



Waiting for and Hastening the Coming of the Day of God

Series: A Divine Antidote to Heresy

2 Peter 3: 1-13

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Introduction: Beloved, this morning as we look at this text, there is an abrupt change in the tone of Peter's letter. Having spent the last chapter warning the church by exposing, condemning, and rebuking false teachers with bold, scathing language, now he turns his attention once more to encouraging and strengthening and exhorting the flock that God has entrusted to him. The change in tone makes sense when we see the shift in his focus. He begins by

1) Peter reminds the beloved to stand fast on the revelation of the Word of God. (v.1-2)

Peter begins his transition to encouraging and exhorting the church by saying: **This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. (2Pe 3:1a ESV)** From the false teachers who rejected and obscured the gospel for personal gain, those whom Peter calls "accursed children" – the children of the curse -- he turns to the children of God. Peter uses a familiar term of endearment to refer to his readers. It is the same word that I use to refer to you. He calls them "beloved" -- a word that is filled with meaning. Beloved – divinely loved ones, ones upon whom the delight and love of God rests, ones, who in contrast to the accursed false teachers are the objects of God's special love. The word "beloved" encompasses a world of meaning. It speaks of our place as the recipients of God's merciful work to raise our hearts from the dead and give them new life; of our place as those covered by the blood of Christ's redemption; of our place as those who have been brought out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ; of our place as a chosen race; of our place as the recipients of the glorious blessings purchased for us by Christ on the cross; our place as those welcome before the very throne of God, welcome before His glorious presence; as those loved by and delighted in by God. That, and so much more, is the meaning of this simple word "beloved." It is not a word that is used carelessly, never used of people in general, but only of the people of God. It's a marked contrast, and it's supposed to be. It is meant to encourage the flock, to strengthen them, and establish them and make them stand firm, knowing that they are loved by God. There is a boldness, a security, a strength that comes from knowing that you are beloved of God. The psalmist expresses the wonder of this steadfast love of God saying: **(Psa 36:5-10)**

Out of this love for the flock, Peter says to them: **(2Pe 3:1-2 ESV)** In essence what Peter is saying is this: Stand fast on the gospel. Stand fast on the words that were delivered to you by the holy prophets who speak for God, as opposed to the false prophets. Stand fast on the words, on the holy commandment of the Lord and Savior, as opposed to the words of the false teachers. Hold fast to the truth.

When Peter says that, he means to stir up their sincere minds by way of reminder, he is saying, “I am writing to you to wake you up, to stir you up so that your mind, so that your understanding, will be pure, uncontaminated, and unmixed with worldly thinking. I am writing to you so that your mind would be instructed and rooted in God’s truth. Beloved, this is why drinking deeply of the truth of God’s Word is not merely a good idea or a requirement for a “legitimate quiet time.” The Word of God is life-giving and error-killing. This is why preaching the gospel ourselves every day is so important. It is vital that we remind ourselves daily of the infinite holiness of God, of our depravity and hopelessness before the rightful wrath of the holy God, our inability to make ourselves acceptable in His sight, to consider and rejoice in the infinite love and grace of God to send His Son to be the propitiation for our sins – the wrath-bearer who took the penalty of our sin in our place as our substitute, of the goodness of God to regenerate our stony hearts and give us faith to believe in His dear Son, of the standing that is ours before God now – fully righteous with the righteousness of Christ and not a righteousness of our own doing, for the work of the Holy Spirit to seal as God’s own and transform us by the word of God more and more into the image of Christ, to remind ourselves of Christ’s return in glory and the promise of eternal joy with Him in heaven to the praise of His glorious grace. We need a clear, sound thinking, coming from a renewed mind filled with the teaching and the instruction of the holy prophets and apostles and why do we need that? Because we live in a world in which we must deal with

2) The mocking and empty logic of the lost. (v. 3-7) Not only do we have to deal with the false teachers and the false prophets, but we have to deal with the general unbelief of our age. Peter is telling us “Look, you need to know, you need to expect, I don’t want you to be shocked that in these last days, in these days between the crucifixion and resurrection and His return in glory – that’s what “last days” means – scoffers are going to abound. We see that clearly today, don’t we? The hallmark of these days, it seems, is a smirking disregard of the God, of His glory, and of His gospel. Scoffers are those who deride and trifle with the truth of God. Scoffers treat lightly and with irreverence that which ought to be taken seriously and with holy awe. They see

the gospel as so foolish and worthless, as a fairytale and a bad one to boot. They treat simple faith as a joke and laugh at the ignorance and primitive thinking of the faithful to trust God and His Word.

