

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD – PART 2 (II Peter 3:14-16)

Take your Bibles and let's turn once again to II Peter 3. I want to start off this morning **the same way** I did last Sunday—by directing your attention to verse 10. The next event on the “end times” calendar is the sound of the trumpet—in conjunction with the return of Jesus as “a thief in the night.”

Will Jesus **destroy** the heavens and the earth at that time? **No**; He won't!

How can we be so sure—especially since the rest of the verse **seems** to say?

Because by studying **what** the “day of the Lord” means in the Old Testament—and comparing Scripture with Scripture in the New Testament—we learn that the **final destruction** of the current heaven and earth is at least **1007 years away**—after **both** the 7-year Tribulation and the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth!

So... based on this final destruction **being a long way off**—and based on the fact that God's people are **spared from that destruction** and judgment—it doesn't matter, how we live, right? **Wrong!**

Although that was the message **the false teachers taught**—it is **not the message of God** that Peter and the other writers of Scripture proclaimed! Last week—from verses 11-13—we noted **three ways God says** the future, final destruction should **impact** our lives.

--In verse 11, we noted that it should impact **the way we live**. **Peter asks** “what manner of persons ought ye to be” but **doesn't expect us to answer** the question. Why? Because God answers it for us!

--We are to have a godly life-style—godly **actions**—as seen in the phrase “holy conversation.”

--We are also to have godly **attitudes** as seen in the word “godliness” which means a reverential awe of God.

--In verse 12, we see that it should impact **where we look**. Our focus—and priority—**in this life** should not be this life—it should be the next one! We are to expect—and earnestly desire—the coming day of God. Why? Because we **want people to be judged**? No; because we **want the new heaven and new earth** to come—and the **old has to go** before the new can come!

--And in verse 13, Peter reminds us **why we should long for** the new heaven and earth: because righteousness—and **only righteousness**—dwells there! What does that mean?

--It means that **God** will be there—and Satan will not.

--It means **only righteous people** will be there—and the unrighteous will not.

Who are the righteous? Those who have come to God in humble repentance, agreeing with God that they are **not righteous**; then receiving—by faith—Jesus and Jesus alone to be their sin-bearer.

--What happens when we do that? God credits to our account the righteousness—the perfectness—of Jesus!

So God will be there...and God's people will be there...and nothing unclean...or unholy...or sinful...or wrong will be there! Can we really, truly **fathom** that? I don't think so—but some day we will **experience** it!

But the letter doesn't end there! Peter keeps going—and gives us **more** responsibilities in light of the future, final destruction. What is interesting, though, is to realize that they really aren't **more or new** responsibilities. Instead, Peter is—to a large degree—**repeating** what he already said!

Why would God do that? Pretty safe to say because He wants to make sure we “get it!” Please follow along as I read verses 13-18.

1. The expectation to look (vs 14a)

Look at the first part of vs 14: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye **look** for such things...”

Whenever we see the word “**wherefore**,” we should ask ourselves what the **where-for** is **there** for! It's a word of conclusion or summary, right? It's as if Peter is writing: “Based on what I just wrote, you need to do thus-and-so.” **What things** did Peter expect them to be looking for? He **doesn't say** in verse 14, does he?

But—as pointed out last week—the words “look for” are in vs 13—and “looking for” are in vs 12! Peter expected them to be looking for the “day of the Lord” (vs 10)—and the “day of God” (vs 12)—which I take to be the same thing.

But...since the “day of the Lord” **won’t start until Jesus returns** for His bride the church, they were to be looking for—continually expecting and earnestly desiring—the return of Jesus!

Who is Peter writing to? Is he writing to **all people**? No; he calls them “beloved”—a phrase of endearment directed **to fellow believers**. And let’s not forget what we learned way back in chapter 1—somehow Peter knew **his days were numbered** so this was, in essence, his **farewell address** to them!

And as a **true shepherd** that was about to leave them for heaven, he reminded them that they were loved **by him**—and they were loved **by God**! It is also noteworthy to realize that the words “**look for**” are in the **present tense**—meaning it was something they were to **continually be doing**.

