

The Return of the King

Good Morning, my name is Dan and I serve as part of the staff team as Corsham Baptist Church – responsible for the youth ministry.

Now, as I was thinking about what to share with you, it occurred to me how the beginning of November is marked by important dates to remember. Like - remember, remember the 5th November, then you've got Remembrance day, where we take time out time to pause and remember those that who have fought and have fallen to protect our freedoms – not just special dates in November that called to remember: often in church we hold an act of remembrance, communion, to remember what Jesus has achieved for us on the cross, shedding His blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Why do we have special dates and ceremonies marked in diaries? *Because we are prone to forget, aren't we?* We forget things, whether it's the keys, to return a message, or the wife's birthday! And if you're young, can't switch off and think my mind is young and sharp I'm not like Dory - I don't forget nothing: Of course, your parents never have to remind you to remember to do your homework, or revise or tidy your room!

No, forgetfulness is something that affects us all – it's why we have calendars and diaries and alarms and lists, to help us remember certain things. Remembering matters! Even the government know this, giving us slogans to burn COVID-19 precautions into our memory: Hands, Face, Space.

The New Testament authors similarly knew about the danger of forgetting essential truths too. Knew there are things we need to remember lest we forget. This is particularly the case when it comes to the second coming of Jesus, that we can forget what Jesus promises, and so risk not only missing out – but failing to live life well in the meantime.

C.S. Lewis once said: 'If you read history, you'll find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next... it is since Christians have ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this'. Remembering what Jesus promises about the future and His return and how we live now in the meantime, matters.

As a result, the New Testament is littered with references reminding us of its reality. 23 of the 27 books talk of Jesus' return, with over 250 references in these 23 books. (The only books that don't mention it are the little books of Philemon, 2 & 3 John, and Galatians).

We're going to turn to one such example now - 2 Peter 3. **Read 2 Peter 3:1-2.**

Peter says he wrote his books to remind us of a number of things. *What things?* Let me show you 5 things that Peter says its crucial to remember, so that we'll be prepared when Jesus returns. **Pray**

(1) Remember scoffers will come (Read v3-4). First thing to know is that there will always be people who poo poo the idea of the 2nd coming. Maybe you've done it yourself.

Some scoff actively by argument – like in v4 '*Really? Everyone knows the world goes on and on. Seasons come and go. End of world, yeah whatever*'.

Others scoff through their lifestyle, v3: by following their own desires. They'd rather not think about the accountable life. Rather ignore this idea and follow their own ways.

Either way, the assumption of our culture is that people that think the end of the world is coming are clearly weird! The result: we can so easily absorb this thinking, can't we? So much so that we can feel like idiots, or be embarrassed by this concept. The idea of Jesus returning and the world ending becomes an awkward truth.

And so we might in our minds say we believe Jesus is coming back, but to talk about it as a reality can seem a bit too far-fetched. We can end up doubting it will happen at all. *'The world seems pretty permanent, maybe we've got it wrong.'*

Or maybe, like me, you can read this verse and think but I don't ever hear any people scoffing the idea of Jesus returning. But then I need to ask myself: *Why that is? Is it only because I don't act and live and talk like it is a very real reality?*

I may believe in heart that Jesus will come again – but lifestyle can say otherwise. What does the way I handle my finances, or pursue career ambitions or retirement plans, suggest about what we really believe about the second coming?

Is how I spend my time and energy, a reflection that Jesus could return at any moment or am I too absorbed with a world that is temporary and passing. To quote C.S. Lewis again: 'prosperity knits a man to this world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him!'

We've got to be careful here, we might not join the scoffers, but we can, like them, grow an unhealthy attachment to the comforts of now!

So how can we combat this thinking? To live distinctively, mindful that Jesus really is on His way, is quite a drastic thing to do, so we need to have confidence that it's true – So *how can we know that it will happen?*

(2) Remember God's Word (Read v5-7). We trust it will happen because we have God's word that it will happen. God's word is a guarantee it will happen.

You know, a promise is only as good as the person who makes it. Think about the opposite.

Imagine Henry VIII strolls in, he's just had his 5th wife, Katherine Howard executed, so he's a free man - and he says wants to marry your daughter... now (if not got a daughter who is single – you'll have to imagine it). Well Henry is king so as parents you can't refuse. So, imagine I start marrying them both. Now, when it comes to the sharing of promises, Q: *Are you going to trust His word or doubt it?* Probably doubt it, with good reason, Henry's track record!

Now think about God's character. Unlike Henry, His track record is impeccable. Time and again when God says something He delivers. What He says always comes to be. The scoffers have deliberately forgotten that God has a track record when it comes to intervening in history.

Such as? 1. **v5:** God's Creative Act. Things are only the way they are because God has made them that way. Creation didn't operate separate to God's word, rather it's a direct result of His word. Not only that but 2. **v6:** God's De-creative Act – from watery void to world, back to watery chaos. v6 reminds that God has stepped in to judge before – by flood with water. And now **v7:** God gives His word it will again – he will judge but this time by Fire. History will not go on forever, the end is coming!