Thomas Jefferson, Robert G. Ingersoll, Richard Dawkins, Oprah Winfrey. The late Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, with uncharacteristic honesty said: **No gods = no masters.** That is the mentality of the scoffers. But she and a legion just like her are scoffers who scoff simply because they *are* mastered, they are mastered by their sinful desires, mastered by their lusts. They are mastered by their own wants and pleasures and so they justify living in sinful and self-indulgent ways by ignoring the truth of God or by raising questions about the truth that convicts them. They have to explain away the Word of God, they have to reject the gospel because if they are true then they must come face-to-face with the realization that they must give an account before God Himself. They mock the sovereignty of God and the inescapable power of His Word. In particular, Peter says, they deny the second coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead. And that makes sense. If you want to live without restraint, if you want to live without consequence, you have to explain away the coming judgment. **(2Pe 3:4-7 ESV)**

With sneering skepticism, they laugh at the prospect of the Lord's return. Theirs is not the honest question of a faithful disciple wondering when Christ will return and vindicate the glory of God and receive the honor He deserves. It is the mocking question of one who discounts God's ability and power to intervene in the world. It is the mocking question of God's existence at all. This mocking, Peter says, demonstrates deliberate blindness and biblical illiteracy. They make themselves deliberately blind to the fact of God's sovereignty and the power of His Word.

Peter uses three biblical examples to demonstrate the sovereign power of God and His Word – creation, the flood and the coming judgment of fire. Look at what he says about the scoffers.

Creation -- 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. (Gen 1:1-10 ESV) The "beginning of creation" to which these mockers refer was a dramatic demonstration of the sovereignty of God and the supreme power of His Word. They deliberately ignore the fact that

by God's word, all things were created and continue to exist, being upheld by the Word of His power. They have to be willingly blind to miss this, for as Paul writes in the book of Romans, **(Rom 1:20 ESV)** Creation stands as an evidence of the sovereign power of God and of His word. Then Peter speaks of the

Flood -- by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

By means of water and the Word of God's sovereign power, the water which was the method of creation became the method of God's judgment against the sinfulness of man. The flood stands in history as the just and clear demonstration of God's willingness and power to bring judgment and wrath against the sinful rebellion of man, but Peter's point here is this, that the flood in comparison to the judgment to come is a small picture.

Future judgment -- 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. The same Word – the Word of God's sovereign power -- which created the world out of water and through water, the same Word that judged the world by water, is the same word that holds the heavens and the earth in place for God's judgment by fire, the day of the judgment and the destruction of the ungodly. Peter's point is this. Just as God created the heavens and the earth when it seemed right to Him, just as God judged the earth by the flood as it seemed right to Him, so God will judge the earth and all its inhabitants by fire when it seems right to Him to do so. The scoffers mock Christ's return because of willful ignorance and deliberate amnesia. The scoffers have rejected and ridiculed the Word of God, the very Word which could deliver them from the wrath to come by pointing them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since they have rejected the Word, there is nothing more that can be said to them or of them. And so Peter turns to the saints and to the Scriptures to explain biblically why the Lord's return has taken so long and has not yet occurred.

