

Peace and Patience

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 September 2014

Preacher: Tom Muir

[0 : 0 0] Please turn back to the passage we read, 2 Peter, chapter 3. Now we're coming into this chapter halfway, and you may remember, I hope you remember, what's come before from previous sermons, but if you've just come along for the first time tonight and you've missed the rest of the sermons, we are coming into a chapter halfway, but where we pick up here in verse 10, links back very much to what's already gone before, of course, the middle of the chapter, so it's not completely unrelated.

But just so we're clear, I want to ask first of all, what exactly is going on in this section that we're going to look at? So if we were to ask what's the message that Peter wants to get across as he closes his book here, we have to say that there's two real points of focus for us to remember.

First of all is the idea of the coming day of the Lord, great future event that is certain, the day of the Lord, the day of God, and it is coming, and it is certain.

And secondly, the really obvious fact that we Christians, the Christians that Peter wrote to and us Christians, live in the light of that.

So the fact that there's a coming day of the Lord isn't irrelevant. It's very relevant. It's the most relevant future event in many ways, and really important for us to understand it and to live in the light of it.

[1 : 2 9] So these are the two key things that we're going to see come out of the passage as we look at it tonight. There is this, as it were, cataclysm, this massive, the biggest world event coming, and Peter wants his readers and he wants us to know about it.

But how did he get there? Just a brief recap and just to set the scene. Well, Peter, as has been clear, as we've been looking at this book over the last few weeks, Peter wants to warn the believers that he's writing to, because he knows that there's danger, and there's danger because he really, really wants them to know the Gospel. Remember, we were focusing so much, if you hear this morning, on the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the primary important focus for the believer.

He wants to warn that the Gospel is so valuable, but there are people, he calls false teachers, who want to take that Gospel and muddy it all up and confuse it and make them all just complacent and confused and rip it away from them, really.

And Peter says that's the worst thing that could happen to you, losing the Gospel, getting confused about the Gospel. So I want you to be very careful to know the Gospel. And so I want you to think about one image I thought that would be helpful.

The way that Peter writes and what he has to say in many ways acts like a lighthouse. You know, we know the idea of a lighthouse if you're out on a ship and you see a light blinking at night. You know that's a lighthouse because it's there to give warning and guidance.

[3 : 0 7] It says you've got to be careful the way you take because there's danger here. So that's just a kind of simple way of explaining what Peter is doing in many ways. But don't just think that the book is negative. Peter's not just saying, oh, don't do this, don't do that, be careful about this.

He warns, but he gives amazing counsel. It's an incredibly positive book. He says, be really careful not to let the Gospel slip and be very diligent in growing as a Christian and becoming all that you are to be as a follower of Jesus.

So there's this kind of dual aspect going on in the book. So it's like a lighthouse saying, watch out and be careful. But these false teachers, there's another image I was thinking about seafaring.

I don't often think about seafaring, but this image just popped into my head. There's these old legends of shipwreckers. And the shipwreckers would steal along the coast and they would send out false lights.

And the aim of them was to wreck ships, to guide ships in a false way so that they'd be wrecked and the crew would be lost and the cargo would be up for grabs and they'd be able to steal what was lost.

[4 : 21] Think about the false teachers as wreckers. They're throwing out teaching that is a false Gospel and it's dangerous. Throughout 1 Peter and 2 Peter, he often is unashamed about talking about danger.

He speaks often of 1 Peter about being self-controlled, about being prepared. He speaks about the devil prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking those who he can devour. So we shouldn't be ashamed about thinking.

We've got to be really careful about the danger to the Gospel because it's the most important thing for us. So he's throwing out these warnings about these wreckers and in particular, and this brings us to the section that we're at here, he wants to flag up the whole coming of the day of the Lord because this is an issue these false teachers have been talking about.

They've been saying to the Christians in this situation, are you believe Jesus is coming back? No. You say Jesus is coming back but he hasn't come back.

