

XXXVI. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The End of All Things as the Beginning of Everything”
I Peter 4:7–11
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Our text is in I Peter 4. We now take on another paragraph in our study of I Peter for the next couple of studies. I Peter 4:7–11 says [7] *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. [8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. [10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The end of all things is at hand – what a powerful, interesting, life-changing statement, particularly when you think of a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Imagine you are back 2,000 years ago and you're the Apostle Peter. Not only has God very graciously, enveloped you with forgiveness, brought you to meet Him by the Sea of Galilee and allowed you three times to affirm Christ, knowing that three times you had denied Christ and then gives you a call to go for Him, similar to that of Isaiah when He said 'who will go for Me?' 'You are forgiven Peter, now tend My sheep, feed My lambs, nurture My sheep.' For the rest of Peter's life, he is going to pastor God's people. In this I Peter letter we are 30 years into his pastoral ministry to fulfill his calling.

Peter is in Rome. He is anticipating and soon will be in prison. Not but a few years later will lose his life and he'll write one more epistle which is II Peter. He sees the rising of persecution. He has this assigned letter by the Spirit of God to the Christians in what today we call Turkey, Asia Minor, the areas of Galatia. I Peter is a pastoral letter about the Christian life. He tells them they are elect exiles as he uses the imagery of how God delivered Israel out of the bondage of slavery as He brought them on a journey into a Promised Land. Our God has chosen to deliver you from the slavery of sin for you are elect of God.

You are elect of God by the undeserved grace of God, the irresistible love of God to bring you from death, sin and darkness into the Kingdom of His Son. Now you're on a journey through a broken world of the wilderness of sin. You're on your way to a new heavens and a new earth and on your way you have a mission to make disciples and a message which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The elect is who you are in Christ and then Peter gives us 13 Gospel blessings of who you are in Christ in the opening three chapters of I Peter. Now that you know who you are in Christ you are ready to serve Christ because your service isn't an attempt to be saved but you're serving Christ because you're saved.

Then Peter gives Gospel commands as how to live for Christ. Up to this point we have noted six Gospel commands. The one we looked at in the last study was arm yourself with the mind of Christ. Why would you do that? It is because Christ has suffered for you and as you serve Christ you will suffer. Peter has very pointedly and painstakingly laid out for us the

Christian life and then he will spend one third of the book to tell us about Christian suffering. There is the general Christian suffering that we embrace which is what all of us face living in broken world. This is a world of chaos instead of a world of Cosmos. Jesus said in John 16:33, [33] *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

Peter then goes beyond the general notion of Christian suffering in a broken world to a specific suffering of a Christian for Christ’s sake. This is what Jesus refers to in the beatitudes when He says in Matthew 5:11–12, [11] *“Blessed are you when (not if) others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Peter is bringing those words of Christ to bear upon us to tell us simply what some of the other New Testament writers tell us that every true Christian at some time to some degree in some manner will suffer for Christ’s sake.

This is why Paul says in II Timothy 3:12, [12] *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* It is also why he says in Philippians 1:29, [29] *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake.* Then he says in Philippians 4:13, [13] *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.* People tend to take Philippians 4:13 out of context and think they can just step up to a baseball plate and hit a homerun. No, it’s the strength of Christ will always be there when suffering is for Christ and you will have His strength at that moment.

How will you suffer? You will suffer in various ways and various manners. Sometimes you suffer by the culture, the world and Satan in his assault by mocking you, your commitment to Christ and what you believe about Christ. Secondly, another way is by the culture marginalizing, attempting to tell you that you’re on the wrong side of history. After that will come maligning us, saying all manner of evil falsely. Fourthly, some didn’t just have their livelihood attacked but they have been martyred for the faith and they freely gave their life up for Christ.

How do we learn to stand in that day of suffering? Peter tells us it’s when we learn to have the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:5–8 says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Arm yourself with the mind of Christ when we face that suffering that is inevitable in this world as elect exiles who are in the world but not of the world. We’re outsiders, aliens, but we don’t live outside but inside. We don’t think of ourselves as insiders but outsiders but we are going to live inside for Christ on mission and on message, a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship always being ready to give an account of the hope that is within you, even in the moments of suffering as well as on the mountaintop. God by His grace has called us there and placed us there.

Now in this I Peter 4:7–11 text Peter gives us the 14th Gospel blessing and he gives two more Gospel commands. In this study we’ll look at this 14th Gospel blessing but I’m not going to do the two commands in this study. I want to do it by answering three questions – why does he give this Gospel blessing, what is this Gospel blessing and when will we experience this Gospel blessing?

So let's start with the why. I Peter 4:7 says I Peter 4:7–11 says [7] ***The end of all things is at hand***; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. All things are at the end. Why has Peter said the end of all things are at hand and why is this a Gospel blessing to us? I think Peter brings this up for a couple of reasons. Let's look back at the previous paragraph.

