

Spectacular Day of the Lord



How the return of Jesus gives you hope for the future
and the motive to live a better life in the present.

A series of pastoral messages
from *2 Peter 3* by
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Major Reference:

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Message 1 Belief in the Day of the Lord v1-7

Do you believe in a coming ‘Day of the Lord’? This is a period of time, in the future, when Jesus Christ will return to rule over the earth. It will be a day when decency prevails, and justice will finally come to all the nations. The Day of the Lord will culminate in the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. An apt description is that it will be *spectacular!*

This series of messages, taken from *2 Peter 3* in the New Testament, is all about the Day of the Lord. It will look at its timing, what will take place, and especially how to prepare for this cataclysmic event. In this first message there are three vital things to be aware of about *your belief* in the Day of the Lord.

1. Belief in the Day of the Lord is wholesome thinking v1-2

v1 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. v2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.

The author of *2 Peter 3*, the apostle Peter, showed affection for those receiving his letter by addressing them as “*Dear friends.*” The purpose in both of his letters (*i.e. 1&2 Peter*) is to remind his readers of the importance of godly living. In *2 Peter*, he is concerned that some quasi Christian teachers had given up their belief that Jesus would actually return as he promised and, as a consequence, were teaching lower moral standards.

The full Gospel includes belief in the second coming of Jesus. Peter asserts that this belief leads to wholesome thinking because it is a powerful motivation for godly living. Godly living is taught throughout the Bible - by the ‘holy prophets’ in the Old Testament and by Jesus conveyed through the apostles in the New Testament. Note the superiority of Jesus’ teaching as “command given” compared to the O.T.’s “words spoken.” Interestingly, the commonly called ‘Ten Commandments’ in *Exodus 20* are ‘Ten Words’ in original Hebrew in *Exodus 34:28*. Jesus’ major teachings, the rock on which to build one’s life, are in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ in *Matthew 5-7*. If you are not familiar with this, you are missing out on foundational Christian teaching and wholesome thinking.

It is also vital to be aware that...

2. Belief in the Day of the Lord will be criticised v3-4

v3 ... in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since”

Peter predicted that scoffers will ridicule belief in Christ’s return. We can, of course, expect that not everyone will accept it. But some, says Peter, will mock and ridicule, as happens occasionally in our Australian media. A deep-seated reason for this scoffing, says Peter, is that people prefer to follow their “evil desires.” It would, perhaps, be too embarrassing for them to become Christian. People tend to love the darkness and reject the light, but it is only temporary.

A man was driving on a long, windy road and he suddenly had to stop because the bridge ahead had collapsed. He realised the danger for other cars following so quickly wrote on a large placard, “DANGER, THE END IS NEAR!” The next cars ignored it and also nearly crashed. He changed his sign to “POLICE CHECK AHEAD!” This time they all slammed on their breaks!

In a sense we face a more difficult task than the early Christians in holding on to our belief in the Day of the Lord. It is now 2,000 years later and Christ has not yet returned. Added to this, there have been failed predictions of the date. Jesus told a parable about a king leaving his domain in the hands of servants who, due to the king’s long delay in returning, started to abuse their responsibility. The king eventually did come back, however, and he punished the unfaithful, wicked servants.

Another accusation is that our belief in the Day of the Lord causes inaction. It is thought that Christians don’t contribute for the good of the world. The truth is the opposite. Belief in a future day of judgment stimulates more than anything else purposeful and respectful living. Jesus had another parable, however, for those few tempted to abandon responsibilities. It’s called ‘the 10 Talents’! Dear friends, you must use your talents more than ever to live useful and meaningful lives. Make a contribution for a better society. Be motivated by your belief in Day of the Lord.

Peter next explains why the false teachers were promoting immoral conduct. They had deliberately forgotten that ...

3. Belief in the Day of the Lord is based on God’s Word v5-7

v5 they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. v6 v7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment

God has already intervened spectacularly in the past in the course of human history. This was with Noah’s Flood. His word is that he will do it again in the future, this time with fire. The Day of the Lord will be the most spectacular event the world has ever experienced.

