

2017 New Year's Message: **LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY OF GOD**

2 Peter 3:1-18

Key verses 3:11b-12a

“You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”

The title of this New Year's message is “Look Forward to the Day of God.” We all look forward to many good things we wish to happen in the New Year. After the last US presidential election, people not only in America, but all around the world are talking about its outcome. These talks reveal people's hopes in this life. It is natural for us to put our hopes in this world. But we should think about where our true hope is.

Have you ever heard of the words, **“Marana Tha (Come, Lord)”**? These Aramaic words were a greeting among the early Christians (1Co 16:22). By looking forward to the Lord's Second Coming, they overcame the world and persecutions and gave good influence to the world. We live in a global age in which secularization is rapidly progressing. The world is becoming like Rome in the early centuries in which Christians were a minority. In the midst of today's crises, how and for what hope should we live? Today's words of Apostle Peter give answers to these questions. May the Holy Spirit renew our minds to find a clear goal in life.

I. The Day of the Lord will come (vv. 1-7, 10)

Look at verse 1. **“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.”** Apostle Peter wrote two letters to stimulate his readers to wholesome thinking, that is, to a “pure or sincere mind.” Why is wholesome thinking so important? Humans are a thinking being. Our thinking or mind determines our ways and direction in life. How can we have wholesome thinking? Look at verse 2, **“I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.”** Peter points us to the words of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible is about God's grand plan of salvation, judgment, and restoration of the creation order through Christ. The word of God enlightens our minds to have a right view of the world and the future.

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Verses 3-4 warn us of the threat to wholesome thinking; **“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires”** (3). Scoffers are those who deny the Lordship of Christ and his Second Coming (2:1; 4). Whether they identify themselves as religious people or agnostics or atheists, they don't believe in God's final judgment. The so-called Enlightenment in the 18th century exalted human reason and science. With the rise of secular humanism, some people began to view that nature is all there is and supernatural entities like God do not exist. Today there are many liberal theologians who deny supernatural accounts in the Bible as unreasonable and unscientific. They invent all kinds of arguments. But Apostle Peter points out what their real reason is; they want to follow their own evil desires. If our lifestyle contradicts the word of God, we must either repent or deny the word of God. The scoffers are those who choose the latter. They deny God's sovereignty and intervention in history. They say, **“Everything goes on and will go as it has according to natural order”** (4).

Verse 5 points out two truths scoffers deliberately forget: **“But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.”** **First, God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing by his word.** I studied ocean engineering, so let me tell you a bit about water. Genesis 1:2 says, **“Now the earth was formless and empty....and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”** As far as we know, there is no other planet like the earth that contains a vast amount of water. About 71 percent of the earth's surface is covered with seas and lakes. Water is everywhere in the air, on and under the ground, and in all living creatures. You know that about 2/3 of our body is water. The Mariana Trench in the Pacific, the deepest part of the earth's oceans, is 6.8 miles (11 kilometers) deep. If the earth surface is flat, water will cover the whole earth to a depth of 1.7 miles (2.7 kilometers). Indeed the earth was formed out of water and by water. Do you like this water science? What is science? It is a study of the order of God's creation. As Sir Isaac Newton testified, true science leads us to God, not to deny God. **Second, there was God's judgment by a supernatural flood.** Verse 6 says, **“By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.”** Much more can be said about Noah's flood, but I'll stop here.

Verse 7 reads, **“By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”** By the same word, God has preserved the world. Hebrews 1:3 says that it is Jesus, God the Son, who has sustained all things by his powerful word.

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Contrary to what scoffers say, the present heavens and earth are preserved for another judgment to come. The final judgment and destruction of the ungodly will be by fire. As God intervened in nature in the past, he will intervene once more to bring an end to the present world.

When will it happen? Verse 10a reads; **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”** The day of the Lord was a prime message of the prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zechariah and Malachi. They proclaimed that God would come to judge all nations and peoples, save his people, and restore his reign. These prophecies began to be fulfilled through Christ's first coming and will be fully realized at his Second Coming. Why is the day called **“the day of the Lord (or, day of God)”**? Because it will be the day when God fully manifests himself as the Lord and Sovereign Ruler of all creation. Ungodly people neither glorify him as God nor give thanks to him (Ro 1:21). They show contempt for God's kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead them to repentance (Ro 2:4). The day will come when God vindicates himself through his righteous judgment. On that day, there will be a great wailing all over the earth.

What will happen on that day? Read verse 10b. **“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.”** The universe will be dismantled and disappear with a roar. The elements that make up the world will melt and dissolve in fire. Can you imagine that dreadful day? Some scientists predict the end of the world by the sun's explosion, or an asteroid's collision, or by nuclear war. They say that the nuclear weapons which the five NPT countries own can destroy the earth more than ten times. We know that there is a huge flow of mass molten with tremendous heat inside of the earth. An asteroid collision can cause the end of the world by the heat and fire erupted from the earth's inside. But the end will come by a far greater universal catastrophe than these. There were remains after the atomic bomb explosion in 1945. But on that day, everything in this world will melt and be burnt up. Possessions that people value like houses, deluxe cars, jewelry, supercomputers and smartphones will be gone without a trace.

