

# We Live, We Die, and Then What?

## Preparing for Eternity

### II Peter 3:10-13

#### INTRODUCTION:

#### ILLUSTRATION:

A pastor visited an elderly man.

Concerned of his spiritual life, the Pastor said, "At your age you should be thinking about the hereafter."

The older man replied, "Oh, I do all the time. No matter where I am - in the living room, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement - I ask myself **'What am I here after?'**"

I am not sure he fully understood the concern!

Many people believe that there is an afterlife. Many of us believe that there is an eternal heaven reserved for the children of God. The problem for many is that they have heard of heaven so many times that the thrill of living eternally with God in heaven has faded away. We get so caught up in our daily lives, that we fail to reflect by our lives how glorious that day will be! Heaven is by far greater than anything here on earth because it is eternal. Everything in this world is temporal and will go away.

How would the world react if the cure for all cancer was discovered and the treatment for it was free and the treatment had no side effects? Can you imagine the excitement that would accompany such an event?

Peter reminds us that the Lord's return **CAN** be the most wonderful thing that we will ever experience and tells us that we need to rekindle our excitement for the Lord's return and be prepared for it.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which 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.

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will

melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

As we prepare to look more closely at Peter's passage this morning, let's bow in a word of prayer.

## Prayer

In order to understand 2 Peter 3:10-14 we have to consider the context from which it was written. Peter is writing this to refute the false teachers found in verse 4.

### 2 Peter 3:4 (NASB)

4...“Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

In other words, the false teachers rejected the second coming of Christ because (among other reasons) that would require a divine catastrophic event. Since they believe that everything moves along at a constant evolutionary pace, they will claim that things like cataclysmic events just don't happen. They deny scriptural truth. The heavens and earth were not created, they are just the end result of a big bang. Man does not have a Creator, he just evolved to this current form over time. There wasn't a Noah's flood. Even if a worldwide flood did occur, it had to be from natural causes. The Red Sea did not actually part. There haven't been any supernatural miracles. Things like divine intervention and eternal judgment just doesn't happen. They will say there will never be intervention from God **because there never has been and there never will be.**

They look at their little piece of time on earth and make conclusions about all of history.

The fact that Peter is addressing this kind of false teaching goes a long way to explain his very **one-sided description** of the end of the age in verses 10-14.

What I mean by **one-sided description** is this: The whole discussion of the end started in verse four with the scoffers denying Christ's second coming. But then after that Peter never even mentions it again. He only deals with one side of that coming -- its effect on the world. His picture of the end is very simple: fire will destroy the sky, the earth and everything on it (v. 10), and new heavens and a new earth will stand in their place (v. 13). He doesn't present any chronological order of this event to the personal coming of Christ, the tribulation, the millennium, the day of judgment, or the way Christians find their way into the new heavens and new earth.

Peter only wrote this simplified but powerful picture of the end because it was the future history of the end times that they needed to hear. His purpose was also to warn new converts of being lured into this heresy.

We have seen what these false teachers were devoted to:

- They were devoted to the world (1:4; 2:5,20; 3:6).
- They tried to take advantage of God's grace (Jude 1:4) and spiritual freedom (2:19) to justify their sexual desires and corruption. (2:2,14),
- They were devoted to their love of money (2:14-16)
- And their desire for human praise (2:10,18).

Because of their desires, they deny that Christ is coming again because it would interrupt their lust for worldly things.

Therefore, it makes sense Peter should give a **single, one-sided answer**:

### **The world you love is going to burn!**

- Don't give yourself over to the pleasures of the world.
- Don't devote yourself to accumulating money.
- Don't spend your life seeking the praise of the world.

### **It is all going to burn!**

Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB)

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### **BODY:**

## **I. JESUS WILL COME AGAIN.**

Now let's turn to our text and give closer attention to Peter's admonitions.

2 Peter 3:10a (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,...

It was Jesus who put these two things together: the Day of the Lord and the image of the thief.

Matthew 24:42-43 (NASB)

<sup>42</sup> “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

The apostle Paul took Jesus' teaching and passed it on to the church at Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; <sup>5</sup> for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; <sup>6</sup> so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

So three things are implied in the day of the Lord coming like a thief:

1. The Day of the Lord includes the coming of our Lord Jesus.
2. It will be sudden and unexpected and destructive for unbelievers -- like the coming of a thief.

