

PEOPLE OF HOPE – Part 1

Hope Assured

Preaching passage: **2 Peter 3:1-10**

Subject: What assurance we have in spite of scoffers

Complement: the day of the Lord will come.

Exegetical idea: We have the assurance, in spite of scoffers, that the day of the Lord will come.

Preaching idea: When you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.

Purpose: To encourage my hearers to hold fast to their assurance that Jesus is coming back a second time to this earth.

Summary paragraph: The people of hope have a problem. For generation after generation we have boldly declared that Jesus is coming again—soon! But Jesus has still not returned. How can we hold fast to our hope in the literal visible audible glorious return of Jesus in spite of the scoffers who mock such an idea as ridiculous? The answer is found in an inspired letter that the apostle Peter wrote to fellow Christians.

The people of hope have a problem. For generation after generation after generation we have boldly declared that Jesus is coming again—soon. And Jesus has still not returned in glory.

To make matters worse, people are starting to ridicule the idea of a literal return of Jesus. “Jesus is never coming back,” they say. “For almost 2000 years followers of Jesus have been boldly declaring that Jesus will return to this earth in glory. But he hasn’t shown up yet. Just forget about that ridiculous idea!”

The apostle Peter prophesied that such scoffers would come. We can read his inspired testimony in his second letter to followers of Jesus. 2 Peter 3:3-4

“Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’”

The Greek noun translated “scoffers”, *empaiktes*, does not refer to an honest skeptic—someone who is wrestling with the big questions of life and admits to having more questions than answers. This Greek noun, used here in 2 Peter 3:4, has a different meaning than an honest skeptic. *Empaiktes* is only used twice in the entire NT—here in 2 Peter 3:4 and again in Jude 18 where Jude is quoting Peter’s words. But the verb form, *empaizo*, is used more frequently in the NT and helps us to get a better idea of the meaning of this Greek noun translated “scoffers”. Open your Bibles with me to Matthew 27:27-31: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews.’” There’s the verb *empaizo*, they mocked Him, they scoffed at Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews.”

“Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.” This is not the behavior of an honest skeptic who is wrestling with the big questions of life and sometimes finds herself with more questions than answers. No, this is the behavior of a scoffer, one who ridicules and belittles. “They spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head”—driving the crown of thorns deep into His

brow. “And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

The verbal abuse continues in Matthew 27:41-43. “Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, “I am the Son of God.”’” These scoffers are ridiculing Jesus, mocking Him.

Jesus had foretold that it would be so. Mark records the testimony of Jesus in Mark 10:33-34. “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him.” Don’t miss the next sentence: “And the third day He will rise again.” Someone ought to say Amen out there. And the third day He will rise again. That’s the rest of the story, but that’s a topic for another sermon.

Many of those who ridiculed Jesus were convicted that He was no ordinary teacher. They had seen Him heal the sick, and cast out demons. They had heard reliable reports that Jesus had even raised people from the dead. But they willfully, deliberately, set that evidence aside and instead of responding with a spirit of humility and faith, they mocked Jesus and ridiculed Him.

The apostle Peter prophesied that scoffers in the last days would act in a similar way. Look again with me at the inspired testimony of Peter in 2 Peter 3:3-7. “Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying,

‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

We have heard such mocking with our own ears. Such mocking has caused some to lose their assurance that Jesus will indeed return again in power and great glory. How should we respond to these mockers, these scoffers? Perhaps we should respond with the words of the apostle Peter, recorded in 2 Peter 3:8. “.....” Perhaps we should tell people that the Lord is not limited by time, the Lord is not time-bound. But still we have the problem that we have been proclaiming the imminent return of Jesus for generation after generation after generation and Jesus is still not here.

Perhaps we should respond with the words of the apostle Peter, recorded in 2 Peter 3:9. “.....” We could tell these scoffers that the Lord is merciful and patient, not willing that any should perish. But even we ask the question, “How long, O Lord?”

Is our hope assured? Can we still have confidence that Jesus will indeed return again in glory? Can we still boldly declare with the apostle Peter, “The day of the Lord will come!”?

My answer to those vital questions is “Yes! Yes! Yes!” Our hope is assured. We can still have confidence that Jesus will return again in glory. We can still boldly declare with the apostle Peter, “The day of the Lord WILL COME.”

The key to Peter’s confidence, the key to Peter’s assurance, is found at the beginning of Peter’s inspired testimony, 2 Peter 1:1. Peter addressed his second epistle “to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Our hope is assured because, like Peter, we have a precious faith. We believe the promise of Jesus that He will return again in glory because we trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Peter had seen Jesus stand up in a small fishing boat in the midst of a storm on the lake and command the wind and the waves, “Peace be still!” Peter had heard Jesus boldly proclaim “I am the bread of life,” after having witnessed Jesus feed 5,000 men plus women and children with 5 loaves and 2 fish. Peter was present when Jesus boldly declared, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Then Peter followed Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus where Peter saw with his own eyes the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, by the power of Jesus. Peter heard Jesus say, “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL COME AGAIN and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also.”