Make sure you are on the right side of the ledger before reaching your “Police Check”. Is it time to slam on the breaks? Dear friends, get your hearts right with God. Receive Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and learn to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a transformed and purposeful life.

Message 2 Timing of the Day of the Lord 2 Peter 3: 8-10(a)

On Wednesday evening I went outside to look up into the night sky. I wanted to see the ‘Super Blue Blood Moon’ promised in the news but, unfortunately, it had clouded over. Around the world, however, this phenomenon was clearly visible. It reminds of an OT passage in the book of Joel - *The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (Joel 2:31)*. In the Genesis account of creation, lights in the sky are for signs and seasons. Can we expect the Day of the Lord to come soon? Do we know when Christ will return? The timing of this event needs explanation.

1. The Day of the Lord may seem a long time in coming. v8

v8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

It was pretty insightful for Peter to write about God’s perspective on time. Two thousand years later, from a human point of view, God may be considered super slow in his promises! Peter actually quoted from Psalm 90, *“A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. ...” (Ps.90:4)*. The key thought in the psalm is in verse 12, *“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* Our time on earth, individually, is short. Wisdom through appreciating God’s perspective is needed to make it count. But can we number our days in a world sense?

Scientific predictions have been made about when the world will end. One example is that a super nova will destroy it within 300,000 years. Most scientific predictions, however, are in millions of years, perhaps thinking we can solve all our problems by then! Closer in time, however, are the unknown effects of global warming, pollution and potential flips of the earth’s magnetic field.

Predictions of the end of the world have been calculated from the Bible. These often string together verses from Daniel and Revelations. Isaac Newton, for example, apparently predicted 2016 and then recalculated it to 2062. (I don’t believe either.) The book of Daniel calls for wisdom to understand the times. There are some signs that the end of time is short - Jews are back in Israel, most nations (insanely) are against Israel, there are many earthquakes and active volcanoes, and there are blue/blood moons.

Predictions and interpretations are helpful if they simulate wholesome thinking and godly living. And they can only be tentative. Jesus said, *“... that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matt.24:36)*. The return of Jesus may seem a long time coming but there are good reasons for the delay –

2. The delay enables more people to be saved. v9

v9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God’s love is causing the delay. Paul wrote to Timothy - *1 Tim.2:3-4.... God our Saviour.. wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*. Since the time of Peter’s writing many more people have entered into the Kingdom of God. Christianity is now the world’s largest religion, but everyone is not yet Christian. Not everyone has even heard of the Gospel. According to Jesus, the Gospel message must be preached to all nations before the coming of the end.

We must challenge ourselves. Do we care enough for our neighbours and friends? Since starting this church, we have seen many accept Christ, but we always pray for more!

The story of Noah’s Ark is a good picture of the Church. After finishing its construction, Noah opened the door for all the animals to come in. When full, at the right time, God shut the door. Then the floods then came. Sometime in the future there will be no more altar calls, no evangelists, no sharing of the Gospel. Christ will have returned with reward and punishment. But when will this come?

3. In the end, the Day of the Lord will come suddenly & unexpectedly. v10(a)

v10(a) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. ...

The end will come suddenly and unexpectedly. The Bible says this in many places. For example - *1 Thess.5:2 ... the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Matt. 24:44 ... the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect.*

One Boxing Day, many years ago, we were taking our kids for a walk and I suddenly felt the need to be back home quickly. We returned and disturbed a thief who then rushed out of our driveway on a motor bike! Thankfully, he only took a few things including an old computer I wanted to get rid of anyway. Thankfully, he missed my new computer, a self-Christmas present!

Jesus warned, *Rev.3:3 “wake up ... if you do not wake up I will come like a thief... Jesus wants us to watch and be ready when his return. One theologian (Louis Berkhof) observed, “The Bible intimates that the second coming of Christ [i.e. it’s surprising nature] will be in an inverse ratio to the measure of our watchfulness.” Are you ready today for the Lord’s soon return?*

Message 3 What will happen on the Spectacular Day of the Lord? v10-13

As a teenager I used to think about what it would be like in the future. I imagined what I would be doing and now I know. I'm standing before you! I invite you to think with me about what will happen in the future still to come. Eventually, we will all be standing before Jesus during the 'Spectacular Day of the Lord.' The apostle Peter helps us to know what will happen at that time. Let's unpack his description.

