

The Day of the Lord

2 Peter 3:1-13

Next Sunday is Christmas Eve. Is everybody excited? How about you, kids?

I'm excited. I love Christmas, but there is something better coming. Do you want to know what it is?

We just heard it in our text. The Day of the Lord is coming. On that day, everything that was accomplished in the incarnation, sinless life, and sacrificial death of Jesus will be completed. It will be an *end* and a *beginning*. On that day, *everything* that was made wrong by sin will be made right. *I am looking forward to that day.*

The Christmas season is a time of anticipation. We anticipate Christmas because we know it is coming, and we anticipate Christmas by preparing for its coming. We observe the advent season as a remembrance of the coming of the Son of God born as a human baby. We celebrate, we gather with special people and eat special food, and we give gifts. It's good and right, *but something better is coming.*

In our text today, Peter frames what he is saying in **remembering and anticipating**. Peter is exhorting us to remember what God has said through the Prophets and the Apostles as we anticipate the return of Christ and our future in the renewed and purified creation.

Look at verses 1 and 2:

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, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

Peter's purpose for this second letter is the same as the first: to remind his readers of what the prophets and apostles taught. His first readers needed to be reminded because they were forgetful. We need to be reminded for the same reason.

One commentator writes: "Believers need reminders about the truths they already know and accept because such reminders, though including the mind, address the whole person. The reminder is intended to grip the whole person so that we are possessed again by the gospel of truth, so that we are energized to live for the glory of God."¹

We also need to be reminded because we will be challenged by false teachers (as Peter addresses extensively in the preceding chapter) and scoffers.

We need to remember what God has done and look forward to what he will do. We are aware of what God is going to do and we are preparing for what God is going to do. *We have confidence that God will fulfill everything that he has promised because he has always fulfilled his promises.*

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 443

Peter isn't concerned that his reader's thinking is wrong, he writes to stir up their *sincere minds*. He writes to stimulate us to wholesome thinking (as the NIV translates). Why do we need this stimulation?

Look at verse 3:

scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

In this context, the last days is referring to the Church age; the time from the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ to the return of Christ. The first readers of this letter were in the last days and so are we.

We need our thinking reinforced by being reminded of the truth because scoffers are all around us. Scoffers deny and distort and mock the truth. We need our thinking to be led by the truth so that we aren't led astray by false teachers and scoffers. Peter tells us to remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of our Lord and Savior through the apostles. We can do this because God has graciously given us what the Prophets and Apostles said, written and translated into English in our Bibles. The authority and revelation that God gave to the OT Prophets and the Apostles is in the Scriptures.

The Old Testament prophets proclaimed that the Messiah, the Christ, was coming to save God's people from their sins. The Apostles proclaimed what they saw with their own eyes. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ, who has come, lived a sinless life, died as a sacrifice for the sins of all who believe, rose from the dead, and is coming back to gather his people to himself.

Scoffers mock the promises of God because they disregard God. They follow their own sinful desires. Perhaps they are atheists, denying the very existence of God. Certainly they question the power and authority of God. This is common to mankind. The Apostle Paul tells us that by their unrighteousness people suppress the truth because what can be known about God is plain to them and they are without excuse.²

Scoffers mock the fulfillment of the promises of God by pointing out that they haven't been fulfilled yet. Things are going along as they always have.

But we know what the Prophets and Apostles have said because we read the Scriptures. *We know* that what the Prophets and Apostles said is true because the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures for us. *We know that God has always and will always fulfill his promises.* We know and believe that God will fulfill all of his promises, but we need to be reminded because scoffers are all around us.

God created our world by his word and proclaimed it very good. It *was* very good. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, lived in a perfect world in perfect fellowship with God and one another. But, as we read in Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve believed the lie of Satan and sinned against God, breaking that perfect fellowship. Because of their sin, God cursed Adam and Eve, but before he did he cursed Satan. In the curse was a promise for us:

² Romans 1:18-20

“I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”³

God promised that one day the offspring of a woman would come to defeat Satan. God promised us a Savior. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus the Christ. We anticipate the fulfillment of God’s promises that he has not fulfilled yet because of the promises that he has already fulfilled.

Part of what we do as a local church is to remind one another. One very important thing we remind one another of is the **promise of his coming**.

Look at verses 4 through 7:

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.’ 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, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 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.