3. It will bring deliverance and salvation for those who are prepared for His coming.

## **II. THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED BY FIRE.**

But Peter goes further and emphasizes the destruction of the present world by fire:

2 Peter 3:10b-12 (NASB)

...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.<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,<sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

Peter is not saying anything new or unexpected. This event had been prophesied many times in the Old Testament that God's wrath would one day boil over causing a fiery destruction of the ungodly and the world which they idolized.

It might seem strange to us that God should destroy the world which he created and which he once called "very good".

Genesis 1:31 (NASB)

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

But Paul enlightens us that not only was mankind overcome by sin, but also the natural world was also corrupted when sin entered the world.

Paul says,

Romans 8:20-21 (NASB)

<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire in order that a new heavens and a new earth can be created free from sin.

Peter says <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,

It would sound like Peter is asking a question here, but you will notice that "what sort of people out you to be" is not followed by a question mark in most translations. It is an exclamation point!

He is saying that if we truly comprehend that this life is temporary and if the heavens and the earth and all of its belongings are going to be destroyed by fire, and the unrighteous are going to be eternally separated from God with gnashing of teeth and in torment, **what sort of people ought we to be!!!** Because we are anxiously awaiting a new heavens and

a new earth where only righteousness dwells. Finally being freed from the sin that surrounds us.

### **III. THERE WILL BE NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH.**

2 Peter 3:13 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

The promise comes from Isaiah 65.

Isaiah 65:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

When Peter emphasizes that this new world will be one in which righteousness dwells, he implies that the cause for destroying the old world was man's unrighteousness. Anyone who has not received the free gift of righteousness from Christ will not be included in the new world. Because only righteousness will dwell there.

But Peter does not stress in these verses that unbelievers will be judged. He did that repeatedly in Chapter Two and it is implied here. But the **emphasis** here does **not** fall on the **destruction of people** but, on the destruction of "**the earth and its works**".

2 Peter 3:11-12 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

Most people try to find meaning in life by building something that will carry on their legacy even after they are gone. Some people acquire wealth and get a great sense of power and success by looking at their house and thinking through their portfolio. Some build professional reputations through skill and hard work and get a sense of power and success from their heavy responsibilities and the numbers of people that look to them for leadership. Some people build artistic expressions and exalt in what they have created. Some, more simply, build hobbies and collections (of coins or artwork, or whatever) and gain a sense of superiority from the size and value of their collection. Some find pleasure in the richness of their garden or the shine of their car or the wonders of their new Apple computer.

The false teachers in 2 Peter had several vices.

- They followed their sexual and corrupt desires. (2:10)
- They despised authority (2:10)
- They distorted the truth (3:16)

Peter's response to us and them is this: it's going to be burned up.

The lesson from verse 11 is this: the only things that are going to survive the fires of judgment on this earth are the expressions of holiness and godliness.

There is an old saying that applies here. "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

That's the point of verse 11: everything is going to be burned up except the fruits of holiness.

Verse 12 says that as you look for the coming of the Day of God in this way you will hasten it. Verse 9 said that God is holding back the final Day that you may repent. It follows that repenting and living a life of holiness helps remove the cause for delay.

We don't hasten the Day in an absolute sense because Acts 1:7 teaches that the Father has fixed the times and seasons by his own authority and Jesus said in Mark 13:22 that the Father knows the hour of the Son's return.

But from our vantage point we can hasten the Day by fulfilling the pre-conditions of Christ's return, namely the preaching of the gospel to all the nations (Mk. 13:10) and the repentance of all of God's sheep.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Jesus IS coming again.

Our world as we know it is going to be destroyed by fire along with all of the treasures that are on the earth.

God is preparing a new heavens and a new earth.

Here is a question for you to consider. If you were to find out this afternoon that you only had one week to live, would you feel the need to change anything in your life?

Think about this: A person is prepared for death when he knows he has one week to live and yet does not need to change anything in his life. He is ready to meet the Lord in judgment.

Now think about this: The things I would do (in relationship to God), knowing it was my last week to live, are the things I should be doing this week - whether I live or die.

Life is short and we only have one life to live.

Now ask yourself: Am I ready to die? Will Christ's second coming be a **glorious event** or will it be a **terrifying event** for me? If you do not have peace in your life that you are a child of God, why not get ready today? God has not promised us a tomorrow!

If you need to place your faith in Jesus Christ and obey His command to repent of your sins and be baptized for the remission of those sins, I plead with you to come forward this morning during the invitation hymn and accept Christ's gift of forgiveness.

**He is Lord!**