



Intellectual Honesty

Evidence that demands a verdict.

This series has given us a slice of the overwhelming evidence for such important questions as:

Is the Bible reliable?

Is Jesus God?

Did Jesus die?

Did Jesus rise from the dead?

And our question for today: **Will Jesus return?** Well..., yes!! I'll do the same, give you a snippet of the vast evidence that is in the Word for this unbelievable future event that we so look forward to. The text for the message is 2 Peter 3:1-13, if you'll turn there...

The subtitle for this series on Intellectual Honesty is "Evidence that demands a verdict." Well, a "verdict" is defined as "a decision on a disputed issue in a civil or criminal case or an inquest." I hope we have not left you to believe these questions are in dispute, as if they need a majority vote to validate! But you cannot leave any of these questions without having to make a personal decision.

Prayer (in groups) – ask the Spirit to reveal truth to you, and to give you the boldness to adjust your life to it, that the Lord may be glorified and that His kingdom might be established on the earth through you.

2 Peter 3:1-13 [READ]

CONTEXT

The conditions in the area of Judea after Jesus' ascent into Heaven...and oh, by the way, what did the angels tell His disciples as they stared into the sky? "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

The conditions? A pagan, corrupt government; and a splintered and no less corrupt religious system...

Judea was administered by a series of Roman prefects (i.e. Pontius Pilate) till 41 AD [by this time, a decade after Jesus' earthly ministry, the Christian movement was mostly among the Jews, till the apostles began a concerted Spirit-led effort to preach the Gospel to

Gentiles; by the time of Emperor Nero (54 AD) Judaism tried very hard to sever themselves from the movement], Roman procurators (managing tax collection; raiding of the Temple treasures) till 70 AD, and Roman military presence thereafter till 135 AD (the final Jewish revolt). There is constant infighting with Roman leadership and civil war among the Jews (those zealous to overthrow the Romans, those attempting to co-exist, accepting their fate, and many in-between; hatred of the Herodians, etc.). In 64 AD a fire burned down a large portion of Rome and the Caesar, Nero, blamed it on the Christians, a sect that the traditional Jews of the day had begun to isolate themselves from. What made the Christians, and the Jews, so dangerous? Belief in one God who is to be worshiped alone [not Caesar who was considered divine]. In the meantime, the radical zealots in Judea had built a large army and was preparing to confront the Roman legion in the area who had already begun to annex Judean towns, displacing their populations. War began in 66 AD [Peter is writing his letters between 64-67 AD; he is crucified upside down in 67] after the Temple was raided of its riches by the Roman Governor. The Jewish rebels would overrun the Roman legion in Judea, and another legion from neighboring Syria that came to help. This led, in 70 AD, to a terrible 4 month siege of Jerusalem (it was reported that children were being eaten for survival because of the lack of food; i.e. Zealots induced), which brought about the destruction of the Temple and the near annihilation of its Jewish population. The horror of the time was described by Josephus: [READ from document]

And so, our text, written during the Great War, within a couple years of the destruction of Jerusalem and maybe months before Peter's death; to the believers in Judea who had expected Jesus' return by now:

REMEMBRANCE

Verse 1 – “stirring up your sincere mind” – Intellectual honesty!

Two Gk words: meaning “sunlight” (heat of the sun) and “to judge.” The word “sincere” is often translated “pure” because it can mean “tested by heat.”

“...by way of reminder.” What is he going to use to remind them of the promised return of Christ, the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath, the day of visitation, the great day of God Almighty, and that day?

Verse 2 – He uses the Word of God, “that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.” This was the same strategy Jesus took when He showed His disciples, through the Scriptures (OT), everywhere it spoke of Him in the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies toward His 1st Coming.

His 2nd coming is discussed 8 times more than His 1st coming [Jesus fulfilling all prophecies]

- The OT – Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi
- The NT – alluded to over 300 times in its 260 chapters; of the 27 books, 23 mention the Lord’s return in plain language (3 of the other 4 books are one chapter; Galatians infers these future events).
- The Apostles’ teaching from Jesus – Matthew 24 for example. He taught them there would be false christs and prophets, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes, great persecution (toward them), betrayal, lawlessness, Abomination of Desolation (Daniel), a dispersion of the Jews, the heavens shaken (supernatural), and then He will appear! “Be ready”

Verse 3 – “in the last days.”

What is the Day of the Lord? What characterizes the event? What does it look like? Psalm 50; Isaiah 13; 24; 30; 34; 51; 64; 66; Daniel 7; Micah 1; Zephaniah 3 speaks of that catastrophic event of His return. We have tried to explain it by man-made cause (i.e. nuclear bomb) but nothing short of the supernatural can explain the universal destruction to take place (we look for a new Heaven and Earth...so, the old one will need destroyed).

