

Sermon Brief

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December 4, 2022

Text: 2 Peter 3:11-18

Title: “Where is this Coming? pt.3”

Subject: False teachers deny the second coming.

Complement: Believers need to live in light of the new creation.

Textual Idea: The false teachers deny the second coming, believers must live in light of the new creation.

Sermon Idea: Live with the end in mind.

Interrogative: What end purpose do you have in mind?

Key Points:

1. Be Devoted – Focus on the Promise of New Creation. (vv.11-13)
2. Be Diligent – Focus on the Word of God. (vv.14-16)
3. Be Discerning – Focus on the Person of Christ. (vv.17-18)

What do I want people to know? I want people to know that Jesus will return to judge the world and that believers must live their lives in light of this promised reality.

What do I want people to do? I want people to (1) steward their lives in view of eternity, (2) keep clear consciences, (3) commit to deeply pursuing intimacy with Jesus.

What need am I addressing? I am addressing the need for living a godly life in light of God’s promised return.

“Where is this Coming? pt.3”

2 Peter 3:11-18

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One of my favorite things to do as a pastor is conduct weddings. They're such a blast! But before we can enjoy the ceremony, we have to go through the rehearsal the night before. I usually round everyone up and, after introductions, I ask them all to stand in place at the front of the venue. Inevitably, someone will question why we're starting in the middle of the ceremony. The reason is because the wedding party needs to know their final destination if they're going to have any confidence walking down the aisle. In other words, we begin with the end in mind. That's essentially what Peter is telling us in 2 Peter, chapter 3. Turn there now.

We're completing a sermon series on **(LCD) 1 & 2 Peter** entitled “Alien Living in a Chaotic World.” We live in an upside-down world, from a biblical perspective, and it seems to be getting dicer by the minute for those of us who have sworn allegiance to Jesus as Lord. It's nothing new - it was true in Peter's day too. Now over the past few weeks, we've been focusing on chapter 3, which is Peter's reply to the false teaching that the Lord Jesus is not returning. Today, we're going to pick up after Peter's explanation of the final judgment starting in verse 11. Let's take a look. 2 Peter 3:11, *“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. 14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 17 Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”*

In this section, Peter is telling us how we are to live in light of the truth of the return of Christ. He begins in verse 11 by summarizing what he taught in verse 10, *“The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”* Regardless of how one interprets this passage, Peter presents a powerful and scary portrait of a fiery judgment of all sin and its consequences. In light of that, he asks the question, *“What kind of people ought you to be?”* And though the grammar is super funky, his reply is, *“You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”* He then goes back to summarizing the end time destruction.

This is our first key takeaway for this morning. The reality of the final judgment should motivate holy living, a life that reflects the character of the God we say we follow. In other words, begin with the end in mind. If God is going to burn all sin and evil away, then don't invest your life in things that won't survive that final test! For instance, how many of you are interested in investing in **(LCD) Sears? CNN had an article this week entitled, "Is this the last Christmas for Sears?"** That sentence would have been unthinkable not too long ago. Sears was everywhere for everyone! It was the Amazon of its day! Not anymore. It would be a really BAD idea to invest in a company with no future – no matter how glorious the past was!

So Peter says, in light of the coming destruction, you should live a life devoted to honoring God. But actually, he says there's an even greater motivation at the end of verse 12, *"as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."* Three times in the next three verses, Peter will use the word for, "look forward to," or "waiting for." Peter doesn't want us to be like Lot's wife and weep for the past, he urges us to rejoice in the future. Instead of fearing all the devastation of the wrath of God poured out on a guilty world, Peter says we should gladly anticipate what's coming! And even speed or hasten it's coming! Now, honestly, no one really knows exactly what it means to hasten the coming of the end, but last week, we saw that God is waiting for people to repent. I found this note interesting, **(LCD) "The rabbis claimed that the Messiah would come if only all Israel would repent or obey the law perfectly for one day – a teaching found in different forms in Jewish literature."** Perhaps Peter is alluding to some version of that – regardless, somehow our repentance speeds the coming of the end.