So what **about us**? Peter expected fellow believers to continually be looking for the old heavens and earth to go away—and for the new heaven and earth to come. But that entailed first and foremost the **return of Jesus**. Are we desiring that? Are we expecting that? Are we **looking for** the return of Jesus—and looking **forward to** it? That was the expectation **Peter had**—and it is God’s **expectation of us**!

2. The exhortation for living (vs 14b)

We already noted **in vs 11** that Peter expected them to live a life characterized by godly **actions**—and godly **attitudes**. In the second half of **vs 14**, Peter **exhorts them again** regarding how they are to live. There are some slight differences in what he said before, however, and I want to expand on them a little.

A. The command

First, “be diligent” is in the imperative—meaning it is a **command**. Peter is not **requesting** or **suggesting** that they be diligent—he is telling them that **they must be**.

But what does it mean to be **diligent**? I won’t have you turn there, but the same word is found in some verses we looked at before: II Peter 1:10 (diligence) and II Peter 1:15 where it is translated “endeavor.” It means to **exert** ourselves...to **fully apply** ourselves...to **whole-heartedly commit** ourselves to do something.

What were they to whole-heartedly throw themselves **into doing**?

“That ye may be found **of Him** in peace...” To be found **of someone** is the same as being found **by someone**. If you are **found of** someone while playing “hide-and-seek,” you were **found by** them.

“Him” refers to God—that’s pretty straightforward—but what does Peter mean when he says, ‘Whole-heartedly throw yourselves into being found by God **in peace**’?

There are primarily **three different ways** “peace” is described and used in the Bible.

1) Peace with God. We see that in **Romans 5:1** “Therefore being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:” This is the peace that is made **with God** when we receive Jesus as our Savior and are declared right with God. We are converted from **enemies** of God to **children** of God!

Is this the kind of peace Peter is referring to? **Probably not!** Why? Because he is writing to people who are **already saved**—thus the reason for calling them beloved! In other words, they didn’t have to make **peace with God** because they already had it!

2) Peace with others. I **Thessalonians 5:13** “And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at **peace among yourselves**.” **Is this** the kind of peace that Peter is referring to? Once again, probably not!

Why? Because there is nothing in the context **about relationships** with one another.

3) Peace of God. What is the peace of God? In **Phil 4:6-7**, Paul reminds us that the best way to have the peace of God flood our hearts—instead of anxiety and worry—is to let our requests be made known unto God.

But—once again—the context does not point to having peace in the midst of storms and trials. Instead, it talks about the kind of **peace that comes with living** a God-pleasing life—without spot and blameless. So, I believe the peace that Peter is referring to is the peace that comes from having a **clear conscience**.

Acts 23:1 “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good **conscience** before God until this day.”

Acts 24:16 “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a **conscience** void to offence toward God, and toward men.” **II Corinthians 1:12** “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of **our conscience**...”

I John 3:20-21 “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

²¹ Beloved, if **our heart condemn us not**, then have we confidence toward God.”

What kind of life will lead to us having peace—a clear conscience—before God?

I believe Peter gives us the answer here in the end of the vs: “without spot and blameless.”

I’m calling that... B. The contrast between true believers and the false teachers

Here’s why I’m making that distinction. Notice on your outline both the English words and the English spelling of the Greek words that they come from. Peter said of the false teachers in the 2nd half of II Peter 2:13: “Spots (*spiloi*) are they and blemishes (*momoi*).” Right underneath that, I gave you the words that Peter uses here in II Peter 3:14: “...without spot (*aspiloi*) and blameless” (*amometoi*).”

The Greek really helps us see the point Peter is making: they needed to be **the exact opposite** of the false teachers! The false teachers denied that Jesus was coming back—and denied that there was a judgment!

And because there was no judgment, the false teachers concluded, you can **live any way you want!** Their motto? Instead of “drill baby, drill,” it was “**sin baby, sin!**”

Peter said, ‘Don’t be like them—be the **exact opposite!**’ Live a life that is spotless and blameless!

