

2 Peter 3:8-13 'A Thief In The Night; And The Day Of God!'

Last week's message was from 2 Peter 3:17: 'Remember The Command In These Days Of Scoffing'. V1 "Dear friends, agapertoi, beloved ones." After that long damning description and warning against those false teachers, Peter then uses those tender words to remind his hearers of the close relationship that they shared. They knew him, and they could trust him! And the link between the two chapters being the word "command" (2:21). The false teachers had "turned their backs on the sacred command."

But in chapter 3:2 Peter wants his hearers to "recall" those things, and the word "command," meaning the whole council of God, as those things pertain to Jesus. He himself spoke of this in Luke 24:25-27, and in v2 Peter calls them "your apostles," because the apostles belonged to the believers as it were, even all believers. Yes as we belong to Jesus, the Lord's faithful servants belong to us!

V3 "First of all" or of the greatest of importance, "You must know that in the last days scoffers will come." Not in the future, because they were already there. But will come and come and come, until Jesus returns. And though the scoffing was directed at God's Word here, "Where is this coming he promised?" Clearly it is also reflected in the world in general! They scoff at what we believe, how we believe, and the One in whom we hold that belief. And the charge of the false teachers, v4, why speak of sin and judgement when nothing ever changes? Everything continues as it always has since God made the world. But they lie! V5 "They deliberately forget." They suppress God's truth. They deliberately suppress the truth that out of nothing, God spoke the universe into being. It is so changed, that even the whole world was destroyed by the flood waters! I explained that, though, now yes the world does acknowledge that there is a problem, they believe it is the climate crisis, not the problem of sin. No the problem is not external it is internal!

And v7, as the world came into being through God's Word, those existing things have been reserved for judgement by fire. Yes as sure as by the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah His Wrath was seen, so too will the whole world and the heavens see the judgement of God!

And so we pick up the text in 2 Peter 3:8-13 'A Thief In The Night; And The Day Of God!' V8 "But do not forget this one thing beloved ones, with the Lord a day is as 1000 years and 1000 years is as a day." But firstly let us quickly remember the context. False teaches have said, "Where is this coming?" And then falsely claimed nothing ever changes, everything is as it has always been. So this talk of a coming judgement is all smoke and mirrors and fairy stories! But Peter accuses them of self-delusion, citing the reality of the Creation, the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and all such things. He asserts that they deliberately forget through their selective memories. Then pointing them to the conclusion of what will be: that all things have been reserved by God for fire!

And now by way of an explanation of how God works in time, through His story, (which is what history literally is, the story of God working in humanity) Peter now says, "But do not forget this one thing beloved: with the Lord a day is as 1000 years and 1000 years is as a day." But what is he saying? Well, it is that time is irrelevant to God, in that He is not beholding to time or bound by time. No the only sense to which God is bound by time, (for want of a better description) is that He has created time so that He would then work within that time to bring about His plans and purposes for humanity. And this being the case, He has indeed set a day, when He will bring an end to all things in the earth and the heavens, (meaning the skies above) yes all things as we know it! So when God is

accused of being slow in the keeping of His Word, even His promises, Peter says no. What is time to God, who holds the universe in the palm of His Hand? (As Sue said at Bible study on Monday night.) Does God get older? No. Is He like man constrained and wearing out? No. Is God like man, always in a race to finish? No. As Peter Marshall explained some years ago, about why God waited 20 odd years to fulfil His promise of a son to Abraham? God is not in a hurry!

Again, what is time to God? Simply the means by which He brings about His plan of the redemption of His chosen people to completion. But no God is not in a hurry because “with the Lord a day is as 1000 years, and 1000 years is as a day.” To God, all of the history of the universe, past, present and future, is laid out before Him as it were. So no He is not bound, He is not constrained by time, other than in the keeping of His Own Word! Yes as all things are, time, is simply a tool through which God brings about His plans.