All this raises a Q. God has given His word that He will return and will purge and purify the world by fire. But *is God's word enough for you? When God says it does that settle it?*

Are you willing to take God at His word? Yes, He might seem a long time in coming, like a kid on a long journey, taking forever, will we ever get there? Used to go on a 5-hour drive to the Lake District for holidays, a few hours in we'd feel like it's never going to arrive - it hadn't yet. But you what? It always would! The same is true of God's promises. He has given His word.

(3) Remember God's Timing (Read v8-9). God doesn't relate to time in the same way as we do. To us, 2,000 years is a long time. To God, like 2 days, no time at all.

I think, being made in God's image, we can grasp something of this. Take the example of age: The older you get the faster time appears to go, maybe you've heard a parent or grandparent say '*It seems like just yesterday that I...*'. Or take the example of joy - if something is boring, it drags on, but if something's enjoyable, the time passes fast, we say things like '*is it over already?*', it feels like no time at all.

So, it is with God, He is not slow with His promise to return, rather He is patient. Like a parent wanting to give time for a child to say sorry before the punishment comes, to give them time to escape it. I'll count to 3.

God is counting to 3 very slowly from our perspective, but really not slow at all, because His view is different to ours.

Obviously, this can raise Q's like: *surely as God counts more people die and are born, more people enter the equation, and so will God delay indefinitely?*

But what is revealed here - is God's heart. *His heart is that people will turn to Him*. He is exercising patience to give us time. So His delay is a sign of mercy not weakness. Unlike some parents though when they count to 3, God will actually get to 3 one day.

So if you are not a Christian: *Do you realise that v9 is for you?* He wants you to repent before it is too late – that is, turn from sin to Him. And if you are already a Christian, this passage reminds us of the urgency of evangelism!

Especially given... **(4) Remember God's Warning (Read v10)**. A thief sends no warning. *They don't knock the day before. Excuse me, Hi, I'm your local thief – would you mind popping out tomorrow about 10am so I can take a few things, always so much easier when the owner is not around, and if you can leave valuables on display – even better...*

No, they don't warn. It's no argument for scoffers to say that we can't see any signs that He is coming yet. Everything appears to carry on as normal. There is no indication He is on His way. Of course there isn't! Jesus specifically warned it will come with no warning or sign.

His return will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief, and everything will be laid bare. Heavens & the earth: The barriers that now separate us from God's presence will be torn away and all exposed before His watchful eye.

The point is normal life will continue until one day, will be THE day. *No funky feeling, oh todays the day, I feel it in my bones!* No life will go on as normal.

This was the case in Noah's day (Matthew 24:38-39) and this was the case with Deborah Garlick.



Take in this picture for a minute.

Here is Deborah on the beach in Thailand enjoying her holidays like many others you can see. This particular picture was taken by a friend, Boxing Day 2004.

Moments after this image was taken, everyone on this beach was wiped out by a tidal wave caused by a giant tsunami, along with 230,000 others. This image was found undeveloped in a pile of rubble.

It seemed like another glorious day, but that day was THE day of the tsunami and everything changed. So it will be at the coming of Jesus.

It's a sobering truth. But a truth that need not be feared. **(5) – Remember God's Promise (Read v12b & 13)**. God will remake and renew the heavens & earth. Isaiah puts it like this: **Read Isaiah 65:17-25**. Joy, gladness, blessing, delight, fulfilment. Closeness to God. Harmony, perfection.

The home of righteousness, **v13**. All that is good and right and true and pure. All as it is meant to be. No sickness, depression or death. A place where we will be overcome by how great God is. A place to get excited about.

What are the implications of all this? **(Read v11-12a, 14)**. (1) Christian: *make every effort* to live differently. If the promise of Isaiah is our future, then we are called to live in light of it now.

'Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Jesus will last'. This is a call to be what one day we will be, what we are becoming. Live for what lasts, not what will be burned up. Remember where you are heading and live in light of it, so that when Jesus comes He will be pleased with what He finds.

And Rejoice, seriously rejoice. Think what would've happened if Jesus had returned before you became a Christian... and be grateful He didn't.

(2) And if you're not a follower of Jesus: Maybe you've still not responded in faith to Jesus. Listen, this is great news: You *can* be welcomed into the home of righteousness, because Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again, Jesus ascended into heaven and He's coming again, to take us to be with Him.

Now that sounds like good news, but it might not be good news to you yet. In fact the bad news is that you're a rebel, rejecting the way of righteousness. Lived as though Jesus is never returning. This morning, I am speaking to you, you are on a sure path to destruction, like the poor woman in the tsunami, any moment could be your last.

Reality is we are in injury time, the final whistle will blow any moment, and you will stand before God with no answer. But Jesus was sent by the Father to provide that answer. Jesus lived a perfect life, and died a sinner's death to take your punishment. So place your faith in Jesus. I implore you - don't delay, make the time and space to do that now – 2 Corinthians tells us: **now** is the time of God's favour, **today** is the day of salvation.

Let's **Pray**.