

THE “FIREWORKS” THAT YOU **DO** WANT TO MISS!

My wife and I have had the blessing and privilege of visiting a number of our country’s famous National Parks. Yellowstone—in 2012—was **our first** such trip—and was unquestionably the trip where we **learned the most**.

Here are some of the **most important** “lessons learned” from that trip.

- 1) The most **helpful thing** we learned was that the **parks are huge!** Our overnight accommodations were in the same place for the entire time—which made for a lot of driving! After that, we concentrated our park visiting to one section of the park at a time and reserved lodging accordingly.
- 2) The most **disappointing thing** that happened was that we were right next to a geyser that had not “gone off” for quite some time. Unfortunately, we had to “use the facilities” and by the time we got back, it had already erupted! In other words, we “missed the fire works!”
- 3) Although that was the most disappointing thing that happened, it wasn’t the **biggest mistake**. The **biggest mistake** we made was **not going** to Grand Teton NP on the same trip because it was only 30 miles away!
- 4) The most **intriguing thing** we learned was that Yellowstone NP sits on top of one of the largest volcanoes in the world! **The Yellowstone Caldera**—the large crater/depression left behind from a previous volcanic eruption—is so large that it is referred to as a “supervolcano.” The caldera in Hawaii is **2-1/2 miles** across; the one in Yellowstone is **44 miles across!** Why is that significant? Scientists who study volcanoes believe that if the one under Yellowstone erupted, ash would cover the **entire United States** in varying thicknesses: up to **3 feet** thick for cities close by...**11 inches** for Denver and Rapid City...and **1-2 inches** for us here in Wisconsin.

Such an eruption would alter the climate, affect farming and our water, and shut down electronic communications and air travel—at least for a time. No one, of course, knows for how long and to what degree. (<https://www.science.org/content/article/ash-yellowstone-supereruption-would-travel-across-us>).

One **more interesting tidbit** of information I found while reading up on this—scientists **might** know a **few weeks ahead** of time if Yellowstone is going to erupt! I’m not sure what good it would do to have a 3 week “heads up” that **3 feet** of ashes would be blanketing your city and home!

Needless to say, this is the kind of eruption—and fireworks—that you would **want to miss!** The best course of action—in my opinion—would be to “get out of Dodge” before the volcano blows!

Will this “supervolcano” erupt during our lifetime? We **don’t know**—and neither do scientists! But we **do know this**: God has something more devastating than a supervolcano **planned** for this earth! **The ground** we stand on—and **the sky we look up into**—will be done away with—in its entirety—to make way for a new heaven and a new earth.

We looked at that in II Peter 3 a couple of weeks ago; let’s turn back there. Two weeks ago, we noted in vs 7 **God’s plan** to destroy our current heavens and earth.

Verse 10 continues on with that thought and gives us some more details regarding the “fireworks” that God has in store for planet earth.

First, let’s notice... **1. The declared certainty of the day of the Lord**

Vs 10 “But the day of the Lord **will come**...”

--It doesn’t say the day of the Lord **might** come—it says that it **will** come. As mentioned two weeks ago, **delayed punishment** does not mean a **defective promise**.

The delay in Christ’s return is not due to His inability...or indifference...or a change of plans.

Why the delay? God doesn’t make us wonder; He “spells it out for us” in verse 9!

He is not willing that “any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

What does **perish** mean? To perish is the **opposite** of having eternal life. **Jesus** referred to it as “dying in your sins”—meaning unforgiven and condemned. **Jesus also** called it “everlasting fire” (Mt 25:41) and “everlasting punishment” (Mt 25:46). The apostle **John** referred to it as having the **wrath of God** abiding on us (John 3:36). **John also**—in the book of Revelation—warns us about the Great White Throne judgment in Revelation 20.

What happens to those whose names are **not written** in the book of life? Revelation 20:15 “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

How can we **avoid perishing**—and escape this fate? **By coming to repentance.**

We see that in the end of vs 9, too! What does it mean **to repent**? It means to have **sorrow for our sin**—and a **change of mind about sin** and a **change of mind about** how to get rid of **the guilt and penalty of sin!**

1) God wants people to know—and believe—that **their sin disqualifies** them from heaven.

