



THE DAY OF ETERNITY 2 PETER 3:11–18

Open to 2 Peter 3. Story about forgetting and not being prepared.

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be... The clear implications here is that the end in view—the reality that these things will be dissolved in the future—should dramatically affect how we live and the kind of people we are in the present. But before we discuss those implications, I want to make sure we're all on the same page about the future reality that Peter is referring to. What's all this dissolving about? Because it's the ground of the entire argument he's making about how we are to live. And if you were with us last week, you know that Peter is continuing his thought from verse 10, which tell us what he's referring to—and that is, **in one phrase: the Day of the Lord.** "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." And he continues this description in vs. when he refers to 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God—another verse that teaches that Jesus is God—because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Alright, so in a nutshell—Jesus is coming and with him a new creation in which everything vile has been destroyed and where righteousness makes it's forever home. And I'd like to pause here and press a little deeper into this reality not only because it's the grounds of Peter's argument but because it's one of the biggest emphases in the NT. "Of the 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are more than 300 references to the Lord's return—one out of every thirty verses. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven New Testament books refer to this great event." (George Sweeting, former president Moody Bible) This is not some, peripheral doctrine, it is central to the hope we have as Christians. And specifically, I want us to see 4 characteristics of the Day of the Lord that are really important if we're going to get our head around this thing. The Lord's coming and the new creation...

First, it will be sudden. If you look at that phrase "Day of God" in vs. 12, it's the same thing as the day of the Lord in vs 10 where Peter says Jesus will come like a thief—totally unpredictable. Jesus himself said, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." (Mt. 24:36) Suffice to say, you don't know. And for that reason, you and I need to stay ready. Do you believe that Jesus is coming today?" If they replied in the negative, he would say, "Then you had better be ready, for He is coming at an hour when you think not! (McCheyne on occasion) He was probably socially awkward. We stay ready. We're going to talk about what that looks like, but it's important that you will not see it coming—anyone who says they know is claiming to know more than Jesus himself.

Second, it will be final. The end of history as we know it. Now some are going to disagree with me here, but it seems that what Peter is saying, starting in vs. 9 is that Jesus hasn't come yet, because he's waiting for his children to come into the fold—to repent—and when all the saving is done, Christ returns and makes all things new. Vs. 10 when will the heavens pass away with a roar? On the day the Lord comes like a thief. Vs. 12 when will the heavens be set on fire—when the day of God comes.

Third, it will be physical. You might be surprised to learn that NT actually talks very little about heaven. It talks much more about the new creation—the new heavens and new earth that Peter references here. Scholars look at the language here and debate about whether God the fire indicates a brand new creation (i.e., starting from scratch) or a renewed creation. But when scholars look at this word “earth” as in new earth, everyone agrees it’s physical. And this is so underemphasized. “Heaven’s not my home, I’m just passing through.” Absent in body is to be present with the Lord. But please understand you are not destined for ethereal existence floating around “up there.” One of the primary reasons Jesus rose from the dead physically is to secure your physical bodily resurrection—so that you could put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53). Which means that you have an embodied future with an embodied Jesus on a physical perfected new creation... which then leads to characteristic number 4...

Fourth, it will be forever. I love a good sentence. Read this in a book: When you read Genesis 1-2, you realize that God is creating a place where He intends to dwell forever. That is delayed by man’s sin, but never abandoned. He dwells with his people by coming down in the tabernacle, and later the temple. Coming down in his son. Coming down in the Spirit to indwell us, but friends there is coming a day where the God of the heavens will make his home on earth as he always intended to. The goal toward which all of redemptive is heading is not us going there, but God coming here. Rev. 21:2-3. This is our future! Peter says in vs. 13 it’s what we’re promised. This is why we have hope! **“To be in resurrected bodies on a resurrected Earth in resurrected friendships, enjoying a resurrected culture with the resurrected Jesus—now that will be the ultimate party! Everybody will be who God made them to be—and none of us will ever suffer or die again. As a Christian, the day I die will be the best day I’ve ever lived. But it won’t be the best day I ever will live. Resurrection day will be far better. And the first day on the New Earth—that will be one big step for mankind, one giant leap for God’s glory.”** (Alcorn)

