



“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,” II Peter 3:10.

The Lord Shall Come

Lesson Aim: To encourage a greater degree of expectancy of His return.

L282. Date: August 1971. **Text:** II Peter 3:1-11. **Topic:** Christ: Return of.

INTRODUCTION — A friend was visiting an aged saint and in the conversation made a comment about death. It brought the reply, “I’m not waiting for death. I’m waiting for Jesus.”

The next major event to occur in the prophetic calendar of God is the second coming of Jesus Christ. That event is the “blessed hope . . . the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” for each believer.

Jesus promised His return: **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also,”** John 14:3.

Angels predicted His return: **“. . . This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,”** Acts 1:11.

The early Christians expected His return in their lifetime. The expectation was common that Jesus would return before the Apostle John died, John 21:20-24.

Believers in all generations have looked forward with anticipation to His coming. Times of revival have always been marked by renewed expectation of His appearing. But today there is a special awareness of His near coming. Many a believer's heart is testifying, **“The Lord is at hand,”** Philippians 4:5. His coming is the next major event in God's prophetic

calendar.

The fact that Jesus comes again, perhaps soon, should spur the Christian to his utmost efforts, his purest devotion, his highest purposes, and his unceasing concern for the salvation of sinners. This lesson should be studied with the heart open for God to use it to arouse us to fervent service in the time yet remaining.

Here is a truth which is the hope of the Christian, a warning to the sinner, and the judgment of the world: Jesus is coming again soon!

EXPOSITION

I. WILL HE COME? 3:1-4.

Not all people believe that Jesus will return. In fact, a small percentage of the total world population believes it. Even among professed Christians, in some otherwise orthodox churches, there are many who do not believe nor expect His return. Why do men deny the fact of His coming?

1. Some deny that He will come because they are ignorant of the Bible, verses 1-2. There is no scarcity of references in the Holy Scriptures regarding Jesus' return. It is seen in statement, type and shadow in both Old and New Testaments. The message of His return is no new message. Even God's prophetic word speaks of it. To this is added the testimony of the Apostles of Jesus.

Both the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament spoke of the coming of Jesus. Why, then, do many people reject it? Because they are ignorant of the Word. It would amaze many if they read through the Bible and marked each reference to the coming of Jesus. They would come away full of faith in the doctrine. But neglect of the Word causes doubt and denial.

2. Some deny that Jesus will come because they live in lust and do not wish Him to appear, verse 3. **“... There shall come in the last day scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?”** verses 3-4a.

A man once said, “I hope there is no hell. Because if there is I am going there.” Instead of changing his ways through faith in Jesus Christ, he spent his time hoping there would be no hell. In the same manner, some deny the coming of Jesus Christ because they fear to face Him personally after they have lived in lust.

Lust is simply an inordinate desire for a thing. But when men are caught up in compulsive desire, they ignore the Word of God and the

warnings of it. Thus they go astray. Even a doctrine so momentous as the coming of Jesus is denied as a consequence.

3. Some deny that Jesus will come because they examine past history and present prospects with a carnal mind, verse 4. **“... 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.”** This is an assertion that there is no evidence in past history now in the present circumstances which indicate a return of the Lord. In what they consider wisdom superior to the Word of God, they examine the plain statements of the prophets and apostles and brand them as lies. What audacity!

Spiritually minded men can read the “signs of the times” and know His coming is near. Carnally minded men cannot understand spiritual things and so deny His coming. The very fact that there are such scoffers abroad today is an indication of Jesus' near return. Spiritual men and women look toward that day with faith which makes it real. Thus it becomes their “blessed hope,” Titus 2:13.

II. HE WILL COME! 3:5-9.

In spite of men's unbelief, Jesus will come. Even if men believe not, God abides faithful to fulfill His promises, **“If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself,”** II Timothy 2:13. But there is proof that he will do as He said. **“And shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,”** Acts 3:20-21. He will come.

1. His coming is guaranteed by judgments in the past and warnings of the future, verses 5-7. Examine, first the judgments in the past. There was a time when men lived in such sin that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,” Genesis 6:5. God purposed to bring judgment upon men who said, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” Job 21:14. Their rebellion was met with a flood of waters in which all creatures that had “the breath of life” in their nostrils died, Genesis 6:17; 7:22.

God saved eight human beings through that catastrophe. These were Mr. & Mrs. Noah, Mr. & Mrs. Shem, Mr. and Mrs. Ham, and Mr. and Mrs. Japheth. When the flood had subsided, God entered a covenant with these and their posterity that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood of waters.

“But the present heaven and earth have been stored up with fire by the fiat of God waiting for that day when He shall judge and destroy all impious and wicked men.” The future as well as the past holds a time of judgment.

Many people objected to this passage, along with verses 10 and 12, saying the thing here described was scientifically impossible. But when man learned how to split the atom the passage suddenly became possible in the minds of unbelievers. For there is a description of the burning of the very atmosphere as well as all other substance when the fire stored in the universe is released in divine judgment. God has only to remove His power which holds all things together (Colossians 1:17) and the destruction of the universe will occur.

