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“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.

Jesus Is Coming

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

L347. Date: July 1976. **Text:** II Peter 3:1-11.

Topic: Christ: Return of; Church: Rapture of.

Jesus is coming! That is the glad affirmation of the Word of God and the people of God. The return of the Lord is called “the blessed hope” of the saints, Titus 2:13. It is a blessed hope because with it is associated believers' resurrection unto life, transformation into the likeness of the Lord, reunion with saints who have preceded them in death, the marriage of the Lamb, the kingdom of God, the renovation of the universe, the new heavens and earth, and eternal destiny. To those whose hope is in Jesus Christ, His coming is “the blessed hope.”

The Lord's return will cease all anxious care, end all laborious work, cure all sickness, comfort all sorrow, answer all prayer, and bring ultimate victory to the people of God.

The truth of His return is the hope of the Christian, a warning to the sinner, and the judgment of the world. It should spur the believer to his utmost efforts, his purest devotion, his noblest purposes, and unceasing effort for the salvation of men. It should call the unbeliever to serious consideration of his destiny and direct him to seek the Savior.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is the next major event to occur in God's prophetic calendar of the end time. Believers anticipate it with joy. A friend was visiting an aged saint and the conversation turned to death. “I am not waiting for death,” the elderly believer stated. “I am waiting for Jesus.”

His coming might transpire before you conclude reading these lesson

comments. Settle it in your heart: Jesus is coming soon!

1. AFFIRMATION (verses 1, 2)

The Bible positively and repeatedly foretells the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is taught as clearly as were the events of His first coming. One who believes the Bible believes that Jesus is coming again.

The prophets of God preached of the second coming of the Savior. From the earliest generations of human history, that expectation was divinely implanted in the hearts of the men who were in on the counsels of God. “. . . **Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,**” Jude 14. Enoch lived before the days of the flood of Noah. In the seventh generation of human history, long before the first coming of the Lord, prophets were anticipating His second coming.

Writings of the Old Testament prophets abound in references to the King, His kingdom, and the reign of righteousness when God establishes His full dominion upon the earth. Those are predictions of His second coming, His return in glory. The same prophets who foretold His coming also foretold the denial which would be made by unbelievers. Believers should keep their hearts steady in faith through the words of the prophets of God.

To the testimony of the prophets is joined the witness of the apostles. They likewise believed in and taught the return of the Lord. The Apostle Paul's writings make up almost one-half of the New Testament. In his epistles there are references of Jesus' return, resurrection of the dead, His kingdom on earth, His judgment of sinners, the dissolving of the old creation and the institution of the new, and eternal destiny. Apostles and prophets agree: Jesus is coming again.

II. NEGATION (verses 3-5)

Some men deny the fact that Jesus will return. Others, not brave enough to deny it outright, question whether it will be. Who is it that denies the promises of Jesus' return? Peter identifies the man as a “scoffer.” A scoffer is one who shows contempt as a manifestation of doubt, cynicism, or irreverence. The term is built upon a root word which means to throw or push away. The scoffer shows his scorn, contempt, and derision by words of doubt or denial.

Why do men scoff at the promises? They are “walking after their own lusts.” God intended that men should believe and walk as the Holy Spirit

leads. Scoffers disbelieve and walk as their fleshly desires dictate.

One should follow the affirmations of truth by those who follow the Spirit of God and believe the Word of God, rather than following the doubts and denials of those who reject God and follow their lusts.

Why do men deny the promises of God? Peter declared that they are “willingly ignorant” of the facts (verse 5). They can find ample basis for belief in Scripture and in history, but they choose not to believe the truth. They insist there is no evidence in past history or present circumstances which indicates a return of the Lord. Spiritually minded men read “the signs of the times,” but carnal and sensual men see no indication of God's plan in history. They cannot find God for the same reason the thief cannot find a policeman: they do not want to find Him.

III. DEMONSTRATION (verses 5-7)

The sacred record of history affirms the certainty of the Lord's return.

Before the flood in Noah's day, men said to God, “. . . **Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,**” Job 21:14. God warned that such rebellion would be met with a flood of waters which would destroy all who were not safely in the ark. Men did not believe. Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” for 120 years, but men would not believe his testimony concerning God.

“. . . What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar . . .” Romans 3:3, 4. God announced judgment. Men refused to believe judgment would come. Judgment came and destroyed them. **“If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself,”** II Timothy 2:13.

In times past, God spoke and it came to pass. In time yet future, what God has spoken shall surely come to pass. What has been guaranteed the certainty of what He says will be. God judged sin in the past; He will judge sin in the future. God promised the first coming of the Saviour, and He came. God promises the second coming of the Saviour, and He will come. Men should not doubt. God's promises and warnings are certain of fulfillment.

God warned of a coming judgment by water. It came to pass in the life time of Noah. God has warned of a coming judgment by fire. It may come to pass in the present generation. The judgment by water destroyed life upon the earth. The judgment by fire will dissolve the entire universe. It is coming. Everyone should be ready against that day.

