

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

Take your Bibles and let's turn once again to II Peter 3. Notice what it says in verse 10. As mentioned last week, if you were unfamiliar with the phrase "the day of the Lord," you would get the impression that Jesus comes back to earth as a thief in the night and destroys the earth immediately upon His return!

But...we know from numerous OT references that "the day of the Lord" is a time of judgment that usually encompasses ***an extended period of time***—not just a 24-hour day!

Another misunderstanding that ***could possibly come*** from this verse is this: ***How*** can Jesus come as a ***thief in the night*** like it says here when Jesus Himself gives us "signs" that will take place ***before*** His coming?

The answer is quite simple—the return of Jesus appears in ***two phases*** or steps.

Phase 1—commonly referred to as ***the Rapture***—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.

Phase 2—occurs 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.

The final destruction, then, of the current heaven and earth is at least ***1007 years away***—which is ***a long way off***. But...***God's judgment*** on this Christ-rejecting world is ***not*** a long way off. There is ***only one*** thing that has to happen ***before*** the 7-year Tribulation period starts here on earth. ***What*** is that one thing?

I already ***mentioned it***: Jesus returns for His bride, the church—meaning all true believers—and takes us to heaven with Him. If you want to be **super accurate**, though, there is ***one more thing*** that happens before the Tribulation actually starts—the antichrist has to make a peace treaty with the nation of Israel (Dan 9:27).

So in II Peter 3:10, Peter declares the ***reality*** of the day of the Lord. "But the day of the Lord ***will come***...and the heavens ***shall*** pass away...and the elements ***shall*** melt...and the earth ***shall be burned up***."

The day of the Lord is real; ***it will come***. But the chapter doesn't end there, does it? Beginning with verse 11—and going through the end of the chapter—God through Peter tells us ***how*** the reality of the day of the Lord should ***impact us***. That is what we are going to begin to look at this morning.

So ***what difference does it make*** that the earth is going to be destroyed—especially in light of the fact that ***believers are not going*** to be destroyed with it? If it doesn't ***personally affect us***, **why does it matter**? Peter gives us ***three ways*** that the reality of the day of the Lord should impact us.

1. It should impact the way we live (vs 11)

We see that in vs 11: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be..." Peter gives us a question but doesn't expect us to answer. How do we know he doesn't expect us to answer? Because God answers the question ***for us***—in two parts.

First, it should impact... **A. Our actions**. We see that in the phrase "holy conversation."

As most of you know, the word "conversation" in the KJ English refers to ***more than just*** the way we speak. It comes from the Greek word "anastroph-ay" and means "behavior, conduct, manner of life." It means "the ways in which holy living shows itself;" in other words, ***actions***. I found it interesting to learn that of the 13 times it is used in the Greek NT, Peter uses it 8 of those times—6 of which are in the book of ***I Peter***.

Here's one of those instances in ***I Peter*** we are familiar with. ***I Pet 1:15-16*** "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of ***conversation***;¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

There's our word "**conversation**" again—as well as God's command for us to be holy!

Another thing I found interesting is that the word "conversation"—meaning manner of life—is ***plural***—the only time it occurs like that! ***Why*** would God through Peter tell us that our "manner of life's" should be holy?

MacArthur suggests it is to emphasize that holy behavior and conduct should spread over ***every aspect of our life***. So ***what*** will holy behavior—holy actions—***look*** like? Here are just a few ways.

1) It means our **speech** should be holy—meaning sin-free! Does **bragging** please God? What about **complaining**? Is it okay to **gossip**...or **lie**...or talk about things that are **displeasing** to God?
--Does **cursing—swearing**—please God? How about **slanguage**—using “modified” cuss words instead of the one we want to say? --What about being **unkind** in what we say to our spouse or children or coworkers or friends? Did I miss anybody 😊?

But as already mentioned, **holy living** encompasses much more than our **speech**.

2) It will affect what we **watch** on our computer or TV—or at least it should. Here’s a pretty simple **litmus test**: Would you **invite Jesus** to sit down and watch what you are watching with you? **If not**, don’t watch it! And let’s not forget—Jesus **is there watching it** with you whether you invite Him or not!

