

The Promise of His Return

2 Peter 3:8-15

April 29-30, 2017

This is Peter's last letter and he writes with a sense of urgency, knowing that his time on earth is coming to an end. He's writing to stir them up in their faith, preparing them for the trials and difficulties he knows will soon be upon them.

Earlier he wrote that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through His divine power and that He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them we might become partakers of the divine nature. In fact, it's only in partaking of the divine nature that a person is transformed.

Here in chapter 3, he writes prophetically about the condition of the last days, that mockers will come in their mocking, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? Nothing has changed, everything is as it has been from the beginning."

But when they maintain this, it escapes their notice, Peter writes, that the earth was formed out of water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded in the days of Noah. In other words, God has destroyed the world before through a cataclysmic flood in the last days, and the world will be destroyed again, but this time through fire.

What's interesting is that in Matthew 24, Jesus said, *“The coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”*

When you look at what's happening in the world today, there is a striking resemblance to the days of Noah. Therefore, Peter's words are sent by God to stir us up in our faith because difficult days are coming upon the earth and there needs to be a sense of urgency in how we live right now.

I. The Lord is not Slow about His Promise
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- Verse 9 – The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness.
- There are many believers alive today who would very much like to hasten the return of the Lord, saying, “Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, this world is a mess and is falling apart!”
- And of course, there are always scoffers and markers.
- But Peter wants to stir us up in our faith and to recognize that God is not slow about His promise.

A. A day is as a 1000 years

- Verse 8 – Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as 1000 years, and 1000 years as one day. In other words, God will fulfill the promise of His coming in His time, not according to our expectation.
- By the way, Peter is not suggesting that one day with the Lord is exactly 1000 years. It's a simile. He's simply saying that God is not slow in fulfilling His promise, the passing of time is immaterial to God.
- Time itself was created by God. Time is part of the fabric of space and God created both of them by the word of His power and He stands outside of time.

Illus – I was working outside when my grandkids, Aviah and Ethan, 9 and 4, came up holding hands and dressed in strange clothes. Aviah then said with an interesting accent, “Excuse me, sir, can you tell me what year this is?” “2016,” I responded, “what are you guys up to?” She then said, “We left earth in 1881 and we got lost in time travel and we’re trying to find our way home.” So I responded, “Well, you’re welcome to stay with us in the meantime.” Oh, what joy they bring!

- Many today wonder why God is taking so long, why does He not come quickly and bring an end to all the wickedness that corrupts this world.
- But Peter explains that God has a purpose in what seems to us to be a delay.

B. God is patient not wanting any to perish

- Verse 9 – The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.
- Some might think that God is slow in fulfilling His promise, but the timing of the fulfilling of God's promise is based on his heart to seek and to save the lost, that messed up people might be reconciled to God. He is giving them opportunity.
- In other words, God is not slow in fulfilling His promise, God is patient and giving sinners an opportunity that will not always be available.
- It's much better to come to faith and receive God's offer of forgiveness now before the coming of the great day of tribulation when God's wrath will be poured out on the world.

- Yes, in the tribulation period people will receive Christ and find salvation, but they will be in the midst of earth-rending cataclysmic events when they do it. It's much better to receive Christ now in the age in which we are now living, while there is still yet time.

Romans 11:25, I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- It's important to see that phrase, “not wishing for any to perish, *but for all to come to repentance.*”
- God's heart is to save, it was the reason He sent His Son; and when someone rejects God's heart to save, He grieves. When a sinner repents and receives God's offer of life, He rejoices.

Ezekiel 18:23, “I don't want wicked people to die,” declares the Lord Almighty. “I want them to turn from their evil ways and live.”

Luke 15:1-10 ...There is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents.

II. That Day Comes Like a Thief in the Night

- Verse 10 – The day of the Lord will come like a thief and the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.
- You’ve probably heard that phrase, the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.
- What it means is that the Lord will come when He is not expected. For one thing, scoffers and mockers will say that God hasn’t done anything up to this point, so there’s nothing to be concerned about.
- Jesus said that the days of his return will be like the days of Noah, “They were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”
- However, having said that, we also need to understand this ...

A. It will not come as a thief in the night for you

- No one knows the day or the hour in which the Son of Man will return...

Matthew 24:44, “For this reason you also be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”

- That’s true; but at the same time, Jesus said there would be ‘signs of the times’ that will indicate that the time is drawing near.

Matthew 24:32-33, “Now learn the parable from the fig tree; when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”

- In other words, Jesus gave us the signs of the times, the condition of things in the world that indicate that the end is drawing near.
- “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see to it that you are not frightened,” He said, “for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. In various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all of these are merely the beginning of birth pangs.
- Israel will be hated by the nations; many will fall away; and because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

- God gives us the signs of the times in advance so that the day of the Lord will not come upon *us* like a thief in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4-5, You yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night... But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day.

B. Let it change what sort of person you become

- Verse 11 - Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord.
- This is not a question, it's a statement. In light of the fact that there is a great Day of the Lord, God's judgment coming upon a corrupt world, it should change what sort of people we are.
- Our conduct should be holy and our character should be godly. That should be our response. The reason God's wrath will be poured out on the world is because of its corruption.
- We have to decide which side we're on, we need to align our character and our conduct with our Captain and Commander, with the

one who saved us from the corruption that's in the world.

2 Peter 1:9, He who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

- This brings up an interesting question, can we hasten the coming of the day of God?
- This scripture and others seem to suggest that the church's holy conduct and godly character, our heart after the lost, and even our prayers can have the impact of hastening the day of God.
- “When you pray,” Jesus said to His disciples, “pray in this way... Your kingdom come.”

Psalm 122:6, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may they prosper who love you...”

- God has a special place in His heart for Jerusalem. Which reminds me of a funny story...

Illus – Billy Graham was visiting the Pope in Rome and noticed a red phone on his desk, so he asked, “What’s the red phone for?”...

- When you pray for the peace of Jerusalem, you're really praying for the return of Christ because there will be no lasting peace in

Jerusalem until the Prince of peace sets foot in that city to rule and reign on the earth.

- When the apostle John was an old man, exiled to the island of Patmos, he wrote the book of Revelation. As he drew it to a close, he wrote...

Revelation 22:20, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

C. Keep watching and waiting

- This is a theme that he repeats over and over...
- Verse 11 – Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, *looking for* and hastening the coming of the day of God.
- Verse 13 – According to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
- Verse 14 – Therefore, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.
- In other words, keep watching for His return, but be found in readiness by being faithful...

Luke 12:35, “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.”

Illus - When I was in my young 20s I was really looking forward to being married, but didn't know how long I had to wait. My pastor gave me great advice, "While you're waiting," he said, "these are the days to prepare your life. Learn, grow in your maturity, and grow spiritually."

- Lastly, wait in confident faith. God is still on the throne and is sovereign over all the nations.
- "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars," Jesus said, "see to it that you are not frightened."
- "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me."

Psalm 27:1, The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?