

March 18th, 2012

The Lord's Day is Coming

2 Peter 3:1-10

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Heavenly Father, what a privilege it is to peer into these things and to know these truths, things Lord unto which angels long look. What a privilege it is to gather together as your people to confess Christ as our Lord and to be reminded of the truth of the reality Lord that is coming. Lord we know one day all of history shall marvel, all of the world shall see Lord our King in the sky. And Lord as we continue these glorious truths this morning I ask you that you would cause me to teach all that is in accord in the truth and we as a body would be edified by these things, that we would grow in holiness, that we would grow in joy, and that our minds would be fixed on the eternal things, those things which matter Lord. And that we would cast off the sin which so easily entangles and run the race with excellence until that great day of the Lord comes. And we ask this in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Well often times when we are waiting for something, especially something that we really desire, we become impatient and fearful. And sometimes we wonder if we will ever possess that for which we wait. And that was really the case to the believer to whom which Peter was writing to here in his second Epistle. They were waiting for Christ's return while contending with false teachers who claimed that Christ was never coming again. These teachers encouraged people to live immoral lives promising them that their immorality would never be judged. Additionally they mocked those who held to the teachings of the Apostles and were causing great distress within the church.

In our text this week Peter encourages his readers saying that the Day of the Lord will certainly come and the heavens and the earth will be purged with fire exposing the wicked deeds of the ungodly (2 Peter 3:10). Because of this they should wait patiently for the Lord to keep His promise and vindicate His people.

So, with this in mind, please open your Bibles now to 2 Peter. Now the last time we studied this Epistle we looked at the last half of chapter 2 where Peter described the nature of these false teachers. And by way of review let's look briefly now at a few of these verses.

2 Peter 2:10b-14, "Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!"

Now Peter says the false teachers were bold and willful as they blasphemed the "glorious ones" and these are likely fallen angels or demons. Verse 13 (2 Peter 2:13) says these teachers will suffer wrong as a wage for their wrongdoing meaning they will reap what they sow and suffer destruction. These false teachers practiced their immorality even during the day which emphasized the wickedness, the great nature of their wickedness, because this type of immorality and evil was normally practiced at night. Peter calls them "blots" and "blemishes" here which is the opposite of what he desires for his readers saying in 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."

Now these false teachers pursued their own interests and had eyes full of adultery meaning they looked at every woman as a potential candidate for adultery. Their desire for sin was so great that they enticed others to sin as and the Greek word that is translated here as "enticed" was used to describe hunters who used bait to snare their prey. Now the false teachers likely enticed people by telling them that their immorality would never be judged. However, as we will see this week, Peter promises that God's judgment is certainly coming and those who deny this reality are willfully ignorant.

2 Peter 3:1-4, “This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the Holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Now Peter begins this chapter saying that this is the second letter he is writing to his audience here and the first is likely the first Epistle of 1 Peter. He addresses these believers as “beloved” which indicates both God’s saving love for them as well Peter’s great affection for those he is writing to. He says he wrote to remind them of the predictions of the prophets and the commands of Christ given through His apostles and he desired that they set their mind on word of God. For in doing so they would act in accord with the truth and thereby reject the false doctrines of the teachers among them.

Now this connection between right thinking and right living is seen throughout the Scriptures such as in Romans 12:2 which says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Additionally, Philippians 4:8-9 says, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” Now Peter knew that his readers like all Christians needed to have their thinking continually renewed through the word of God. The more righteous their thinking, the more righteous their living would become.

Verse 3 (2 Peter 3:3) says that “scoffers will come in the last days and follow after their own sinful desires.” The phrase “last days” or “latter days” is seen in the Scriptures as a period of time at the end of the age when many prophecies will be fulfilled such as in Micah 4:1 which says, “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it.”

These “last days” began with the first coming of Christ according to Hebrews 1:1-2 which says, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

Verse 4 (2 Peter 3:4) says that the scoffers ask “where is the promise of His coming?” and the Greek word translated here as “coming” is “parousia”. And this is a technical term used to describe the coming of Christ at the end of the age and Peter mentioned this coming in this same Epistle back in chapter 1:16 (2 Peter 1:16) saying, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

This “coming” is when our salvation is finally consummated as we read in Luke 21:27-28 which says, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Now this coming will also be a time when God’s wrath is poured out. In Revelation 6 tells us of the cosmic events that will proceed this coming and in Revelation 6:15-17, we have it recorded for us of the wicked who say or tells to us, “Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

The false teachers claimed that everything has continued unchanged since the beginning of creation. They mocked the promise of God and all those who mock God will be destroyed according to Micah 7:10 which says, “Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, “Where is the Lord your God? My eyes will look upon her; now she will be trampled down like the mire of the streets.” These teachers mocked God’s future judgment because they were willfully ignorant of His judgment in the past.

