

**THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME LIKE A THIEF (Part 2)**

**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.”

Last week, under our second point, we started examining the **three directives** Peter gives to the church regarding the coming of the Day of the Lord. We are told we must be **waiting** for it, we must **prepare** for it, and, strangely, we are actually told we must **hasten** it. Today we'll study the last two of these:

- b) ***We must be preparing for the Day of the Lord - 2 Peter 3:11 & 14*** - “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness....14.... Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.”

When Peter says we must be preparing for the Day of the Lord, he means something **more than** we must be trying to be better people. He isn't talking about morality at all. He's not just talking about being kinder or nicer or more honest. Atheists can desire to be better persons. No, **Peter is talking about behavior that is specifically prompted by a longing for Jesus - being ready when our Master comes.** So he's talking specifically about **righteousness rooted in, and motivated by, the cross of Jesus Christ.**

This is always the thrust of New Testament holiness. Christianity is different from mere morality in two important respects. Morality is man's attempt at self-betterment. And it has the value of making life on earth more peaceable and safe. But Christian righteousness is rooted in another world altogether. It is miles removed from mere moral reform or a compassionate political agenda.

We have to catch Peter's radical heart here. He is describing the outward actions of the life as they are formed and motivated by **anticipation** rather than **religious duty** or **personal reform**.

Think of the efforts put into the preparations for a wedding. Flowers for the table - the room readied - speeches planned - dresses picked out. But none of those efforts is rooted in itself. It's all the work of **anticipation**. None of the work and none of the expense has any meaning apart from anticipating the actual wedding.

Christian righteousness is birthed in **a personal love for Jesus that stems from the grace received through redemption.** Truly Christian behavior is rooted in the **Cross** and the **Second Coming**. It thrives by **looking back in thoughtful reliance to Calvary** and **forward in loving joy to the return of our Lord.**

Christian righteousness **looks forward to the Day of the Lord in preparation for the blessing and reward of Jesus.** Truly Christian behavior is motivated by **another kingdom**. It works hard here on earth. But it does so with an eye to heaven - **“Set your mind on things above.”** Self-motivated righteousness is what the Bible calls **“filthy rags.”** This is not because it has no benefit to **this world**, but because it has no **redemptive value in the kingdom of God.**

Peter is talking about **righteousness that is the result of Christians waiting for - preparing for - the Day of the Lord.**

The preparation Peter has in mind centers around two main areas. One has to do with our **affections**. And the other has to do with our **actions**. **God never measures my deeds apart from my motives - not ever.**

**First, Peter addresses the area of our affections, though you have to look carefully at the text to see it - 2 Peter 3:10-12** - “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!"

You just can't miss the repetition of the single idea that the material things of this world are all going to be **"burned up"** - or **"dissolved"** - when Jesus comes back. **And then Peter comes right out and asks the question he really wants to ask - "Since all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be...?"(11).**

You can't be truly preparing for the Day of the Lord, that day when all these material things of earth are going to be burned up, and live for the accumulation of material things at the same time. Either you're preparing for that day or you're living for the things of this world. But you just can't be doing both. And it makes no sense to anchor your destiny to stuff that's destined for destruction.

It's humbling to let this text speak for itself. Peter speaks of a danger we usually don't feel. But that's only because our hearts don't approach this subject from neutral. Unless I'm incredibly watchful the center of my personal affections will **shift from things eternal to things temporal**. And Peter says I need to fix that if I'm going to prepare for the Day of the Lord.

**Second, Peter addresses the area of our actions - 2 Peter 3:13-14 - "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."**

The text call me to remember something that seems almost unreal to my five senses. There's a day coming when only righteousness will endure. There is more coming than just the destruction of this present order of things. There is also the beautiful promise of the creation of **new heavens and a new earth**. And Peter says we are to be preparing for that realm.

These new creations will be very different from this present world. You can dwell in this present world as an unrighteous person. You can get along, for a limited time at least, while clinging to sin and disobedience to God in this present world. There is no **immediate** external pressure to become holy. You are free to do as you please without being turned to a pillar of salt. You can survive. At times you can even appear to thrive in a state of unrighteousness.

But Peter says all that will change with the coming of the Day of the Lord. Unrighteousness will not be allowed to enter the new heavens and the new earth. And Peter wants Christians to have their hearts so shifted in affection right now that they are perfectly **"at peace"** about this future reality - **2 Peter 3:14 - "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace."**

Think about this. My affection are to so have shifted already that I'm already untroubled by this transfer of the treasures of my heart. I'm already making that transition - right now.