There will be such a judgment by fire, as there had been a judgment by water, when “the day of the Lord” has come. The coming of that great day will be in relation to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

2. His plans are not changed by time, verse 8. Those who deny or question whether He will come point to the passing of time as proof of their unbelief: “. . . **for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,**” verse 4. Thus they suggest that all things will continue to be as they have been and are now. This time span is interpreted to mean that God has changed his plans. But it is not so.

God is not affected by time, as are men. A thousand years is a very long time to men but it is only as a day to God. God has the day of Jesus' return determined and set. He alone knows when it will be, but it is certain, Matthew 24:36. Time makes no difference in that date. It is certain and sure. Each tick of the clock brings it nearer. God's plans are not changed by what seems to men as delays in His work.

3. His coming is delayed as an expression of divine grace, verse 9. In no wise can God be accused of negligence because Jesus has not yet come. He does not loiter over His plans. He is not dilatory nor slow to fulfill His promises. There is a reason why God delays to call an end to time. It is a reason of grace.

God delays the coming of Jesus Christ in order to give sinners the more time to repent and be saved! He bears patiently with men, being long-suffering, because it is not His will for any to be lost and perish but that each one should repent and be saved. This is why it seems that the coming of Jesus is delayed.

If Jesus delays in order that more sinners may be saved, how this should challenge Christians to be busy in witnessing that more may be saved. Who knows, perhaps the next person who is saved may be the last person saved before Jesus comes. Win your friends and your loved ones to

Jesus now!

III. WHEN HE COMES, 3:10-11.

1. He will come unexpectedly, verse 10a. “ . . . **The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.**” This does not suggest that His coming will be like an enemy, but that it will be totally unexpected. Of course men who do not believe that He will come at all will be astonished when He appears. Totally unannounced will He come. In the midst of life's ordinary affairs, suddenly He is here!

Those who boast themselves of tomorrow and think they have yet years to live should consider this very seriously. Those who delay salvation should realize that they gamble with their eternal souls at stake.

He will come. Every promise will be kept. In spite of the mockers, in spite of His seeming delay, He will come. How important it is to be prepared for His coming.

“ . . . **If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee,**” Revelation 3:3. “**Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched. . .**” Matthew 24:42-43. He may come tonight. If you do not expect him to do so remember the unexpected nature of His appearing.

2. He will come in judgment, verse 10b. “The day of the Lord” is commonly associated with judgment in Bible references. It is always spoken of as a day of fierce judgment. Joel 1:15 reads, “**Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.**” Amos 5:18 adds, “ . . . **The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.**”

How then, can believers look forward to that day? Because it is for them a day of deliverance. When Jesus appears and takes the Christians to Himself, there is only judgment waiting for the unregenerate world.

3. He will come to renovate the creation, verse 10. The destruction of both the heaven and earth by fire is suggested in verse 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.**”

It appears our whole solar system will disintegrate in a flame of fire. The elements (meaning, “orderly arrangement”) of the stars shall melt. “The earth also” will become a super funeral pyre for a universe cursed by sin.

With the universe will be burned all the “works” associated with it. Thus shall it pass away as Paul stated, “. . . **the fashion of this world passeth away,**” I Corinthians 7:31.

In the place of this sin-cursed creation there will come “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” verse 13. The new creation is described in Revelation 21 and 22. It is marked by the presence of God, the glory of God, and is the homeland of the people of God.

4. His coming is a challenge to Christian purity: **“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,”** verse 11.

What a practical challenge arises from the fact of the Lord's return and the attendant consequences. The things of earth shall be dissolved and melt away. Holy manner of life and pious attitude toward the Lord should mark the believer. He is but a stranger and pilgrim in this world. How busy, prayerful and watchful he should be.

With a manner of life characterized by holiness and an attitude toward the Lord marked as godliness, we will be both clean and devoted. What a way to live while waiting for His coming with earnest desire of heart!

CONCLUSION—What a joy to live in anticipation of the coming of our Lord Jesus. What an inspiration it gives to our service. What fervency it adds to our witness. To awake each morning with the realization that this day may be the day when He comes makes every day have a halo of glory. What a thrill this gives to living.

Are you ready for Jesus to return? Those who are unsaved will be left behind to suffer divine judgment. How is it with your soul? **“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,”** II Corinthians 6:2b. Are you ready for His coming? What if it were today? Is there anyone you would like to win to Jesus first? Hurry!

QUESTIONS

1. What scriptures promise Jesus will come again?
2. Why do men deny His coming?
3. How do past judgments testify to it?
4. Why is the coming of Jesus delayed?
5. In what sense does He come as a thief in the night?
6. How is judgment related to His coming?
7. What will happen to this creation when He has come?

8. How does this challenge believers?
9. Do you think He may come today? Why?
10. Is His return a “blessed hope” for you? Why?