

The Coming Day of the Lord Jesus, pt. 2 (2 Pet 3.10-18)

I. REVIEW: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECOND COMING

- A. The reality and certainty of the Second Coming of Jesus was one of the most important parts of the belief system of the early church. Throughout the New Testament, the Second Coming is seen as the *blessed hope* for each and every believer.

¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2.13)

- B. Yet, most believers are completely unaware of and unfamiliar with the truths related to the Second Coming. Often, we believe the lie that studying the events surrounding the return of Jesus are difficult and unclear — or unknowable — thus leading us to a type of ambivalence related to these truths.

- C. However, the expectation of Christ's return — and the events that surround it — were a foundational part of Christian belief.

²that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles (2 Pet 3.2)

⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thes 2.5)

- D. The certainty of Christ's immanent return stands behind the faith, obedience, and encouragement of every single book of the New Testament. Because of that, it is important for us to familiarize ourselves with the glorious truths related to Jesus' return in order that we might be filled with hope and steadfast endurance in this world.

- E. It was precisely the teaching concerning the Second Coming — and particularly the judgment that will happen at Christ's return — that the false teachers of Peter's day had sought to undermine.

- F. In 2 Peter 3, the apostle looks specifically at the false teachers' disregard for the second coming and outlines the faultiness of their beliefs, the right understanding of the "delay" of Christ's return, and an exhortation to holiness in light of the immanent and certain return of Jesus.

- G. Outline of 2 Peter 3

3:1-2	Purpose of writing this letter reinforced
3:3-4	The presence of scoffers who mock the reality of Christ's Second Coming
3:5-10	Two answers to the objections of the scoffers
3:11-18	Exhortations to holy living in light of Christ's return

II. THE CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S RETURN (2 PET 3.10)

- A. At the beginning of chapter 3, Peter turns to show how the false teachers in the midst of the church had begun to scoff at the reality of Christ's return. These false teachers *misunderstood* the reality of the delay in Christ's coming as evidence that he would not return — and thereby would not bring judgment. This teaching was how the false teachers justified and promoted their sinful lifestyles (v. 3).

- B. To answer the presence of the scoffers who mocked the coming of the Lord Jesus, Peter gave two answers for the people of God in order to rightly understand the situation.

1. First, Peter demonstrates that the teachers overlooked a *historical fact*. Although the teachers claimed that God would not intervene because nothing seemed to ever change, Peter demonstrates this is a deliberate and willful distortion of historical reality.

2. Second, Peter encourages the church to remember a *theological reality*. The church is to rightly understand the delay in Christ's coming. We are not (like the false teachers) to view this as evidence that God doesn't care or evidence that he will not intervene. Rather, we are to rightly understand that the delay in fact demonstrates something about the character of God — namely, that he is patient and long-suffering toward sinful humanity *in order* that might give them time for repentance unto salvation.
- C. **Day of the Lord:** After giving these two answers in response to the scoffers, Peter wants to emphasize that although there is in fact a delay in the coming of the Lord, Christians must not be deceived. He desires that the church recognize that the day of the Lord will certainly come.
1. Throughout the OT Scripture, the phrase “Day of the Lord” was shorthand for the time when God would consummate his redemptive purposes. This “day” would include judgment on all unrighteousness, salvation for God's people, and the eternal restoration of the created order in peace and righteousness.
 2. In the NT, the Day of the Lord becomes synonymous with the return of Christ.
 3. At the first coming of Jesus, God *fulfilled* his purposes by making a way of salvation available to all who would call upon Christ as Lord.
 4. At the second coming of Jesus, God will *consummate* all of his purposes by recreating all things, judging the wicked, and ultimately saving those who are in Christ.
- D. In reminding the church of the certainty of the coming Day of the Lord, Peter uses two images to support the ethical exhortations that will occupy the remainder of his letter.
1. **Thief in the night:** Peter utilizes a common portrait that Jesus used about the suddenness of his return. This image is intended to promote a sober watchfulness and diligent faithfulness among God's people as we wait for his coming.

³⁶But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only...
⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matt 24.36, 42-44)

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1 Thes 5.1-3)

2. **Purging fire:** The second image that Peter uses is one of a refining fire. He declares that when the Day of the Lord comes the heavens will pass away and the heavenly bodies and the works of the earth will be burned up. Because of this fire, Peter declares that the works of the earth will be “exposed” (or, shown) for what they are. The image is of a refining fire that “proves” the quality of the metal by exposing impurities and imperfections.

¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — ¹³each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3.12-15)

⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (1 Cor 4.5)

III. THREE EXHORTATIONS TO GODLY LIVING (2 PET 3.11-18)

- A. For the remainder of the letter, Peter will utilize the certain coming of the Day of the Lord — and the reality of it being like a thief and a exposing fire — as the motivation for three exhortations toward godly living.
- B. If the false teachers used their scoffing at the coming of the Lord (particularly his coming in judgment) as the impetus for promoting lifestyles of indulgent passion and turning away from God’s authority (cf. 2 Pet 2.10), then Peter desires to show that the certainty of Christ’s return actually fuels submission to Christ’s ways in a spirit of obedience.
- C. Throughout the NT, there is an inseparable relationship between *eschatology* (the coming of the Lord Jesus) and *ethics* (how we should live). Examples: Mark 13.32-37; Rom 13.12; 1 Cor 15.58; Eph 5.11-13; Phil 4.5; Col 4.5; 1 Thes 5.1-11; 2 Tim 4.1-2; Jas 5.8-9; 1 Pet 1.13-17; 4.7; 1 John 2.28.