Are you sure about Jesus coming back? If you look back into the start of the chapter, in 2 Peter 3 from verse 3, he says, you must understand in the last days scoffers will come.

[5 : 33] In verse 4 they will say, where is this coming? He promised. So one of the particular things that the false teachers were talking about is the day of the Lord, the fact that the Lord Jesus was coming back and they belittled that and they were careless about it.

So he wants to flag this up to the Christians and he wants to warn them. And so we have these two different elements. He talks about the day of the Lord, he talks about it as a vital and a fundamental thing for the Christians to know that it is coming.

It is a significant thing for them to think about. And as I said and we'll come to this later, he talks about the fact that they must live in recognition of that. Now you see that it goes back and forward in some ways between the book but you see it encapsulated in two verses.

If you look at the last two verses of this chapter, chapter 3, you see in verse 17 he says, therefore, dear friends, since you know this, be on your guard.

And then he says in verse 18, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. So there's these two focal points. I just want to flag that up at the start. Be careful and be warned about false teaching.

[6 : 43] Keep the true Gospel and grow. Grow in the Gospel. Go on and develop. Don't just stand still and don't go backwards.

First of all then, the future event that Peter wants to talk about, what is he talking about this day of the Lord? What is to come in Peter's letter?

Verse 10, the day of the Lord will come like a thief and he speaks later on about in verse 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed that's coming. The day of the Lord.

The first thing that we can say as we've already noticed really has been a lot of complacency about that. The false teachers have said, well, we are unsure about this and it sounds implausible now because we don't see evidence of it.

Now I think that's maybe relevant for us because it can feel like that to us even as Christians. We look back to the days of Jesus and we look back 2,000 years and even though we may have a living faith, we can't see the day of the Lord now and sometimes we go about our daily lives and we go about our weekly lives and even our monthly lives and we don't think about the coming of Jesus.

[7 : 55] We don't think about this great event but he wants them to be sure about its coming and he wants them to know that it's a vital thing. You see that he, as he says in verse 10, the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

Now in other words, you're not going to know. It's going to be unexpected. You're going to take it by surprise. So don't get complacent and as we'll see later on, complacency can lead to a completely wrong attitude when we think about that.

So don't get complacent. This is something that he wants to assert that it is going to happen. You'll see that he says in verse 15, bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation.

Patience. God is patient. So why is he patient? Because in this time between, Jesus is being on earth and his work of salvation and the time of the day of the Lord when he comes back, God is calling all his people to be saved.

And so now, that phrase we use so often, now is the day of salvation. Now is the time when people are being called into the kingdom. complacent, know that it's real.

[9 : 10] And isn't that such good news that now is the time when the gospel can go out and people can be called into the kingdom before the final day of the Lord. It's a good time.

It's a good time for the gospel and for us to take the gospel out. Another thing to say about this day of the Lord is it's not something that Peter's just kind of coined this phrase by himself.

It's not new. This isn't new news. This goes way back into the Old Testament. Again, remember from this morning, we're making the point and the sermon that I was making the point, that the gospel is right throughout the Bible because it speaks about what God is doing from all time.

It's the work of God from beginning to end to come into my experience, your experience, and people's lives throughout all of time and save them.

So the gospel is all through the Bible, but there is this consciousness all through the Bible of the coming day of the Lord. Let me just read a couple of verses.

[10 : 15] You don't have to turn this up. Let me just read from Amos, chapter 5. Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord. Now, woe to you who long to the day of the Lord? Well, Amos warns these people because they've become really complacent.

Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That will be a day of darkness not light. Now, these people were really presumptive. They thought, oh, we're God's people, but we can live any way we want.

It doesn't really matter what our day-to-day life is like. And they expected that God would come and that He would bring salvation, but they presumed too much.

But there is this idea of the day of the Lord. One more verse in Isaiah. Let me just read from Isaiah, chapter 2.