But why in the world would we be glad to speed about the cataclysmic desolation of the entire cosmos? Because of verse 13, *"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells."* Believer in Jesus, rejoice! God made a promise that He would one day renew and redeem His creation – all of it! And that day is the day of God. While it is terrible news for those who refuse to submit to Him, it is tremendous news for those who do! One example of this promise is found in Isaiah 65, **(LCD) "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more."** Amen! The fulfillment of this new creation promise, then, is what Peter wants the believers to focus on. It is the prime motivation to live a life that honors God. Our first point this morning, **(LCD) Be Devoted – Focus on the Promise of New Creation** – that's how we stay devoted to God. We won't live holy and godly, or god-like lives in this world, lives which say 'no' to our sinful desires and selfish ways, unless we have a rock-solid conviction that the promise of new creation and the righting of all wrongs is coming.

This is exactly the point Peter made at the very beginning of the book. Remember these verses, **(LCD) "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so**

that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” It’s God’s promises, like the coming new creation, that enables us to participate in the divine nature, have God’s power, to live a holy life and no longer by our evil desires. The promises of God are key to holiness!

Another way of thinking of all this is paying attention to what Peter says about the new heavens and new earth: he says it is *“where righteousness dwells.”* The word for ‘dwells’ is the word for “home,” but it has an intensive prefix, “where righteousness TRULY dwells.” This place we’re destined for, our end home, is a place of righteousness. Like my wedding rehearsal, if that’s where we’re going to stand in eternity, in the place of righteousness, doesn’t it make sense to take the righteousness aisle to it? Live with the end in mind! Righteousness is our end...prepare for it now!

Are we? One way to tell is to look at our **(LCD) spending habits and calendars.** Do they reflect a devotion to God and His righteousness, His way of doing things? God says to give hilariously. Do you? Do you trust that you can’t outgive God? How about your calendar? Do you pray over what to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to, or just do what you want? Is it my will or His? I love what C.S. Lewis says in **(LCD) “The Screwtape Letters,”** **“Prosperity knits a man with the World. He feels that he is ‘finding his place in it,’ while really it is finding it’s place in him.”** May we find our place in the Lord.

Peter summarizes his point in verse 14, *“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”* The word for “make every effort” is a command and a strong word that speaks to intense effort like **(LCD) Crossfit!** We are to give all we have to live pure and peaceful lives – purity within ourselves and peace with God and others. And just like Crossfitters are motivated by their end goal of physical fitness, we too need to keep the end goal of honoring God when He returns in mind. Live and work with the end in mind!

And just like Crossfitters have to use the right equipment to stay in shape, so do we to stay godly...and that means going intensely into the Word of God, verse 15, *“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”* Note that Peter references Paul here as an expert witness! Paul is obviously highly respected, and Peter is saying that Paul agrees with him about all this. Now we don’t know which of Paul’s letters he is referring to, but regardless, it is true that in those letters, a focus on godly living in light of eternity is found like in 2 Corinthians, **(LCD) “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”**

So Paul, too, emphasizes living with the end in mind. But why else does he bring up Paul? I think it may be because the false teachers are saying Paul is on their side, not

Peter's. First of all, notice that Peter says that Paul's teachings are from God; notice that he even calls them "Scripture." That's pretty amazing at such an early stage of the church. We can and should trust the New Testament as the Word of God. But he also admits that some of what he writes is hard to understand. That makes me feel a ton better! And because they are hard, they can be easily distorted or twisted. He says that's what ignorant and unstable people do. The word for 'unstable,' literally means 'one who is without a staff,' and so is unsupported. These false teachers, who are not taught properly, have twisted Paul's teaching to fit their sinful desires. The word for 'distort' or 'twist' is the same one used of a torture rack that mangled people's bodies...only the false teachers mangle minds and souls!

