

“THE DAY OF THE LORD!”

11/15/09

2 Peter 3:1-15

ILLUSTRATION: I heard about a funny conversation between an old farmer in the country and the new preacher:

“Do you belong to the Christian family?” asked the minister.

“Now, they live two farms down,” replied the farmer.

“No, no, I mean are you lost?”

“Lost? Why, I’ve lived here thirty years.”

“I mean are you ready for the Judgment Day?”

“When is it?” asked the farmer.

“Well, it could be today or tomorrow.”

“Well,” said the farmer, “when you find out for sure when it is, you let me know. My wife will probably want to go both days.”

INTRO: vs. 1-2

Of all the passages which deal with the Second Coming of Christ, this is a key passage. Peter deals with much of the modern thought that we deal with today. It is a very clear passage dealing with the idea that the NT Christians no longer believed in the Second Coming of Christ. Because Christ had not returned by that time the prevailing teaching was that He wasn’t going to return. It was all a fable. It was a story made up to fool the church into following Christ.

Peter begins by reminding his dear friends that this is the second letter that he has written to them. The NLT doesn’t do the word justice since it means ‘beloved’ more than merely friends. They are his ‘beloved friends.’ The word means very close, dear, or trusted friends. These people are more than just acquaintances, they are long time friends.

His purpose in writing his dear friends is to stimulate their thinking. The Greek word is ‘to rouse their pure mind.’ The word pure means ‘someone who has filtered out the chaff as in sifting wheat.’ In other words, their minds are not cluttered with unnecessary stuff which would affect their decision making. The NLT is good: ‘wholesome thinking.’ They are a people who don’t engage in unwholesome thinking. They are wholesome thinkers.

The second thing that Peter says is that he wants to refresh their memory. He wants to remind them of what the prophets said and what Jesus said about His return.

Notice, he didn't say that he wanted to inform them, but to remind them. There are times in our life when we need to be reminded of what God has done for us. We tend to forget all the many blessings upon our lives.

“The Day of the Lord” is a very common OT phrase to describe the end times. The purpose of this letter by Peter is to reassure his friends that because there is a delay in the return of Jesus it doesn't mean that He isn't going to return. Evidently there was a group of people teaching time-tables and calendars about the return of Jesus which in their mind justified that His return wasn't going to happen.

1. THE **REACTION** OF THE WORLD TO THE LORD'S COMING. (vs. 3-7)

In order to understand what was happening, we have to understand what Peter meant by 'last days.' The 'last days' are the days that come between the first coming of the Messiah and the Second Coming of the Messiah. So by 'last days' Peter is referring to all of the days that have occurred since the Resurrection of Jesus and the day He will return again.

“Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires.”

“They will say, ‘What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created?’”

A. The World Isn't **Expecting** His Return.

The word 'scoffer' merely means: false teacher. In other words, there were people teaching something other than the truth about the return of Jesus. Isn't that what still goes on in the world today? The world is not expecting Jesus to return. If they did believe they would not live as they live today. Their excuse is that life goes on just as it does every day and no one expects anything different. Show me where the world has changed since Christ came was their argument. Nothing is different.

B. The Lord **Explains** Why They Don't Get It.

“They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water.”

“The he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood.”

“And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.”

The reason they don't get it is that they aren't aware of what has been happening. It's like Peter is saying that they are blind to what has really been happening in the world. They forgot that God made everything by speaking it into existence. He spoke and it was. He spoke and there was water. He spoke again and there was the earth surrounded now by water.

God speaks and things happen. Think about it. When we speak things happen. We speak words of encouragement, joy, hope, thanksgiving, love, or we speak words of discouragement, sadness, despair, selfishness, or hate. God spoke and the earth happened. We speak and emotions happen.

And he reminded Peter that there was a day when God destroyed the world by water and there is coming a day when He will destroy the world by fire. A 'day of judgment' is coming when the ungodly will be sent to a very hot place. Peter does not tell us when this will happen, but says that it will happen and people are forgetting that judgment will take place.

ILLUSTRATION: Paul Harvey tells the story of Gary Tindle, who was in a California court room charged with robbery. He asked the Judge for permission to go to the bathroom and permission was given. While in the bathroom he climbed up onto the plumbing and opened a panel in the ceiling.

He climbed up into the crawl space and headed south. He had gone some 30 feet when the dropped ceiling panels broke and he dropped onto the floor below. He dropped right in front of the chair he had occupied in the court room.