The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low. The Lord alone will be exalted in that day. The Lord will be exalted in that day. So it's a day when nobody will be able to help seeing, you certainly will know about it, seeing the coming of the Lord, and He will be exalted.

[11 : 23] Now, we speak about that in church, don't we? The sermon last week was about the glory of God. And this will be an evident display for all time and all people of the glory of God, of the fact that God is to be exalted.

Whether folk want it or not, it will happen, and He'll be exalted. So it's a great day and it's a great coming. So it's certain, or it's not to be complacent, it ties right back into this theme that is woven throughout, and as we pick it up in the New Testament, of course, it ties right into the fact that the Lord that is coming is Jesus, the Savior Jesus who will come again, and as He comes again, He will bring, He will draw His people to be with Him.

And so for those who are Christians, it's a good day to look forward to when our Savior Jesus will come and will bring us back.

But then as we spend a little bit more time just looking at the specific verses here, it's an, I can't even describe it, or begin to describe the awesomeness of the day.

Look at the verse 10. The day 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 in it will be laid bare, will be exposed, can't hide from it, can't cover over who we are or what we want to be doing.

[12 : 54] Everything will be finished, brought together in some massive dramatic way that it doesn't explain exactly what's going to happen, and it's not really for us to think about or to decide, or to want to decide exactly what this process is or what it's talking about.

But what this speaks about, and the consciousness, as I was saying at the Old Testament folk right through the Bible had, was that God is overall things. History isn't out of His control and that He knows, and He's working towards a time when He will bring to an end His creation.

So He started everything, everything that you see when you look around, all that we are, all that we know, He started it, and He will finish it. In awesome fashion that we can't even begin to describe.

I read one thing about this that simply said that these words aren't literalistic necessarily, this doesn't describe exactly what's going to happen, but they're just an attempt to describe the indescribable.

How do you describe the time when the Lord will bring the heavens and the earth to a close? And He goes on again and talks about it.

[14 : 08] You see halfway through verse 12, that day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. Now I don't want to say any more about that in terms of exactly what it's going to look like, what's going to cause it, how it's going to happen, but it's right for us to know that it's going to happen and that it's God's work and that it's His time and we can't change that.

We can't really affect what God is going to do, but we live in the light that it's a sure certainty and it's His work that He's working towards. So it's this incredible, terrifying, upheaval that is certain to come and it's true for every one of us to know about.

Peter wants the people who are so maybe being buffeted by this false teaching, he wants them to be sure about what's coming and to know what's happening.

The final thing just in thinking about this that I want to say just now is that the day of the Lord, the day of God is, don't think about it as some passive thing that's just going to happen up there in the heavens.

It's personal. So it affects, and it will affect everybody who's ever lived and it will affect every one of us who's here tonight. The day of the Lord is personal. It affects me and it affects you.

[15 : 34] How so? Well, in Matthew 24, 31, we read, he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds.

So this speaks about a time of winding up the earth. It speaks about a time of destruction of the awesome display of God's power. But it speaks of a time when you, if you know Jesus, will be brought home.

He will come for you and when you see him, you will know him as your saviour. So it's good news again. It's good for you to look forward to this time.

So you live now, well look at this in a minute, but you live now in the light of the fact that your saviour is coming back for you. But also, if you are not tonight one of his people, if you don't know Jesus, then this event is going to happen and if you don't know Jesus, then you won't know him as saviour.

But you still won't be able to change the fact that you'll stand before him because Jesus comes as judge. He comes as judge and none of us can stand before him. I can't stand before him and say, you should save me.

[16 : 50] None of us can. That's why we remember Jesus when we celebrate the communion because Jesus is our saviour. And so if you don't know him tonight, then I ask you to pray to him and pray that you would know him.