Not only does holy living influence what we **say and watch**...

3) It will also affect what we choose to **do**. Does **cheating** please God? Obviously not! What about **stealing**? Of course not! But what about the way **we dress**—especially you ladies? This is **not a news flash**, but here’s an **important reminder** to teen girls—and ladies—especially as the weather gets hotter!

Here’s the reminder: the “**eyes of guys**”—what they see—**affects their minds** more than it effects yours! **No; not all men** are “lustful pigs”—but God wired us differently than women! So don’t let the way you dress be a tool Satan can use to **tempt men** to have the wrong kind of thoughts!

One more area where holy living should influence what **we do**. Without being too specific—but hopefully specific enough—what about **partaking in sinful pleasures**? Is it okay for you to **do something wrong**—in the sight of God—just because it makes you **feel good**? It’s not okay, is it?

Much more could be said, but we must move on. Not only should the future destruction of this world motivate us to be holy **in actions**, it should also impact.... B. Our attitudes (“godliness”)

We see God’s desire for us to have a holy attitude in the word “godliness.” We’ve looked at this word way back in chapter 1, but since it’s been a while I want to remind you of what we learned before. “Godliness” is one of the seven “ingredients” listed in chapter 1:6-7 that we are to **lavishly supply** to the foundation of our faith. **D. Edmond Hiebert** defines it as “**the attitude of reverence** that seeks to please God in all things.” (BSAC 141:561 (Jan 1984)). **Zane Hodges** states: “it seems to have definite overtones of the **awe in which God should be held**.” (JOTGES 11:1 (Spring 1998)).

Is your life characterized by an **attitude of reverence** toward God, **an awe** of who God is? We’re supposed to have that; that is what God through Peter is telling us here in this verse.

How do we **cultivate**—how do we develop—a reverential awe toward God? By **reading** God’s Word... and **being** in church...and spending **heart-to-heart** time with God in prayer. So easy to **understand**—but often-times so difficult **to do!**

In light of the future destruction of the heavens and the earth, what kind of person does God want us to be? He wants us to live a holy life in an attitude of awe and reverence toward Him.

But why? If we are a child of His—having previously come to Him in repentance and faith and are trusting only in what Jesus did for us on the cross to save us—and if He is going to take us out of this world before He pours out His judgment upon it, **why does it matter** how we live? **Why does God insist** that we have **holy actions**—and an attitude of reverence toward God—while we remain here on earth?

C. God’s answer as to why we should be holy

There are obviously more, but I want to share 2 reasons why I believe God wants His children to live holy lives.

1) One reason is found in vs 9 where it says that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” So what does that have to do **with us**? After all, God does the saving—not us!

To which I reply, “Amen!” But the message that people **need to repent** has been **given to us to share** with others. Jesus said in **Luke 24:47** “And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached** in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Question for you, **Who** are people more likely to listen to regarding their need to repent: someone who is **no different** than them—or someone whose life **demonstrates a fear of God** and avoidance of sin? The answer is pretty obvious, isn’t it?

Let's not forget: "Our **talk** talks—and our **walk** talks—but our walk "talks" louder than our talk talks!"

Simply put, **a holy life** reinforces our message—but **an unholy life** undermines it! Why does the average person have "no fear of God before their eyes?" Because **God's people** don't have the reverence toward God—and hatred for sin—that they should have!

A second reason we should live a holy life is one that we looked at a number of months ago way back in chapter 1. Let's turn there; notice vs 11. The word "ministered" in vs 11 comes from the same Greek word that "add to" comes from in vs 5. And—just to refresh your memory—"add to" doesn't mean to **sprinkle a little in** like you do with salt. "Add to" (vs 5) and "ministered" (vs 11) were words used to describe how rich donors would **lavishly supply** for the needs of the choir when they came to the city to put on a play. Rather than be considered "stingy," they gave abundantly; lavishly.