2 Peter 3:5-7, “For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the Word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

Now those who denied Christ’s future return did so by appealing to creation saying that everything had gone essentially unchanged since the world was created. This argument is flawed for several reasons not the least of which being that God intervened in creation in the past by bringing judgment upon the earth as He did through the flood.

Additionally, the very act of creation itself demonstrates that God intervenes in the world. Peter says that God created the earth out of water and judged it with water as well. Once again, he wants his readers to remember history so that they might better understand the future. Just as God intervened at creation and the flood, so too will He intervene once again in the future and judge world by fire. Now fire is often associated with judgment in the Old Testament such as in Zephaniah 1:18 which says, “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.” Now the use of fire in judgment here carries with it the idea of purification. As fire, unlike water, always remains undefiled when it is mixed with other elements.

Peter says the earth was formed by the word of God, which is a reference to Christ according to John 1:1-3 which says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Now interestingly, Peter says that it is by the same “word”, meaning Jesus Christ, that all of creation will be judged which is also taught in Acts 17:31 which says that, “God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Though many mocked, Peter wanted his readers to be assured that God’s judgment is coming and when it does, only those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be saved.

2 Peter 3:8-10, “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. 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 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 says in verse 8 (2 Peter 3:8) that his audience should not overlook that with the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And this is a reminder that God is eternal and it is an allusion to Psalm 90:4 which says, “For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.” Peter points to God’s eternal nature to remind us that He transcends time and unlike humans who grow increasingly frail and weak as we age, God is entirely unaffected by the passage of time as we see in Hebrews 13:8 which says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Now this was essential for Peter’s audience to remember as those who mocked Christ’s return did so because many years had passed since Christ’s ascension. How much more so for us today as almost 2,000 years have passed since these prophecies were spoken and many today continue to mock the return of Christ. Let us never forget that those who mock Christ’s return are themselves fulfillment of prophecy and proof that the Scriptures are utterly reliable.

Verse 9 (2 Peter 3:9) tells us why the Lord has delayed His return—that men would repent. And some understand the “all” in verse 9 to mean “every person on earth” in that God has made salvation possible and is patiently waiting for men to accept His offer of salvation. I do not find this argument compelling when we consider Ephesians 2:8-9 which says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Salvation is a monergistic work of God meaning that God, and God alone, accomplishes salvation in all who believe. God does not simply make salvation possible but rather He actively saves all He has chosen for salvation according to Ephesians 1:3-5 which declares, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be Holy and

blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”

Now it is true that God has commanded all people to repent according to Acts 17:30 which says, “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” So in one sense God does desire that all people repent for He has commanded it and the very nature of a command implies a desire that it be obeyed. However, God does not desire that all people repent in the sense that He has ordained that all people to repent. For if He desired it in that sense all people everywhere would certainly repent.

Now this highlights the distinction between God’s moral will—that which He commands—and God’s providential will—that which He ordains to come to pass. The classic example of these two working together is seen at the cross in that Christ was murdered by sinful men and that was against God’s moral will because He forbids murder. However, Christ’s death was in accord with God’s providential will and that in eternity past that God had ordained that the Son would die.

Now having said that, I think the context of this passage is the key to understanding who is meant by the “all” in verse 9 (2 Peter 3:9). The “all” here is qualified earlier in the verse by the word “you” that precedes it as Peter says that God is patient toward “you” not wishing any to perish but all to come to repentance. The “you” here is a reference to the believers in the churches that Peter is writing to. Thus this verse seems to be teaching that the Lord is delaying His return in order that all the elect, or the chosen we read about in Ephesians 1, come to faith through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

God has ordained the full number that will come to faith and He chose them before the creation of the world. These are the ones Jesus died for and the ones granted faith by God that they might believe. God not only commands them to repent but has also ordained that they will do so and accomplishes this through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus Jesus did not die potentially for all people but rather He died specifically for some people and He will return when those He died for have come to faith. In this way, Christ will fulfill the promise He made in John 6:37-39 saying, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from Heaven, not to do My own will but the will of

Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day.”

