

LIVING ON EARTH WITH A DIVINE NATURE - Part sixteen

Studies in 2 Peter - Sunday, June 9th, 2019 - Teaching #2138

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket

THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME LIKE A THIEF

2 Peter 3:10-13 - “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.[11] Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, [12] 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! [13] But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

When you study this whole letter in sequence the **balance** in Peter’s teaching shines more brightly. In **verses 8 and 9** he writes to fortify the patience of the saints with regard to the delay of the coming of Jesus - “**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. [9] 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.”**

But for every **ten believers** who are impatient about the Second Coming of Jesus, there are **hundreds of believers** who rarely consider it. That’s where the verses from our text come into play - **2 Peter 3:11-12** - “**Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, [12] 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!**”

When it comes to our response to the truth of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, both **impatience** (“**Where is the promise of His coming?**”) and **indifference** (“**We have all sorts of time. Eat, drink and be merry!**”) will lead to serious problems. That’s why Peter addresses them each in turn in his letter. In today’s text, he confronts **indifference** to the coming Day of the Lord.

First, Peter deals with the **unexpected fact** of the Second Coming (**10**). Then he offers **three responses** to it (**11-13**).

1) **THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME SUDDENLY, UNEXPECTEDLY, AND WILL BE A CATAclysmic EVENT**

2 Peter 3:10 - “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.”

Peter didn’t just make up this idea about the Day of the Lord taking place like a thief coming in the night. He got this idea from Jesus Himself:

Matthew 24:42-44 - “Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. [43] But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

That last phrase is striking - “**....at an hour you do not expect.**” This is strange because in other places Jesus clearly teaches we can look at the signs and be aware that His coming is near. So how can he now say He’s coming at an **unexpected** time?

It’s not that we’re not given signs. We **should** expect the time of His coming. No. Jesus means He will return to a world **preoccupied** and **distracted**. People will have **lost interest**. Most will be **uncaring**.

Remember, Peter is writing these words to **encourage readiness** for the Day of the Lord. It’s not enough just to **want to be ready**. We have to **be ready**. And the main point in Peter’s words is this: **You can’t prepare for the Day of the Lord at the last minute**. It’s a call to **carefulness and alertness**. You will always think you have more time. You and I will always put off what needs to be done now unless we remember that **this is the only time we have for preparation for the Day of the Lord!**

We’ve heard the phrase so often it doesn’t sound strange or shocking anymore, but it is. Why would the coming of

our blessed Lord be likened to the break-in of a **thief**. Jesus is holy and thieves are anything but. And the term is so carefully chosen to make the point that something is **taken from us** when Jesus comes. That's what a thief **does**. He takes something away that you had up to that point.

Peter says there's a way in which that's what the coming of Jesus will do. Something is taken from us that we had up to that point. It's something very precious and something we take for granted as perpetually **belonging** to us.

Jesus comes like a thief in that He takes our **opportunity to ready ourselves for His coming**. This thief takes something more valuable than gold or diamonds. And the event will happen **so suddenly** there won't be time for last minute confessions and refinements. You and I won't get that chance. When you're sound asleep, and the thief comes in and takes all the silverware, it's too late to get up and set the alarm. **You have to do that before the thief comes.**

So Peter's message to churches like ours and people like I is simply this - **Don's spend any day this coming week not getting ready for the Lord's cataclysmic return.** Preparedness is a life-style. It's a moment by moment getting ready. There is no last minute getting ready. Be ready instantly and be ready always. I know it's bad English, but never be **not** ready for the Day of the Lord.

This is a readiness that is hard to put into simple words. We all know people who **aren't** ready. Why aren't they? Usually it's because they make day by day decisions based on the needs they discern **at** those moments.

But people who are constantly preparing for the coming of Jesus don't live life like that at all. They make **present** decisions based on **future** events. They make every decision based on its impact on their joy or shame at that future moment when Jesus returns - **1 John 2:28** - "**And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.**"

This is John's way of reminding me many of the decisions I make now that seem perfected to my present priorities will prove to be eternally foolish. So look at life from the eternal perspective **now**.

