

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #13

II Peter 3:10-13

Many of us have had the experience of realizing that there was no point further investing in something that wouldn't last. For example, not long ago someone was talking about all of the problems they were having with their vehicle. The essence of the discussion is why pour more money into something that is on its last leg? That same principle was exactly what Peter was after when he wrote these verses.

Peter wanted believers to realize that there is no point living your life according to the course of this world because this world isn't going to last. If we are going to spend our entire lives investing ourselves in this world, we are investing in the wrong thing.

The Apostle Peter wanted God's people to carefully study the Scriptures so they would have a true time perspective of Biblical prophecy. It is very clear from **II Peter 3:7** that God has set aside a day of destruction and judgment of ungodly men. Coming out of **verse 9**, God wanted His people to know that God's eschatological calendar is an evangelistic calendar. We know the reason why the Lord has not returned to this point and raptured His Church is because God is not willing that any of His beloved elect should perish but that all should come to repentance. However, God does not want us getting too comfortable here in this world, because this world will ultimately be burned up.

When we come to this section of II Peter we also learn that God's calendar is a creation calendar. God created the world which starts a future clock; He destroyed it once by flood and He intends to destroy the heavens and the earth by fire.

In fact, II Peter 3:7, 10 and 12 are the only places in the New Testament where God predicts the future destruction of the world by fire. In the previous wrath destruction it was by flood but in the final wrath destruction it will be by fire. What Peter is communicating here is this:

GOD WANTS HIS BELOVED FAMILY TO KNOW THAT THERE WILL EVENTUALLY COME A DAY OF HIS DESTRUCTIVE BURNING WRATH AGAINST THE UNGODLY WORLD AND UNGODLY PEOPLE; AND IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH, WE NEED TO BE HEAVENLY IN OUR CONDUCT AND NOT WORLDLY.

Verse 10 begins with the very important eschatological theme "the Day of the Lord." The term "Day of the Lord" occurs in twenty-three places in the Scripture: Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 18, 20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14, 14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; I Thessalonians 5:2; II Thessalonians 2:2; **II Peter 3:10**.

From these texts we may observe that this will not be a pleasant day. For example:

- 1) It is called a “day of reckoning.” Isaiah 2:12
- 2) It is a day of “destruction.” Isaiah 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15
- 3) It is called a day of “battle.” Ezekiel 13:5
- 4) It is called a day of “clouds” and doom for the nations. Ezekiel 30:3
- 5) It is called a day of “darkness” and “gloom.” Joel 2:1
- 6) It is called a day that is “great” and “awesome.” Joel 2:11, 31
- 7) It is a day when the sun will be dark and the moon will be turned into blood. Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20
- 8) It is called a day of “judgment” or “decision.” Joel 3:14
- 9) It is called a day of “darkness and not light.” Amos 5:18, 20
- 10) It is a judgment day for all nations and a payback for what they have done. Obadiah 15
- 11) It is called a day in which God will sacrifice many for His consecrated guests. Zephaniah 1:7
- 12) It is a great bitter day of war when God will pour out wrath. Zephaniah 1:14ff.
- 13) It is a day when God will deliver Israel and destroy her enemies. Zechariah 14:1
- 14) It is called a “great” and “terrible” day. Malachi 4:5
- 15) It is called a “great and glorious” day. Acts 2:20
- 16) It is called a day that will come “like a thief in the night.” I Thessalonians 5:2; **II Peter 3:10**
- 17) It is a day that is of no threat to the Grace Age believer. I Thessalonians 5:4; II Thessalonians 2:2
- 18) It is a day that will end with the burning up of the heavens and the earth. II Peter 3:10

The Day of the Lord has been a matter of great debate among the interpreters of Scripture.

- 1) Some say the Day of the Lord is a day that refers only to the Tribulation.
- 2) Some say that it refers to the actual day that Jesus Christ returns a second time to this earth to establish His Kingdom on this earth and all of the judgments connected with it.
- 3) Some say it is the period of time that starts with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and ultimately ends with the fire destruction of the heavens and the earth and the creation of a new heaven and new earth.
- 4) Some say it is the entire future program of God in which He openly intervenes in the affairs of men. This time that starts with the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation and ends with the creation of the new heaven and new earth in eternity. C. I. Scofield takes this position and we agree.

Dr. Charles Ryrie says, “It will begin unexpectedly at the beginning of the Tribulation (like a thief, I Thessalonians 5:2) and end at the conclusion of the Millennium with the destruction of the heavens and earth (Revelation 21:1)” (Ryrie Study Bible, NASV, p. 1988).

