

"The Day of the Lord" – 2 Peter 3:8-10

We're back in 2 Peter after a one-week sojourn into the world of topical sermons in support of Village Missions. It's good to be back. We're picking up with the third chapter, where Peter clearly states that judgment on this world and this world's system is inevitable.

Danger lurks when the Church gets too comfortable. Danger lurks when the Church gets too prosperous, too complacent and too worldly. We tend to take our eyes off God and focus instead on the enticements of this world. Moses warned the children of Israel about this dynamic just before they entered the promised Land:

"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God ... (Deuteronomy 8:11-14)

... then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' (Deuteronomy 8:17)

We live in an incredibly prosperous culture. Sadly, much of the visible church has been seduced by this culture. We have become Laodicea and Jesus told John to write to the church at Laodicea:

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—"

Jesus says ...

... Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:14-21)

Understand this, folks: When Jesus said He was knocking at the door, He was not speaking to unbelievers. He was speaking to a church that had locked Him outside. Oh, please, Lord, do not let us become that church! Let us not be distracted by the blessings of this world. Let us not be deceived into thinking that things will always continue as they are because things will not always continue as they are.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:8-10)

Now I want to remind you of the context for this passage. Peter is warning us about deceivers who will rise from within the Church. The Apostle John talks about the very same class of false teachers when he writes:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; (1 John 2:19)

God's truth is recorded for us in Holy Scripture. We must test every teaching by searching the Bible to see if it is accurate. If somebody brings a new gospel, it is a false gospel. If somebody's teaching does not conform to the word of God, he or she is a deceiver, an antichrist, a tool of the devil. We must be discerning enough to reject that teaching. Peter tells us:

... that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

The Day of the Lord has not yet come. Christians have been waiting for it for two-thousand years, but that does not mean that it will not come tomorrow ... or today.

We are temporal creatures. We live in the context of time. We are aware that a future is coming. We are aware that we have a past. And we live in the present ... although the very moment we think of the present it becomes the past, so it sort of messes with your mind.

God exists outside of time. God lives in what has been called the "eternal now". He is not fettered by time. He is not constrained by time. In fact, He created time. He certainly is not going to conform to our timetable.

Peter tells us that

... with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8)

There is some disagreement among Evangelical Bible scholars about how literally we should take this verse. Some believe and assert that it is absolutely literal. By their reckoning, there were 4,000 years that elapsed between Adam and the Cross. There have been approximately 2,000 years that have elapsed since then. So, we have seen almost 6 of the Lord's 1000-year days go by and if God sticks to a 6-day work week, we should be looking for the start of a 1000 year millennial Sabbath.

I think it is quite possible that they are right. I do. And if they are right, and if Jesus was crucified around 30 AD, we should look for His return around 2030 AD. So, we're getting really close!

Except, Jesus told us:

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mark 13:32)

Don't fall into the trap of trying to predict the Lord's return. You will be wrong. Besides, if you think you know when the Lord's going to show up, you will be tempted to live for the world until that time. "Oh, I'm going to repent at the very last minute. That way I can party like a rock star until just before Jesus returns."

If that is your attitude, you don't know Jesus at all. If you know Jesus, then you will take Him at His word:

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. (Mark 13:33)

Whether Peter's 1000-year time period is literal or figurative should have no impact on how we live our lives. Christian, you need to live your life as if you expect Jesus to come

at any moment. You need to take heed ... that is, live carefully and circumspectly. You need to watch for Him. You need to be absolutely committed to prayer.

The Day of the Lord has been a long-time coming by our way of reckoning time but not by God's. He is working all things together according to His will and Jesus is going to show up at exactly the right time.

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness,
(2 Peter 3:9)*

God has not forgotten His promise. God has not wandered off into some far corner of the universe and forgotten all about us. God has not lost interest. The delay is according to His purpose and his perfect plan.

He ... is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

This is a wonderful verse. It is a verse that reflects God's grace and God's love. God does love you.

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

And according to Peter, He wants everyone to come to repentance. So, this verse has also caused some people to stumble, because, they reason, if God is omnipotent, and God wants everyone to be saved, Won't He just save everybody? Why does anybody turn down the offer of salvation made by means of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

To answer this question, I need to point out that the term "God's will" is used in two different ways in the Bible. The first, is what we call God's decretive will. We might call it God's will of decree. What God decrees will necessarily come to pass. When God said "Let there be light", there was zero chance that light would fail to come into existence. When God willed that Jesus would die for our sins at that one particular Passover, there was zero chance that it wasn't going to happen.

But there is another kind of will seen in the Bible, God's prescriptive will. Because God created the universe, He has every right to prescribe how His creatures will behave. With regard to humans, this is how He wants us to behave but as I'm sure you know, He allows us to exercise a certain amount of volition. He allows us to rebel.

The Ten Commandments are examples of God's prescriptive will but you have the ability to ignore them. And in fact, you do. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!

So when Peter says God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, is that decretive will, or is that prescriptive will? Of course it is prescriptive will. Despite what He might desire, He is not going to force anyone into the kingdom of heaven who doesn't want to come and no, that doesn't make me an Arminian. I still believe in God's sovereign election and I believe the Bible when it says:

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
(Romans 8:29-30)*

But God's prescriptive will is that you turn from your sins and turn to the cross.

Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, (Ezekiel 33:11)

I want to ask you this morning: Why should you die? Why should you pay the death penalty for your sins when Jesus has already paid the price for you?

Yes, you are a sinner ... everyone is. There has been only one human life that was absolutely free of sin and that is the life of Jesus Christ our Lord. He took that sinless life and voluntarily sacrificed it on the cross so that you could be reconciled to God.

*For God so loved **YOU** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

The work of God is to believe in the one He sent. (John 6:29) And Jesus said:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

Do you? If you believe this, you will accept Jesus Christ as your Lord. You will turn from your sin and turn to Him, determined to let Him lead. You will believe He was raised from the dead so you can have a living relationship with Him. You will seek His will through prayer and serious Bible study.

God does not want you to perish. He offers grace and forgiveness ... for free. If you will trust in Him, He will gladly usher you into His kingdom.

And believe me; you do not want to wait. The Day of the Lord is at Hand. The clock is ticking. Today is the day of salvation, but you are not guaranteed another.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

This universe has an expiration date. This world and this world's system will be utterly annihilated to be replaced with new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. I do not know when that Day will come. Nobody does. But this I do know: we are two-thousand years closer than Peter was when he wrote this epistle.

Are you ready? You'd better be ready, because the alternative is an eternity in hell.

Trust Jesus. Live for Him.

For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:13)