And in light of that giant leap for God’s glory on the day he dwells with man fully, finally, and forever, we’re forced to ask Peter’s question in vs. 11, what kind of people ought we to be? **Pray.**

Holy People

Vss. 11 and 14 makes this clear, **“what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** and just in case we missed it, he says it again in vs **“14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.”** I love that phrase found, “by him”. He’s not delegating this to anyone. It’s not a staff member, it’s not an angel—Christ *himself* is coming to find me. And it makes sense in light of Christ’s coming for us, that Peter would say we need to be ready to be found; Are we being diligent to be found without spot or blemish, and at peace. This language of without spot or blemish—not perfection, but godliness. A life that demonstrates your desire to look like him, when you’re found by him. **A.J. Gordon (Gordon-Conwell) Story children’s white dresses. Anticipation fuels dedication.** And as we anticipate his coming—as we anticipate the new earth he’s coming to establish—it’s only appropriate to cultivate a life reflects the righteousness of our rescuer.

And not only is it appropriate, it’s a requirement. **“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”** Heb. 12:14 Like personal holiness is a requirement to see Christ. This is why we take personal holiness seriously. It is not legalism to emphasize the necessity of righteous living. It becomes legalism when you insist that righteous living is the basis for God’s acceptance of you; that holiness is pre-requisite to salvation. And it’s not. Particularly if you’re new to Christianity, you’ll notice Peter says we should be diligent to be found “at peace”. I take that to be at peace with the Lord. And Paul couldn’t be more clear, **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (Rom. 5:1)

if you're counting on being at peace with God due to your godliness and moral exertion—you won't be at peace with the Lord when he comes. And as those saved—rescued—by faith, we cultivate the righteousness of the rescuer who's coming to find us! In light of his coming, we ought to be holy people. Second, we are to be watching people.

Watching People

Magic misdirection—sin and Satan cause us look the other way. And Peter warns us about that right here. You may or may not have noticed how Peter repeats the same participle 3 times in 3 sentences “12 *waiting* for and hastening the coming of the day of God, ... 13 we are *waiting* for new heavens and a new earth... 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are *waiting* for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. Now this word *waiting* is the Greek word for watching or expecting which is what just about every other translation renders it. And the distinction here is important. Men returning from sea, “Honey I was waiting for you, yes but the other wives were watching for them.” And then they had a domestic dispute. This is active, expectant waiting. Not passive boring like waiting at the DMV, like anticipation a bride and groom have of seeing each other on their wedding day. So, for many there is no emotional yearning for the return of Jesus. The best hope they know is a kind of intellectual, theological hope. But an intellectual knowledge of what the New Testament teaches about the return of Christ is surely a poor substitute for a love-inflamed desire to look on His face!... (Tozer) to often describes me. I want to be like the Scottish hymn writer Horatius Bonar who before bed each night looked out of the window and said, “Lord, perhaps tonight” and when he rose, “Lord perhaps today.” We need to be watching; living in a constant posture of readiness for the sound of the trumpet.

And not only that, Peter adds an astonishing comment—we're to be hastening the coming of the day of God! This word hastening—σπεύδω—it means hurry (only others uses in Luke-Acts) same word used of wisemen hurrying to find Jesus in the manger (Lk. 2:16), and Zacchaeus hurrying down the tree (Lk 19:5). And at face value, Peter seems to be teaching that we can speed up Christ's return. And you have to believe Jesus words in his head, “Thy kingdom come.” And as soon as we're amazed by that, we're perplexed because we already heard Jesus say that the Father knows when Christ is returning. Like is Peter suggesting human action somehow determines divine sovereignty? Schreiner, “Peter clearly teaches that believers can advance or hasten the arrival of God's day by living godly lives. We think here of the prayer, “Your Kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). Surely the idea is that our prayer has some impact on when the Kingdom arrives... [but] God's sovereignty, is not threatened since God himself foreknows what his people will do. Indeed, he even foreordains what we will do. Nevertheless, God's sovereignty over history must never cancel out the call to live godly lives and the teaching that our prayers and godliness can speed his coming. We must not fall prey to rationalism that either squeezes out divine sovereignty or ignores human possibility. Both of these must be held in tension, and here the accent falls on what human beings do to hasten the day of God. God uses means to accomplish his purposes.” Flesh that our in small groups... In light of Christ's coming, we ought to be a holy people, a watching people, and third.