When God raptures His Church, it will kick off His final dispensational plan which will feature terrible wrath and end with the creation of the new heavens and new earth. So Peter says, in view of this, God’s people don’t want to live life like the people of this world, but with a heavenly and holy focus.

If we compare what is said in this context to Revelation 21:1-22:5, there is a definite fit. That part of Revelation speaks of a new heaven a new earth and new Jerusalem in which the first heaven and first earth has passed away.

Now this day of the Lord will have eight different features that are connected to the finale known as “The Day of the Lord”:

(Feature #1) - It will be a day that will come like a thief . **3:10a**

In **verse 7** the day that is referred to in connection to fire destroying the heavens and the earth is “the day of judgment of ungodly men.” **Judgment day will come upon ungodly people like a thief in the night. In other words, the Day of the Lord will kick off on an unexpected day at an unexpected time, not a day you would normally think or be able to calculate.** The Rapture of the Church and the beginning of the Tribulation will surprise everybody.

I have just recently been given some tracks which have been written by some religious eschatological nut-job from a radio station in the Schoolcraft area. He has gone on the radio and told everyone that he has calculated God’s judgment day which will be May 21, 2011. He has published a pamphlet, which he is distributing, that says it will be the day that “God will destroy the world because of the sins of mankind.” He also says that this will be the day of the Rapture and the Day of Judgment. He is warning everybody that this is the day. Assuming this guy actually knows Jesus Christ as his Savior, what he does not know is how to “rightly divide” Scripture. His dispensational, eschatological, and exegetical skills are nonexistent. He claims that the last day of the Church Age was May 21, 1988 and we are now in part of the twenty-three year period known as the great Tribulation. He doesn’t know what he is doing with Biblical prophecy and he does not understand the point Peter makes.

Peter did not want God’s people to set dates, but live godly lives in view of the future date. In fact, Jesus used this very image to stress this very point in Luke 12:37-40. The Apostle Paul did exactly the same thing in I Thessalonians 5:2-9.

Now this text states that when the Lord comes to start the judgment process, it will be “surprising and catastrophic: like a thief” (Kenneth O Gangel, *II Peter*, p. 876).

(Feature #2) - It will be a day in which the heavens will come to an end with a roar. **3:10b**

There are some very scary predictions made in Scripture about how God is eventually going to ferociously judge the heavens with cataclysmic judgments that will terrify all people in the world (Isaiah 34:4-5; Revelation 6:12-17).

The word “roar” (ροιζηδον) refers to a loud rushing sound, like the roaring of fire or roaring flames (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 398). The language indicates this this moment will be a very loud moment. One writer said the sound will be deafening unlike anything this world has ever heard before.

I want you to notice that the noun “heavens” (οὐρανοί) is plural. There are three heavens in Scripture: 1) The throne of God heaven; 2) The stellar heaven where the planets exist; 3) The atmospheric heaven where the birds fly. It is these last two God will destroy.

A couple of years ago, we went and visited NASA Space Center. At one point, NASA employed 400,000 people and spent billions of dollars a year to explore the heavens. I am not sure what exactly all of this space exploration is accomplishing, but what I do know is that one day God will burn up the very heavens that have been explored by NASA since 1914. A life time of space achievement will be gone in a moment.

(Feature #3) - It will be a day when the elements will be destroyed. **3:10c**

The word “elements” (στοιχεῖα) is one that refers to a series of elementary things that are in a row, like an alphabet (Smith, p. 418). We believe with many Bible interpreters that this refers to atomic components that make up the chemical, physical, and dynamic property of the atmosphere. Atomic physics says that “all electrically charged bodies in nature carry a charge of a single electron.”

What is basically stated here is that God will cause all electrical atomic charges to burn. In fact, the words “intense heat” (καυσοῶ) is a middle voice participle which means this will burn with great heat in and of itself (Smith, p. 242). God will just permit all atomic energy to explode at the same time. Man isn’t going to set off an atomic bomb to burn things to bits; God will do it.

What is amazing about this is that Peter was a fisherman who knew nothing about atomic physics. But God is the One who created atomic things and He directed Peter to write inspired, prophetic truth concerning what God would do with the atomic world.

