

The End Of The World, And Our Attitude Towards It.

Text: 2 Peter 3:3-14

1) The End Of The World

Suggested Hymns:

2) Our Attitude Towards The End

485, 492, 490, 290, 304

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Peter 3:3-14, ³ *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to 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 creation.”*

⁵ *For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,* ⁶ *by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.* ⁷ *But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

⁸ *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* ⁹ *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, 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 which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

¹¹ *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,* ¹² *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*

¹³ *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* ¹⁴ *Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

St. Peter introduces this Epistle with an allusion to the scoffers who will come in the last days. He says, ³ *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to 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 creation.”*

Such scoffers abounded already in the early days of the Christian Church, after the death of the holy Apostles, as may be seen from the writings of the church fathers. They poked all manner of fun at the Christians because they held on to their faith, that Christ would come to judge the living and the dead.

They pointed to the fact that the Apostles had already expected Christ to come while they lived, and that He had not come yet. They walked after their own lusts, and said to the Christians: *‘What fools you are not to enjoy life as we do, but to look for something better when your Christ shall return! Did not your Apostles die who expected Christ to come, and does not the world run its regular course as it did since the creation?’*

By divine inspiration St. Peter knew that these scoffers would come and what arguments they would use to shatter the Christians’ faith in Christ’s return. And how does he meet their arguments? He says, ⁵ *For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.*

In other words, the fact that God did come once before and destroyed the earth overthrows all the arguments of these scoffers. How can they say that no change will come because things have been running their regular course for thousands of years? Was not the Flood a catastrophe which affected the whole world? And have they no knowledge of the Flood in which the water covered the whole earth? It is not a thing of which they do not know, but of what they do not want to know. *They willfully forget!*

Now, as these scoffers were numerous in the early days of the Christian Church, so they also abound in these last days of the world which have come upon us. Let us not listen to their mockery!

Let us hold fast the faith so clearly set forth in the Scripture that this world will come to an end. Let us consider *The End Of The World, And Our Attitude Towards It*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The End Of The World.

St. Peter makes several statements as to the end of the world. The first statement is, that the end of the world is sure to come. He says, ***But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.***

What, then, is to become of the heavens and the earth? Are they to last forever? No; as by the word of God they came into existence, so they shall go out of existence by the same word of the Almighty. The world shall stand no longer than God will permit it to stand.

And God has appointed a day of judgement, a day of perdition of ungodly men, a day of destruction, in which all things shall pass away. The end of this world is as sure to come as the Word of God is true. Did not Christ say, ***Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away?***¹

But why is the day of judgement so long in coming? Ever since Christ's ascension into heaven Christians have been looking for His coming in the clouds. The Apostles waited for Him. The early Christians lived in expectation of the last day of this earth. They watched for the end of all things in all the following centuries, and now we are in the 21st century, and the end is not yet here.

How are we to reconcile this long lapse of time with the instructions given to the Christians already in the days of the Apostles, that they should wait and watch for the Lord? The Apostle says, ⁸ ***But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.***

God is eternal. He does not measure time as we do. Periods of thousands of years are as one day to Him, as the Psalmist says, ***For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past.***²

What God calls the last days and the last hour is the entire time of the New Testament, and we do not know, neither can we figure out, when the last day will come. But we should live in constant expectation of the last day, and feel as if it may come at any time. Beware of the thought that the end of this world is not to be expected for some time!

The Apostle says, ⁹ *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

We should not say, as the scoffers do, “Where is the promise of His coming?” We should not infer from the long lapse of time that the Lord is slack concerning His promise, or that, perhaps, thousands of years will roll by before the end of the world will come.

No; we should view this delay from an altogether different point of view. We should say with the Psalmist, *The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy!*³

We are living in a world steeped in sins, crimes committed daily that cry to heaven, creatures abused for sinful purposes so that they groan under the service of sin, people without the fear of God, blaspheming their divine Maker, and given to vice and crime, — why does not the Almighty come down and destroy them as He did in the days of the Flood or in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah?

How patient and how merciful God is with us damnable sinners! We read in Ezekiel 33:11, ¹¹ *Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.* And our text says that God is *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* It is owing to God’s long-suffering that, as yet, the end of the world has not come.