So why should we **pursue spiritual growth**—like Peter says in chapter 1—and **live a holy life**—like he says in chapter 3? **2)** So we can have an abundant, hero's welcome kind of entrance into heaven! "Well done, though good and faithful servant" is **not spoken to every child of God** when they enter heaven—only the ones who have been faithful!

You're in II Peter 1; turn toward the front of your Bible a couple of pages to **I Peter 1**. Look at vs 17.

"And if ye call on the Father"—if God is your Father because Jesus is your Savior—"who without respect of persons" (meaning without favoritism or partiality)—"judgeth according to every man's work..."

What judgment is Peter talking about? Is he talking about your **good deeds** being put in a scale to see if they outweigh your **bad deeds** so you can get into heaven? No! He is talking about being rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ for what we do **after we are saved!** That's how it is determined whether or not we have **an abundant entrance** into heaven—or a "by the skin of our teeth" kind of entrance. (Additional verses about the judgment of believers: Romans 14:12; I Cor 3:12-15; II Cor 5:10; Rev 14:13).

And let's not miss what Peter says in the end of this verse: "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:" What does that mean? Peter is again telling us to have **a reverential awe of God**—and one way to develop it is to remember that we will be judged!

Back to II Peter 3:11. So...in light of the future destruction of the earth—even though believers won't be destroyed with it—God still wants us to live a holy life in both actions and attitudes. Why? Because He wants to use us to bring others to Himself—and He wants us to have an abundant entrance into His kingdom!

Not only should the future destruction of our current earth impact our lives...

2. It should impact where we look

We see that thought in vs 12 "Looking for and hasting unto the coming day of God..."

We have the words "look for" here in verse 12...and in verse 13...and again in verse 14. All 3 come from the same Greek word "pros-dok-ah'-o" which means "to expect, wait for, anticipate."

"Hasting"—is an old English word that means **to hasten**. **To hasten** means to **move or act with haste**; to proceed with haste. Some commentators suggest that we can hasten—**we can bring on more quickly**—the day of God by living holy lives. God unquestionably wants us to live holy lives, but I don't believe doing so will **bring the return of Jesus sooner**—and failing to do so will not delay it further. God's timetable is God's timetable and is not dependent upon us!

The Greek word that "hasting" comes from does not **just mean to hasten** and to urge on—it also has another meaning. What is that? **To "desire earnestly"**—which certainly fits the context much better and emphasizes how we are to look for the return of Jesus—with an earnest desire!

When I was about 5, my mom remarried, and we moved from Minnesota to a small farm in Wisconsin. My grandparents still lived in the St. Paul area and pretty much every Saturday they would come to visit us. I don't remember when that tradition started—and I can't remember exactly when it ended—but I do remember this: they **always**—without fail—brought jelly-filled donuts with them!

So even though we never lacked sweets—my mom was an incredible baker—we “looked for”—and “desired earnestly”—those donuts each Saturday!

Pretty poor analogy, but at least you get the point! Do we **look forward to**—and desire earnestly—the return of Jesus? If not, why not? ***I’ve thought of this off*** and on through the years. Selfishly—don’t judge me, I’m a sinner too—I wanted to **stay around** a while. I wanted to “do some things”—like raise my family...and travel...and be a grandpa...and—believe it or not—be a Pastor! But now that I’ve done all those things, I can honestly say if Jesus came right now, I’d be **singing** on the way up—not kicking and screaming!

What about you? Are you looking forward to Jesus coming back? You can’t be if you **aren’t saved**—and **you won’t be** if you aren’t living for Him! **1 John 2:28** “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”

We know—in our heads—that we are one heartbeat—or one blast of a trumpet—away from our life here on earth being done. That’s it—**no mulligans...no do-overs...no second chances**. Our opportunity to live for God will be over! And yet, we squander and waste our lives chasing things that won’t last—and that we can’t take with us!

How should knowing that this current earth is going to be destroyed impact us? First, it should impact **how we live**. Second, it should impact **where we look**. Third...**3. It should impact what we long for**
Verse 13 “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

--God’s children **need not fear being destroyed** with the current heaven and earth because we won’t be!
--And we shouldn’t necessarily **long for the coming of judgment day** so this world can be destroyed!
But...we do understand—IAW God’s promise—that the old earth has to go before the new one can come in!