2) God wants people to know—and believe—that they **cannot make themselves qualified** for heaven.

3) And God wants people to know—and believe—that they **can be forgiven**—and **gain access** to heaven—by confessing **their sins and sinfulness** to God...and **trusting Jesus and His death on the cross** for the payment of the penalty that they owe!

And when we **come to Jesus**—in both repentance and faith—He forgives us...and receives us...and credits His perfectness—His sinlessness—to our account! That’s what God wants for each of us! He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. What about you? Have you repented?

Don’t **use God’s longsuffering**—His delay so people can repent—against Him like the scoffers do! And don’t doubt in your heart the return of Jesus!

It is a **promise Jesus Himself made! He will come**—just as He said! The Greeks didn’t speak—or write—what we would call “proper” English 😊 and would often **change the word order** of a sentence for emphasis. Schreiner points out that in the Greek, the verb “will come” is first to emphasize the certainty of the coming day of the Lord. (Thomas Schreiner, *The New American Commentary*, 1, 2 Peter, Jude; p. 383).

2. The defining characteristics of the day of the Lord

So what are the characteristics of the day of the Lord? Peter gives several; here are three.

A. Sudden and unexpected

Although they are slightly different, I’m lumping them together. How do we know the day of the Lord is sudden and unexpected? Because Peter says it will “come like a thief in the night.”

How does a thief come? Suddenly and unexpectedly, right?

--You **don’t get a letter in the mail** from a thief saying he—or she—will be there on such-and-such a date.

--And you **don’t get a follow-up phone call** or text saying, “I’m on my way!”

We know from verse 15 of this same chapter that Peter was familiar with the **writings of Paul**. Paul told the believers of Thessalonica in 1 Thess 5:2 “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh **as a thief in the night.**” So Peter could be referring to Paul’s words.

Or...God could have certainly brought to Peter’s mind what **Jesus Himself had said** in Mt 24:42-44 “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ⁴³ But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in **what watch the thief would come**, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. ⁴⁴ Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not **the Son of man cometh.**” Regardless of Peter’s source, the day of the Lord would come suddenly and unexpectedly.

A second defining characteristic of the day of the Lord is that it is... B. Destructive

God **created** the heaven and the earth—Genesis 1:1—and **will create** a new heaven and earth according to Revelation 21:1. And Jesus—while on earth—**gave the blind their sight**...and the deaf their hearing...and gave the lame an ability to walk...and cleansed lepers...and fed the hungry and raised the dead!

But the day of the Lord is not about **creating or healing**, it is about tearing apart!

It is **not constructive**—it is destructive! --“Fire” is referred to in vss 7 and 12

--“Fervent heat” is referred to in vs 10 and 12 --“Burned up” is referred to in vs 10, “melt” in vs 12

--In vs 10, we see that “the elements”—the stuff the world is made of—“shall melt with fervent heat”

--Vs 11, “Seeing all these things shall be dissolved...”

--Vs 12 refers to “the heavens on fire being dissolved” and the “elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

The word “melt” in vs 10...and “dissolved” in vs 11...and “dissolved” in vs 12 all come from the same Greek word “loo’-o.” It has a couple of meanings, but here it means to “break up into its component parts.”

In other words, **to destroy**. We can get caught up in trying to determine the exact meaning of all this—and how to visualize it in our minds—but the bottom line is this: the current heaven and earth will be destroyed!

Not only that, it will result in ... C. Complete destruction

The current earth we live on shows **evidence of a flood**—meaning it is the **same earth** that God created in Genesis 1. God through Peter specifically states in vs 6 that the **world**—meaning the inhabitants of it—perished in the flood, but **the earth itself** was not destroyed. But it will be in conjunction with the day of the Lord!

--If "...the heavens shall pass away..." (vs 10), then they are no more!

--If the elements—what the earth is made of—is broken down into its component parts, the earth obviously has to be completely destroyed!

--Vs 11 "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved..." What are "all these things" referring to?

--The heavens...and the earth...and the elements that make up the earth!