What possible twisting of Paul's teaching could he be talking about? How about **(LCD) this verse, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."** It would be easy to interpret this as saying, "Hey, you're saved by grace, not your works, so you're free to live anyway you wish! God loves you! You're free!" That's what happened in Peter's time, and it happens in ours too. I recently learned about a cult that was big in the '70s and '80s called **(LCD) The Children of God** started by a guy named David Berg. The cult attracted people through sex. One practice they employed was called "Flirty Fishing" and involved young, attractive women becoming "fishers of men" by luring them sexually. They justified their activities by saying that hundreds of thousands of otherwise unreachable young men became born again through this free sharing of love. Wikipedia adds this, "*Women who objected to being what the cult itself bluntly described as "hookers for Jesus" were admonished not to "let self and pride enter in", [citation needed] and reminded that their body did not really belong to them, as according to 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 it had been "bought" with a price.*" All kinds of Scripture twisting there! Needless to say, this strategy brought in a lot of men and a lot of money. Watch out for those who twist the holy scripture like this! Our second point, **(LCD) Be diligent – focus on the word of God.**

This has been a consistent point of Peter's throughout the letter. A life focused on and guided by God's eternal, perfect Word will enable us to live lives that honor Him. But that requires diligence - Crossfit, "make every effort," diligence. So how is your intake of the Scripture? The new year is coming, and it might be a good time to make a new commitment to diligently investing in God's Word. Dave found **(LCD) this the other day on Crossway.com**. This table shows how much time someone would need to set aside each day to read through either the Old Testament, New Testament or the entire Bible. Reading through the Bible in a year would take 12 minutes per day; the Old Testament is 9 minutes per day, and the New is 3 minutes per day.

(LCD) This graph shows what percentage of people spend 30 minutes or more each day engaging in common activities. Email – 70% spend at least 30 minutes a day. TV – 59%. Books – 55%. Hobbies – 42%. Etc... Finally, this last column shows how much of the Bible you could read if you spent 30 minutes every day reading it. You could read Ecclesiastes in 1 day; Romans in 2 days, Mark in 3 days, Genesis in 7 days; Psalms in 10 days; the whole Bible in less than 6 months. Let's be Bible Crossfitters this year!

Finally, Peter closes his letter by going back to his two main points; verse 17, *“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, (in other words, you don’t have any excuses to be duped after what I’ve written) be on your guard (a command and a military term about being on guard, at attention, fully awake) so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.”* This was the main point of chapter 2 – avoid the false teachers, the lawless ones who follow their own rules. If you don’t, you’ll fall from your secure position. The word for “fall” was used nautically of drifting or being blown off course and running aground. He doesn’t want them to drift away from solid teaching and doctrine, from their secure position in what they’ve been taught. Stay grounded in the apostolic teaching faithfully handed down through the ages.

Finally, verse 18 harkens back to chapter 1, *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”* Another command, “grow.” Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. This speaks to not resting on any laurels of spirituality but constantly seeking to become more and more like Jesus as we seek Him. I like how Chuck Swindoll summarized how these two complement each other. **(LCD) Grace keeps you tolerant and loving; knowledge keeps you strong and confident. Grace gives you mercy and compassion; knowledge gives you discernment. Grace helps you believe and accept; knowledge helps you question and critique. Grace results in vulnerability; knowledge results in stability.** We need both and that requires intentional efforts to grow. When we do this, as verse 18 says, He is glorified. Our last point, **(LCD) Be discerning – focus on the person of Jesus Christ.**

Don’t drift away from Jesus. Make knowing Him your highest pursuit...it makes all the difference. *“The story is told of a religious gathering where a famous actor and an elderly minister were both present. The actor, while not on the program, was nevertheless asked by the emcee to come forward and give a word. At a loss as to what to say, he turned to the elderly minister and whispered, ‘I don’t really know what to do.’ The seasoned pastor shoved his Bible into the hands of the actor and replied, ‘Just read Psalm 23.’ The actor stood and with his eloquent voice read the psalm. When finished, he wasn’t quite sure what to do, so he turned to the minister and announced, ‘Well, I’d like the minister to come up and say a few words on this.’ The minister surprised everyone by merely reciting the psalm again and then sitting down. The actor leaned over to him and said, ‘You did much better than I, and now I understand why. I knew the psalm, but you knew the Shepherd.’”* Do you know Him personally? I hope you do.

I began this sermon by talking about weddings. The Bible says that one is coming on the day Christ returns. He’ll be coming for His bride, the Church, dressed in white. If we want to be found ready for that day, we need to be living now like it’s the wedding rehearsal – living with the end in mind. We can do that if we focus on growing in the grace and knowledge of the Shepherd and Lover of our souls. Amen.