D. *Exhortation #1: What sort of people ought you be (2 Pet 3.11-13)*

1. Peter begins by drawing an ethical implication from the certainty of Christ’s return and the radical nature of the coming judgment of all things.
2. Since the heavens will be dissolved and the works of the earth will be tested in the fire of God’s presence, the implication is that we ought to ask ourselves what type of people we must be in light of this.
3. **Holiness and godliness:** this phrase serves as a short-hand for the lengthy exhortation earlier given in 2 Peter 1.5-11. Peter is reminding his readers that the faith they have obtained as a gift is to be supplemented by a diligent and faithful pursuit of godly living in partnership with God’s grace. Christians are to make concerted effort to pursue the elements of a godly life in a *wholeheartedness* with a *spirit of obedience*.
4. **Waiting:** to live with a pursuit of such wholehearted obedience demonstrates that our hope is set on the coming of the Lord Jesus. One of the primary images used throughout the New Testament of a sober-minded life of holiness is that of waiting for the coming of the Lord. Rather than scoffing at the reality of Christ’s return (whether actually or functionally), we are called to *look for* and *long for* the day when Christ will come to make all things new.
5. **Hastening:** Peter declares a remarkable reality about a lifestyle of godliness in the church. He states that such an ordered life actually *hastens* the coming of the Day of the Lord. This is tied logically to what he has stated earlier with regards to why the Lord delays his coming. If, in some manner, the Lord delays his coming in order for the church to walk in a posture of repentance (“patient toward *you*”, v. 9), then it follows that a church walking in a posture of repentance and a spirit of obedience will in some manner hasten the coming of the Lord. Throughout the Scripture there is a dynamic relationship between the repentant response of God’s people and the activity of God among them.

¹⁸Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you... ¹⁹He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you (Isa 30.18-19)

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (Acts 3.19-20)

6. **New heavens and new earth:** The purging of the heavens and earth with fire is not so that God can destroy creation — but rather so that he might renew it. Because of this, we are waiting for God’s purposes in judgment and salvation in order that he might establish a new creational reality where righteousness and perfection dwell for eternity.

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Rev 21.1)

E. **Exhortation #2: Be diligent to be found without spot or blemish in peace (2 Pet 3.14-16)**

1. Now, since believers are waiting and watching for the coming of the Lord Jesus in a spirit of humble obedience, they are to **be diligent** to be found without spot or blemish. Earlier, in chapter 1, Peter had exhorted believers to “make every effort” to pursue holy virtues and to be “more diligent” to confirm their calling in Christ. Now he takes up the same word to remind them of the grace empowered effort required to walk in obedience as a child of God.
2. **Without spot or blemish:** The lack of belief in Christ’s judgment had led the false teachers to promote a type of teaching that indulged the passions and sensuality. Peter had defined these teachers as *blots* and *blemishes* within the Christian community (2 Pet 2.13). Now, he is reminding believers to live in a manner that reflects the purity and holiness that has been given to them freely by the grace of God. This does not mean that our lives make us spotless and without blemish before God, but rather that because we have been made so before him, we are to diligently seek to order our lives in submission to his ways as a demonstration of this.
3. **Count the patience of the Lord as salvation:** Believers are exhorted to consider and think rightly about the patience of the Lord as Peter has described it previously (v. 9).
4. **As does our brother Paul:** Peter highlights that Paul had also taught this concerning the patience of the Lord (cf. Rom 2.4). However, the false teachers were accustomed to take Paul’s teaching and distort it for their own ends. This likely speaks of the common distortion of Paul’s teachings on free grace as license for sin (cf. Rom 6.1ff.).

F. **Exhortation #3: Take care to not be carried away (2 Pet 3.17-18)**

1. The final exhortation of the letter is a call for the Christian church to take intentional care to not be tossed to and fro by the teaching of the false teachers.
2. Since believers are given ample warning on the front end (**knowing this beforehand**, v. 17), they ought not be surprised or knocked off course when it happens. Not being carried away requires a sure and stable footing in the truth of Christ Jesus.
3. This imagery is important because of the subtle and crafty nature of false teaching. Much false teaching in the church catches believers unaware because it sounds so similar to aspects of the truth in the Scripture (uses Biblical language or ideals, emphasizes one aspect of the truth at the expense of others). Peter demonstrates that without a diligent and faithful watchfulness, the church is at risk to be carried away by such teaching. In other words, there is a risk that individuals (or communities) might be taken far down the stream of false teaching before they realize they have succumbed to it.
4. Rather, Peter exhorts the church to **grow** in two things. Using the word “grow” is clearly contrasted with the language of being carried away. To grow requires that we actively labor to participate in pursuing the means that God has granted us to experience life in him.
5. **Grace:** This speaks of the empowering presence of Christ given to the church by the Holy Spirit. We are to cultivate partnership with his empowering grace through the means that he has bestowed to us.

¹Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Cor 6.1)

6. **Knowledge of Christ:** At the heart of our stable foundation is communion with Jesus himself. We are to grow in the knowledge of who he is — not merely intellectually, but relationally and experientially as we commune with him through his word.

³And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17.3)