In verse 10 (2 Peter 3:10), Peter declares that the day of the Lord will certainly come. In the New Testament, the day of the Lord is also referred to as the day of Christ as it is in Philippians 1:6 which says, “And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Peter says this day will come “like a thief” in that it will be unexpected by the world who mocked that it would ever come.

However, this will not be the case for Christians according to 1 Thessalonians 5:2-5 which says, “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.”

Now Peter says the heavens will pass away with a “roar” and the Greek word translated as “roar” implies a rushing sound and is likely referring to the crackling sound of fire. The term translated as “heavenly bodies” could also be understood as “elements” meaning the basic things of which is made and it’s possible that both of these ideas are in view here. When these heavenly bodies are dissolved by fire they will expose all the works that have done on the earth. And this is likely a reference to all the wicked deeds that had been done by the ungodly for they will be finally exposed in judgment. And we see here that the Day of the Lord is certainly coming and when it does it will be a day of reckoning, a day of salvation for the righteous and a day of damnation for the wicked.

Well this morning, I have two points of application for us. And the first is: Warn others that judgment is coming. Warn others that judgment is coming.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-9, “This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels

in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.”

And though the wrath of God is never a popular topic, it is our responsibility to warn others that it is coming as well as how they might be saved from it. When we do we are often labeled as narrow, bigoted people for we claim there is only one way to God and that through His Son, Jesus Christ. Even so, whether we face great persecution or mere disinterest, we are called to proclaim the Gospel to the very ends of the earth.

Sharing the Gospel requires that we tell others the truth about God—that He is Holy and just and that His wrath is directed against sin. As sinners, we are the objects of His wrath unless we take refuge in the Son according to John 3:36 which promises, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” Jesus Christ unlike every other human who has ever lived was born of a virgin and entirely free of the sinful nature. He lived a sinless life and He accomplished all the righteous works required by God under the law. Because of this, He was the only suitable sacrifice that could take away sin through His death on the Cross. However, because He was sinless, the grave could not hold Him and on the third day God the Father raised Him to life proving that He had conquered both sin and death. He then appeared to many witnesses before ascending to Heaven and where He now sits at the right hand of the Father. And as we’ve seen today, He is coming again to judge the world and when He does, if you do not know Him as Lord and Savior, you will perish for all eternity in Hell. Therefore, if you have not done so, today, repent and believe the Gospel that you might be spared from the wrath that is certainly coming upon the earth.

However, if you are trusting in Christ for salvation, His return will be a time of joy that exceeds what our minds can even comprehend and this brings me to my second application which is: Continually live in the hope of your salvation. Continually live in the hope of your salvation

1 Peter 1:3-5, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in

Heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Now Peter says that "we are born again to a living hope" and that means that our hope is living and active because even though we have not experienced the full consummation of our salvation we can be utterly certain that we will. This is truly a glorious promise for our inheritance is imperishable, unfading, and is secured by the power of Almighty God. This reality should cause us to live in a settled joy that is truly unshakable. Now I'm not saying that we are sinning if we are not always grinning from ear to ear as we face many serious and grieving trials in this life that cause us great suffering. Christ Himself was called a "man of sorrows" in Isaiah 53 and indeed none walked in the joy of the Lord more than our King. However even in the midst's of our trials we must always remember that our days of sorrow are numbered. Our trials will certainly end and when they do eternal glory that is exceedingly great will follow forever.

May we be ones whose thoughts, emotions, words and actions are informed by this central truth remembering that a time is coming when our tears shall be wiped away forever. Every day that passes brings us one day closer when we shall see our Lord face to face and inherit our eternal reward. On that great day we will be gathered together with all the saints from every age to serve our God and sing praises to His name forever. Therefore, my fellow Christians, let us walk in the hope of our great salvation knowing that our temporal trials cannot compare to the eternal joy that is coming soon.

Well this week we have seen that though the world may scoff, Christ is certainly returning. And when He comes He will judge the heavens and earth with fire and those who do not know Him will be destroyed. Additionally, God has patiently delayed this return that none of His people would be lost. Therefore, as believers we must warn others that judgment is coming through the proclamation of the gospel and continually walk in the living hope of our salvation.

As we do, let us heed the words of James 5:7-8 which says, "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." Amen.

Sermon By

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