

Title: Deliberate
Text: 2 Peter 3:1-7
Theme: The Day of the Lord will come
Series: 2 Peter
Prop Stmt: Deliberate atheism if intellectually ignorant and personally meaningless.

Read Text:

Christians are often accused of being unwilling to follow the science. The truth is, we are not willing to follow the manipulated half-truths of science. True science is the agent of God that reveals the splendor of God. But in our day, much of what is called science is selected data given to advance an agenda. The prevailing and popular view of skeptics is that science has led them to be skeptical of God. But skeptics have not been skeptical enough because any science that reveals the fingerprints of God is rejected because we are not allowed to admit that. We can't have a Creator. We all know that. Why not? What if the science actually leads us to that? We can't have that because we don't want that. The fact that we don't want that, means that we can't have that. Scoffers who reject the idea that God created the world, unleashed the flood and will judge the world, is nothing new. But scoffers will not last. God's Word does. The text tells us to: 1) Remember the promises of God; 2) Remember to expect scoffers and 3) Remember that God is involved with the world.

1. **Remember the Promises of God.** (1-2)

Like he did in his first letter (1 Peter), Peter is reminding his readers (whom he loves dearly – beloved) not to lose sight of what really matters. The dailyness of life threatens to blind us to the reality of the journey we are on. But even more, we get worn down by effects of false teachers. Beloved, remember the promises of God.

A. **Remember what was said.** (2)

The Bible is full of accounts where God made promises and kept them. We could summarize the OT with the title, promises made and summarize the NT with the title, promises kept. In the face of scoffers, Noah warned about the flood. In the face of scoffers, Moses warned Pharaoh of the judgments of God. In the face of scoffers, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the minor prophets all predicted what would happen. History is His Story, which is why history always vindicates the Word of God. Remember the promises God made then because God made promises to you.

B. **Remember who said them.** (2)

“The holy prophets” is a reference to the OT prophets and the apostles is a reference to the NT apostles. The OT prophets spoke God's promises and the NT apostles have told us of the promises of Jesus. These predictions that we stake our lives to come from God through the mouthpiece of his servants, the prophets and apostles. When you are tempted to be intimidated by the scoffers, remember who told you God's promises.

C. **Remember what happened.** (2)

“Remember the predictions” means remember what happened to those predictions. They were fulfilled. The flood came. The plagues came. Israel became a nation and took possession of the Promised Land. The Assyrians wiped out the northern kingdom and the Babylonians took the southern kingdom into exile, and they returned. The Messiah came. He was a descendent of David, born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, came out of Egypt, and was raised in Nazareth. He lived, died and rose again. Everything that was promised, happened. So, when scoffers come and they will, and they are loud, intimidating and threatening, remember. Remember what happened to all of the promises that God made. He kept them. Remember what happened to all the scoffers who mocked those promises. Remember, Christ has promised to return. You have centuries of evidence of God keeping his promises. Christ will return.

2. **Remember to expect Scoffers** (3-4)

A. **Scoffers are promised.** (3a)

Here is the irony. The very people who make fun of the fact that we believe in the promises of God are themselves a fulfillment of the promises of God. The very ones who think of themselves as being so much smarter and wiser and too sophisticated are the very ones who by their rebellion are fulfilling God’s plan. He promised they would come and they have. Scoffers use scoffing as a cover-up to camouflage their insecurities and emptiness. Here in the western world, there are two views of life: Atheism vs. theism.

<u>Atheism</u>	vs	<u>Theism</u>
Intellectual		Ignorant
Scientifically-grounded		Faith-based (Dangerous)
Educated		Folly
Rational and logical		Emotional and unreasonable
Free-thinking		Primitive
Progressive		Backwards
Refined		Pathetic
Strong		Weak

Atheism passes itself off as being the logical result of an intellectual pursuit that freely looks at the evidence and discovers that belief in God is not only unscientific, it is dangerous. Atheism has a very good marketing department and therefore while atheists in centuries past were secret about their beliefs, it is now Christians who feel like they have been muzzled and are forced to be secret about their beliefs.

Imagine that you are in a history or science class and the teacher or professor asks if there are any students who believe in the ancient myth of a worldwide flood and an ark. The environment is such, that if you dare to raise your hand and kindly say, that you believe in the historical veracity of a worldwide flood and the rescue of one family by an ark, you can expect to be labeled as being either ignorant, pathetic, abused by religion, brainwashed and potentially dangerous. Your teacher or professor may be on a mission to save you from such primitive sins so that you can live free from the notion that there is a God who rules the universe. This has given many Christians a measure of

hesitancy to freely declare their beliefs. They fear the inevitable shame that is implied when someone says, "You don't believe THAT, do you?" But while atheism has a great marketing department it has an even greater reality problem. So much so, that we not only have nothing to be insecure or embarrassed about, but when the entire story is revealed, we are the ones who ought to be saying, "Of course I believe in that, don't you?" Let me explain.

