

November 28, 2021

## “Thankfully Waiting for Christ’s Return”

2Peter 3:10-18

Last week in **2Peter 3:1-10**, we studied a major reason why God’s people should be thankful: because Christ is coming back for us, to take us to be with Him forever in heaven.

Today we are going to study how we should be living while we wait for His return. Please open your Bibles to **2Peter 3:9...** God clearly wants everyone to be saved; He desires for no one to perish, and so He is patient with mankind, giving people the opportunity to repent, believe, and follow Christ.

Read **2Peter 3:10a...** What is the “day of the Lord?” In order to understand what the New Testament writer’s were saying about *the day of the Lord*, we must look at what the Old Testament prophets wrote about it. The following passages give a consistent overview of the OT’s teaching on it:

**Isaiah 13:9**, “Behold, the day of the LORD comes cruel with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate.”

**Ezekiel 30:3**, “*the day of the Lord* is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.

**Joel 2:11**, “*The day of the LORD* is great and very terrible.”

**Obadiah 15**, “For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.”

**Zephaniah 1:14**, “Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly.”

*The day of the LORD* is referred to as *a day of doom and gloom, a day of wrath and vengeance*. Jesus speaks of it as a day of cataclysmic turmoil, where God’s anger and wrath bring destruction on unbelievers (cf. **Matthew 24:29-41; 25:31-46**); and in **Revelation 19:11-16**, Jesus returns to the earth where He carries out God’s judgement upon the ungodly.

There are other phrases similar to *the day of the Lord*, but these are quite different in their specific contexts: e.g., *the day of the Lord Jesus* (**1Corinthians 5:5; 2Corinthians 1:14**); *the day of the Lord Jesus Christ* (**1Corinthians 1:8**); and *the day of Christ Jesus* (**Philippians 1:6**); these phrases reference the opposite of anger and wrath, speaking of redemption and rewards for Christians.

Peter says (**2Peter 3:10**), “the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”

What does that mean? See **Matthew 24:42-44...** Christ’s return should not surprise you like a thief breaking into your home. Think about that! If you are awakened at night to the sound of what you think is a thief breaking into your home, it might cause you to be frightened or fearful, to go get your gun, call 911; however, if you are awakened at night by the sound of what you think is a loved one returning home from a long trip, you will, most likely, become joyful, happy, because you expected them, but didn’t know exactly when they would arrive.

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Paul, in **1Thessalonians 5:2** says, “the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” It doesn’t say that the Lord will come like a thief in the night, but that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, i.e., unexpectedly, suddenly, without any specific warning (**1Thessalonians 5:3**), “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.”

The *day of the Lord* is revealed and fulfilled in stages that begin after the rapture of the church, near the middle of the Seven-Year Tribulation Period, at the end of the Tribulation Period when the Lord Returns to earth, after the Millennial Kingdom when Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire, and at the White Throne Judgement, after which (**2Peter 3:10b**), “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.”

Read **2Peter 3:11...** “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way,” (i.e., the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire), “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” In other words, how then should you live your life?

Peter now exhorts us (**2Peter 3:12**), that we should be “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!”

*The day of God* that Peter is referencing here, is literally, *God’s day*; this is when God’s glory will be revealed, when everything will be made brand new: no more corruption, no more sin, nothing displeasing or offensive to God will ever exist again, from that day throughout eternity we will live in a perfect Paradise.

The word translated *elements* (**2Peter 3:10, 12**) is the word *stoicheia*, which means, *things in a row*, like *letters of the alphabet*, or *a sequence of numbers*. This is describing the basic elements and/or minerals, the molecules and atoms that make up the non-living material universe, i.e., this is the most fundamental or rudimentary recipe for matter.

**Genesis 1:1** says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Peter is saying that the earth, the heavens, and everything in them, will be burned up, consumed, obliterated by intense fire.

This will be done (**2Peter 3:13**), “according to [God’s] promise,” therefore “we are [to be] looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (see **Revelation 21:1-6**).

Read **2Peter 3:14...** Because we have this marvelous and eternal hope, we are to be waiting expectantly and thankfully for the Lord’s return; to be reading and heeding His Word, communicating with Him through prayer, loving one another as He loves us, and sharing the gospel of His salvation with all who will listen:

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**Acts 2:21**, “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” **38**, “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” **44-47**, “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

**Romans 10:9-10**, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” **13**, “for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**1Corinthians 15:1-5**, “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve.”

Christians are saved from hell’s condemnation, so that we might live on the earth, in such a manner, so as to do that which is pleasing to God.

**Ephesians 2:8-10**, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

We are to live for God among unbelievers:

**1Peter 2:12**, “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

We are to live for God among believers:

**Hebrews 10:23-25**, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

When we live like that (cf. **Ephesians 2:8-10; 1Peter 2:12; Hebrews 10:23-25**), we will experience the peace of God (**Philippians 4:4-7**), “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let

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your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Back to **2Peter 3:14...** We are to express and exhibit God’s peace, while remaining spotless and blameless, i.e., outwardly, as recipients of salvation, we show our obedience to God by the way we live; inwardly, we seek to maintain an attitude of gratitude and contrition, keeping a short account with God concerning any sins we have not yet acknowledged to Him (**1John 1:8-10**), “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

Read **2Peter 3:15a...** As we wait eagerly for the Lord’s return, we should be living out and proclaiming the message of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ, while there is still time, “regarding the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Earlier, in **2Peter 3:9** we read, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient with you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” I told you last week that the Greek word translated *patience* in that verse [*makrothumeo*] is a compound word, combining “large” and “great anger,” meaning that *God has a massive capacity for storing up anger and wrath before it overflows into judgement.*

God’s timing for Christ’s return will perfect, when the fullness of time has come, which will also coincide with God’s patience reaching its maximum capacity.

As we await the time when we will all be caught up to meet Christ in the air, we should be serving God the Father, by sharing God the Son with all people, as God the Holy Spirit (living in us) equips and encourages us to do so.

Read **2Peter 3:15b-17...** Peter references the writings of apostle Paul as divine revelation, for many of Peter’s readers/listeners (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians) were most likely familiar with Paul’s letters, that often contained things that were difficult to understand, e.g., the rapture of the church, the rise of the Antichrist, the time of Tribulation, and the return of Christ to bring judgement upon those who reject Him.

The false teachers (*untaught and unstable men*) distort the Word of God, in an attempt to deceive God’s people. Peter, like Paul, repeatedly warned the believers “to be on their guard so that [they] are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men [immoral, carnal men without God’s Spirit]; but instead, to stand firm in their salvation, remaining alert, resolute in their knowledge and understanding of God’s promises.

Read **2Peter 3:18...** Instead of being influenced by the false teachers who reject God’s Word, bringing condemnation and destruction upon themselves, God’s people are exhorted to continue “[growing] in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Peter identifies Jesus as both Lord and Savior.

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**Colossians 3:1-2, 4**, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

Let us remain thankful and faithful servants, living out and proclaiming the life-saving and life-giving Gospel to every person who will listen, for as long as we have life on this earth, or until the Lord returns.

To Him *be* the glory and honor and praise and power, now and forever, Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior: crucified, resurrected, and coming again.

And all God’s people said? Amen!

*Pastor Mike*

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