Peter wants the people of God to understand

3) The whole truth about God's gracious delay. (v. 8-10) The scoffers are ignorant, but by contrast Peter means for the people of God, for His beloved to understand what is behind God's gracious delay. He says, what I am about to tell you is of vital importance. He says, first you need to understand that God's view and our view of time is greatly different -- **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day..** The amount of earthly time that passes is of no consequence from God's perspective. He is not subject to time but is

sovereign over it. He created time but God, Himself, is eternal. What Peter is saying is that while the return of Christ may seem far off to human beings, it is exactly on God's schedule. To expect God to operate according to our schedule is to forget that God is the **One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy (Isa 57:15 ESV)** As the Psalmist declares: **(Psa 135:5-6 ESV)** So, therefore, to think that Christ will not return because He hasn't returned yet is ignorant and illogical. But more than that, it misses the purpose of God in this delay. Peter tells us what it is. First God doesn't work according to human timelines and second, **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.**

The reason that everything has not come to a crashing halt, the reason that Christ has not returned and every sin been judged is because God is patient for the sake of the elect. God does not delay because He lacks the ability to judge the earth and all that are in it, nor because He is indifferent to sin. God delays because He is gracious to His beloved, to His elect, to His people. That's what this verse is clearly stating. There are some who pull verse 9 out of context and use it to support a variety of unbiblical notions. But look that context of this verse. Peter is writing to the beloved – the objects of God's love. He says to them, God is patient toward you, His beloved. He does not wish that any of you, the beloved, should perish, but that all of you, the beloved, should reach repentance.

This is a great and glorious promise from God. Christ will not come back till every person, whom God has foreknown and chosen before the foundation of the world and predestined to adoption as a child of God, has been called by God, has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and has responded in repentance from sin and in faith in Christ's finished work on the cross and been brought into the family of God. Only when all of the elect have been gathered in and been saved will the patience of God run out. We should see the delay of Christ's coming and God's judgment as an act of grace and of patience. Until then, His grace will endure. The full number of God's people not yet filled up, all the victories of the grace of Christ's cross have not yet been consummated, there are still men, and women, and children from every tribe and nation and tongue who have yet to be transformed from rebels to worshippers of the Living God. But Peter would not have us be lulled into sleep; the Day of the Lord will come. Although God is **merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, (He) will by no means clear the guilty... (Exo 34:6-7 ESV)**

The Day of the Lord is coming, when He will completely destroy His enemies, vindicate His name, reveal His glory, and establish His kingdom. **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. (2Pe 3:10 ESV)**

Like a thief, with no warning, when the scoffers are least expecting, when they are reveling in their security, the Lord Jesus Christ will come **(2Th 1:7-10 ESV)**

On that day the heavens will pass away, literally, with a crackling roar. The noise of the dissolution of the atoms of the universe will be ear-splitting. This destruction by fire will be so intense and so complete that the heavenly bodies, the component parts of the universe, will be burned up and dissolved. It is a judgment unlike any ever seen before, so intense that the fire of God's judgment will burn up things that don't even seem able to be burned, seemingly indestructible matter will be completely destroyed.

Everything will be exposed in this judgment. There will be nowhere for any to hide for the earth, all of its inhabitants and everything done by them, will be exposed and consumed by the fire of God's judgment. This terrifying picture may be difficult for our modern minds to grasp but it is nevertheless true. This one and for all end to the universe as we know it is beyond our frame of reference and beyond our imagination, but such is the greatness and the exacting justice of the our God who reveals Himself as Creator, Savior, and Judge. The Day of the Lord is coming and so with that in mind, Peter gives us

4) The application: How should we live in expectation of the Day of the Lord? (v. 11-13)

Living without a vibrant and hopeful expectation of the coming of the Lord, without the expectation that creation will find its climax in the glorious revelation of Christ and the people of God leads to living that is alternately self-consumed, apathetic, or filled with despair. The vast numbers of unbelievers, of scoffers and rejecters of Christ, and of those ignorant of the gospel because they have never heard it, strive to overcome their sense of their own finiteness by running headlong after eternally worthless things as their first love. We see them self-consumed in the personal pursuit of sinful pleasure, of self-glorifying reputation, of personal power, of enslaving wealth, of overmuch learning, of obsessive pursuit of athletic prowess, of

hoarding possessions, of striving for superiority, obsessed with sexual indulgence. We see them pursue all of these things only to become disillusioned with its lack of soul satisfaction and becoming apathetic, indifferent to everything, only then to despair and search for another savior of their own making, refusing to submit to the Lord and the Savior who is. And that kind of living is foolishness and vanity for it will all burn up. That why Peter says: **(2Pe 3:11-13 ESV)**

