

Hope in the Day of the Lord

Bible Background • 2 PETER 3

Printed Text • 2 PETER 3:1-15A | Devotional Reading • JOHN 14:1-7

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: UNDERSTAND the significance of holy living; FEEL CONFIDENT that Christ will return for His Church; and ANTICIPATE the day when God will make all things new.

In Focus

Jaden was looking out of the window when his mother, Brenda, arrived home.

“Jaden, what are you doing at the window?” she asked.

Jaden did not turn to look at her. He continued to stare out of the window as he replied, “I’m waiting for my daddy to come and take me to the ball game.”

Brenda walked over to Jaden. “Honey, did your daddy call today?”

“Yes, ma’am,” mumbled Jaden. “He said that he’d pick me up around 4 o’clock.”

Brenda walked away. It was already 5:30, and she didn’t have the heart to tell her son that his daddy probably wasn’t coming. Brenda knew her former husband, Johnny, was not a man who kept his promises. He would simply not show up, then call a couple of weeks later with some lame excuse.

As Brenda walked to her room, she turned to look at Jaden who was still staring out of the window. She knew her son was counting on his father to keep his promise. She prayed that Johnny would not let Jaden down again.

A promise is a binding declaration between two or more people or institutions. Only God keeps every one of His promises. In this week’s lesson, Peter confirms Christ’s promise to return and to usher in the new heaven and new earth.

Keep in Mind

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”
(2 Peter 3:9, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV 2 Peter 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 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 the creation.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation;

The People, Places, and Times

Day of the Lord. The Greek word is *parousia*. Theologians interpret this in various ways, but it certainly is the time when Jesus returns, whether in judgment for unbelievers or with everlasting joy for the followers of Christ.

Background

The apostle Peter wrote this text not only to warn Christians about false teachers but to exhort them to grow in their faith and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. One principal area of attack from false

teachers was the return and future judgment of Christ. If there was no future judgment, then people were free to live as they chose. In the final chapter of his second epistle, Peter directly challenges this error.

He begins by admonishing the people to remember those things he had taught them. It is important to remember the words proclaimed by anointed men and women of God. They challenge us to live holy lives, to use our gifts and talents for God, and to keep us from becoming complacent.

At-A-Glance

1. Believe God's Word (2 Peter 3:1–4)
2. Believe in God's Creation (vv. 5–9)
3. Believe God's Promise (vv. 10–13)
4. Be Spotless, Blameless, and at Peace with Him (vv. 14–15a)

In Depth

1. Believe God's Word (2 Peter 3:1–4)

Peter intended to “stir up” the people’s memory (2 Peter 3:1). To “stir up” means “to fully awaken.” The apostle suggests three areas where the people’s memory needed awakening: the words of the holy prophets, the commandments of the apostles, and the commandments of Christ.

Peter realized that in these “last days” many people would question Christian beliefs in the Lord (3:3). These people would cause others to have doubts about the authority of God’s Word. Peter called these unbelievers “scoffers” (v. 3). Scoffers are false teachers who mock the truth. The apostle had already warned the people that these scoffers would infiltrate the church with their “damnable heresies” (2:1). Some even went as far as denying the deity of Christ.

The “last days” refer to the period between the first and second coming of Christ. During this period, ungodly teachers will deny that Christ is coming back to execute judgment. “They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (3:4, NIV).

It is sad that people are deceived into believing Christ is not coming again. However, Peter’s message is clear: Do not listen to these scoffers and do not follow them. God’s Word is true and His promises are unfulfilling.

2. Believe in God's Creation (vv. 5–9)

The scoffers do not believe the truth of God’s Word. They portray God’s truth as a moral fable. These false teachers purposely forget that God created the heavens and the Earth. To refute their heresy, Peter reminds his readers of God’s creative power. First, he reminds them of how God, by His Word, rolled back the waters to create dry land (v. 5; Genesis 1:9–10). God used the same waters that He rolled back to destroy the old world in the days of Noah and his family (2 Peter 3:6). He did not spare the old world when His people disobeyed Him (2:5), and He will not spare the current world. God has already decided the world’s fate and declared it through Christ and His apostles.