Judge Rodriguez said: "Mr. Tindle, I'm glad you dropped in for your judgment we are about to give you. Your actions have determined your sentence."

Peter wants to remind us that everything that God has done is preparing for the Day of Judgment. It will happen.

2. THE *REASON* THE LORD DELAYS HIS COMING. (vs. 8-9)

Peter also reminds them of the reason why the Lord delays His coming. He gives us two specific reasons why the Lord has not returned.

A. His *Patience* Isn't Limited. (v. 8)

"But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day."

Time is not the same to God as it is to man. When we think of how long the earth has been in existence we tend to feel insignificant in comparison. It is easy to become discouraged. It is easy to overlook

God's time perspective. We have to be very careful that we do not allow the skepticism of the scoffers to discourage us while we are serving the Lord. You see, God's patience is not limited to man's time tables. He isn't limited by what other people say. He isn't limited by what people think.

B. His *Purpose* is Limited. (v. 9)

“The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think.”

“No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”

Now we see into the heart of God. His return has nothing to do with His inability or indifference, but with His love. He is waiting for some to make up their mind. He is waiting for you to make a decision. Some of you have been putting it off for a long time and God is patient. He doesn't want you to miss what He has planned for your life.

God's timetable is influenced by His love and patience. That means that every day is an opportunity for you to become a Christian. He doesn't lose patience with you. He isn't mad at you. He isn't about to throw you to the dogs. He loves you and wants you to become a believer. But, if you don't, there are consequences to failing to repent.

3. THE *RESULT* OF THE LORD'S COMING. (vs. 10-11a)

“But the day of the Lord will come...”

It is as if Peter changes his tone from hope to certainty. The word for 'will' means that it will happen. It is certain. It is sure. Don't misunderstand God's love, grace, justice, and patience. The day when He returns will happen. It is inevitable.

To the Jews there were two ages. One is this present age in which we now live. The second is the age to come, which was often referred to as: The Golden Age. The question is: how do you turn the present age into the age to come? There is only one way and that is by direct action and intervention by God. That action and intervention is called: The Day of the Lord. It is that day when Jesus Christ will return and this present age will be changed into The Golden Age or what we call heaven. And there are some things about this change that Peter outlines for us.

A. His Return Will be *Sudden*. (v. 10a)

“...as unexpectedly as a thief.”

The return of Jesus Christ will be suddenly and without warning. Just as Matthew's Gospel says: "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself." (Mat. 24:36)

Now most thieves do not announce their arrival. They don't come to your house the night before and tell you that they are planning on arriving at 2:00 the next night so be prepared. And that's why so many people put off making that decision to become a Christian. They have plenty of time. They can do what they want and someday before they die they will accept Christ as Savior.

You have just about as much chance of making it to heaven that way as you would decide to bet your future financial savings on the Lottery. The first reason it doesn't work is that only 6% of people accept Christ once they have reached the age of 18. And how do you know when Christ is going to return? It could happen right now and it would be too late.

B. His Return Will be *Surreal*. (v. 10b)

"Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise..."

The word for 'terrible noise' is "crackling roar." This word is used only here in the NT. The word literally means: "the noise made by something passing swiftly through the air." How many of you have witnessed a sonic boom? Back in the 50's & 60's we would often experience a sonic boom over KY. You hear a fighter jet going at a high rate of speed at an extremely high altitude and you would witness this incredibly loud percussion boom. That's the word used in Peter. He says that when the Lord Jesus returns there will be a very loud sonic boom because Jesus and His angels are going to be moving at a very high rate of speed.

Could that answer how so many are going to witness His return? He is going to circle the earth many times at a high rate of speed. You will witness Jesus and His angels inviting the redeemed to join him in a celebration fly over around the earth. I have always wanted to fly in a military jet, but those things will be nothing to what you will experience with Jesus. You talk about surreal. It will not feel like anything you have felt before.

C. His Return Will be *Sensational*. (v. 10c-11a)

"...and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this..."

His return will be sudden, surreal, and sensational. There has been a lot of speculation as what Peter meant by the word elements. Traditionally, the word was used in other areas of the NT to mean air, earth, fire, and water. Many scholars believe that Peter is referring to the three realms: the heavens, the heavenly bodies, and the earth. In other words, when Jesus returns, the heavens, the stars and planets, and the earth will all be destroyed by fire. There are three points made by Peter:

- a. Things, Planets, and the Earthly Things Will **Disappear** by Fire.
- b. People on the Earth Will **Deserve** Judgment.
- c. Everything Will be **Destroyed**.