Careful People

In verse 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation—we saw last week that Jesus isn't slow in his return, he's patient waiting for all his sheep to come into the fold—so he reminds them and says this, as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. Now, we learn three things here. First, apparently false teachers were appealing to Paul to support their teachings—Peter is saying, “No, Paul and I are teaching the same thing—Jesus isn't slow, he's patient.”

If you believe he's not coming, you'll be carried away. That phrase means, "fall away" as in depart from the faith. You don't believe Jesus isn't returning—you don't belong to him. Second, look at the language in vs. 16. Peter says the false teachers are twisting Paul's teaching, like they do the other Scriptures. Peter's classifying Paul's letters as Scripture. When Peter's audience heard "Scriptures" they would think OT. Peter is saying that Paul is on the same level as Moses. Like when you read "In the beginning..." Peter wants them and us to know that when you read Paul's letters, it's just as authoritative. And finally, I love that Peter says what we all know—that Paul can be hard to understand. Isn't this great. Like, Peter read Paul and said, "Huh? I was with Jesus and I don't get it." It's why folks don't read the Bible! It's hard. Don't just do a devotional—if we don't read Scripture, we'll be vulnerable to the very error he's warning against—believing what someone else says Paul says. It's not Scripture. This is where we have to really careful—a careful people. Can't have a knowledge of Jesus that is second hand. Study Bible. Curriculum. It's how we guard against having a distorted knowledge of Christ but it's one of the primary ways we approach Peter's final exhortation in vs. 18. In light of Christ's return, we ought to be holy people, watching people, careful people, and finally...

Growing People

Scripture intake is one of the primary ways that we grow. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Doug Moo says, "If we are to find a single, "key verse" for all 2 Peter, this would probably be it." This is what Peter has been helping them and towards all along. And we usually think of grace as something we have or don't, but here Peter presents it as something we grow in. And I take him to mean that that we are to constantly to be pressing into appropriating the grace of the Gospel to our lives as we know Christ more and more intimately. Old people and a smart phone—call and text only. Need to grow into that. GPS? Alarm? Shop? Video Chat? Ok...Cast to TV? Remote Start? Operate the lights in your house? Apps that will identify constellations through your camera and apps that will make sure your pictures are level? In a similar way to call/text, the resources we have in the grace and knowledge of Christ are tragically underutilized. Wasting the resource you have. Like we start with an understanding of grace that frees me from sins penalty. Where grace is little more than forgiveness. Call and text—but growing in grace means know how does grace empower me to address shame? How does an increasing knowledge of Christ, free me from living for people's approval. How does grace address low self-worth? Guilt? How does knowledge of Christ help me fight my love affair I have with my career? Where does the grace of Gospel intersect with anxiety? Anger? Grace empower me to not respond harshly to my spouse or kids. Scripture and community and prayer and spiritual discipline help us live into the privileges that we have.

And it's worth pointing out that growth doesn't just happen. There are tons of folks who will arrive in heaven as spiritual infants. Growth doesn't just happened for everyone automatically, Peter wouldn't command it. This requires intentionality. In fact, in vs. 14 he told us to be diligent to be found without spot or blemish. Growing in grace—requires diligence, intentionality, effort. Which means there's not room for casual Christianity. If Christ's isn't who. If he is—and it could be today—it affects everything. Ur whole lives preparing for the king to come; preparing to be found by him. Would you prepare for a guest? We have no problem, sweeping the floor and taking out the trash to prepare for a coming guest, but seem hard pressed to pray, study the word, and share the Gospel for a coming king. So let's press on, and exert ourselves, let's spiritually sweat growing into the grace that is ours, preparing to see our bridegroom face to face, and in so doing might our lives lives proclaim with Peter To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.