Ask him to be your saviour. The day of the Lord is personal. And so when we think about our daily lives, when we think about all the different things that you face this week, the things that you're afraid of, the things that you're looking forward to, all the distractions that you have, all the things that you hate about life, everything else that goes on in your life, it can be so difficult, can't it, as I was saying, to remember all the time the fact that Jesus is coming again, or even to think sometimes about how that's relevant, how does that help me get through my day-to-day life?

But you need to think about it, and you need to work it into what's going on in your life. So are you successful at the moment? Is life going well? Is your business doing good? Are your studies doing well?

Are you top of the class? That's great. But sometimes our temptation can be to become self-reliant. I'm just thinking about the way we can get into patterns in our everyday lives.

And so if we're good, successful, popular people, we can become self-reliant. But the day of the Lord is coming.

[18 : 16] And so if we rely on ourselves, if we get into that way of thinking that it's all about us, we'll be humbled. We can't get to the end of time and say, Lord, look at how great I am.

Everyone needs to know Jesus as Savior. But if you're really struggling at the moment, what if you're unsuccessful? What if you feel really bad, and like things aren't working, your job isn't working out, you feel unpopular?

We're tempted to think that who we are as a person must be rubbish, because we feel rubbish. But the fact that the day of the Lord is coming, levels all of that, doesn't it?

Because it says in Jesus, if you're in Jesus, if you're one of His people, then you're co-heirs with Christ. You're an heir of the new heavens and the new earth.

You're one of His people. Now you're in His kingdom, and He is coming for you. And so for all that you feel about yourself, know that you're one of His people.

[19 : 17] He knows you by name. And when He comes again, He comes for you because He knows you. In many different ways, we have different feelings. The future often affects how we feel on a day-to-day basis.

If we've got a bad meeting coming up, or whatever's going on in the future can so affect how we are, what we think about ourselves. But over and above all of that, the day of the Lord is coming.

And that's the eternal perspective that we need to know. So Peter wants these people to know this day of the Lord. But as we move into the second thing I want to speak about, how then do we live?

How does that affect? We've started to think about that just now, but let's look at what the passage says a little bit more about how you and I live in the light of this. First thing to say is we're to look forward to it.

Now, I don't know if you find that a challenge. I had a time in my life I remember distinctly when I used to be quite afraid of it. Life is good sometimes, and we like life, and we look forward to things in life.

[20 : 23] And I think I used to think, well, I guess I look forward to the coming again of Jesus, but I want the X, Y and Z to happen first. The coming of the Lord seems so out with our experience.

Sometimes it can be hard to think about it and to look forward to it. But this passage says that we should look forward to it. Look at verse 12. Or I'll read from verse 11.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? He says you ought to live holy and Godly lives as you look forward to the day of God.

Verse 13, in keeping with this promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. So as the day of the Lord gives way to this new heavens and new earth that the Lord will bring in, He says you're looking forward to this.

And then in verse 14, so then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, so are we looking forward to this? Simple fact that He wants to bring before us is that this is something that is good news.

[21 : 23] And it's to be a major part of our life. It's to be in front of our vision, not way back in the back dusty recesses of our minds. We're looking forward to it.

It helps us because we're Christians and we know that Jesus our Lord is coming back. So look forward to this. And the main thing that He then wants to bring through is that as you look forward to this, as it changes your life, again, remember the Gospel, as we focused on it this morning, is something that changes us.

It's not just something we kind of technically believe in or adhere to that happened in the past. As we trust in Jesus and are changed, then He says, live holy lives.

He says, the way that you live should reflect the fact that you believe that your Savior is coming back. What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.

Straight up there, no messing around here, live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of His coming. So the image, one image or picture that I want to just pick out that He uses, He goes back again to the false teachers.

[22 : 36] If you look back to chapter 2, and verse 13, Peter wants to emphasize how dangerous their teaching is.

And he says that they will be held accountable for their false teaching. Look at what he says in verse 13. They'll be paid back with harm for the harm they've done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse and broad daylight.