When the Apostle John receives his vision of the new heavens and the new earth he is very careful to mark the boundaries of what is **inside** the city of God and what is **outside**. **The Bible seems more comfortable with these rather absolute divisions than we are:**

**Revelation 22:10-15 - "And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. [11] Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."[12] "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."[14] Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. [15] Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."**

So Peter says we must, first of all, be **waiting** for the coming of the Day of the Lord. Then he says we must be **preparing** for the Day of the Lord. We must **prepare our affections** by **learning to love things eternal more than things temporal** because temporal things are going to be burned up when Jesus comes. And we must prepare our lives by **holiness** because nothing unrighteous will be allowed inside that new kingdom.

You can see the logic in Peter's argument. How can I say I am preparing for the Day of the Lord - preparing for that day when everything unrighteous will be forever shut out of the kingdom Jesus will be ushering in - if I cling to my sin? How can I say I am preparing my life for that kingdom where only holiness can enter while I persist in sinful disobedience to my Lord?

Remember what we studied in the first point of this message. ***There will be no time to prepare when Jesus comes.*** Peter has told us that day will come ***“like a thief.”*** It will rob us of any future opportunities to repent and get our hearts ready. That the coming of Jesus will rob us of the freedom to ***ignore judgment, like it’s not going to come.*** No, Peter says we ***must all prepare now so we will be ready when the Day of the Lord comes.***

- c) **We must all *hasten* the coming of the Day of the Lord - 2 Peter 3:12 - “....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!”**

These are truly amazing words. Just as Father God, in His merciful patience, seems to ***delay*** the coming of Jesus and final judgement on this world (3:9), we are actually called upon to ***speed up*** that whole process as we purify our lives and reach out with the gospel to others.

Actually, we shouldn’t be surprised by these words. When you think about it, they are consistent with what Jesus Himself said: Matthew 24:14 - ***“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”***

***God is waiting for the unreached nations of the world to have the gospel presented to them.*** We can have a hand in speeding up the coming of the Day of the Lord by reaching the world - by busying ourselves - by sacrificing all reasonable time and energy and money to get the job done. ***This is what will usher in the coming of the Day of the Lord!***

How we need to hear the fresh voice of the Lord calling to us at this crucial time in history - ***“Get the gospel to the unreached people groups of the world. I’m not coming until that job is done!”*** The fact is there are still over 4 billion unreached people who have yet to have any meaningful exposure to the gospel.

Do you see how these closing exhortations fit together? In preparing for the Day of the Lord my affections must be loosed from the temporal things of this world. I have to remember that they are all going to be burned up. One day after the Day of the Lord there will be no good earthly investments. You will never think about them again. ***“Dissolved”*** is the word Peter uses to describe their future.

I know these are hard words. Usually, we come to the Bible for ***comfort*** or ***direction***. We don’t usually look to have our ***world-view re-assembled***. But that’s what Peter’s doing here. He’s reminding me about the Day of the Lord, but not just so I can learn a ***doctrine***. He’s calling me to remember that a \$100,000 ***income*** doesn’t require a \$100,000 ***life-style***. He’s calling me to examine my consumption of material goods and find to make striking visible to the watching world priorities that can only be reasonably explained by a ***supernatural desire to reach the unreached and hasten the day of the Lord.***

Let me press this just a bit more firmly. Suppose you were a Canadian, perhaps on some specific government assignment, living in France for three months. You’re working and renting a room. And just suppose you’ve been told you can’t bring anything whatsoever with you on the plane when you fly home. All you can do is earn your money and have it deposited in your account back in Canada.

Now, here’s my question. Would you decorate your one room apartment with the most expensive paintings and Persian rugs and priceless antiques? Or would you release only the funds absolutely essential on living expenses so you could forward your earnings home so they’d be waiting for you when you got back?

I think we all know the answer. And I think we all know where this is going. Every single day the person whose treasure is here on earth is ***moving away from his treasure***. And everyday the person laying up treasure in heaven is moving ***toward his treasure***. Jesus said it was just that simple.

Hasten the Day of the Lord. The Holy Spirit draws all of us to ***use*** rather than just ***spend*** our resources. They can be put into the one investment that will survive the flames of the Day of the Lord. You can lay up treasure in heaven as you invest them in building God’s Kingdom and reaching the lost.