Now friends, there are many today and more over the centuries who have used these verses and others, to do mathematical equations in there seeking to work out and determine when Jesus is actually going to return. Even as though there were some kind of secret hidden formula for us to discover. Well no! As I've explained, Peter is simply using descriptive language to explain that God is not bound by time, or is slow within His responding in that time. He is the God of time. Even as we sing, ‘When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more, and the glory of his resurrection share’. The commentator explains that during our time in these last days, we should be looking outward to fulfil the great commandment of John 14:6 To “love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples.”

And also looking upward, to fulfil the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20 To “go into the whole world making disciples of all nations..... and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” No not using our precious time to speculate upon when He will come, but to be ready, for when He does come! And in the words of the commentator Peter Lewis, ‘The perceived delay of Christ’s second coming is not after all, the failure of God’s plan, but rather the condition of its` success. And I say this again. The perceived delay of Christ’s second coming is not after all, the failure of God’s plan, but rather the condition of its success!’

Do you get what he is saying here? The length of time it is taking for Jesus to return, is simply assuring the success of His victory to bring all of His lost sheep into the fold. For instance, if the Lord had of returned 70 years ago, most of us would have either been destined for hell, or never been born at all. Brothers and sisters, as much as we all want Jesus to return now, to take all pain and suffering away; To put an end to violence, war, famine, pestilence and plague, perversion, corruption and evil. If He did, many of our family members would be lost. So we do pray “Come Lord Jesus come, but we also pray, “Father please have mercy on our last family and friends before You do!”

Look at v9 “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Friends why has the Lord not yet returned? Because He is merciful. Even in the face of the increasing evil and depravity of our age, praise God, that the Lord has not cut short His time of mercy. If Jesus returned today, my father, my nieces and their families, my brother in law and his family, my friends and many of your families would all be lost. So yes we do pray “Come Lord Jesus come,” but we also pray, please Lord have mercy upon those whom we love before You do! No Jesus “is not slow in keeping the promise” of His return. He hasn't come yet because there are still more that need to be gathered into the flock, His flock. Yes He is the true Shepherd of the sheep. Yes brothers and sisters God is merciful!

Ezekiel 18:23 “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” Declares the Sovereign Lord. “Rather am I not pleased when they turn from their wicked ways and live?” And Leviticus 18:32 “For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone,” declares the Sovereign Lord. “Repent and live.” Yes “repent and live.”

Brethren, we need to remember that Peter has been making this important connection between the old and new testaments. Holding that what the apostles taught was as “God breathed,” and went hand in hand with what the holy prophets spoke. And in verse 8, he has continued to do this as he draws from Psalm 90:4 which says, “for a 1000 years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.” No the Lord has not yet returned, but it is because of His great mercy! In Psalm 90, Moses speaks of men as being “as dust” and like the “grasses of the field” of the Middle East, which spring up overnight and yet when the sun blazes upon them through the heat of the day, they wither and die. In another place, God speaks of the span of a man's life, in the scheme of eternity as being “a mist that appears and is gone.”

Yes as Peter continues to draw those links between the old and new testaments, with them both being the “sacred Command,” even the whole council of God, in his referring to Psalm 90, he compares the Eternalness of the Creator of the universe who is not bound by time, to men, who are as but specks of dust that are here and gone! And yet such is the love of God, that even for that dust which we are, He gave of His Son that we might live. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! But we need to heed those warnings Peter says! Though the world and false teachers would have us believe that Jesus's second coming is never going to happen. 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 in it will be laid bare.” Yes “but the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”

Brothers and sisters, there are actually people who have convinced others to believe, that what Peter is speaking of here is of the secret coming of Jesus. And throughout even recent history, there have been those who have made the claim that they were indeed Jesus Himself. And many have followed after them. And that Jesus has or will return in secret, and then wait for just the right time to reveal Himself. But of course it makes no sense, and is contrary to scripture, and is valuable only to those whom, through such deceptions hold others captive for their own evil schemes!

But what is the reality? Matthew 24:30-31 “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and with great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” And 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 “for the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

And Acts 1:9-11 “After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him going to heaven.” And finally Revelation 1:7 “Look he is coming with the clouds and every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be. Amen.”

