

2 Peter 3:11-18 – Being ready for the day of the Lord

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 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. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

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If you knew that one day a great flood would come and wash away this town, then how would you live? Surely you would live differently. If you know the future, then it will change your life today. Peter has told us about the day of the Lord. Now – what difference should it make? Let us ask Peter some questions.

What difference does it make? (v11)

Peter asks – so, how should we live? This is a great question. Once we have studied the Scriptures, we should then ask – “so what?” The Bible is not given to make us clever. It is given to make us please God. It is meant to change us. We should be different after reading it. Christianity is a life to be lived. It is not a mere ticket to heaven. It is the way to honour God in his world, in the life in which he gives us strength and breath today. God watches us, to see how we do. There are nations and peoples everywhere who need to learn how to follow Jesus (Matthew 28:18-21). What difference is the Bible making to your life?

How then should we live? (v11-13)

How should we live? We should live holy, godly lives (v11). Peter has told us that all the world will be burnt up. Nothing will survive God's final judgment. Everything will be tested with fire, and only what is pure will remain. This world is a good place, which God made for man (Genesis 1). But it is fallen (Genesis 2-3) and needs to be remade. It is not the final world of glory that God planned. So, we should not live for this life. If we live only for careers, friends, houses, fame and money, then in the end we will lose everything. But what will last is what is done for God. The righteous will shine like the stars in heaven (Philippians 2:15). Jesus wanted disciples (Matthew 28:18-21) – followers – not that we should be rich and famous. What is your priority? If Jesus died to purchase you, then you should live for him.

Where are we going? (v13-14)

What will the new world be like? Verse 13 says that there will be a new heavens and new earth. Even the present heaven will be changed. Christians do not die to go to heaven forever. Even heaven is just a waiting place. The people there are waiting for Christ to return, and raise up the dead with new, glorious bodies, and to make the world new. The great mark of the new world will be righteousness. There will be no evil, no sin, no vileness. Now, we are travellers through this fallen world. But when Jesus returns everything will be holy and pure. Do you hunger for that? Are you happy with sin as long as you enjoy life and do well? Or do you long to be with Jesus in a pure place? Peter tells us the standard to aim for, verse 14. It is not just to look respectable, or be as good as your neighbour. It is to be totally pure and without any spot or blemish at all – because that is what the new heavens and earth will be like.

Where can we get help? (v15-16)

Why do we have to wait? Why can we not go there now? Peter already told us in verse 8 that it is God's kindness. He is giving others opportunity to repent. There is time for them to be saved. There is also time for us to become holy and fruitful in our lives. Salvation means to be delivered from sin: its punishment (which Jesus took on the cross), its power in our lives (which is broken as we learn to obey, through the Holy Spirit) and its presence in the world (Jesus will one day make us new). As we learn and grow, we can gain greater self-control and usefulness in God's world. Peter told us to not only read his words, but all the Scriptures – including those of Paul. Paul also had wisdom from God, and Peter rejoiced in it. Peter was not like many preachers today who are competing with others, trying to put them down and lift themselves up. In the churches there are many different gifts and we should be glad for all the good that is done anywhere.

Any final words? (v17-18)

Peter knew that his readers knew these teachings already. But they must remember them. It is one thing to know that you have an enemy who wants to destroy you. But you must then act! Christians must be watchful. They must be on their guard. In a war, a city will have soldiers so that the enemy cannot come secretly. Christians must watch carefully over their lives and beliefs (1 Timothy 4:16). There is a danger of being carried away, when we are not paying attention. The lives and errors of the wicked are tempting and seductive. How can we be safe? Verse 18 points the way. We should seek to know Jesus better. We should look to him for every spiritual blessing we need. He is Lord, and he is Saviour. He is the one who should have all glory and praise forever. If you keep your eyes on Jesus, remember his death and resurrection, and try to please him, repenting and trying to be holy each day, then you also will enter that heavenly kingdom at last.