

SCOFFERS WILL COME WITH SCOFFING



2 Peter 3:1-7

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, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For 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, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 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.

No one likes to be laughed at. By the way, that is one of the best things you can do is to learn to laugh at yourself. Don't take yourself too seriously. But if you are going to live as a serious believer in this world, you must be prepared to have people ridicule you and literally laugh at you.

Unfortunately, some of the reasons we get laughed at is the false ideas of other Christians. You probably remember the false predictions of Harold Camping. He predicted that Jesus would come In May of 2001 and then he recalculated it to last October. News of his predictions and the wholehearted devotion of his followers made nationwide and worldwide news. People rightly scoffed at these ridiculous and unbiblical predictions and in the process, they are scoffing at you and me.

You might be glad to know that Camping has repented of his error. The following are two sections of the statement released by Family Radio.

"But we now realize that those people who were calling our attention to the Bible's statement that 'of that day and hour knoweth no man' (Matthew 24:36 & Mark 13:32), were right in their understanding of those verses and Family Radio was wrong."

"We tremble before God as we humbly ask Him for forgiveness for making that sinful statement. We are so thankful that God is so loving that He will forgive even this sin."¹



Some of you will recall the so-called diversity discussion group that I was a part of several years ago which included a Buddhist, a lesbian, an atheist, an agnostic, and an inter-faith minister. It was very diverse! Most of the folks were very nice but two put on a nice face but ended up being very mean! One of the guys openly ridiculed my beliefs by drawing this cartoon during our discussion and showing it to the group. This was the same guy who screamed at me during one of the groups. He was so angry I thought he was going to get out of his chair and strangle me. By that time I was used to being scoffed at but not screamed at!

Are you prepared to be ridiculed and scoffed at for your faith? Paul wrote these words to Timothy. *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* If you are not the recipient of scoffing on occasion, then you may be guilty of being one of those secret agent Christians where no one knows you are actually a Christian, so they leave you

alone.

Peter wanted his readers to be ready to receive this scoffing and especially in regard to the topic at hand—the promise of the second coming of Christ. The attitude of the mockers is abundantly clear in verse four. *They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"* Everything hinges on the fulfillment of future promises. If Jesus does not come again and bring justice to the earth and the culmination of our salvation, and the resurrection of our bodies, then our faith is futile. The promise of his second coming is the linch pin of all other promises. It is the steel girder which holds up our faith, our future and our souls. We may get into the timing of Christ's coming later in this chapter, but for now our main focus is *that* it will happen, not *when* it will happen.

Before we get to the scoffers, first Peter reminds us of his reason for writing his two letters. *In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember*

- *the predictions of the holy prophets*
- *and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles*

Why is it so important to remember? Well, for one, we forget, don't we? We are notoriously forgetful, especially when it comes to the more important things. We may remember Aaron

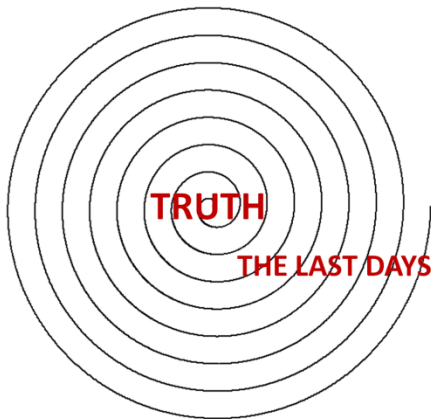
Rodgers quarterback rating from last season but we forget important things like the fact that we need the Holy Spirit's power to get through every day.

The second reason why we need to be reminded of these infinite truths is because we think we remember. For example, what if someone asked you what your pastor preached about today? You might say, "Oh, he talked about Jesus and how he is coming again some day." That's a pretty basic topic, isn't it—the second coming of Christ. It is Christianity 101 and so what happens is that we get this sense that we already know the Bible, the stories are so familiar so we kind of just tune out. We begin to think, "I don't need to be reminded again and again, do I? It's all so repetitive and a little bit boring."

NO! Peter said that we *all* need to be reminded of these truths. Furthermore, he is not addressing lazy believers, babes in the faith and milk drinkers. He is writing to maturing believers because he stated that he wanted to "stir up your sincere mind." Peter assumed from the start that they were sincere and serious believers but even then they still required reminding and "stirring up." This is not a kick in the pants to lazy, forgetful believers but rather a reminding for believers who are growing in grace and knowledge.

Let me give you an illustration of this phrase, "stirring up." All Biblical understanding is like a spiral. This morning we are studying the topic of "the last days," which is a broader term for the second coming of Christ. Our Christian walk is like a spiral and as we move toward the center of the spiral, we are getting progressively closer to the actual truth and experience of the Lord. As

Biblical Spiral of Understanding



we walk this spiral of faith, we encounter the same topic over and over and each time we do it deepens our understanding. The spiral is a process of stirring up because when you stir something, what shape does it form? It forms a spiral!

And what did Peter say that we are to remember? Verse two: *that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.* Therefore, we could put predictions and commandments in the center of the spiral or to simplify it, just use the word TRUTH. This is the purpose of our Christian life—to know the

truth which ultimately is not head knowledge—it is the person of Jesus Christ.