Peter saw Jesus ascend into heaven. He heard with his own ears the words of the angels: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

And Peter had experienced in His own life and ministry the power of the Risen Christ. Once intimidated by external pressures and inward anxieties, Peter had denied that he even knew Jesus. But on the day of Pentecost, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter boldly declared, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."
Acts 2:36

Several days later, when Peter and John were on their way to the Temple to pray, they met a lame man at the temple gate called Beautiful. You know the story. The man was begging for alms. And Peter responded with these words, recorded in Acts 3:6-8. "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The Scripture records that "he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."

When asked to give account before the Sanhedrin, Peter boldly testified, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, 'If we this day are judged for a good need done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here

before you whole. This is the stone, which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:8-12

Peter had a precious faith in Jesus as His Savior and Lord. And because Peter trusted Jesus, he believed His promise. He could say with the apostle Paul, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). What had Peter committed to Jesus until that day? Everything. Peter had a precious faith.

Peter could declare with the apostle Paul, “I have fought a good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Peter’s hope in the glorious return of Jesus was assured because of His precious faith in Jesus as His Savior and Lord. Because Peter trusted Jesus, he believed His promise. That is why his hope was assured—in spite of the apparent delay, in spite of the scoffers who ridiculed and mocked. Peter could boldly declare, “The day of the Lord will come.” **When you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.**

I was reminded of the importance of trusting someone and believing his promise during my recent trip to Southeast Asia. David Tan and I had just visited the city of Iloilo in the Philippines. I was excited because ASI members there are launching a satellite TV network called HCBN, He’s Coming Broadcasting Network. I

like that name, don't you? Anyway, I was excited, and apparently a little distracted because when we got to the Iloilo airport to catch our flight on to Manila I discovered that I had left my waist pouch at the house, 45 minutes away and the person who drove us to the airport had already left to go home. Now my waist pouch isn't that valuable, but it contained my passport, my money, and my airline itinerary. I was in serious trouble! I couldn't even get inside the airport terminal. Without a moment's hesitation, David looked at me and said, "Stay here. I'll be back!" He took my checked bag and disappeared into the crowd. After a few minutes it dawned on me that I was standing all alone on the sidewalk in a strange land with no ID, no money, no itinerary, no cell phone, no address for the people in town. All I had was a promise, "I'll be back!"

But I didn't panic. Why? Because I had come to trust David Tan during our travels together. I knew that he loved God with all of his heart and he cared about me. He was a man of integrity. I knew that I could trust him, and so I could hold on to his promise with assurance: "I'll be back!" I'm not sure how long I waited on the sidewalk. It seemed like forever, and the time for our flight to leave was drawing perilously near. Finally, David re-emerged from the airport terminal with my boarding pass in hand. He had checked my bag and got a boarding pass for me without me even being in the terminal. Don't ask me how he did that. I didn't even want to ask! David had also called our hosts in town and a personal courier was on her way to hand deliver my waist pouch. Before long, I had my passport in hand, we flew through security, took a deep breath, and boarded our plane for Manila. I learned a valuable lesson that day: When you trust the person, you believe the

promise. All I had was David's promise: "I'll be back!" But when you trust the person, you believe the promise. It's the same way Jesus and His promise that He'll be back. **When you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.**

Almost a half-century has passed since Wayne Hooper penned the words to a hymn that Seventh-day Adventists have come to love all around the world. You've sung it many times, perhaps, but I want you to listen again to the words.

We have this hope that burns within our hearts
Hope in the coming of the Lord.
We have this faith which Christ alone imparts,
Faith in the promise of His Word.

Our hope in the return of Jesus in glory is not based upon our feelings. Our hope in the return of Jesus in glory is not based on the tide of popular opinion. Our hope in the return of Jesus in glory is not based on our calendrical calculations. Our hope is based on Jesus and the promise of His Word. We believe by faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who is come into the world and so we believe His promise that He will come again and receive us to Himself that where He is there we may be also. **When you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.** Am I telling you the truth today? **When you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.**

Brothers and sisters, the Day of the Lord will come. Lift up the trumpet and loud let it ring. Jesus is coming again. Cheer up, you pilgrims, be joyful and sing. Jesus is coming again. Our hope is assured. Hallelujah!

Children's story

Pastor Patty Hofer told me something really amazing earlier this week. She told me that a SMART CAR was going to be delivered to the church on Friday. Wasn't that an amazing thing to say? Do you think I believed her? Yes, I did. Because I know Pastor Hofer. I trust her. So I believed her promise. And did someone actually deliver a SMART CAR to the church yesterday? Yes, they did. Did you see the SMART CAR out in the lobby? It's there, just as Pastor Hofer promised it would be.

I would like to make a promise to you today. I'm going to promise you that at the end of this children's lesson, I'm going to give you a bright, shiny 50-cent coin. How many of you believe me that I'm going to give you a bright, shiny 50-cent coin? Why do you believe my promise? You believe my promise because you know me and trust me. Right? You know that I wouldn't lie to you. You know that I'll keep my promise. So, what are you going to do with your bright, shiny 50-cent coin. Well, you could save it. You could give it as an offering in church or in Sabbath school. You could give it as a present to someone who needs it. That's up to you. You can do whatever you want with your bright, shiny 50-cent coin.

Thank you for coming up for the children's story today. If you believe my promise to give you a bright, shiny 50-cent coin, you can meet me over by the organ when the organ starts playing. OK? You can go back to your seats now!