

“The end of the world” (10)

The last time we were together, Peter encouraged us not to be troubled by those who make fun at us because we're waiting on Jesus' return. He reminded us in **2 Peter 3:4+5** that we're to expect people who will mock us. In **2 Peter 3:5-7** Peter reminded us that God's word is sure and consistent. In **2 Peter 3:8** he reminded us that God is not affected by time. And finally in **2 Peter 3:9** he reminded us that God is not slow in keeping His promise but is patient with everyone, in order that others will come to Him in repentance. Today Peter is going to describe what will actually happen when our Lord Jesus finally does come back.

Three friends die in a car accident and they end up in heaven. Before they enter they were all asked this question, "When you are in your coffin and friends and family are mourning upon you, what would you like to hear them say about you? The first guy says, "I would like to hear them say that I was a great doctor of my time, and a great family man." The second guy says, "I would like to hear that I was a wonderful husband and school teacher who made a huge difference in the lives of children." The last guy replies, "I would like to hear them say, look, he's moving".

I guess a lot of people have their own ideas about what they would like to happen after they die. But loved ones, before some people die there is a going to be a great event which has to take place first. An event which Peter calls the day of the Lord.

Now, there are some who believe that **the coming of Christ** and **the day of the Lord** are actually two separate events. They believe that the **coming of Christ** is a **secret coming** in which He will **rapture** His saints. And they believe that **the day of the Lord** is the final Day of Judgment which occurs much later. But if these people who believe this would actually take the time to read the text, they would soon discover that both Peter and Paul use these expressions interchangeably.

For example Paul writes in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** "Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left **until the coming of the Lord**, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words". So here Paul is describing the coming of the Lord and its implications for the righteous.

But then in **1 Thessalonians 5:1-4** he writes, "Now on the topic of times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you know quite well that **the day of the Lord** will come in the same way as a thief in the night. Now when they are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction comes on them, like labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would". Here the apostle Paul calls it **the day of the Lord** as he is discussing the timings of these events. And the point I'm trying to make is that the coming of the Lord and the Day of the Lord is one in the same thing.

Now remember what Luke records in **Acts 1:9-11** "After he had said this, while they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight. As they were still staring into the sky while he was going, suddenly two men in white clothing stood near them and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven."

Luke simply tells us that Jesus will return in the same way they saw Him go up into heaven. **So what does Peter have to say concerning Jesus' return?** **2 Peter 3:10** "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." We all know how most thieves work, they usually wait until late at night to break into someone house. And sometimes they are so good at it, you could be lying in your bed fast asleep and by the time you wake up in the morning, you discover that most of your belongings have gone. And loved ones nobody goes to bed expecting to be burgled.

And Peter says for a lot of people, Jesus' return is going to happen in the same way. People are just not expecting it. He says it's going to be unexpected, in fact Paul tells us the same thing over in **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3** "Now on the topic of times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come in the same way as a thief in the night. Now when they are saying, "There

is peace and security,” then sudden destruction comes on them, like labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape”.

It’s amazing the amount of so called prophecies I hear from the religious world, trying to predict the exact date of Jesus’ return. Let me share with you three people who have tried to predict the date of Jesus’ return. A Baptist preacher by the name of William Miller predicted that the second coming of Christ would occur before March 21, 1844. When this date passed a new date was predicted, April 18, 1844. Again the date passed and another guy named Samuel S. Snow came up with the date of October 22, 1844.

The Assemblies of God Church wrote in their weekly evangel publication that Jesus would return during World War 2.

The Jehovah's Witnesses founder Charles Taze Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society, calculated 1874 as the year of Christ's Second Coming, and taught that Christ was invisibly present and ruling from the heavens since that year. Russell proclaimed Christ's invisible return in 1874, the resurrection of the saints in 1875, and predicted the end of the "harvest" and the Rapture of the saints to heaven for 1878, and the final end of "the day of wrath" in 1914. The Jehovah's Witnesses have gone on since then, to predict Jesus return in 1975 and 2012.

But loved ones the first thing Peter tells us about the Lord’s return is that it will be unexpected, without warning. Paul says as Christians we don’t need to know the date and time of His return, but as Christians we should be ready for His return. Paul continues in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 and says “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would. For you all are sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober”.

Paul says the day of the Lord should not overtake you like a thief would. In other words we should be ready for His return not because we know the day or hour of His coming, not because of any so called revelation that pinpoints the time of His coming. But we should be ready for His return because as Christians we’re told to stay alert.

Listen to what Jesus said to a church that didn’t stay alert, a church that fell asleep. Revelation 3:1-3 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead. Wake up then, and strengthen what remains that was about to die, because I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Therefore, remember what you received and heard, and obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come against you.”

Christian, we always need to remember that Jesus is coming back one day and until then we need to remain faithful to His word and repent when necessary. Because if we don’t, then the Lord will indeed come upon us as a thief in the night.

The second thing which Peter tells us concerning the Lord’s return is that it will be catastrophic. Listen to how Peter describes this great day which is to come. He says in 2 Peter 3:10 “The heavens will disappear with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare.” He says in 2 Peter 3:11 “Since all these things are to melt away in this manner.” And he says in 2 Peter 3:12 “The heavens will be burned up and dissolve, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze!”