Therefore we see that the PURPOSE is the truth (verse two)—this is what we are aiming at. The PROCESS of reaching the truth is remembering & repetition (verse one—being "stirred up") and the POWER to mature through this process is the Holy Spirit (though that is a different sermon altogether but important to keep in mind.)

Since today is Father's Day I would like to point out that this spiral is also a model for parenting. Dads, not only do you walk along this spiral of understanding but your role is to walk this journey with your children. You set yourself a vision of leading them to the center of the circle—

Jesus Christ. Do not ever make your goal as a parent to produce “good” children. We don’t want good children we want Godly children. That’s your goal, your purpose and the process is remembering. I don’t care if it feels like repetition to you as read the same Bible stories and talk about the same subjects. That’s how it is done. Until they are grown and released, your children’s journey is your journey. You share in that with them and lead them all the way.

If we are being stirred up in this way, we will be better prepared to handle the *scoffers (who) will come in the last days with scoffing*. Here’s some more repetition for you—the scoffers will come with scoffing. This is what scoffers do—they scoff. They always carry around a hot thermos of scoffee.

A good illustration of scoffing at the Christian faith came in the last segment of The Truth Project we watched last Sunday. [Here is the clip](#).

(Here are two quotes from the clip from a committed evolutionist.)

Most modern biologists, having reviewed with satisfaction the downfall of the spontaneous generation hypotheses², yet unwilling to accept the alternative belief in special creation, are left with nothing. I think a scientist has no choice but to approach the origin of life through a hypothesis of spontaneous generation.³

One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that spontaneous generation of an organism is impossible. Yet here we are, as a result. I believe in spontaneous generation.⁴

Such people scoff openly at the notion of a Creator. They scoff at Christians and state that our beliefs are absurd, ridiculous and dangerous but we can see that they are willing to hold to a long disproven theory rather than bow their knee to a Creator. However, as I watch this, I find myself scoffing at these unbelievers, so you need to watch your attitude toward people with whom you disagree. Except for the grace of God, I would be one of them.

The object of the scoffers that Peter was dealing with was in regard to the second coming of Christ. *They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”* The scoffers ridicule the believers—where is the promise of his coming? This is what we call smack talk. Talking to these scoffers is the equivalent of attempting to hold an intelligent conversation about politics on facebook, something I had to learn again recently. The faithful apostles and teachers have promised the coming of Christ and the renewal of all things but the scoffers just don’t believe it.

But to each his own, right? Some people are convinced by the evidence and others remain unconvinced. We shouldn’t fault the scoffers because they are not able to see the truth. That might be true if you were having a discussion about who is the better ball player—Kevin Durant or LeBron James. You could have a friendly debate about that topic and let your opinions and some stats fly around the room, but the scoffers were not just ignorant of the facts. They were not merely uninformed bystanders. Peter tells us that they “deliberately overlook” these truths.

Before we examine what it is they deliberately overlooked, let’s look at this phrase in other translations. The ESV which I am using translates this phrase as “deliberately overlooked.”

The NASB (1995) reads, “it escapes their notice.” That sounds like they may have been looking for the truth but just happened to miss seeing it. The NIV is a little closer with its translation—deliberately forgot. The literal leaning of the phrase is this—“By an act of the will they have turned away.” For this reason, I prefer the KJV translation—*they willingly are ignorant of*.

These scoffers are like the evolutionists. The facts stare them in the face and they pretend they don’t exist. “Facts? What facts? My mind is made up. Please don’t confuse me with the facts.” Peter was very specific about the facts the scoffers ignored.

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.*

You can break this down into three phrases but Peter classified all of these as one fact. They deliberately overlooked “this fact.” He see all of these as comprising one big idea that centers around creation and the flood. Water is the key word which runs through this fact. What does Peter mean by saying that *the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God*? We know that God spoke the universe into being. The “word of God” was the creative force and water played a key part for two reasons. In Genesis 1.2 we read, *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* As we know, water completely covered the face of the earth so one could say that the earth was formed out of water, even though Peter clearly states that it was done “by the word of God.”

I think Peter emphasized water so he could bring special attention to water as the means of judgment if the worldwide flood—*and that by means of these* (that is, by means of water and the word of God) *the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.* This is the second time in this letter that Peter mentioned the flood. In 2:5 he wrote, *if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.*

So we can summarize by saying that these scoffers denied creation and denied the flood. They looked at the evidence and “deliberately forgot” these facts. They were not ignorant of the facts but rather, as the KJV puts it, “were willingly ignorant.” They denied creation and the flood because they did not want to admit that there was a master Creator over them and that this Creator deserved their worship and that they will be judged if they do not trust in him.

I have already given you an example of how secular scientists scoff at our belief in creation and the flood, but what bothers me even more is when evangelical Christians also scoff at creation and the flood. The best known group that does this is called Biologos. Here is the description of this group taken from their own website.

BioLogos is a community of evangelical Christians committed to exploring and celebrating the compatibility of evolutionary creation and biblical faith...