Scoffers challenge us to question the promises of God. “*Where is the promise of his coming?*” They point out that things are going along as they always have. And they are, but the scoffers *deliberately* overlook, they *deliberately deny*, the truth that God is working out his plan of redemption for his people.

Contrary to popular opinion, this world was created by God and we are accountable to God. You may be here this morning with questions about all of this. That’s OK. Asking sincere questions is not scoffing. *If that’s you, don’t miss the grace of God today.* Ask your questions. We don’t have all of the answers, but Jesus does.

God has already cleansed the world with water and promises to cleanse it again by fire. When this happens things will be going along as they always have. Quoting Jesus, Luke 17:26-30 says:

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot – they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all – so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”⁴

As in the days of Noah and of Lot, on the day of the Lord things will be going along like they always have. On that day, Jesus is coming back to judge the unrepentant rebels, those who deny

³ Genesis 3:15

⁴ Matthew 24:36-39

the facts and ignore the truth. *But that's not all.* He is coming back to gather his people to himself.

From mankind's fall into sin until the cataclysmic flood, things were going along and things were getting worse. People did what people do, eating and drinking and getting married, but most ignored God. Genesis 6:5-6 tells us that:

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

We regret when we make a bad decision or do something wrong, but God never makes a bad decision or does anything wrong, so his regret is not like ours. God saw the sinful state of mankind and judged them. ***But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.***⁵

Justice came for the sinners because God is just. Mercy came for Noah because God is merciful. *His justice never interferes with his mercy and his mercy never interferes with his justice.*

In the whole world, God only found one righteous man. Was Noah without sin? Of course not, he was human, but he believed God and obeyed God. Hebrews 11:7 says:

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Noah believed God about events as yet unseen and he obeyed. He believed and obeyed and built a boat so he and his family would be saved from the destruction to come.

Imagine how the scoffers howled as Noah and his sons built a boat, 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet tall, in their yard. Imagine how the neighbors scoffed when Noah told them of the impending destruction of the flood. Sadly, Noah's neighbors chose their own sinful desires.

I knew a guy once that was building a rather large sailboat in his driveway (42 feet as I recall). It got a lot of attention and many jokes. Launching the boat would require a crane to load it and a truck and trailer to move it, but those things were available. Not so with the ark. The water came to it. That was an event yet unseen, but Noah believed and obeyed God.

The animals came and the time came and God shut Noah, his wife, their sons and their wives, and the animals in the ark. Just like Noah's neighbors, folks today mock the account of the flood. They think it a myth, but we know that it is true history. The flood came, and judgment with it, as God nearly destroyed the earth as he destroyed the unrepentant sinners.

When it was over, God made a covenant with mankind that he would never judge the world with water again and gave us the rainbow as a reminder. We still have floods and floods can be destructive, but we will never see another flood as destructive again. We have God's word on it.

Final judgment is coming, this time by fire not water. Judgment is coming for the scoffers, those who *deliberately deny the truth.*

⁵ Genesis 6:8

Look at verses 8 and 9:

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Interpretations of these verses vary, but I believe the simple reading is that God is not bound by time and that God will completely work out his plan of redemption for his people.

Peter doesn't want us to overlook this. God created time, but is not bound by it. He lives outside of time, and by his sovereign prerogative he works in time to fulfill his promises. God promised to send the offspring of a woman to defeat Satan. He fulfilled that promise in Jesus after many years and many generations, but he was not slow and he was always working. It has been many years and many generations since Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father but he is not slow and he is always working, drawing people to repentance by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. *In his kind providence God is patient towards us as he draws everyone that he has chosen to himself.*

To us, a day is a relatively short time and a thousand years is a relatively long time because we are bound by time. God is not. He can and will accomplish everything he intends. He may do it in a day; he may do it in a thousand years. He may do it in an instant. *The point is not how little or how much time God may take. The point is that he will accomplish everything that he has promised.* God is not slow, he is patient. He is merciful. His final judgment will not come until all that he has chosen have come to repentance.

When God has drawn all that he has chosen to himself the day of the Lord will come with **the fire of purification.**

Look at verse 10:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

The day of the Lord is coming. As in the days of Noah, people scoff. They follow their sinful desires. As in the days of Noah, God has provided safety for his people in the cataclysm to come. *Our safety isn't in a boat; it's in the gospel of Jesus Christ.* The day will come like a thief – unexpected and unannounced – and “***the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.***”

I don't know how literal this imagery is, but it is unsettling. It terrified me as a child. I didn't want to think about the sky bursting into flame. I especially didn't want to think about judgment because I didn't know the truth and glory of the gospel.