Do you hear what Peter is saying to us, church? Do you see it, beloved? He is saying all of the things that the heathen expend their lives for, all of the things that they sinfully pursue in idolatrous fashion; all of those things are going to burn up. But the only things that will survive the coming of the day of God will be the fruits of lives lived in holiness and godliness. No don't misunderstand what I am saying here. I am not saying that you should not earn a living or seek an honorable name, or own a home or a car, or play a sport or go to school. That is not the point. We who have believed in Jesus Christ as our Savior are to understand something about the coming judgment. We are to understand that everything you can see and touch and handle is going to be destroyed, dissolved and eliminated. We are to recognize the reality of coming judgment and the destruction of all things. Peter's point is this: a life that is lived for the pursuit of the things of the world first and only will go naked into judgment; but a life lived in this world for Christ, first and above all, will be of great eternal worth and stand the test of God's judgment.

So Peter says, in light of the day of the Lord, live a life of holiness and godliness. Though you cannot see this in the English translation, those two words are plural words. We should live lives of holinesses and godlinesses. What Peter is saying is this. Holiness -- to be set apart from the evil world around us, to be set apart from the world and dedicated to God for His use and for His glory displaying a life of righteousness that reflects the character and nature of Christ -- that holiness is to characterize every aspect of our lives. That is the point of using the plural words here.

And as we have seen before morality is not holiness. Holiness is something more. God is not calling us to be moral, but to be holy, to reflect His character, His Lordship, a transformed life, a life satisfied in Him and filled with love for Him. There is a massive difference between a moral home and a holy one that is set apart to God, that reflects His glory. There is a massive difference between a frugal and conservative and wise checkbook and one that is holy. There is a major difference between making moral decisions that reflect well upon you and making holy decisions that magnify Christ as your greatest treasure. There is a massive difference in raising

your children to be good, socially conservative, productive members of society and raising them to as holy, set apart to God and in the fear and instruction of the Lord. There is a great difference in being nice and being holy. There is a massive difference between having conversations that are moral and conversations that are holy. There is a massive difference between having moral relationships and holy ones. Is every area of your life pointing to the worthy and value of God, His Christ and His gospel? Is your life set apart for His praise? Is your life a vehicle for the revelation of the holiness of God and for the power of His gospel to change you?

Along with holiness, our lives are to be characterized by godliness – that inner attitude of worship that expresses itself word and deed is to characterize every aspect of our lives. Godliness pictures a man or a woman who is empowered by grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit to conduct themselves in the reverence and awe of God, not just in appearance but in reality, in a way that pleases God. Again that is to be the character of our lives. Is it? Are you living your whole of your life as an offering of worship to Christ? Are we living the entirety of our lives “Corem Deo” -- before the face of the Lord?

We are to live these lives, Peter says, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God. That word that is translated as hastening is a word that also means “to desire earnestly” and that makes more sense here. This waiting is not just holy inactivity and withdrawing into the four walls of the church, but rather an active co-operation with God in the pursuit of the lost, preaching and sharing the gospel faithfully and persistently, praying according to His will, and worshipping Him in the light of eternity as well as meeting together, and encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:25) That is the second response that Peter is encouraging and then last, we should

Look for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Peter closes this section by saying: **But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2Pe 3:11-13 ESV)** Peter is saying that in light of God’s promise of Christ’s return, we are to be looking for a new home, a glorious home, a new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells. The new heavens and the new earth will be the residence of righteousness. The new heavens and the new earth will be characterized by righteousness. There will be no sin. Sin will have been completely annihilated. The evidences of sin will be completely gone. **(Isa 65:17-18 ESV)** Righteousness will reside there because the

King of Righteousness will reign and rule there. Jesus, who is our righteousness, will occupy the throne. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, in whose righteousness we are clothed and by whose righteousness we are covered will be the King. The One whose righteousness endures will be forever enthroned and we will worship Him and enjoy Him as our worthy King forever.

1) Make the focus of your life the soon return of Christ...

2) Consider the gospel. The only refuge for coming judgment is the one who bore the judgment from God reserved for sinners – Jesus Christ **(John 5:24)**.

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