Was Peter teaching that they could **attain** sinless perfection? Not at all! But he was reminding them that the way to have **continual peace with God** is to strive to be **obedient to God and to please Him**. Can you have true peace with God—and in your heart—when you are **purposely disobeying** God?

I’ve never experienced peace when I’m willfully disobeying —and I don’t believe you have either! But we can have a clear conscience—and peace with God—if we **strive to live** a God-pleasing life—and confess and forsake our sin when we fail! What happens when we confess our sins? I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

So Peter is teaching us to **keep short accounts with God!** It amazes me that there are Christians who know—in their heart of hearts—that they are doing wrong, yet they are **seemingly surprised** that they have no peace! I’ll take it a step further: I believe **a lot—not all, but a lot**—of mental health problems are caused because people **don’t deal with their sin and guilt** in a Biblical way!

First, God expects us to be **looking for** Jesus’ return.

Second, God exhorts us—through Peter—to **live our lives** in a way that pleases God.

Third, Peter gives us... **3. The explanation of the longsuffering of God (vs 15-16a)**

--Vs 15 “And account”—consider, deem, think of—“the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...”

A. The purpose of the longsuffering of God

We know from vs 4 that the scoffers denied Jesus’ return because He hadn’t come back yet—and they adamantly denied the flood claiming that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

But—in vs 9—we are told **why the delay**: because the Lord is “long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

And in vs 15, Peter **gives the same reason** using a different word: **salvation!** The delay of Jesus is because He is waiting for more people to **come to repentance and be saved!** It really shows the heart of God, doesn’t it? Some of us want Jesus to return **to set things right** in this mixed up, upside-down world.

We want Jesus to **be honored**—not mocked! And Jesus wants that, too!

We want Jesus to **be praised**—not scorned! And Jesus wants that, too!

We want **good to be called good**—not evil; and **evil to be called evil**—not good! Jesus wants that too! But...Jesus delays His return because He wants more people to repent and be saved. Do we want that, too?

B. Paul’s concurrence with the longsuffering of God

Peter wasn’t the only one who taught that the delay of Jesus was because He wanted more people to be saved. **Paul taught** the same thing—and Peter refers to that in the end of vs 15 and the 1st part of vs 16: “even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him **hath written unto you**; As also in all his epistles, **speaking in them** of these things...” What things?

The importance of living a holy life—and the reason for the delay of Jesus!

1) Some of Paul's exhortations to be holy are found in Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; I Thessalonians 2:12.

2) Some of Paul's teaching on the reason for Christ's delay are found in Romans 2:4 and I Timothy 2:4.

Although not as specific as Peter's teaching, it is certainly implied.

One question that often comes up when studying this passage is: **Why does Peter** all of the sudden, it seems, randomly **bring up Paul**? Paul's name is **not mentioned** at all in the first letter—and it's the one and only time Peter refers to Paul in **this** letter—and he doesn't do that until **pretty much the end** of it! The answer that makes the most sense is this: false teachers were **taking what Paul taught**—especially about liberty and freedom from the law—and **twisting it to mean** that they could live any way they wanted to!

Peter doesn't deny that **some of what Paul** wrote was "hard to be understood"—but Paul never wrote that it was "okay to sin." In fact, God led Paul to anticipate that some might misunderstand him! **Romans 6:1 - 2a**: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." **May it never be!**

Lastly, we need to consider: **4. An examination of the distortion of Scripture (vs 16b)**

We see that in the middle of vs 16: "which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

A. The distortion

The key to understanding this last half of the verse hinges on what is meant by "wrest." It looks like the first part of the word "wrestle," doesn't it? Is Peter saying **not to study and "wrestle"** with things in the Bible that are difficult and hard to understand?

No; he is **not saying** that at all! The English word "**wrest**" appears only once in the NT—here! It is a very graphic word and **literally** means "to twist, causing torture." **Figurately**, then, it means to twist...to pervert...to distort language. They were taking what **Paul** wrote—and what **other Scripture writers** wrote—and twisting it to mean **something other than what God** intended it to mean!