For many of you, the concept of “evolutionary creation” is a new concept. Don’t be confused by the word creation. God did not create ex nihilo—out of nothing. These scientists and theologians hold firmly to the notion of theistic evolution, which means that evolution is an absolute fact and that God used the process of billions of years of evolution to bring about the world we have today.

Most of you know that I hold to a literal, six day creation as it is clearly detailed in Genesis. I don’t have the time to debate old earth vs. young earth in the time we have left, but I do want to show the danger of theistic evolution as promoted by Biologos. First, read this section of from the Biologos April 2012 newsletter which described a conference they held in March.

Given the data that was presented at the meeting—which convincingly showed that almost half of America’s protestant pastors hold strongly or lean toward a belief in a universe less than 10,000 years old—there was a deep concern for the church, not only in America, but also worldwide. This time, leading evangelical Christians left with not so much a statement as an urgent desire to bring about change. The church of the coming decades cannot divorce itself from matters about which there is scientific certainty.⁵

Did you catch the reason for their “deep concern”? They are extremely concerned that about half of protestant pastors believe in a young earth. Frankly, I am surprised that the numbers are that high, but that’s beside the point. Now you know that organizations like this—and they are rapidly growing in influence in evangelical circles—not only believe in theistic evolution, but they are actively trying to win converts to their side.

The lead team members and board of directors are comprised of professors and scientists from the following Christian colleges and universities.

Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich
Regent College in Vancouver, B.C.
Seattle Pacific University
Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, ID
Wheaton College
Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va
Gordon College
Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego,
Messiah College
Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C.

The last one on the list concerns me the most because it an EFCA school. I am not suggesting that our denomination is headed into trouble because even though we allow for freedom of belief in the area of creation, we do strongly affirm the historical Adam and Eve.⁶ But that is precisely what theistic evolutionists do not affirm. The Biologos group denies the global flood and they deny the literal Adam and Eve. If you deny a literal Adam and Eve then you lose the Biblical explanation of how sin came into the world in Genesis 3 and if you deny a global flood you deny the massive judgment pronounced on the human race because of that sin.

More than that, Peter said that future promises are explicitly tied to past events. Verse 7—*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.* In other words, the future judgment by fire is tied to past judgment by water. If you deny special creation and the judgment at the flood you run the risk of denying the future judgment, which is inextricably tied up in the second coming of Christ. When you start denying core doctrines like these, there is an undeniable slippery slope into all manner of heresy and confusion.

Furthermore, here is more proof for a global flood. Peter is directly comparing the future judgment of the heavens and the earth with the past judgment by water. Many Christians believe that the flood was only a local flood that covered the Mesopotamian Valley but that does not match with what Peter wrote. However, the future judgment by fire will result in the destruction of the heavens and the earth. But if the flood was only a small, local flood, the comparison seems pretty silly. You would have to say that in the past God flooded one valley in a small section of the planet—it was just a little tiny form of judgment, but in the future, he is going to destroy the entire earth. The comparison only makes sense if it is truly a comparison. As Peter wrote, the earth was deluged and destroyed by water in the past and in the same way it will be destroyed by fire in the future.

It is tempting to pick and choose the parts of Scripture we like and the fact of the matter is that we always do this to make our life more comfortable and our faith more palatable. If we reject creation and the flood and tend toward some form of evolution, there is no question that the world will like us better. There will be much less scoffing and perhaps none at all. Scoffers will come with scoffing, but you can avoid it. You can be safe and well liked but do you really want to give up your pursuit of Jesus for the love of the world?

Rich Maurer
July 17, 2012

¹ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/harold-camping-admits-sin-announces-end-to-doomsday-predictions-70953/>

² spontaneous generation, the hypothetical process by which living organisms develop from nonliving matter; also, the archaic theory that utilized this process to explain the [origin of life](#). According to this theory, pieces of cheese and bread wrapped in rags and left in a dark corner, for example, were thus thought to produce mice, because after several weeks there were mice in the rags. Many believed in spontaneous generation because it explained such occurrences as the appearance of maggots on decaying meat.

By the 18th century it had become obvious that higher organisms could not be produced by nonliving material. The origin of microorganisms such as bacteria, however, was not fully determined until [Louis Pasteur](#) proved in the 19th century that microorganisms reproduce.

(<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/560859/spontaneous-generation>)

³ George Wald, *The Origin of Life*, *Scientific American*, August 1954.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ <http://biologos.org/newsletter/2012/04-02/theology-of-celebration.html>

⁶ To be sure, Genesis 1 expresses truth about God as Creator and his creation, but because of the uncertainty regarding the meaning and literary form of this book and the lack of Evangelical consensus on this issue, our Statement does not require a particular position on the mechanics of creation. However, to be within the doctrinal parameters of the EFCA, any understanding of the process of creation must affirm:

- That God is the creator of all things out of nothing (ex nihilo)

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- That he pronounces his creation “very good.”

That God created the first human beings—the historical Adam and Eve—uniquely in his image. Taken from *Evangelical Convictions*, Greg Strand (ed.), Free Church Publications, © 2011, p. 34.