I Peter 4:3–6 says [3] *For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. [4] With respect to this they are surprised when (not if) you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you (you will be persecuted for making right choices for Christ); [5] but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. [6] For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.*

Peter is telling us when we preach the Gospel to the world everybody we're speaking to is dead (spiritually – dead in their sins) and this is why the Gospel is preached to those who are dead so that the sovereign hand of God goes to work with the Gospel by the Spirit of God so they can be born again to a new life with the power of the Gospel. It's obvious they had a pretty stiff lifestyle – drinking parties, orgies, and all of that. Peter is telling us that time has passed for that for that was your old way of life. Now you're converted and here is your life after Christ. You have given enough time to the debauchery of sin and now that God has converted you for the rest of the time you give that to the Lord. It is a lifestyle of evangelism, discipleship and worship unto God so whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do you do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

Now that you have this time Peter give you an encouragement, a blessing. The time passed is done, the time now is glorious and now he says that time is almost up. Time is about to be done away with, when time, earth and heaven are no more, but a new heavens and new earth in eternity is about to come. The end of all things is at hand and those who have persecuted you there is coming a day they will give an account, not to you, because you're a sinner saved by grace, but they will give an account to God and He is ready to judge. Now Peter tells us how ready He is to judge – the end is now for the time for judgment is next.

In God's work of redemption, Jesus will come back and two things will happen. There will be a judgment seat in which God's people will be headed to a new heavens and a new earth and those who reject Him, putting themselves in His place in their lives where all glory goes to them, will be judged/condemned to the eternal lake of fire. It is a terrifying thing in that day to fall into the hands of the living God, but if you know Him you don't fall into the hands of the living God on that day for you are brought into glory by the hand of God through that day because Christ is your Savior and Lord. That Day is next. Peter is telling those who are suffering that it won't be long, for Glory is coming.

This makes me think of the words of Jim Elliott who went to take the Gospel to the Auca Indians knowing he was likely going to die at a young age; "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." So instead of dying in pile of self-pity when we suffering this world for Christ's sake, we say 'blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you' and we know these people who do it to us don't answer to us but they will answer to the Lord. We just want to tell them about the Lord even while we suffer and we know we haven't that long to do it. The end is at hand.

Perhaps another reason Peter is saying this is Peter remembered when he was given his mission and message along with the other Apostles at the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:6–11

which says [6] *So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” [7] He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” [9] And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. [10] And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, [11] and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

Their last encouragement as they turned from the Mount of Olives on the mission to make disciples of all the nations, was that He is coming again. Peter tells us with Divine revelation that the end of all things is near. He wants to encourage those who are suffering by bringing this to them. There is an end to this and the end is glorious. He wants to equip us with the knowledge that the end is coming and that means the judgment is coming because the same Jesus who came the first time to save and bear our judgment, will come again to judge, to bring judgment on that time. That time is near. He is also pastorally comforting us in the midst of suffering.

Peter is also pastorally exhorting us. As I was preparing this text I got a note from the wife of my spiritual father back in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was his second wife because his first wife had died. She became like a dear older sister to me and my wife. She had so many experiences on the mission field when she was a single woman wondering what would happen on the mission field. She felt called to Kenya and surrendered to the call. I Peter 4:7a was the reason she went – the end of all things is at hand. She thought, ‘If that’s true I only have so much time to reach the lost.’ Why lay aside the time?

Another reason is that my heart ought to go out to those who persecute me for His sake because I know if it weren’t for God’s grace for me I would be with them persecuting the church of Jesus Christ. They will have to give an account and God has delivered me through the righteousness and blood of Christ. It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment (Hebrews 9:27) and after realizing all this it ought to give me compassion for them. Didn’t Jesus show this to us as He came and took hold of that cross for us? One of the seven things He says from that cross is ‘Father forgive them, they know not what they do’ for those who laid hands on Him. Can you imagine the angels in heaven who were straining at the tether to come down because for the one time in history men and women have God where they can put their hands on Him and they crucify Him, I can’t imagine what the angels from heaven would have wanted to do as sinful men laid hands on the holy, Son of God. And Jesus says to them ‘Stay.’

Stephen learned it. Stephen had that same compassion as the stones rained down upon him, as they were taking his life. Acts 7:59–60 says [59] *And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” [60] And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “**Lord, do not hold this sin against them.**” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.* We see it in the Reformers. Recently I read about the Reformers who were put to death simply because they translated the Bible into English and so they died so that you could have an English Bible to know about Jesus. There were many who were strapped to a post as they lit the fire brands and would be burned alive for Christ. Many would reach out their hand to their captor and tell them ‘I want you to know I forgive you. Come to Christ.’ So knowing the end of all things is at hand is building them up and encouraging them in the Lord and that’s why Peter is writing these things.