B. The distorters

Who were the ones that were distorting/perverting/twisting the meaning of Scripture?

First, Peter says they were **unlearned**. What does that mean? Here again we have a Greek word that is **used only once** so we don't have other verses to compare it to. Were they "unlearned" because they hadn't "gone to school" and learned from the Pharisees...or Sadducees...or apostles? Is that what Peter means?

Second, Peter says they were **unstable**. They were unsteady...unsettled...and someone who could not be relied upon. But again, we don't have a lot to go on because it is only used here and in II Pet 2:14.

When it comes to **literal walking**, we understand that a toddler is unstable. We also know that when it comes to **walking with the Lord**, "toddler Christians" stumble and fall down quite often.

So what are we to **take away** from this? Is Peter saying that if you **don't have a college education**—and are a little bit up and down in your walk with the Lord—that **you will distort and twist** Scripture? And—**by implication**—is Peter saying you **shouldn't study** the Bible for yourself if one or both of these descriptions fit you? We know that's not what is meant—but how would we answer someone who said: 'Don't read the Bible for yourself; instead, just listen to what your church leaders tell you'—and back it up using this verse?

The best way to answer this is by **comparing Scripture with Scripture**—and believing that the Bible is **the best commentary on itself!** So...what does the Bible tell us **about studying the Bible**? Here are just a few of the many verses:

Joshua 1:8 "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt **meditate therein day and night**, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein:"

--You need meditate on the word of God so you know what it says so you can obey it!

Psalms 1:2 "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and **in His law doth he meditate day and night.**"

--Pretty hard to **delight in** God's Word—and **meditate on it**—if you don't read it for yourself!

I Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, **desire the sincere milk of the word**, that ye may grow thereby:"

--Imagine how crazy my schedule would be if I had to drive to all of your homes every day to read and explain the Bible to you if you were "unlearned!" So Peter is obviously **not saying** that we should avoid the Bible until we have a certain amount of **education or experience!**

C. Their destruction

What happens to those who distort...and pervert...and twist the Scriptures? Vs 16 ends with the phrase “unto their own **destruction**.” Is that a reference to merely **their physical death**? No; it’s not! The same word is found twice in II Peter 2:1...and in II Peter 2:3...and in II Peter 3:7. In each of those instances, the context demonstrates that **destruction** means to “incur the loss of eternal life” and “to be delivered up to eternal misery.” Let’s think this through a little so as not to miss what Peter is saying.

--Are there **devil worshippers** and followers that will be cast into hell? Yes; there are!

--Are there **evil, wicked people** that will be cast into hell? Yes; there are!

But...there are people that **read** the Bible...and **study** the Bible...and **teach** the Bible—or at least **think they** are teaching it—who will **also be cast** into hell! **Why?** Because they distort and twist what the Bible teaches about **forgiveness** of sins and **eternal life** and how to be **right with God!**

There is only **one way** to be saved—period! It is not **this church’s** way...or **that church’s** way...or **my** way...or **your** way! It is **God’s way**—and Jesus, of course, is God’s way!

John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man** cometh unto the Father, **but by me.**”

Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

How serious is God about this? Peter just told us, right?

--If they get it wrong, it will bring their eternal damnation!

--And God—through Paul—wrote in **Galatians 1:8** “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **accursed.**”

Strong language, but needful because the stakes are literally **a matter of heaven or hell!** Next week we will talk a little bit about how to guard against twisting Scripture—and finish up the chapter.

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

1. First, be looking for the return of Jesus. Why? Because God expects you to be looking!
2. Second, be whole-heartedly striving to have a clear conscience before God. Don’t take sin lightly—and confess sin as soon as God points it out!
3. Third, remember the reason for the Lord’s delay. He wants people to repent and be saved. Ask God to help you be a tool—a vessel—that He can use.
4. Four, remember that there are those that twist Scripture. Be on guard!
5. Last—but most important—are you yourself saved? Are you born again? Do you have Christ?