1. Heaven & earth will be 'destroyed' by fire. v10

v10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Earlier, Peter explained that the heavens and the earth were reserved for fire and judgment (v7). Now he elaborates by giving three descriptions, all coming suddenly like a thief.

1) The heavens disappear with a roar.

A fire in full blaze is called a 'roaring fire.' The Day of the Lord will be a noisy event! It will happen first in the heavens with a 'destructive' fire (also see v12). This will certainly get everyone's attention, more than the New Year's Eve fireworks! It will be new millennium eve!

2) 'Elements' will be 'destroyed' by fire, melting in the heat, (also see v12).

Two cautions are needed here. 'Elements' should not be read as *all* elements. (There is no article in the Greek.) 'Destroyed' does not necessarily imply total annihilation. The same description was used of Noah's Flood, but we are still here. The fire is a purging fire.

3) Everything done in it will be laid bare.

This indicates (i.e. with 'laid bare') we will be subject to the fire of God's judgment. The famous evangelist, Billy Graham, was asked in an interview as to why God allowed nuclear weapons to be discovered. Didn't it make him *not* believe in God (i.e. in his goodness)? Billy answered that it made him believe more in the God of the Bible! He took warning from 2 Peter 3's prediction of a future melting and destruction, now possible even with human hands.

There are pictures of the destructiveness of fire in nature - fire from beneath the ground in earthquakes and volcanoes, and fire from bushfires and warfare. Destruction from global warming, coming slowly, is not likely the Day of the Lord. Stored up fire in nuclear weaponry may be part of it, especially if North Korea becomes desperate. I believe the prayers of godly people would prevent this.

Fire can be destructive, but that destruction, as mentioned, can also purge and cleanse. The apostle Paul assured a church in Thessalonica undergoing persecution - *God is just: he will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. (2 Thess. 1:6-7; NIV).* The Day of the Lord will bring destructive fire on evil people intent on destroying the Church and Israel, and all good people, but let's not us judge. I digress with two different interpretations. Will the Day of the Lord be total destruction? Will it be instant or over a period of time? (Ref. Douglas Moo, Commentary on 2 Peter 3).

- 1) Total Destruction? Interestingly, early Christians interpreted the Day of the Lord as purging fire and renewal. For example, Augustine wrote, “this world shall pass away by transmutation, not by absolute destruction.” It was the heretical Gnostics who taught complete destruction. (Stoics believed the universe was repeatedly destroyed by fire only to start its cycle over again, for Peter it is will be a one-off event.)
- 2) Time period of restoration? The Day of the Lord may be a time period, say 1,000 years. This could be the millennium reign of Christ beginning suddenly and then a period of peace. *Jesus said ... at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt. 19:28).* Peter also preached, *Heaven must receive him [Jesus] until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. (Acts 3:21).*

We now come to what is most important for us how are we going to escape?

2. All our works will be judged by God. v11-12

v11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? ...

The biblical teaching on the Day of the Lord, with its purging destruction by fire, is mainly ethical in intent. It is designed to motivate to holy and godly living *in the present*.

- a) **Our works will tested.** ...“what kind of ppl should we be?” *1 Cor.3:v12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. v14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.*

Billy Graham observed, “*When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost.*” We are to be ‘holy,’ separate from the world’s sub-standard values, and to be ‘godly,’ set apart for God’s calling and purpose. We are to be ‘looking forward’ and alert to the return of Christ.

- b) **Our witness speeds its coming.** The Day of the Lord will come sooner if we all participate in the spreading of the Gospel; remember that God’s delay is so that more may be saved. (Mat 6:10; 24:14).

Finally, the really good news ...

3. A ‘new’ heaven and earth will be revealed. v13

v13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a ‘new’ heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

The evangelist, Billy Graham, just passed away. He had previously reflected, “*My home is in Heaven. I’m just traveling through this world.*” Evil, and its resulting corruption, will not last forever. We have the hope of a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells. (Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1; Rev 22:20). There will be no stealing, lying, cheating, unfaithfulness, killing, etc., nor sickness and death. There will be righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Which side of the ledger will you be on when the Day of the Lord arrives?