Atheism believes that there is no God. Without God, there is no Creator and creation. That means that there is no planner and plan, no designer and design. There is no purpose and meaning. Without God, we are not even sure what is, is. In fact, no one can be 100% certain that we aren't in a matrix, or that we aren't simply a brain in a vat imagining our lives, but not actually living them. When you believe that there is no God, then you are left with the uncomfortable and very disconcerting reality that there is no morality. Nothing is inherently right or wrong. Nothing is inherently good or evil. Not only that, but you are left with the inevitable conclusion that there is no over-arching narrative to life. Life has no meaningful and intentional cause. Therefore, it has no meaning and ultimate purpose. It just is. There was no was, and there will be no will be. There is just is and that's it. But even atheists find this hard to swallow, yet they can't argue that their views lead to this. Philosopher James Rachels contemplates this when he writes:

Consider what it would be like for someone to actually believe that nothing is right or wrong. Someone who said this would mean, presumably, that rape is neither right nor wrong; that torture is neither right nor wrong; that murder is neither right nor wrong; and so on for anything else that might be mentioned. If all this were said seriously, and not just as part of a philosophical discussion, it would be alarming in the extreme.¹

But James, if it is logically part of the philosophical discussion because atheism takes us there, then why would it be alarming in the extreme? James Rachel likes atheism as a theory but he is alarmed if someone consistently applies that theory to life and in his book, he struggles with the same problem. Alexander Rosenberg recognizes the moral vacuum of atheism and he is concerned that people would be turned off by that because atheists cannot "*condemn Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, or those who fomented the Armenian genocide or the Rwandan one.*" So, what is Rosenberg's answer to those who are skeptical of atheism? What is his brilliant, intellectual, scientific, philosophical, educated, sophisticated, cultured and refined rebuttal? He says:

We have to acknowledge (to ourselves, at least) that many questions we want the "right" answers to just don't have any. . . . Many enlightened people, including many scientists, think that reasonable people can eventually find the right answers to such questions. Alas, it will turn out that all anyone can really find are the answers they like. The same goes for those who disagree with them. Real moral disputes can be ended in lots of ways: by voting, by decree, by fatigue of the disputants, by the force of example that changes social mores. But they can never really be resolved by finding the correct answers. There are none.²

¹ James Rachels, "Subjectivism," in *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 434.

² Alexander Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 96. The previous quote was from p.96.

And yet, when you keep reading Rosenberg, he admits that he has a moral compass even though he claims that there are no correct answers to moral disagreements. Why is the Hindu caste system wrong? What right does Rosenberg or any atheist have to say that female genital mutilation is wrong, that slavery is wrong, that racism is wrong, that cutting the right hand off of a thief is wrong? He believes it is wrong, but he doesn't have a reason, a basis, a grounding for the fact that he has morals. Atheism only tells you what they want you to believe. Here is the rest of the story:

<u>Atheism</u>	vs	<u>Theism</u>
Nihilism		Ex Nihilo
No Ruler		Sovereign God
No meaning		Meaning
No morality		Morality
No life after death		Eternity

We have nothing to be embarrassed about. It is the atheist who has no logical explanation for why he or she thinks that something is right or wrong. A consistent atheist cannot complain if someone steals his car, burns down his house, takes all of his money or does even worse things to him and his family. If there is no God, then there is no right or wrong and nothing in this life matters anyway. But that is not what they actually believe. Why would an atheist be incensed and distraught if someone kidnapped his daughter and sold her to the sex-trade industry? He would beside himself with grief as he should be and as we would be for him. But why? Atheists claim that there is no God, but then they want to steal the language of morality from us. Hold the phone! You cannot have morality as a category without a basis for morality. You cannot have the benefits of God without God.

This week, a group of U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops announced the drafting of a position paper that, if accepted could lead to the refusal of serving communion to professing Roman Catholic politicians who promote and vote for abortion. Kudos to them. Are they closet right-wingers, you know – political operatives trying to embarrass the President? I don't think so. What are they doing? They are saying that if you claim to believe in God as we do, (theism) then you have to accept that there are such things as moral laws, like murder is wrong. You can't claim to be this (theist) and practice atheism (amoralism – murder is legal). They are right. Just as you cannot logically claim to be an atheist and yet try to hold on to any basis for morality beyond your own preferential taste at the moment – whatever that happens to be.