(Feature #4) - It will be a day when the earth and its works will be burned up. **3:10d-11**

The earth will be burned up and all of the men who did the works will be burned up with it. Think about this; God will burn up all civilizations and all things in the world that people thought were so great. God will burn up everything. People work their lifetime to try to leave something to this world or achieve something in this world, and the fact is all the works of men will be burned up. **One day the world will see what the men of this world really amounted to, nothing but a bunch of ashes.**

Peter’s point here to the beloved is don’t get too hunkered down here in this world. You aren’t going to be here long and this world and everything in it will be completely destroyed. The song is so true: “Only one life will soon be past; only what is done for Christ will last.”

Peter says in verse 11, look in view of the fact that God is going to destroy everything connected to this world and universe, we need to be holy in conduct and godly in life. Holy conduct refers to how we live our lives and behave externally. The noun “conduct” and the adjective “holy” are plural. What this means is we are to be people who set ourselves apart in various ways. We are not to be legalists who live under the law, but we are to make many adjustments in our lives to bring ourselves under the authority of the Word of God.

The noun “godly” is also plural which means we are to have an internal reverence and piety towards God. In view of what God is going to do to this world and universe, we are to continually demonstrate in many ways that we are godly and reverent people. We had better live our lives with a reverent fear of God.

Some Christians are making a big mistake. They think their job is to spend their lives criticizing everybody else. Listen up - man, woman, boy, girl; your job is to go to work on yourself in light of Scripture. Our job is to be holy and godly and reverent; and in view of the fact that we have a relationship with the Sovereign God who will judge everything, I suggest that we take our responsibility very seriously.

(Feature #5) - It will be a time when the heavens shall be destroyed. **3:12a**

Now Peter again comes back to what God will do to the heavens, the elements, and the earth. Peter says we need to live our lives looking for this day. We don't need to be afraid of future judgment and we don't need to be worried about it. We need to be holy and godly as if this could start happening right now. We need to live with an eager anticipation that this day will come. We are certainly not to set dates like some goof from Schoolcraft, but we are to live holy and godly lives as we anticipate all these things.

Notice Peter says we are looking for the coming of the “Day of God.” Now the “Day of God” and “The Day of the Lord” are slightly different. The Day of God refers to the time after the Day of the Lord, when God has already judged everything and is reigning over everything. As Floyd Barackman said, “The Day of the LORD will end . . . this will be followed by the Day of God, which will continue forever” (*Practical Christian Theology*, p. 474).

Peter's point is we don't need to worry about the heavens being burned up; it will be just part of the process to bring about the coming Day of God. This will be an amazing display of the sovereign power of God in which the heavens will be burned and destroyed.

(Feature #6) - It will be a time when the elements shall be melted. **3:12b**

The word “melt” means to be made liquid. The heat will be so intense that it will melt and turn to liquid everything. There are two different words used for “fire” in this verse. The word “burning” speaks of a glowing red fire that melts. The word “intense heat” refers to a scorching, burning heat; extreme fire and heat.

To put this in some perspective, the atomic bomb generated heat to two trillion degrees centigrade, but it did not melt everything. What that means is that God's heat will be hotter than an atomic bomb.

We don't have a thing to worry about. In fact, we can look forward to this happening because this will bring about the Day of God.

(Feature #7) - It will be a time when we will get to see a new heavens . **3:13a**

Notice God has promised this to us. The word “new” is kainos (καινος) not neos (νεος). What this means is that the heavens will be new in kind. The new heavens are not going to be a refurbishing of the old heavens. They will be brand new.

Peter’s point is we can look forward to the Day of the Lord because we know that this is a chronological moment that will ultimately lead to us being able to see a brand new heavens and a brand new earth. We are looking for the old heavens to pass away and a new heaven to appear.

(Feature #8) - It will be time when we will see a new earth . **1:13b**

Again the adjective “new” (καινος) means new in kind. It will be an earth like has never been seen before. It will be a new earth where righteousness reigns.

The exciting truth for believers is the end of the old creation is the beginning of a new creation. We can look forward to an amazing future.

As near as I can determine, there are four key practical applications from this amazing text:

- 1) God’s people have nothing to fear about God’s future time of wrath. The future for us is not scary but exciting. We can look expectantly at the future knowing great things will come.
- 2) God’s people need to always remember that this world and everything in it will be gone. We have to live here and there are things to enjoy here, but let’s keep it in true theological perspective; everything in this world will get burned up.
- 3) God’s people need to develop their own lives in a holy and godly way. We need to continually analyze ourselves and apply Scriptures and to live godly and reverent lives.
- 4) God’s people need to make a statement for God to this world by what we do and what we say.