What is Peter actually saying in this ‘end of all things is at hand’? Peter wrote this around 62 A.D. and now we’re 2,000 years later. Did Peter get carried away with optimism when he said this? First we have to understand what he means when he gives this Gospel blessing of the end of all things is at hand. It’s not the first time Peter would have known about this language. The first time this language makes itself known is in Matthew 3:1–3 which says [1] *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,* [2] *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* [3] *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’”* There is that language. It is near. It is here.

Here John the Baptist is coming out of the wilderness preaching the King of heaven is at hand and his calling is to prepare the way of the Lord. He is saying that the Kingdom is always where the King is. The King is here, He is at hand. Jesus the Messiah, Prophet, Priest and King is at hand which means the Kingdom is at hand. It is an event language, not calendar language. Jesus picks up on it so Peter would have known about it as well.

Let’s look at Matthew 4 where Jesus is coming out of the wilderness. Matthew 4:17 says [17] *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* Here’s the King. He is preaching and that means the Kingdom is here. Inauguration, event, the Kingdom is here at hand, right now. In the midst of a calendar time, is the event time and the event time is the Kingdom is at hand. We also see Jesus say to Greek who were seeking Him, in John 12:23, [23] *And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”* This is the redeeming time of the King for up until this time Jesus would say ‘the time is not now.’ That event in John 12 signaled something.

Paul uses this language in Romans 5:6 when he says [6] *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* There is the event Christ did in the timely fashion. So when you see this kind of language like ‘the end is at hand’ don’t think chronology, think events. He is saying that God’s history is not circular or cyclical. God’s history has a beginning and an end – creation, fall, redemption, consummation.

Here is a simple outline of the Bible. Creation is in Genesis 1 and 2. The fall is in Genesis 3. Redemption is Genesis 4 to Revelation 22. So creation is done. The fall into sin is done, where all of the human race sinned in Adam’s sin has come into the world in a sin nature and sin record. In that work of redemption that leads to a consummation where God has revealed who He is and what He has done through a series of covenants (with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.) leading up to the covenant of grace in the One Mediator, Jesus Christ. All those covenants are building on each other until you get to the new Covenant in Christ. Now there is only One Mediator between God and man. All those other mediators needed their own mediator and now we have One that doesn’t need a mediator who can be your Prophet, Priest and King. He can give you His blessings with His righteousness from the resurrected tomb.

The work of redemption has been done step by step and here are the prophecies that Jesus fulfills. There were these christophanies which were pre-incarnate appearances of Christ and now we have the Incarnate Christ. All of this led up to the virgin conception, virgin birth, the sinless life, the atoning death on the cross, the triumphant resurrection from the tomb, the regal ascension, the present intercession of Jesus for us, the outpouring of Pentecost where the Spirit of God is poured out upon His people and all of that is done! Every event is done and there is only one left – He is coming again! The end is at hand. He didn’t make a mistake for Peter is telling us that everything that God must do to save His people to bring them to a new heavens

and a new earth except He's coming again. It may be morning, may be noon, may be evening but it will be soon – Jesus is coming again.

Don't think of cessation when you hear the word end. Think of consummation. The end of all things is at hand – Behold I make all things new (Revelation 21:5) – a new heavens and a new earth, a new body. All of that sin, suffering, temptation, sorrow, weeping and death are done, into the consummation for I shall see Him face to face. It is that sure knowledge where nothing else needs to be done by that God to redeem us for the next thing on the redemptive calendar is that He's coming for His people.

When is He coming? There are two things that are being done through us because of what He has done for us and as those things are brought to completion then comes the consummation. Let's look at Matthew 24. Where is Jesus and why hasn't He come yet if the next thing is eminent and will happen soon if all has been done by the Redeemer to redeem His people? The brief answer is that the task of going to get those people isn't finished and this means two things have to happen.

Matthew 24:1–3 says [1] *Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. [2] But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."* (Destruction of the temple happens around 66 A.D.) [3] *As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be (the destruction of the temple), and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"* The Disciples ask Jesus three questions here and He'll answer all of these questions throughout the end of chapter 24 but I'm just going to show you His answer to them about the end of the age.

Matthew 24:13–14 says [13] *But the one who endures (suffering) to the end will be saved. [14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed (through the lifestyle and evangelism of His people) throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* So how do we hasten the coming of the Lord? It is through missions and evangelism. It is through a lifestyle of evangelism, discipleship and mission making because Jesus isn't coming until all His people from all the nations have heard the Gospel.

The second thing that has to happen we'll see in II Peter 3. The last redeeming event of the second coming of Christ has not happened because of what Christ is doing of His redemption through His people. II Peter 3:1–4 says [1] *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."* They actually have deliberately overlooked things, like the flood and other things because things haven't been as they always have been.

