

Last week we said that regardless of what is happening in our nation and world, in our Churches, the Christian could take great comfort in the fact that judgement is coming. We are in the “Last Days” and have been so since the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have the promise of God that Jesus will come again in judgement.

We don’t know when that will be. It could in the next minute ... next year ... next decade ... next century ... we just don’t know. But we have God’s promise that Jesus will return at His appointed time.

As we read in 2 Peter 3:10: *“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 I said, we know the end of the story and God wins!

So, the question then must be asked – what do we do until he comes? Do we sit and twiddle our thumbs ... do we sell everything, as some have done, and go live on a mountain and wait for his return ... or do we eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die?

Obviously, it is none of those things. On the contrary, Peter, as he begins to conclude his letter tells his readers what to do. Turn with me to 2 Peter 3:11-16 (READ).

What Peter is telling his readers and us – I need to remind you that he is also talking to us – that in light of the facts that Jesus is coming – again, we don’t know when – but the fact that he is coming means that we need to occupy ourselves with holy and godly living. In other words we are to live our lives as if he could return in the next moment – and what would he find us doing?

Again, we believe in the imminent return of Christ – it could happen at any time ... even when we least expect it. So we have to be ready at all times.

Consider what he says in 2 Peter 3:11-12: *“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 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?”*

What he is saying here is that sure judgement is coming when the heavens and earth will be dissolved – you can count on that – and until it happens we need be holy in our conduct and godliness.

As I have said on numerous occasions, true Christianity is not a list of rules and regulations that one must follow in order to be saved. It is not a religion of works. In fact, I prefer to call Christianity a faith rather than a religion – it is faith or belief in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a big difference between a religion and a faith. Religions, generally say that there is list of things that one must do in order to gain access to God, or their idea of God. Basically the direction is from man to God. If you look at all the other religions of the world, you find that this is generally a true statement – they all say: “what must I do to gain access to God?”

Christianity is much different – it is actually from God to man – where God says this is what I have done ... I have sent my Son to die for the sins of those who believe in him, and therefore they can then have access to me.

God has done it all – not man. This is why Christianity is a faith – in the person and work of Jesus Christ and not a religion.

However, it does not end there. As Christians, we believe that Jesus died for our sins in our place. But as a result of what he has done for us in giving us our salvation that we are then to live in a certain way. The scriptures define this in many ways.

We are to live according to the Great Commandment and the Ten Commandments – although we know that we cannot do this perfectly. (As a reminder, this is why our Communion Service begins each week with the Ten Commandments or at least the Summary of the law, to remind us that we need a Savior ... that we need Jesus Christ who kept the law perfectly for us.)

We are to, as Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, to put off the old ways and put on the new ways in Christ. In Ephesians 4:20-24, Paul, in talking to Christians says: *“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Paul then goes on to describe some of the things that we are to put off and put on: Ephesians 4:25-32: *“Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

We see it is a combination of putting off the old ways, before Christ and putting on the new ways, after Christ. This is not to add to our salvation, but rather, most importantly, it is an evidence of our salvation.

Earlier in this letter we saw that Peter exhorts us to godly living – 2 Peter 1:5-9: *“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”*

These are things we are to put on – these are godly and holy traits that are to be part of our everyday lives. I am once again reminded of those words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8-10: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

Yes, we have been saved by grace through faith – it IS a gift from God. But we have been saved for a purpose – for good works – that is, living a holy and godly life in the world that we live in as a witness to the world around us.

The bottom line is that as a result of our faith we are to live a certain way – and that way is that which God has revealed to us in His Word. Again, remember that Peter has told us that God has given us all things for life and godliness – that is, how to live in this world and in the world to come.

And part of that world to come – and we don't know when – is that judgement is coming and the heavens will be dissolved and the earth will be destroyed.

It is for this very reason, that as Peter goes on, he tells us that we are to be diligent in our Christian lives – 2 Peter 3:14: “*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;*”

Again, we know that we will not do this perfectly – and that is the very reason that Jesus came – because we cannot follow the law of God ourselves.

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;”

As a reminder, whenever we see the word therefore, we are to ask what it is there for – and the answer is that it is there to remind us what the writer has said previously. In this case, as we are looking to the 2nd coming of Christ in his glory and judgement — knowing that it is something that we can count on – we are to *be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;* – again, an exhortation to holy and godly living.

Regardless of what is happening in the world around us – in our cities ... in our states ... in our nation — we are to live our lives in accord with God's revealed Word — following what is acceptable to Him and avoiding what is not acceptable to Him. As we are then reminded – a delay in the 2nd coming of the Lord Jesus Christ results in the salvation of more, but also in the judgement of more.

This is what Peter tells us as he goes on: 2 Peter 3:15-16: “*and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*”

Yes, there are things that are hard to understand in the Scriptures. But remember, God has promised to give us all that we need for life and godliness – and if don't understand some things – then we don't need to know it. It is that simple.

But as we see, the false teachers try to interpret things they don't understand – *which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*. This is exactly what we see in the church today – people twisting the scriptures to say what they want to say. But the result – as then and is now – to their own destruction.

So again, as we see all that is happening around us we need to remember two very important things – first, we know that in the end, God wins and judgement is coming.

And secondly, until that happens we are to live holy and godly lives as a witness to the grace that we have been given and as a witness to the unbelieving world around us.