Their blots and blemishes are reveling in their pleasures. So their blots and blemishes, they're like stains. They're like bad black marks. And then if you turn forward to our chapter that we're looking at, look at what he says in verse 14 about how the Christians should be.

He says, so then dear friends, since you're looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless. Not like black marks, not like a mess, not like a blot on your spiritual Christian community.

Spotless, pure, holy. Be holy because I am holy, says God. Now that is a huge challenge for us and a daily work and something that we have to be committed to personally and as a community to encourage each other and to help each other in that.

[24 : 01] But he wants to emphasize it. Because he says, look at what he says at the start of verse 14, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him. I haven't made every effort every day of my life and I need to repent of that.

But when we recognize that and how difficult it is and the struggles we have, it drives us back to the grace of God. And it drives us back to remind ourselves that we say, Lord, I struggle so much, help me and help me live the way you want to be.

Make every effort to be holy. But then he goes on and we get this incredible understanding of why and why it's so appropriate for us to live holy lives.

In verse 13, he says again, we've looked at this already, in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. Which is what? Well, it's the home of righteousness.

In other words, where we're looking forward to, we think about the coming of Jesus in the future. Where he will take us to be is a place of perfect purity and holiness and righteousness.

[25 : 20] We're citizens of heaven and when we are changed and we're made Christians, as I said, we're transformed now because we've become part of his kingdom. We've become part of his people.

When we become Christians, we're adopted into his family. If we're adopted into God's family, if we're part of his kingdom, part of his people, and if his home in heaven is the home of righteousness, then isn't it so appropriate that we live holy and righteous lives now?

Or if you put it the other way, isn't it so inappropriate when we live unrighteous lives now? We're looking forward to the hope of heaven, the home of righteousness, the place where Jesus dwells, where we will see him face to face.

Isn't it so incongruous or kind of messed up and round the wrong way that we live so often for ourselves and we forget and we're careless and complacent?

And so we're just reminded again to live the way of Jesus. That's what this means, living holy and righteous lives. Look at the life of Jesus. Follow the way that he lived, putting God first and your neighbor second and honoring and giving all glory to God.

[26 : 40] Because this is our identity. To do with our identity and who we are, so let's not forget that we've been adopted. Let's not forget that we've been brought into the family of God and more citizens of heaven.

Can I just flick back to 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter 1? And really, just as we sort of bring things to a close now, I just want us to really focus on this issue of thinking about who we are and what is our identity.

Because this is all about thinking, not just thinking about being a Christian again is something that just happened way back when, or something you write on a form when people ask you what is your religious inclination.

Our identity is all encompassing as Christians. So Peter writes to the Christians in 1 Peter. He says, Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, verse 1, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, etc.

He knows that these people have this sense of being like aliens, like foreigners, because where they are now physically and even in terms of where they see themselves, is they're like strangers, because they have this sense, although they're in the world and they're to mix with people and they're to be friends with people and they're to share the gospel with people, they're going, they're looking forward.

[28 : 09] They're to look forward with this knowledge that Jesus is coming again and that they're his people. And this is the identity that they're to have. And as they live as strangers in the world, they're to be as a light amongst the nations.

This was always what God wanted for his people through the Old Testament and into the New Testament, that they were to be God's people, they were to be his family, his people, who were like a beacon of light in a dark place.

I just want to read, I was reading a good book this week, I've got to read it, because it's for an exam I've got tomorrow. So I had no choice, but it's a good book. And there's a couple of quotes from it, which kind of speak about this whole idea of the way that Christians see themselves and think about themselves in community.

First one is this, just to be short quote, God's people are to be a holy or a distinct nation, just as God himself is holy. And then I love this phrase, God is carving out one place on earth where the goodness and freedom of his kingdom can be seen.

Now that doesn't mean, as in the Old Testament, a geographically located central city. But as the church of God meet and go out into their daily lives, wherever the gospel goes out amongst the Christian community, that is where God's light is shown to the nations or to your friends and to your neighbors and to the people that you mix with.