But when the end does come, how will it be? The Apostle says, ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

As a thief in the night so will the day of the Lord come. Now we know that a thief would not be such a fool as to give a warning beforehand, that the people

might expect him. He will come most unexpectedly. And likewise the end of the world will come when nobody expects it.

Things will be running their regular course as usual. On one side of the globe everything will be hushed in night, and on the other side people will be walking in the brightness of day, following their daily vocations, buying and selling, eating and drinking, rejoicing and sorrowing.

Then suddenly, as a flash of lightning from a clear sky, the crash will come which no astronomer was able to foretell. Christ will appear descending in the clouds, the dead will rise everywhere and meet the Lord in the air, the whole earth will be wrapped in a huge mass of fire, and the flames will consume everything and melt even the elements, so that nothing remains of this present earth.

And not only the planet upon which we live shall be thus destroyed, but the heavens also, that is, the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Everything shall pass away in this terrible fire by which everything *will be burned up*.

2. Our Attitude Towards The End.

Can we remain indifferent in view of this awful catastrophe which may come upon us at any time, and act and walk in this life as if no danger was threatening? Certainly not!

Let us consider, then, in the second part, our attitude towards the end of the world. We should, above all things, be found in a state of godliness. The Apostle says, *¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.*

You know, my dear Christians, that all these earthly things shall pass away. How careful you should be, then, that the things of this world do not take possession of your heart and alienate you from God!

We read in 1 John 2:15-17, *¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

How careful you should be that, when the Lord comes, He will find you in all holy conversation and godliness, as one of the wise virgins, with the lamp of faith burning bright, and ready to receive the bridegroom!

To this end we should continually occupy our minds with God's prediction as to the last day of this world, and pray for that day to come as the Apostle says, ¹² *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.*

Christians should not live in dread and fear of the day of judgement and wish and pray that they may not live to see it. What have we who are in Christ to fear when Christ comes?

That day shall be terrible only for the wicked, but not for those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered, for those who live in the faith of the Son of God who has redeemed them with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

For us it shall be the day of our redemption, the day in which we shall be divested of all that is vile upon us, and received into joy and glory which no language can tell. O how we should pray for that day to come!

For, as the Apostle continues, ¹³ *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* The earth upon which we live now is full of wickedness, full of sin, which was brought into the world by the wiles of the devil and the disobedience of our first parents. Untold misery, woe, and death have followed in the wake of sin, marring God's beautiful creation and turning this world into a vale of tears.

But when this visible creation is destroyed by the universal fire, the new heavens and the new earth will come forth which God has promised. For this is the promise which God has made in the prophecies of Isaiah, *"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind."*⁴

And in the Book of Revelation John says: *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*⁵ We do not know what the nature of this new heaven and earth will be; but what we do know is, that righteousness will dwell therein. Christ will rule and shine as the Sun of Righteousness, and there shall be no pain, no

sorrow, no sin, no wickedness in God's new creation. O how we should look and long for this new heaven and new earth!

Finally the Apostle says, ¹⁴ *Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.* Of ourselves we are never blameless and without spot, and peace does not dwell in our hearts by nature.

We are all sinners, and the best Christians sin daily and deserve nothing but punishment. But, in spite of all our sins, we are blameless and without spot in the sight of God if we sincerely believe in Jesus Christ who was bruised for our iniquities and wounded for our transgressions.

Christ, the eternal Son of God, has worked out for us all, a spotless righteousness by His perfect fulfilment of God's Law, and has atoned for all our sins by His vicarious suffering and death.

If in true faith we appropriate to ourselves the merits of our Saviour, peace enters into our hearts, and we know that we have been reconciled with God.

Let us be diligent, then, let us be active and alert that we may always be in a state of faith and godliness. Then we shall be able to stand before the Son of Man, whether He come in the clouds to judge the world, or whether He come to us in death to take us from this vale of tears. Let us heed our Saviour's warning *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming!"*⁶ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 24:35

² Psalm 90:4

³ Psalm 103:8

⁴ Isaiah 65:17

⁵ Revelation 21:1

⁶ Matthew 24:42