Scoffers will scoff. Scoffers will mock Christians for their faith in God and for their naïve and antiquated belief in both the reality of God and in the fact that we will give an account to God. Scoffers do not want God because they do not want his morality. What I have attempted to demonstrate is the folly of the scoffers. In throwing out God, they throw out his morality. But if you throw out God's morality, you throw out all morality. After all, who are you to say what is right and wrong? God says that homosexuality is a sin and that he will judge sin. We can't have that, so let's throw out God so we can do what we want. God says that greed and materialism is idolatry and that he will judge that. We can't have that, so let's throw out God. But when you throw out God's morality, you throw out all morality and are left with nothing. If you think that sex between two

consenting people is fine, then why is pedophilia wrong? Why is incest wrong? If you can define marriage however you want, then why can't a woman marry her dog, or a guy marry his sex doll, or car and get his medical benefits to cover a new transmission? Throw out God and you are left with lunacy. This is what Peter is saying. Do not be intimidated by scoffers. All you have to do is peel back the thin layer of intellectual tissue paper that is trying to cover a proud, rebellious, meaningless, empty, insecure, incoherent and dissatisfied life.

B. Scoffers follow their own desires. (3b)

The scoffers reject the idea of Christ returning and reigning. They reject the idea of standing before God and giving an account of their lives. They reject this because they do not want this to happen. They want to live according to their own rules and the reality of God frustrates them. Scoffers scoff, not because they are following the science. They scoff because they are following their glands. They are following their own desires to NOT be accountable to God. This is why I encourage you to pray for scoffers. Their desires will betray them. What they are running to will never deliver what they want.

C. Scoffers pretend that nothing will change. (4)

Where is the promise of his coming? How long are you going to believe in that foolishness? Go back generations, nothing has changed. Everything continues just like before. Since nothing has changed in the past, nothing will change in the future. Hold the phone. Is that really true? Has nothing changed in the past? If things have changed in the past, then we have reason to believe that things will not continue into the future as they are indefinitely. And that is Peter's point.

3. God is involved with the world. (5-7)

Always has and always will. Peter draws upon Genesis to prove his point.

A. God was involved through creation. (5)

Clearly Peter could point to the very act of creation as evidence of God's power and involvement and in a sense he does. But, when you look at verse 5, Peter actually takes us to Days 2 and 3 in creation; Genesis 1.6-7. *And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so.* Then in verse 9 we read, *And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

Creation is not only the activity of God, but God involved himself in the details of creation. He formed the earth out of the waters and used the formation of the earth to separate the waters into seas. Scoffers deliberately overlook this. Their rejection is intentional. Scoffers are using the air that God created to breathe out denials of God's involvement. They are standing on the earth that God made to declare that God is irrelevant. Beloved, the scoffer is irrelevant and his scoffing is lunacy as it is a

fundamental denial of the obvious. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek authored a book about 17 years ago entitled, "I don't have enough faith to be an atheist" because it takes an enormous leap of logic to buy what is being sold by the evolutionary infomercials. But this has never been about logic.

B. God was involved through the flood. (6)

In verse 6, Peter points out that while water was the setting out of which God brought the earth, water was also the means that God used to judge the earth in the worldwide flood. This example underscores the point that God is not only involved in the world and that the world has not gone on and on from day one without any major interruption, the flood obviously proves otherwise, but this example points out what every scoffer wants to ignore. God is God and every human being is accountable to him and he will judge sin. That is the message of the flood. Google "Noah's ark bedroom ideas" and you will see some amazing images of little kids' bedrooms decorated with this theme. Aww, isn't this cute, when God destroyed the entire earth and judged the human race for their rebellion? (doesn't that miss the point?) The reason this account is mocked is because of its message. Verse 7 is clear.

C. God will be involved through the Day of Judgment. (7)

Creation came by the word of God. The flood came by the word of God. The end of the earth and the heavens, as we know them, will come by the word of God. All mankind will be held accountable by the word of God.

Conclusion:

- 1) What is your defense on the day of judgment? What is your ark?
- 2) Live for that which will last – people who are changed by the gospel
- 3) Don't be intimidated by the scoffers, pity them, pray for them, be patient with them, love them and seek to share Christ. They have nothing to stand on.
- 4) Who are you praying for? If God answered all your prayers today, would someone come to know him?