[29 : 38] And so now in this time before the coming of Jesus, we are to have this identity and we're to know the hope for the future, which helps us live as a light to the nations.

But of course, again, we so often struggle with that. And many things just get in the way of that and obscure our vision. So let me just read this other quote.

And what the author really does here is just pick up on one thing that can obscure our vision and get in the way of us having this identity. He says this, much of contemporary Western life is given over to the pursuit of possessions or security and wealth.

He really just gives this one example because it's like a distraction that can so easily happen for us. Part of the explanation for this obsession is the complete loss of any sense of eternity.

If this life is all it is, then getting more here and now makes sense. But he says the gospel makes a contradictory claim. Christians are the people of the future.

[30 : 43] The future that Christ has secured for us. This doesn't mean that life here and now is irrelevant, but that this life is to be lived in the light of eternity. So whatever you find distracts you, keeps you from seeing this vision of the future and of being able to live in the light of that now as a light in your community with the gospel, then it's right for us to personally go back to the Lord and ask Him to help us to remember this.

And I think as a community as well, in city groups or as a community of people together, not to waste our time talking about any other thing apart from the gospel, but to encourage each other daily.

Because time is short and time is precious and we have a great calling and we have a great identity that the Lord wants us to live out.

And He wants us to see ourselves as this people now. And a lot of what Peter is speaking about in this letter, as he speaks about the holy lives that they're to live, and as he speaks about holding on to the gospel, not allowing it to be fragmented and shredded by any old false teaching that comes along, is to do with this.

It's all to do with the fact of keeping the gospel central and keeping our focus as God's people. Two things I just want to say in conclusion. First of this is you look to the last verse.

[32 : 09] All of this has to do with the glory of God. It goes back again to the theme that we looked at a couple of weeks ago. Peter, as we've said, Peter says, you must keep hold of the gospel.

You must remember your Savior Jesus. You must know that He's coming again. You must live holy lives. But what does He say as He gets to verse 18? Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to Him be glory, both now and forever. Amen.

Us recognizing our identity, who He's called us to be, and living that out, is to His glory. All to His glory.

And second thing, just in finishing, we're going to celebrate communion tonight. We're going to share the Lord's Supper. And it's a great blessing to be able to do that.

As we sometimes find it hard to go about our daily lives, as we often find ourselves forgetting and getting distracted, Jesus knows that we find it hard.

[33 : 15] But He wants to encourage us. And He wants to help us to remember who He is and what He's done for us and who we are. And so we read these words about the Lord's Supper.

And I think it really helps us to remember our identity. Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. So remember, as we take communion, that He is coming.

And that this day of the Lord is a sure thing. And that now this is to help us to remind us personally and collectively as a community that our identity is found in Christ and we are to live for Him.

And we're to strive to live holy lives because what could be better than to follow the way of Jesus? And it's all to the glory of God. And that's a great calling, but we need help.

So as we finish, I'm going to pray and I'm just going to ask the Lord to help us to remember these things and to follow Him. Okay.

[34 : 20] Lord Jesus, we praise you for the Gospel. We thank you for people such as Peter who knew the Gospel and who drew such clear attention to it and who warned of the dangers of falling away from the Gospel and who were such encouragers to follow you and to live holy lives and to give glory to you.

We confess that we often struggle. Even tonight, Lord, it may be appropriate for us to confess that we've been really careless about our lives.

Forgive us for this, but we pray that we wouldn't turn away from you, but even as we recognize how weak we can be, we'd come back to you because you're so gracious and merciful and good.

And what you want for us is to be reminded again and again of who we are, what you've called us to be, and the fact that this didn't start with us. We didn't inspire you to save us because of your great love.

You came into our lives and called us. Help us if we don't know you personally to see that your coming again is something we can't...

[35 : 32] we can't just run away from. Teach us and draw us to yourself. And thank you so much for all that you've done for us. Help us to live for your glory in Jesus' name.

Amen.