IV. PROLONGATION (verses 8, 9)

It appears that God delays the fulfillment of His promises concerning the return of the Lord. That is why some scoffers say, “. . . **Where is** (the fulfillment of) **the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,**” verse 4. God's seeming delay is not delay at all. It is a prolongation of the age of grace.

God is not limited by time as men are. The Lord counts one day as a thousand years and one thousand years as a day. He works on a different time schedule from men. If He takes a thousand years to bring to pass what He has promised, it does not mean He is negligent. Men are so limited by time that they want God to do things quickly, so they may see. God moves slowly because of grace. He bears patiently with men. His desire is that not one should perish, but that all should repent. Believers should not despair if God's promises are not immediately fulfilled, He will bring every word to fulfillment in His own time.

Christians should look upon God's seeming delay as an indication of His grace, not as an evidence of His unconcern. Day by day they should grow more assured of His faithfulness and more appreciative of His grace.

V. DISSOLUTION (verse 10)

The present universe will come to an end. A great noise shall accompany the rending of the heavens. Intense heat shall melt the planets. The earth and all that is therein shall be burned up. The whole creation will dissolve in heat and be consumed by fire.

What is the explanation of that catastrophe? A few years ago, scientists were saying that what was described was scientifically impossible. When they entered into fuller scientific truth, they were surprised that there was a scientific explanation for what Peter described. Through a splitting of the atoms of the created universe, the noise, heat, and dissolution described in II Peter 3:10-12 would come to pass.

When will that change come? The date is known only to God. Since men do not know the time, it is advisable that they live each day as if that were the last. When the day comes, however, men will be surprised. “. . . **The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night . . .**” verse 10.

Those who boast themselves of tomorrow and think that they may be saved at a time which they choose should consider that fact very seriously.

To trifle with spiritual things is to gamble with eternal destiny. The coming of Jesus is too certain as to occurrence, too indefinite as to time, and too significant as to eternity for one to delay his preparation for it.

VI. SANTIFICATION (verses 11, 12)

All things that are now known as tangible and stable are on the verge of dissolution. In view of that, what holy and pious, devout and dedicated, lives believers should be living. While waiting the coming of the Lord, none should dare to be as the wicked servant of whom Jesus spoke (Matthew 24:45-51). He grew careless when his master delayed his return from a distant journey. He grew negligent of his duties, belligerent with his fellows, and wicked in his actions. He grew increasingly heedless of the soon return of his master. **“The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,”** Matthew 24:50. No one should let that day catch him unprepared. How does one prepare for that day? (1) He can be sure that he is saved. (2) He can be sure that he is living like one who is expecting and waiting for his Lord. “All holy conversation and godliness” should mark the life of God's child as he waits for the coming of God's Son.

Delay in the return of Jesus will do either of two things to a person. (1) It may permit him time to become neglectful about spiritual matters and be unprepared for His coming. (2) It will permit him time to grow spiritually and to serve faithfully in view of His coming. One's choice determines which of the two possibilities happen to him.

“... Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him,” I John 2:28,29.

VII. EXPECTATION (verse 13)

What will follow the dissolving of the present universe? There will be another, improved model, in its place. The anticipation of a world without sin has been in the hearts of God's people throughout all generations. God predicted, **“... Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create . . .”** Isaiah 65:17, 18. (See also Isaiah 66:22.) God placed the anticipation in man's heart because that is what He intends to do at His chosen time.

Jesus promised the disciples that He would “go to prepare a place” for them (John 14:1). That prepared place is in the new creation which follows the dissolving of the old.

The Apostle Paul wrote of the conflict suffered by the present creation. It is as if it were in the pains of travail at birth. The creation was made subject to the curse which came as a result of man's sin (Genesis 3). It is waiting its deliverance from that curse, Romans 8:19-23.

The Apostle John brought the final revelation to light in Revelation 21 and 22. “. . . **I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . .**” Revelation 21:1. It is a glorious place. (1) The tabernacle of God is there where He freely meets with His people. (2) The city of God is there, where He freely dwells with His people. (3) The garden of God is there, where He freely provides for His people. All that is essential to true happiness — food, water, health, fellowship, worship — is there in pristine purity and absolute abundance. That is the goal toward which believers are traveling. They should keep their directions dear, their interest single, and their hope vibrant. Heaven is ahead.

That is the “blessed hope” which believers enjoy as they anticipate the “glorious appearing” of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Some have objected that such teaching makes the Christian too “other worldly” for him to be of any use in the here-and-now. That is not so! Hope of His return does not make Christians idle dreamers of “pie in the sky bye and bye.” It rather inspires them to loving devotion to Jesus, purity of life in their hearts, and selfless service to others. It is an inspiration to serve, an encouragement to the weary, and a call to salvation to the sinner.

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” Revelation 22:20.

Questions

1. What scripture says that Jesus is coming?
2. What did prophets say about His return?
3. What did the Apostle Paul say about His return?
4. Why do some deny His return?
5. How does Noah's flood prove that Jesus will return?
6. How does Romans 3:3, 4 relate to the study?
7. Why does the Lord “delay” His return?
8. What will happen to the earth at the end of time?
9. How is that a call to holy living?

10. What will the new heaven and the new earth be like?