Let's think again about the supervolcano of Yellowstone. **Will there be survivors** if it does indeed erupt and spill ash all over the United States? Yes; there will be! **Many** people will die—but **not most**.

--How many people will **physically** survive what Peter is describing for us here in verses 10-12?

None...zip...zero—unless you are in the **glorified, resurrected body** that God gives to those who are forgiven and who will be the inhabitants of the new heaven and new earth!

Next, let's consider... **3. The difficult chronology surrounding the day of the Lord**

Steven Cole wisely noted: "If II Peter were the only book of the Bible, we would have to conclude that this all-encompassing judgment by fire will take place at **the instant** that Christ returns."

(<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-13-living-light-day-2-peter-310-13>).

But II Peter **isn't the only book** of the Bible and from the other references to the day of the Lord, we learn that Peter **is not giving us a detailed chronology** of the end times. His emphasis is on **being prepared for the return of Christ** by living a godly life—something we see in vs 11 and that we will talk about next week.

A. The day of the Lord in the OT

When God led Peter to use the phrase "the day of the Lord," He **expected the readers to be familiar** with what was meant based on the teaching of the Old Testament. As just mentioned in the quote from Cole, you would have an incomplete—and confusing—view of the day of the Lord if you only looked at this verse.

Since there are **numerous references** to the "day of the Lord" in the OT (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6-9; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Mal. 4:1, 5), it would take quite some time to go through them. We're **not going to do that** here this morning, but I do want us to look at one passage—Isaiah 13—where we see a description that is similar to what Peter says in II Peter—and what John wrote in the book of Revelation. Please follow along as I read verses 6-13.

Can't spend a lot of time on this, but according to verse 1, this describes the judgment that came upon **Babylon**. But—according to vs 11—it is **also a judgment** that is to take place upon the **whole world**. Suffice it to say that this judgment **has not happened yet** because "the arrogance of the proud" has not ceased yet, has it?

We also know that vs 10 sounds a lot like how John—in the book of Revelation—describes events that take place during the 7-year Trib period and that vs 13 sounds a lot like what we just looked at in II Peter 3:10.

So—based on what we have here and the other OT references, we know these **4 truths** about the Day of the Lord:

- 1) It is a time of **God's judgment**
- 2) It often encompasses a period of time **longer than** a day
- 3) Sometimes it refers to judgment that has **already taken place**
- 4) Sometimes it refers to a final judgment that has **not yet taken place**

But understanding the day of the Lord **in the OT**—and comparing it with II Peter 3—still **leaves us with the impression** that when Jesus returns, He is going to **immediately destroy the world by fire**! To clear up this possible confusion, we also need to know **what Jesus said about** His return.

So next let's consider.... B. The return of Jesus according to Jesus. Notice on your outline **Mt 24:29-30** "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the **sun be darkened**, and the **moon shall not give her light**, and the **stars shall fall from heaven**, and the **powers of the heavens** shall be shaken:
³⁰ **And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven**: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with **power and great glory.**"

The point I'm making is this: In some verses that I read earlier—from this very same chapter—Jesus said He comes **as a thief in the night**. And Peter says, in II Peter 3:10, that the day of the Lord **comes as a thief in the night**. And yet here in Mt 24:29-30, Jesus says there will be **unmistakable**—"unmissable"—signs connected to His return in power and great glory. So how do we explain this apparent contradiction?

C. Clearing up the confusion between "signs"—and suddenness

The supposed contradiction between Jesus coming **without warning**—and **the signs** that He Himself mentions in Matthew 24—is easily explained if we look at Jesus' return **in two "phases" or "steps."**

Phase 1—as mentioned about a month ago—is what is commonly referred to **as the Rapture**. It is the sudden, unannounced return of Christ to **take true born-again believers to heaven** with Him before pouring out judgment on earth during the Tribulation. This event also includes the **resurrection of true believers** who have previously died. Biblical support for this view is found in I Thess 4:13-18 and I Corinthians 15:51-53.

Phase 2—also mentioned in a previous sermon—is roughly 7 years later when Jesus returns to earth in **power and glory**, defeats the antichrist and his armies during the battle of Armageddon, judges the nations for their treatment of the Jews during the Tribulation, then sits as king on David's throne in the city of Jerusalem for 1000 years. Biblical support for this is found in Matthew 24:29-30 and Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-6.