Loved ones, does that sound like a silent return of Jesus? Peter is not talking about some fiery purification process of the earth as some believe. He is talking about what can only be described as the total destruction of the whole universe. The sun, moon and the stars are going to melt because of a great heat.

And that word melt, in verse 10 is the Greek word *luo* which means to break up, destroy, or dissolve as verses 11+12 translates it. Peter says all these things will be dissolved; the heavens will be dissolved from being on fire. The word melt in verse 12 is the Greek word *teko* which means to liquefy.

And so loved ones the universe is going to be totally destroyed, now look what Peter says will happen to the Earth. 2 Peter 3:10 “The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Peter has used words like, pass away, melt, and dissolve, don’t those words tell us that when Jesus returns everything in the entire universe is going to be totally wiped out including the Earth?

I remember getting a knock on my door and it was two religious people who tried to convince me that God isn't going to destroy the Earth because He plans to keep the Earth for the great multitude to live on forever. And after discussing with them what the Bible actually teaches, it got to the point where they were almost saying that it would be too much for God to create another earth, so I asked them this question. If God can create the universe including the Earth and everything in it in six days just by talking it into existence, why would it be so hard for Him to do it again if He so desired?

The point I'm trying to make is this, not only does nobody know when Jesus will return except the Father Himself. But Peter says when it comes loved ones, you will know it has come because the world as we know it will be non-existent. Now for some people this is frightening and so it should be, but not for the Christian. **2 Peter 3:13** "But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides".

Peter says when everything in the universe has been totally destroyed; this will actually usher in a new order. He says there will be a new heavens and a new earth in which the righteousness will live. This is what Old Testament saints looked forward to. **Hebrews 11:13-16** "These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth. For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

The new heavens and a new Earth is something which the early Christians looked forward to. **Hebrews 13:14** "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." Loved ones this new heavens and new Earth which Peter is talking about is the ultimate destination for Christians. And don't take my word for it; take God's word for it. Peter says in **2 Peter 3:13** "But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides".

We look forward to this new heavens and new earth because of God's promise. Peter says no-one knows the date and time of Jesus' return but when it happens; it's going to be catastrophic. Everything will be totally destroyed and then we will go to live eternally in the place which God has prepared for His people. And he says you can sure that's going to happen because God said it's going happen.

Now if we believe God and trust that, that great day is coming, **what do we do in the meantime?** Well Peter tells us in **2 Peter 3:11+12** "Therefore since all these things will be destroyed like this, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God."

Peter says the very fact that we believe that Jesus the Christ is going to return should inspire us all to live right for God. Jesus' return should encourage us to live holy lives and strive for godliness. **Did you know that all the material things in this room, all the material things in this country and all the material things in this world will be destroyed one day?** All our wealth, all our fame and all our physical relationship are going to be dissolved when Jesus returns. The only thing that has promise of the life to come is godliness.

1 Timothy 4:8 "For bodily exercise has some value, but godliness has value in all things, having the promise of the life which is now, and of that which is to come". Let me ask you, **can people see that you're a Christian because of the way you live in this world?** Now we all know that a vast majority of people don't read the Bible but what they do read is your life. **Is it holy? Can people see and hear Jesus in our speech and the way we live?**

Coming to worship is one thing loved ones but living a holy life is another. Reading your Bible and praying everyday is one thing but believing what you're reading and living what you're praying is another thing. **As D.L. Moody once said, 'A holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine'.**

Peter says Jesus' return should encourage us to live holy lives. And he says we should be looking forward to and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God. Think about, Peter says, it's impossible to look forward to the ushering in of the new heavens and earth but at the same time not look forward to Jesus' return. And I know lots of people who pray for the Lord to return but I also know that when these prayers are expressed publically some people get nervous.

In the film Gladiator, Russell Crow who plays the part of a Roman General after escaping death by the sword, travels for miles to save his wife and children only to find by the time he got there, they had already been brutally murdered.

And as the film goes on he becomes a Gladiator and makes good friend with a man from Africa. They get talking about their loved ones and the African man comforts him by telling him, 'you shall see them again, but not yet.'

And I think some people are like that, they want Jesus to return, but not yet. They want to go to heaven, but not yet. The Apostle Paul didn't have any problem in wanting the Lord to come; he writes in 1 Corinthians 16:22 "Let anyone who has no love for the Lord be accursed. Our Lord, come!" The apostle Peter Himself had no problem in asking the Lord to come. Acts 3:19-20 "Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah".

Loved ones when Jesus comes, it will be a day which is unexpected by many. When Jesus comes, everyone will know because the entire universe and everything in it will be non-existent. When Jesus comes, it will be a day which will usher in the new heavens and new Earth. It's a day in which we all as Christians should very much be looking forward to.

Or in the words of Eliza E. Hewitt, the great hymn writer, who wrote these words,

'Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving every day;
Just one glimpse of Him in glory, Will the toils of life repay'.
When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory!'