a joke though? It's not, is it?

According to the word of God the Lord is coming back to judge the living and the dead. Peter says to his readers don't be, don't get caught up in the mockery because he ends this section by saying

they haven't remembered that God always does what God says he'll do.

Have a look from verse 5. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

You know in this section Peter's, he's drawing our attention to the power of God's word. The faithfulness of God to follow through on what he says is evident everywhere since the history of creation.

[24:20] These mockers who talk about things not changing since the beginning of the world deliberately forget the very thing that they affirm in mocking it. That God created the world.

He made it by speaking. He spoke and it happened. He separated the waters above from the waters below. Peter's reminding his readers that from the very beginning God speaks and it actually happens.

In verse 6 he reminds them of the great flood that we associate with Noah. God spoke back in Genesis 6. He intervened in creation. So this is God speaking again. But he spoke this time to judge and guess what?

It happened. God spoke about coming judgment and it happened. What Peter's saying is not only when God speaks does it happen but when God speaks about judgment it happens.

And he will do it again. He says in verse 7 by the same word that reliable faithful powerful word of God the present heavens and earth by which he means all of creation are reserved for fire the refiner's fire where the ungodly will be destroyed.

[25:41] Don't listen to the mockers Peter says. They forget the power of God's word. They forget that God always does what he says.

That's why Peter says you need to wake up. You know the 12 years we lived in Townsville no cyclones. Such a waste of time pulling the trampoline down.

Halfway through our time there my wife put a chicken coop under the trampoline. She put chicken wire around the edge because it's 8 meters wide. It's quite a clever use of time. Traumatic for the chickens when the kids are on the trampoline.

Pulling the trampoline down just became a whole lot more chaotic so I stopped bothering. 12th year we got one.

fences blew down trees blew down trampolines everywhere loads of towns will have no power for days in the humid heat of summer who would have thought weather warnings would ever come true?

[26:59] Well the answer is we all should have shouldn't we? Because they have before. And if we heed the word of the weatherman who we all acknowledge is fallible how much more ought we heed the word of God that is infallible?

the God who always does what he says even with judgment. How foolish not to.

You know there's a time in the book of Acts where the apostle Paul is speaking to a bunch of non Christians in the public square it's in Acts 17 and he says this bear with me here because you'll be thinking what's this all about I thought we're just about finished we are don't worry this is Acts Paul says this now God commands all people everywhere to repent for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed he's given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead let's just unpack what that's talking about that's Acts 17 verse 30 and 31 you know Jesus said he'd be crucified and rise from the dead at least three times you can read it in Mark's gospel and you know what he was crucified he died Mark tells us he died as a ransom for many he died to make it possible for sinners like me to be reconciled to

God he took the penalty of sin he took God's wrath on himself on the cross wiping me completely clean paying in full and finally for sin on the cross we see God following through on his promise to judge sin I don't know if you've ever thought about it like that before but on the cross we see God following through on his promise to judge sin because on the cross God's judgment fell fully and finally on the sin of his people for the sin of his people on his son God intervened in human history despite what the mockers say to deal with human sin God said he would do it and he did it but Jesus also said three times he would rise and he did and according to the apostle

Paul that is proof that people can be raised it's proof that we'll all be raised and it's proof that the whole world will be judged with justice by the Lord Jesus the resurrection of Jesus is proof that God will do and has done what he said he will do one day the risen Lord Jesus we will all stand before

him as judge so Paul says here in Acts it's time to repent it's time to wake up it's time to stop ignoring God it's time to turn back to him it's time to accept his offer of forgiveness to fall on your knees and to live with him as Lord now having proven judgment is coming into the world the apostle Paul says it's time to repent and Peter's readers back in 2 Peter chapter 3 you know what's great they seem to have done that they are his beloved brothers and sisters in

[30:38] Christ like many of you here in this room but even though they're already saved he says I'm writing to wake you up I want you to wake up recall God's words judgment is coming God always does what God says he will do let's pray heavenly father we thank you so much for revealing your plan for salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ to us in your word father thank you that you've brought many of us here in this room to faith in the Lord Jesus thank you for the freedom of knowing our sin has been paid for that we've been washed father thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ but father help us to to open our eyes to wake up to the reality that one day the

Lord Jesus will return and will stand before him as judge father help us to live in light of that day in the face of the scoffing in the face of our own slumber father help us to cling to your word that always comes true father entrenching us a habit to drip feed ourselves with it every day that we might remember the truth of the great and terrible day of the Lord from which we've been spared through the Lord Jesus Christ we pray this in his name Amen Thank you.