It is a point in history when Jesus returns to gather His church (a singular event), judge the wicked (not a popular theme today), and establish His kingdom in righteousness.

- Certain, imminent – evident by the overwhelming prophecies in Scripture; a definite “day” 1 Thessalonians 5:2 – “You know full well that the day [not epoch but a 24-hour period from dusk to dawn] of the Lord will come”
- Quickly; suddenly, unexpectedly, fast (does not mean “soon”); 1 Peter 4:7 – “the end of all things is near” James 5:8 – “the coming of the Lord is near” Matthew 24:33 – “He is near, right at the door” [“Gabriel is licking his lips”] Seen in light of His 1st advent...He has appeared! We have been in the end times since! It will be like a thief...remember Noah (used 8 times in the NT [Matthew 24; Luke 17; Hebrews 11; 1 Peter 3; and 2 Peter 2] all but one in reference to God’s judgment in his day; 120 years hence!)
- Literal, visible – Matthew 24:30, Jesus said, “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory!” 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; and Titus 2:13, speak of His “appearing,” epiphany, manifestation. Hebrews 9:27-28 – “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear [lit. “to stare at;” clearly discern physically] a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – He will descend from Heaven and we will meet Him in the air (the Rapture of the Church)
- Terminal; Final
 - 1 Corinthians 15:23f Resurrection order; vs. 24 “then comes the end”
 - Hebrews 9:27 (“appointed”) Men die once, then the judgment

- Romans 14:10-12 on judging our brother...we will all be judged; quotes Isaiah 45:22-25 – “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him [they hated Him first] will be put to shame.”

Why has Jesus not come back yet? (from 1st C. perspective...as well as ours)

RESPONSE

Verses 3-4 READ

The Mockers

Will mock, nothing reasonable, just to intimidate, to ridicule believers (this is how arguments have been in our day; no desire for truth)

The motive? They want to follow their own lusts, no accountability

Their absurd claim? All continues as it has from the beginning. This is a revision of history, at least as they imagine!

REBUKE

Verses 5-9 READ

Paul

Makes an argument from Scripture. We’ve seen how the teaching of the second coming of Christ permeates the Bible.

He challenges their revisionist history. There has been a supernatural catastrophe that brought judgment on the earth.

Our understanding of time is not the same as the Lord’s. “A thousand years is as one day...” We have been in the “last days” since Jesus 1st advent. God is on an eternal time clock!

He continues by reminding his readers of an important motive for His wait, God is patient. God has the power (authority) to destroy the earth and cast into Hell, and yet... See the following:

Exodus 34:6, 7 (and throughout the OT) – [to Moses at the replacement of the two tablets] “Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives

iniquity, transgression, and sin; *yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished...*" [verse 8 says that Moses "made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship"]

Joel 2:12, 13 – "'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.' [Joel] Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil."

1 Peter 3:19, 20 (Noah) – [verse 18 – "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit"] "in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah (120 years), during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water [represents God's judgment here]."

Luke 15:11-32 The Lord's compassion as seen through the father of the prodigal son in his son's return home

Romans 9:14-24 SEE & READ

I am glad (as Rene' shared with our small group last week), He waited for me!! Are you glad He waited for you?

REASONS

Verses 10-13 READ (especially 2 Peter 3:11)

Reasons for an understanding (more than that, a personal grasp) of Christ's imminent return; used often in Scripture to be an incentive to affect present behavior. If we are just fixated on earthly events, we have missed it!!

- James 5:8-9 "You too be patient [like the farmer in verse 7]; *strengthen your hearts*, for the coming of the Lord is near. *Do not complain*, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door!" Followed in verse 10 by seeing the suffering and patience (endurance) of the prophets as an example.
- 1 Peter 4:7 "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of *sound judgment and sober* [not addicted to anything but God] *spirit for the purpose of prayer*.
- Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how to *stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together*, as is the habit of some, but *encouraging one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

- 1 John 3:2-3 “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

In Conclusion

To believers

1 John 2:28-29 [writing some 20 years after the fall of Jerusalem, probably after they tried to kill him by plunging him in boiling oil] “Now, little children, *abide in Him*, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.”

1 John 4:17 “By this [verse 16 “God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him”], love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”

To unbelievers

Hebrews 4:13 “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him *with whom we have to do*.”

Romans 2:4-6 “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, *who will render to each person according to his deeds* (quoted from Psalm 62:12 & Proverbs 24:12)

Isaiah 45:22 “**Turn to Me and be saved**”