No there will be no secret return of Jesus Beloved. He came first as the humble and obedient servant, even the sacrificial Lamb of God. But when He comes again, it will be as the "Lion of Judah" the "King of kings and the Lord of Lords." With that "Name which is above every other name," before whom will "every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Amen!

No it is not the secretiveness which Peter speaks of here, but the suddenness of Jesus` coming. Luke 12:39-40 "But understand this, if the owner of the house had of known what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Yes friends, as when there is a great gathering in preparation for the coming of royalty. And as the precision approaches and everything must give way before the king, so shall it be at the return of the King of heaven. The whole of Creation must make way before the King, on that great and dreadful day of the Lord, the Day of God!

Dear friends, notice how this continues to be a warning for us. This is not gentle Jesus meek and mild; it speaks of the destruction of everything as we know it by burning no less. At the sudden coming of the King, "the heavens will disappear with a roar." The commentator explains it as the "roar" of the bushfire. A whizzing, a roaring, a crashing, yes the "roar" of the fire that those who have been at the forefront of such things, and experienced the terror of them, speak of. Even the most experience of firefighters say, that nothing can prepare you for that. Because it is terrifying as you realise, that you are totally and completely powerless and helpless. Yes "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."

Oh Beloved, we can't even begin to imagine such things. No one could begin to imagine this. Because no fire has ever burned so hot dear friends, as will those, when comes the fires of the eternal judgement of God! V11 "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people bought you to be?" Brothers and sisters it is a good question isn't it. "What kind of people ought you to be?" Four times in this short chapter, (only 18 verses in all) does Peter warn of the ultimate and imminent destruction of the world and everything in it. And as I have pointed out many times now in this series, he does this as he himself is facing certain death! 'Judgement is coming, judgement is coming, judgement is coming, judgement is coming. I'm about to go the way of all men, please hear what I am telling you. Hear what I am reminding you of that you already know'. In light of the judgement of God that is coming, how should you be preparing for that coming? Yes "what kind of people ought you to be?" Can you see? When he puts it in these terms he is basically asking us, are we making preparations for the coming of the King? And he does this by suggesting that how we are living, is a reflection of whether or not, we are indeed making preparations! Are we living as though the return of Jesus is real, and that it can happen at any moment? Or are we so caught up in the busyness of life and the here and now, that only a sprinkling of Christianity within our world is all that we have time for?

And friends I don't believe that Peter is talking about being theological geniuses with hearts of stone. "What kind of people ought you to be?" What position of priority does your walk with God take in your life? Is Christianity what you sometimes do, or is it who you are? Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:8 when he was about to die, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." Yes that is the question isn't it. Is the way that we are living, evidence that we are "longing for his appearing?" And this is harder to do than it is to say. Life is busy and difficult. We get pulled in so many different directions. Responsibilities with family and friends. Struggle with health, emotions, sin concern for others. But Beloved here's the thing. For the Christian, all of these struggles should drive us toward God, and not steer us away from Him. And all the more, Peter is

saying, because Christ's return is imminent, and the very nature of that coming! V11-12a "What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed it's coming."

So not just what we do, but who we are. We need to remember that the word "holy" conveys the idea of being set apart. But it is not physically separated from, it is being spiritually set apart by God and different. By God's grace as Jesus said we are "to be in the world but not of the world." And in the strength of the Holy Spirit, we are to be seeking to be those people who are beacons for Christ on earth, until He comes. And the sense to which we "speed his coming," is in our proclamations of His gospel message with our lips and also within our lives!

Lucas explains that part of this "holy and godly living" is not being one of those people who are saying "where is this coming?" Even having doubts in our hearts as if it were not real at all. But as we live, looking beyond this world and this life with anticipation, with that longing that Paul spoke of. Because Beloved, there is a real sense, to which we are all living in the waiting room of God! Paul put it this way in Philippians 1:20-27a: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

So as I close this morning brothers and sisters, let this be our desire also. Let us prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus, because "He will come like a thief in the night" at a time and day that we do not know. And that will be the day of God. And let us also brothers and sisters like Paul, have our "desire to be with Christ which is far better," but live this life for Him, until we do!

Let's pray!