I want us to turn back to II Peter 3; notice again verse 10. Based on what we just talked about, it should be pretty obvious that Peter is using the phrase "day of the Lord" to indicate an **extended period of time** that **begins with** Jesus' any-moment-return as a thief in the night. When does the day of the **Lord end**? With the destruction of this heaven and earth referred to here in vs 10...and vs 7...and vss 11 and 12!

Please know there is **much, much more** that could be said about the day of the Lord. I actually considered giving you a chronological timeline of the major events that take place between the rapture of the church and the final destruction of the heavens and earth as described here by Peter.

Instead, I felt led to share with you... **4. The consequences for not being prepared for the day of the Lord**

The next event on the end times calendar—and the event that "kicks off" the day of the Lord—is the **return of Jesus** to rescue His true, blood-bought, born-again children from the wrath to come.

What if that were to happen right now—**literally**—during this church service? **Many** of us (hopefully **all** of us) would instantaneously—the Bible says "in the twinkling of an eye"—be given a body like Jesus' glorious body and meet Jesus in the air!

But... it would be extremely naïve of me to believe **that everyone** who darkens the door of this church is a true believer. **The Lord** knoweth them that are His—**but I don't!**

So what if you **aren't** a true believer? What will happen **to you**? I obviously can't say with 100% certainty, but here is what I envision. First, you will **look around the room** to see who else is still here. Maybe you will be **the only one**—or maybe there will be a handful of you!

Second, you will quite likely have this thought: 'Jesus came—just like Pastor was talking about!'
Third, you will probably ask yourself: '**Now** what? **What** is **going to happen** now?'

Again, I can't say with 100% certainty **everything** that will happen, but I do know this:

1) It will be a time of chaos greater than anything that has ever been experienced! **Millions of people** will be **missing**—and many people will die or be killed because **drivers will be** snatched from boats, cars, planes, and trains. **Fires will take longer** to put out because of missing fireman, **police will take longer** to respond because there won't be as many, and **looting will sky-rocket** when those left behind realize that there are a lot of empty houses to steal from!

2) It will be a time of **confusion** because those left behind will be trying to figure out where **everyone went...** and how to **clean up** the mess...and how to get society back up and running again.

And all of this is **just the beginning!**

3) It will also be a time of great **cataclysmic events**. What kind of events? **Time** does not permit me to read to you about the seven seal judgments...and the seven trumpet judgments...and the seven bowl (vials) judgments as found in Revelation, chapters 6 through 19. But here are a few verses to give you **a sense of the terror** that takes place in those who are left behind:

Revelation 6:15-17 “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, **hid themselves** in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ And said to the mountains and rocks, **Fall on us, and hide us** from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the **wrath of the Lamb**: ¹⁷ **For the great day of His wrath is come**; and who shall be able to stand?”

Now do you understand why I’m calling this the **fireworks you do want to miss?**

A question you may have is this: Can those that are left behind be saved?

There’s **a difference of opinion** regarding the answer to that question.

--Some suggest that if you **reject the gospel** now and **are left behind**, you can’t be saved based on **II**

Thessalonians 2:11 “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:”

--Others point to Revelation 7:9 which speaks of a multitude being saved during the Tribulation.

My view? Based on Revelation 7:9 being very clear—a multitude **is saved** during the Tribulation—and because II Thessalonians 2 is not quite so clear as to **exactly who** believes the lie, I’m not going to say that you can’t be saved if the Rapture occurs tonight, and you are left behind.

But I will say this: **Why take a chance?**

II Cor 6:2b “...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

So, what is it that God wants **you to do today?**

1. God wants us to believe His promise that Jesus will return—and respond accordingly!

--If you are **not saved**, He wants you to humble yourself...and repent...and receive Jesus as your Savior

--If you are **saved**, He wants you to live a life that is pleasing to Him

2. God also wants us to be burdened for the lost? God’s delay is for us to share the good news that He is not willing for people to perish. People need to repent—and we need to tell them of their need to do so!