I imagine that thinking about a coming cataclysmic flood unsettled Noah, but he believed and obeyed God and God saved him. We don't have to worry about the coming cataclysmic fire,

beloved. Whatever happens on the day of the Lord, *just as God saved Noah and his family from the destruction of the flood, he will save us.*

I don't think the fire will result in the total destruction of the creation. One commentator writes: "I incline to the notion that the world will be purified instead of seeing an annihilation and a restart. In this respect, the new world is like the resurrection of our bodies, where there is both continuity and discontinuity."⁶

I think that as in the flood, the destruction will bring purification. Sin will be completely exposed and in the new earth, the renewed earth, *there will be no more sin.*

Revelation 21:1-4 says:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

God gave John a look at the new heaven and the new earth. In the new heaven and earth, the former things, the things corrupted by sin, have passed away. The new heaven and new earth are the dwelling place of God with man.

One commentator writes: "Likewise in the new heaven and earth which God creates as a home for his bride, the 'first things have passed away,' and these first things are the woes that infected the first created order through human sin: death, mourning, crying, and pain."⁷

We know that the day of the Lord is coming. *We know* that on that day we will be raised with him to the glories of eternal life and eternal perfect fellowship with our Triune God and with one another. *I'm looking forward to that.*

When I was younger, I looked forward to being with Jesus in the new earth, but I could wait. I was busy. I had things to do. Perhaps it's my age, but I'm ready. I'm ready for anticipation to become reality. I'm ready for faith to be sight. Don't get me wrong; I'm not ready to quit, but I'm very ready for the day of the Lord to come.

Things go along as they always have, but the day of the Lord is coming. We have been in the last days for millennia, beloved. Are we in the last, last days? I don't know, *but I do know that the day of the Lord is coming.* How should we think about that? How do we live in that reality? **With our hearts set on the new earth.**

Look at verses 11 and 12:

⁶ Thomas Schreiner, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 469

⁷ Dennis Johnson, *The Triumph of the Lamb*, p. 303 (quote from the NASB)

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

We don't need to be concerned with when or how the day will come. We need to be the right kind of people, living with a right heart, waiting for the return of King Jesus. As we wait we are to love our neighbors, we are to proclaim the gospel, and we are to make disciples. With God working through us by the Spirit in us, we participate with him in working out his plan of redemption. When everyone chosen by God is redeemed by Christ and safe in Christ the end will come.

Imagine that. One day the last elect sinner will be born of the Spirit and given faith to believe unto salvation. On that day, all those in Christ who have died will be raised literally and physically from the grave. All those in Christ who are alive on the earth will be caught up together with them. We will be with the Lord forever. *Encourage yourself and one another with this future reality* brothers and sisters.

Look at verse 13:

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Peter tells us that ***according to his promise we are waiting***. We are waiting, anticipating God's fulfillment of his promise of a re-creation of heaven and earth. God created the heavens and the earth and it was good. But mankind has spoiled God's good creation with our sin.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:22-25

The creation groans waiting for the day of the Lord. We groan as we wait, yet we wait patiently. We groan, not in despair, but in anticipation of the glory that is to come on the day of the Lord. On that day and forever after, everything will be complete and as it should be.

We are waiting for what we haven't seen with confidence because *God has promised and always fulfills his promises*. On the day of the Lord, God will fulfill his promises of judgment and redemption. All who are in Christ by grace through faith will be raised to the glories of eternal life and eternal perfect fellowship with God and one another in the new earth *where there will be no sin*. God's intent for mankind will be fulfilled.

Think about that brothers and sisters, *there will be no more sin in the new earth or in us*. It's mind boggling. We can only imagine it now, but *we will experience it one day and forever*.

We have been made new in Christ, and we are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, but we still live in flesh corrupted by sin and in a world corrupted by sin. In the new earth there will be no pain or suffering or disease. Our bodies will not wear out and fail us. That's good news, but the best news is that there will be no sin. We are assailed by temptation inside and out. *But in the resurrection and the new earth we will be delivered from the very presence of sin.* There will be no temptation. There will be no rebellion. We will live forever *in perfect fellowship with our Triune God and one another.* We will be as we were created to be in the creation as it was meant to be.

We will live forever in the ***new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*** It will be even better than we can imagine and it is the future reality for all who are in Christ.