Then Peter says something else about the event of the Second Coming itself. Not only will the event be **sudden** and **unexpected**, it will **destroy the things of this world as we know it: 2 Peter 3:10** - "**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.**"

In fact, Peter actually says we will all hear, with our own ears, the sound of everything around us being burned up. There will be a loud roar. But not the kind of roar that's constantly appearing in new worship songs. It will be the kind of noise you hear when standing close to a huge bon fire. Not only will there be the sound of the trumpet. There will be the roar of this present world being consumed.

Peter is not just saying these things for dramatic effect. He's not just trying to scare these churches. His concern is much more practical and down to earth. There is a kind of thinking that leads Christians into continuing in their own materialistic, sense fulfilling, culturally value driven lifestyles. And Peter addresses their mind-set head on. Any kind of thinking that places your attention more on the material things of this world is setting your soul on the things that will be burned up with a roar when Jesus returns.

Peter says when the Day of the Lord comes, **life will be stripped down to its essentials**. We won't have anything else to hide behind or cling to for security. The actual place of the Lord Jesus in our lives will be exposed because everything else will be stripped away. There will be no distractions to this final issue. There will be no excuses.

So that is the event Peter calls the Day of the Lord. He says it will be sudden and unexpected. And he says it will destroy everything else in its wake. And Peter says we must never forget that the Day of the Lord is actually going to come - "**The Day of the Lord will come...**" (3:10). This fact is unavoidable. It will come.

2) KNOWING THE COMING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD, THERE ARE THREE THINGS EVERY CAREFUL CHRISTIAN SHOULD DO

2 Peter 3:11-14 - "**....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! [13] But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. [14] Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.**"

We must be **“waiting”** for the Day of the Lord. There’s attention and anticipation in that word. Then we must be **preparing** for the Day of the Lord. And we must be **hastening** the Day of the Lord. We’ll look at **one** of these today, and **two** next Sunday:

- a) ***We must be waiting for the Day of the Lord - 2 Peter 3:12-13 - “....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! [13] But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”***

Three times in three verses Peter says we are to be **waiting for the Day of the Lord (12-14)**. Our sights are to be constantly set on this event. It hasn’t happened yet. But we’re to be anticipating it is coming. It’s the exact opposite of being distracted or sleepy about it. We’re to be nourishing high **expectation** around the Day of the Lord.

Let me show you another place where this idea of **waiting for something with expectation** is used in the Scriptures. You will find a beautiful and familiar example in the story of the healing of the lame man in **Acts chapter three**:

Acts 3:3-5 - “Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. [4] And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” [5] And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.”

“Expecting to receive something from them.” That’s the idea Peter has in his mind when he says we are to be **looking for the Day of the Lord**. The issue is one of **concentrated attention and desire**. What do you pin your hopes to in this world? What do you find yourself day-dreaming about? What could happen in the future that would satisfy and thrill you more than anything else? What do you look at as the solution to this world’s problems? What kind of thoughts make you the most happy.

There are many wonderful accomplishments in science and education. The environmentalists are making great gains in protecting the earth. Modern medicine has lengthened all of our life spans. We are becoming more prosperous than most humans who have ever lived on the earth. New peace treaties are signed. Trade deals excite nations.

But Peter says, for all that, this world is on its way out. You and I are not made to last forever in this world. And this world isn’t made for eternity either. At the very center of the Christian’s convictions is the position that this world, no matter what mankind may do, is doomed. History is coming to a close. It will end with the Day of the Lord.

Three times in three verses we are told to be **waiting for God’s final plan for this world in which we live**. Peter says Christians must **wait for that day** like children wait for Christmas or an expectant mother waits for her new baby.

What Peter means is Christians are **consumed** by their fixation on this reality. **Everything else that fills their day seems flat and boring without this**. Of course, Christians **do** lots of other things. They drive cars, wash clothes, work in offices, invest money. But Christians don’t place their **hope** in anything else. They are continually thinking about the coming of Jesus and the end of this age.

This is what gives us one of our greatest chances for a **visible witness** before this unfocused, randomly, distracted world. They should see in our love for Jesus - like a wife awaiting the return of her soldier husband from Iraq - a passionate, restless love for the one we hold dearest. Without this our words about Jesus will have a cold feel and an empty ring. And Peter says the blessed hope needs to be taken out of the moth balls.