

Like a Thief in the Night

2 Peter 3:10-13

Thought for the Day: In light of the coming Day of the Lord, we should live holy and godly lives so that those around us will be attracted to a personal, saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord has delayed His coming for nearly 2,000 years and scoffers question, "Where is the promise of His coming?" They question the faithfulness of God and the trustworthiness of His Word. They fail to realize that God does not operate according to our timeframe and is working out His plans and purposes according to His will, not ours. If He delays it is because He wants more and more people to repent of their sins and trust in Him for salvation.

In verses 10-13 Peter describes what is going to happen in the Day of the Lord and how believers ought to live as they wait for that Day to come.

10 But the day of the Lord will come...

- The word "day" here does not refer to a single twenty-four-hour day.
- This expression is used at least 21 times in the Old Testament to refer to various times of God's judgment.
 - "In the Old Testament, [the day of the Lord] referred to any period of time when God sent judgment on the wicked, so there were many historical 'days of the Lord'—like the flood of Noah or the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah." (*Swindoll, 1&2 Peter, p. 357*)
- This expression is used only 5 times in the N.T. and always referring to the same time of future judgment that Peter is speaking of here. "It is a period of time with various stages:
 1. It refers to the Tribulation, a seven-year period when God will judge unbelieving Israel (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2).
 2. It includes His return to earth [at the end of the Tribulation] when He will inflict vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus (2 Thess. 1:7-10).
 3. It is [also] used of the Millennium when Christ will rule the earth with a rod of iron (Acts 2:20).
 4. It refers to the final destruction of the heaven and the earth with fire. That is the [primary focus] here in chapter 3." (*MacDonald, Commentary, p. 2401-02*)
 - In summary, the future Day of the Lord will begin at the start of the seven-year Tribulation period and run through the Millennium, until the final destruction of the heavens and the earth with fire, just before the creation of a New Heaven and Earth at the beginning of eternity future.
 - In other words, the Day of the Lord will last approximately 1,007 years!

...like a thief...

- Jesus, Paul and Peter all use this expression but none of them tell us when the Day of the Lord will be. (Matthew 24:43-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)
- It will come unexpectedly, without warning, and at a time when those who are on the earth will not be looking for it.

- “The thief does not warn his victims that he is coming!” (*Wiersbe, Be Alert, p. 102*)
- Why doesn’t Scripture tell us exactly when the Lord is coming? Because human nature being what it is, people would wait until the last minute to prepare! As it is, we must *always* be prepared for His return! And that is as it should be.
- Remember that the Church will not be here for the beginning of the Day of the Lord; Christians will be removed from the earth in the Rapture some time before that Day begins.

...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.

- This describes the final destruction at the conclusion of the Day of the Lord, 1,007 years after its commencement.
- The entire physical, material, universe will be destroyed. The very elements of the universe will be melted away with an incredible fervent heat. Every material thing in the universe will cease to exist!
- The earth and everything on it will be burned up and dissolved!
- There are only three things in this world that will last forever: God, the Word of God, and people. Everything else will burn! Are you spending your life on things that will burn or investing your life in the things that will last forever?

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...

- God’s coming judgment should motivate us to live lives of holiness and godliness.
- “If we’re not going to be here for the Day of the Lord, why does it matter how we live?” It matters because anyone who is left behind following the Rapture of the Church is going to experience the judgment of the Day of the Lord!
- We should be living in such a manner that people are drawn to the Lord to put their faith in Him for salvation.
- “A man’s character is the only thing he can take out of this life with him. Therefore...the quality of the lives we lead in the light of this coming dissolution is of supreme importance.” (*Michael Green, Second Peter, pp. 139-40*)

12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

- “In a certain sense, as we do the work of evangelism and share the gospel, we participate in speeding the return of Christ. God already knows how many and who will be saved, and when that number is fulfilled, the end will come.” (*Swindoll, 1&2 Peter, p. 358*)
- “‘Hastening’ means eagerly desiring; we are not to fear the end but to hope for it.” (*MacArthur, 1 & 2 Peter, p. 97*)

13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- Cp. Revelation 21:1-4.
- We don’t know as much as we would like about heaven, but we know enough to know that’s where we want to spend eternity!