Message 4 How can I prepare for the Day of the Lord? v14-18

Wisdom prepares ahead of time for a better future. It changes present circumstances for a brighter tomorrow. Would you go into an exam without having studied? Would you ask for a pay rise without having thought of a good reason for it, like having done a good job? This is the last message from 2 Peter 3, *Spectacular Day of the Lord* series. It completes our coverage of 2 Peter, which has been all about godly living. It closes with Peter summary advice on how to prepare for the Day of the Lord.

Firstly,...

1. Make every effort to be found at peace with God. v14

v14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Why is it important to “make every effort”? This is a challenge! I’ve always believed in the second coming but not with such strong intention. Do you, like me, need to repent? A good reason to *make every effort* is because of the deceitfulness of sin.

You may not steal, lie, or cheat on relationships, but what’s going on in the inside? Are you spotless and blameless in your thinking? *Make every effort* surely includes paying attention to our thoughts. Wisdom will change present behaviour *and thinking* so as to keep at inner peace with God. Pray earnestly, “*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil!*” “*Search me, oh God, and know my heart!*” “*See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me to the way everlasting!*”

I read of a pastor who died and found himself in the wrong place. He hated his brother in his heart. Thankfully, through praying Christians, he came back to life. He could forgive his brother and find peace with God again. Peace comes through an active faith - *Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* This doesn’t mean that if at any time we feel ill at ease with God we must not be ‘saved’ but it does mean to be alert and investigate the reason.

Secondly, ...

2. Be aware of false interpretations. v15-17

v15 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ... v17 Therefore, dear friends, be on your guard

The second thing to do in preparing for the Day if the Lord is to be aware of false teaching or interpretations about what will or will not happen in the future. Peter shows how we can test such teachings.

- 1) **Truer interpretations** inspire earnest prayer and sharing of the Gospel. The Lord is patient in not returning so soon to enable more people to be saved.
- 2) **Truer interpretations** are broadly consistent with the teaching of other respected Christian leaders. Paul says in all his letters the same thing as Peter –i.e. *Live godly lives!* A theologian compared to a fisherman, yet they conclude the same. Admittedly, some of Paul’s writings are complicated and need deeper study (e.g. Romans!).

- 3) **Truer interpretations** will be consistent with the Bible. Paul’s writings are preserved in the New Testament and recognised as Scripture, inspired in a special way by the Holy Spirit. False teachings take part of the Bible and interpret it in an extreme measure, like the Gnostics teaching on annihilation.
- 4) **False interpretation**, on the other hand, come through ignorance and instability - through those who are erratic and microscopic rather than consistent. They make bold claims with insufficient justification. For example: “Jesus will return on this day!” or “Jesus has already returned!”

Peter calls for us to be on guard against the “error of the lawless.” The conduct of Sodom and Gomorrah was considered lawless. The antichrist is called the lawless one. Lawless people live by what they feel is right in the moment (existentialist) and are self-interested rather than principled and Spirit- filled.

“Error is not the cause of lawlessness; it is the result. Heresy begins by a decision to change the way one lives. Once the decision has been made to disobey, human nature searches out some basis to support its wilful acts. At this point truth is twisted and pressed into service for some deviant lifestyle. Men go wrong not because some sort of evidence forces them in a particular direction but because they need to rationalise a prior decision to disobey.” P 148 (Mounce, 1982).

In a moment of honesty, a prominent person explained his immoral lifestyle outside of marriage as due to “sugar”, not rational thinking.

Finally, ...

3. Keep growing spiritually. v18

v18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

The best way to be ready for the Day of the Lord is to keep growing spiritually, day by day, month by month, year by year. Growing in the grace of Jesus - forgiving ourselves and others through life’s complicated circumstances. Growing in the knowledge of Jesus - being a continuous learner and deepening our relationship with God. These actions will lead to our improved worship, which will continue on into the Spectacular Day of the Lord.

Please join me! *“To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”*

*“I have found a desire within myself that no experience in this world can satisfy;
the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”*

C.S. Lewis

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