The obvious question is: If everything is going to be destroyed, what happens to Christians? Well, according to traditional Gospel teaching, Christians will be RAPTURED to be with the Lord before this destruction takes place. We will be taken away according to Paul in 2 Thess.

What does this teach us? It teaches that we need to be prepared for His coming because it will be sudden, surreal, and sensational. We should prepare by receiving Him as our Lord and Savior today. If you are not a Christian today and know for a fact that you will go to heaven with Jesus, then you need to receive Him as your Savior today!!!

4. THE **RESPONSE** OF HIS PEOPLE TO HIS COMING. (vs. 11b-15a)

What should Christians do pastor? I'm glad you asked. Peter now tells us what we should do to prepare for our Lord's coming. He gives us specific instructions of what we should do.

A. Our **Attitude** Until He Returns. (v. 11b)

“...what holy and godly lives you should live.”

Peter gives us two essential words that deal with attitude. The word 'holy' means "separation". The word godly means "worship or purity of heart." Both have to do with attitude. While we are anticipating the Lord's return, he says that we should have an attitude of worship and separating ourselves from anything that is not of God.

Peter is forming the statement in what almost a question. Since this is all going to happen we want to live godly and holy lives, don't we? Since this is going to happen we will want to live holy and godly lives, won't we?

ILLUSTRATION: In the early 1880's the Northeastern church was fueled by one revival after another revival and so the church grew very rapidly. Most of the new Christians knew little about the Bible, but became very interested in the Second Coming. Many began to speculate as to when Jesus would return. One such person was William Miller of New York. After his conversion he began to study the book of Daniel concluding in 1818 that Jesus would return in 1843-44.

A few years later he became a preacher and was very eloquent and sincere. His followers multiplied quickly. He announced that Jesus was going to return on October 22, 1844. The financial panic of 1839 had left the country wondering if the world was going to end so they began to publish Miller's prophetic predictions right along with the stock market listings. His teachings swept throughout New England.

On October 22, 1844 people gathered on mountaintops, churches, roofs waiting for the Lord's return. When it didn't happen many Christians gave up on their faith and turned from the Lord. The following year there were no revivals and the church rapidly lost membership.

The point. Jesus doesn't want us to worry about when He is going to return, instead, He wants us to concentrate on living a godly and holy life.

B. Our *Anticipation* For His Return. (vs. 12-14)

“Looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames.”

“But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.”

The reason we are anticipating the Lord's return is that we will experience a new heaven and a new earth. Since the old is to be destroyed He will give us a new heaven and new earth. If you take this literally then you believe exactly what it says. God is going to destroy this earth and heaven and will build a new one.

If you take this symbolically then you believe that the writer is talking about our hearts and that when we receive Him as Lord the old is passed away and the new is given to us. Our old nature is destroyed and our new nature is regenerated so we can live holy and godly lives. Either way, we are anticipating and eagerly awaiting His return.

C. Our *Action* Until He Returns. (v. 15a)

“And remember, the Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.”

Peter concludes that the Lord's patience gives us opportunity to share the Gospel with those who do not know. Instead of worrying about when He is going to return, we need to spend our time sharing the Good News because the Lord is being patient. The Lord doesn't need to be patient, but He is so we should take this time to share with others the Good News.

CONCLUSION:

During WWII a Glasgow professor named MacDonald and a Scottish chaplain was put in a prison camp. There was an American side and a British side separated by a wire fence. The German guards didn't know it, but the Americans had a small home made radio and were able to receive messages from the outside. The American MacDonald and his Scottish friend would sit back to back at the fence while MacDonald would share the news they had received the night before.

One day the news came over the radio that the German high command had surrendered and the war was over. The next day MacDonald shared the news with his friend who went into the barracks to share the news with all of the other prisoners.

The camp was transformed. Men were walking around singing, waving their arms, shouting and even laughing at the guard dogs. The Germans could not figure out what was happening. How can a prisoner in such awful conditions be that happy?

For three days this went on until the Germans got the news and fled in the night leaving the gates open for the prisoners to leave. For three days they had been free when others had no idea what it meant.

While we wait for our Lord's return we are free here and now. I know we live in some difficult times in our world, but Christ has set us free from the sin and guilt and stain of this world. We should begin living like it. While we are anticipating His return we should live holy and godly lives and share the Good News with others who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior. We don't have to live like we are in a prison camp, we are free and we should live like it.