Scoffers need to be warned that God’s Word is true. They think He has forgotten His creation, so they feel they can live any way they choose. They fail to realize that God is being patient with us. Scoffers fail to understand that because His desire is to save and not destroy, God does not measure time according to human standards. “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (from 3:8, NIV). God can accomplish in one day what might take 1,000 years, and He may take 1,000 years to accomplish His will in a day.

3. Believe God's Promise (vv. 10–13)

Peter emphatically declares, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (v. 10). According to Spiros Zodhiates—a Greek American Bible scholar and author—the “day of the Lord” represents the second coming of Christ and the occasion when God will actively intervene to punish sin. The term also refers to the time immediately before the creation of the new heaven and earth (*Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 710).

Peter says that on this day, “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise” (v. 10). The Greek word translated “great noise” means

“with a great crash.” The apostle declares the Earth will be burned up, and not only the Earth, but all the “works that are therein.” Everything that humankind has ever created, invented, or built will be utterly consumed in this “fervent heat.”

4. Be Spotless, Blameless, and at Peace (vv. 14–15a)

The underlying theme of these verses is the second coming of the Lord. Whether our lives on Earth end in death or whether we are alive when the Lord returns, we want to be found ready. To be found “without spot, and blameless” is to be fully like Jesus (v. 14). This thought should motivate us to examine every aspect of our lives and think about what we may be doing when we are suddenly taken to be with the Lord. The standard is perfection, but the Lord knows our weaknesses and frailties, and the blood of Christ covers all of our sins. So we have great peace as we look forward to His return. The only reason the Lord is delaying His return is to give more people the opportunity to be saved before He returns.

Search the Scriptures

1. What three things does Peter want to remind the people of (2 Peter 3:2–4)?
2. Why is the Lord delaying His coming and the execution of judgment on the world (v. 9)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. What are some false teachings that are being spread in the church today? How do you know that these teachings are false?
2. If the “day of the Lord” is coming as a thief in the night, what characteristics can you identify in people’s behavior or in institutional activities that suggest the Lord may be coming soon?

Liberating Lesson

Many people in our society live according to a “bumper sticker” mentality. Some believe they should “live fast, die young, and make a beautiful corpse.” Others believe that “the person who dies with the most toys wins.” These people live for immediate pleasure and are not concerned with the consequences. They believe they will somehow escape the consequences of their actions today and in the hereafter. They are either ignorant of or flatly deny the return of Christ and God’s judgment of the rebellious. How does society perpetuate the idea of living just for the now?

Application for Activation

Read the following Scripture texts. Identify the statements said to be the will of God: 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18; 2 Peter 3:9. Decide to obey God’s will in these matters until Jesus comes.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

- Green, Michael. *Second Epistle General of Peter, and the General Epistle of Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Lucas, Richard C., and Christopher Green. *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude: The Promise of His Coming*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Mounce, Robert. *A Living Hope: A Commentary on 1 and 2 Peter*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.
- New Testament Greek Lexicon*. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek> (accessed October 31, 2011).
- Zodhiates, Spiros. *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1992. 710, 1487–1488.

Say It Correctly

Perdition. per-DIH-shun.
Scoffers. SCOF-fers.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Distressing Times Will Come
(2 Timothy 3:1–9)

TUESDAY

Warnings for False Prophets
(Jeremiah 23:23–32)

WEDNESDAY

Warnings for Rich Oppressors
(James 5:1–6)

THURSDAY

Return to the Lord
(Hosea 14:1–7)

FRIDAY

Teaching the Ways of God
(Micah 4:1–5)

SATURDAY

I Will Come Again
(John 14:1–7)

SUNDAY

The Promise of the Lord's Coming
(2 Peter 3:3–15a)

Notes