Notice again how God led Peter to describe the new heavens and new earth: “wherein dwelleth righteousness!”

--Not the **beauty of it**: streets of gold, gates of pearl, and a wall whose foundation is 12 kinds of precious stone
--Not the **blessings of it**: God wiping away our tears, no more death...or sorrow...or crying... or pain
--Not the **“coolness”** of meeting Bible heroes like Abraham and Moses and Elijah and David and Paul
--Not **the immensity of it**, the new Jerusalem being 1500 miles high...and wide...and long (Revelation 21:16)
--Not **the marvel of the tree of life** with 12 kinds of fruit—one for each month (Revelation 22:2)
--Not **the reunion with loved ones**

How did he describe it? “...wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

MacArthur points out the English word **“dwell” doesn’t really do justice** to the Greek word it comes from. The word in Greek means to “settle down as a permanent resident.” Isn’t that a wonderful thought? Righteousness won’t just be there **once in a while as a guest**—it will be a **permanent** resident!

But...what is meant by **righteousness**? Commentators are divided as to exactly what Peter is referring to by the word “righteousness.” Is he referring to **God the righteous One** who dwells there...or **that only righteous people** will dwell there...or the **absence of unrighteousness** there? To which I reply, “Yes”—all three!

1) God will permanently dwell there.

Rev 21:3 “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and **He will dwell with them**, and they shall be His people, and **God Himself shall be with them**, and be their God.”

Rev 22:4 “And they **shall see His face**; and His name shall be in their foreheads.”

We cannot fully fathom—this side of heaven—what it will be like to dwell in the presence of God! Unmatched glory...and majesty...and perfection! So great is God’s glory that the new Jerusalem has no need for the sun or moon because the “glory of God did lighten it” (Revelation 21:23).

Not only will the righteous God dwell there permanently—so will we!

2) God's people will be righteous and permanently dwell there.

--We already noted that in Revelation 21:3 and 22:4

Revelation 22:5 "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they [His servants referred to in vs 4] **shall reign for ever and ever.**"

Righteousness will take up permanent residence in the new heaven and new earth. How? Because the righteous God dwells there—along with the people that God has made righteous.

But for righteousness to permanently dwell there...

3) Sin—and sinners—must be permanently banned from there.

And they are! We see that truth in **Revelation 21:27** "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Just as it is nearly impossible to imagine what it would be like to dwell in the *physical* presence of God, it is equally difficult to imagine what it will be like to dwell in a world where **there is no sin**—only righteousness.

Everything will be right there; **nothing** will be wrong! "In no wise"—meaning in no way—shall anything enter in "that defileth"—meaning, is "unclean."

Rev 22:3 "And there shall be **no more curse...**"

Sin is gone...the consequences of sin are gone...and the sin nature is gone!
And all God's people said, "Amen!"

According to Revelation 21:27, who is **banned** from this city? Anyone who is unclean!

--Who is unclean? All of us—we are all disqualified!

--How can we get rid of our uncleanness? We can't—but Jesus can because He died to pay the price of our sin and uncleanness!

--What happens when we come to God **in repentance**—recognizing our sin against Him...and our unworthiness of entering into His heaven—but also **in faith**, putting our trust in Jesus alone to be our sin-bearing Savior?

--He takes away our uncleanness—and puts our name in the Lamb's book of Life! **Romans 10:13** "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

--Have you received Christ? Is He yours? You need to have Him—not just know about Him!

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

1. First, He wants all of us to believe that Jesus is coming—and that some day God will destroy this world.

2. But He doesn't want us just to believe that—He wants us to **respond** to that truth!

--If you're not saved, He wants you to be saved!

--If you are saved, you have a responsibility to live a holy life—both in actions and attitudes.

--Are you doing that?

--He also wants you to be looking forward to Jesus' return.

--Are you doing that?

--Lastly, He wants you to long for heaven for the right reason—because righteousness is there.

--Are you doing that?