II Peter 3:8–10 says [8] *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.* (This is not a formula, it is just telling us that time doesn't control God. God makes time, is Lord over time and uses time. Time doesn't use Him.) [9] *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that **any** (the beloved) should perish, but that all should reach repentance. [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 end comes when all of the beloved whom God is patiently and persistently pursuing has all been brought to Him who came for them. This is the second letter the beloved have received so let's look in the first letter he sent. I Peter 1:1 says [1] *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are **elect exiles** of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.* The next thing on the calendar is the second coming of Christ and that last event won't happen until all of the elect are brought to Him by faith and repentance and they are coming from every tribe and nation. So the Gospel has to be preached to all the nations. That's why we love missions here at Briarwood for it's part of "Peter" hastening the coming of the Lord.

Somewhere out there is the last nation to reach and somewhere, someday the last of the elect are going to say 'I believe.' On that day the trumpet sounds, the arch angel will shout, the angels will roar and the end now is enacted. There are no more redemptive events to take place. Jesus says 'Father **all** whom You have given Me, I lose not one, but I will raise them up **on** the last day' (John 6:39, therefore that day doesn't come until the day of redemption and conversion of all of His people happens. Now we don't have the stewardship of converting people but we do have the stewardship of the mission to take the Gospel to all the nations and the message of the Gospel to share with people personally with a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. When all His elect have heard we will be ushered into glory and will see Him face to face on that day and what a glorious day it will be. This is a Gospel blessing that Jesus has secured and what a blessing it is! The end is at hand so go and make disciples.

The takeaway is the eminent return of Christ and the assurance of the consummation of all things in Christ and for Christ is a Gospel blessing that calls us to perseverance in suffering and urgency in mission fulfillment and message proclamation. As we suffer it won't be long. This Gospel blessings gives me perseverance in suffering as we're maligned, mocked, marginalized and even martyred. Romans 8:18 says [18] *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* Until that Day we will embrace the mission and the message of the glory and majesty of Christ our Lord.

I want to ask you to pray for me and I'm going to pray for you that you at a general level will do what I'm supposed to do at a special level. I've become convinced in studying this text that the majesty and glory of what Christ did at the First Advent, where He didn't come to bring judgment but came to bear our judgment that the church has freshly grasped that but we're not preaching the second coming. We need a revival and awakening of not only sharing and preaching the Gospel of the glory of the first coming but the realities of the second coming of a judgment, a heaven, and a hell. So pray for me for I repent of not preaching it enough. When I have come across it in the text I have been faithful to it but I'm going to start loading up on it.

I will pray that when you share with people the sobriety of the Gospel. I'm not talking about adding members to a church although when Christ gets a hold of someone's life they will come to His family but this is heaven and hell we're talking about. It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of a living God and you and I have the only message to deliver people from that sure Day which is the next event in the calendar of redemption. We share it while we're up on the mountain and in the valley of suffering, ready to give an account of the hope that is within us. I believe this is helped in people when it's found in the pulpit.

This is the reason for Paul's last words to Timothy in II Timothy 4:1-2 which says [1] *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead,*

and by his appearing and his kingdom: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. Timothy, every time you preach you ought to feel the eyelash of God upon you, the presence of God upon you, the footsteps of Jesus coming and the gavel of the judgment seat consigning men to one of two places, heaven or hell, for this may be your last sermon and you stand between them and that day. Preach the Word.

This is why Peter gives us this Gospel blessing. It is for encouragement for perseverance and exhortation in mission and message for proclamation. Come quickly Lord Jesus. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this Gospel blessing that has been added to all of those. I thank You that Peter has reminded us that we have been born again of the Word of God and the Spirit of God, we've been blessed by the blood of Jesus that has made us righteous, we have an inheritance that has been secured for us, we are secured by that inheritance, we're chosen, holy, a royal priesthood, priests to our God, a dwelling place of God, a temple of God and living stones. We have blessing after blessing and now we have another one. Stay the course for the end of all things is at hand and you can do all things through His strength. He is with you and is coming for you. Jesus thank You for this glorious assurance, Gospel blessing and until that Day may we every day, everywhere evangelize everybody and lead them to follow Christ. Take a few moments in silent prayer. Is the Holy Spirit speaking to you to come to this Jesus before that Day? If you haven't come yet today is the day of salvation. The end is at hand. Come today! I plead with you! Forget all the insurance policies you have for there is that assurance relationship you can have with Jesus. He's coming but He first came for you. You come to Him. Jesus for those who know You, send us to the nations to sow the Gospel over the entire field and You bear the fruit to Your glory for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Gospel Blessing #14

The End of all things is at Hand!

- I. Why?
- II. What?
- III. When?

Life Takeaway

The imminent Return of Christ and the assurance of the consummation of all things in Christ and for Christ is a Gospel Blessing that calls us to perseverance in suffering and urgency in mission fulfillment and message proclamation.