The day of the Lord will come unexpectedly like a thief. A thief doesn't make an appointment. So we watch that our houses may not be broken into. Our Lord Jesus said, **“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him”** (Mt 24:44). People in Noah's time scoffed at God's warning through Noah. But the flood came as God had said and

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all the ungodly were destroyed. The day of the Lord will surely come as he said. How then can we be ready?

II. What kind of people ought we to be? (vv. 8-9, 11-18)

The Apostle asks, **“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be (11a)?”** He tells us three things about how we can be ready.

First, look forward to the new heaven and the new earth (vv. 12-13)

In verses 12-14, the word **“look forward to”** is repeated three times. What do we look forward to? Young people look forward to graduation, marriage, success, and so on. Missionaries and shepherds look forward to raising many spiritual leaders including their children and then retirement. These are all wonderful hopes. But we lose heart when these hopes are not realized. Apostle Peter exhorts us to look forward to a far surpassing and sure hope—the day of God and a new heaven and a new earth. Read verses 12-13. **“...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”** The day of God will be the day of judgment for the ungodly. On the other hand, it will be the day of supreme glory for God’s people. There will be a great rejoicing with shouts of victory. What will the new heaven and the new earth be like?

Revelation 21:4b says, **“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the older order of things has passed away.”** In this life, we all suffer much because of our weaknesses and fallen nature. When D. L. Moody was asked if he had any trouble with people, he said, “I have had more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any other man I’ve ever met. If I can only fix him right, I don’t have any trouble with others.” But in the new heaven and the new earth, we will put on the spiritual body like Christ. Can you imagine how beautiful and handsome you will be? Senior missionaries will be forever young. Now we see the Lord only in part (1Co 13:12). Then we shall see him face to face. How great our joy will be when we meet him and talk with him personally! He will wipe out every tear we shed for him and for the gospel from our eyes. He will reward each of us for what we have done for him (Mt 25:21). All creatures will rejoice as they participate in the glorious freedom of the children of God (Ro 8:21). The lion and the calf, the wolf and the lamb will dance together, singing, “Mambo Sawa Sawa (Things are already getting better)” (Isa 11:6-7).

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Most of all, there will be righteousness, flowing like a river. This world is full of sufferings and sorrows due to injustice by evil systems and greedy people. We long for political leaders who would fix the problems, only to find out that many of them are the problems themselves. In the new world, however, there will no longer be sin, cruelty, or injustice. God and our righteous King Jesus will be the light. And we will reign with the Lord forever (Rev 22:5). Wow! Are all these true to come? Yes! At his trial, Jesus' final words were, **"You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven"** (Mk 14:62) In Revelation, the Lord confirmed the promises that we just shared and said three times, **"Look, I am coming soon!"** (Rev 22:7, 12, 20) In this world, many things attract us. But everything in this world is passing away. Our true hope is in the new heaven and new earth that is eternal. Praise and thanks be to God who gave us this living hope!

Second, live holy and godly lives (vv. 11b, 14)

The immediate answer to the question, "What kind of people ought you to be?", is: **"You ought to live holy and godly lives"** (11b). A holy and godly life is God's purpose of calling for us (2Pe 1:4, 10). 1 John 3:3 says that all who have the hope of Jesus' Second Coming purify themselves, just as he is pure. Verse 14 continues, the Apostle continues, **"Since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."** Here the words **"spotless and blameless"** point to Christ, the Lamb of God (1Pe 1:19). This verse calls us to escape all impurities and sins and be united with Christ. This is a very high goal for us. But this is God's command for us to strive for participating in his divine nature.

As we look forward to the day of God, we should remember that we will all stand before Christ's judgment seat. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, **"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."** During the last national election, ugly things the president candidates had done were exposed to the public. Before Christ's judgment seat, however, everything we did, even our deep hidden motives, will be exposed. So the Apostle exhorts us to make every effort to be holy and at peace with Christ.

How can we live holy and godly lives in spite of our weakness? 1 Peter 1:18-19 say, **"You were redeemed from the empty way of life.... with the precious blood of Christ"**. Nothing valuable in the world like gold or diamonds could redeem us from sin. It was only by the most precious blood, the life of the Son of God, that we were redeemed. The blood of Christ has power to cleanse our

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consciences from acts that leads to death (Heb 9:14). We should come to Jesus daily to be sprinkled with his blood.

1 Peter 4:1 says, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin”**. A holy and godly life is not possible with Bible knowledge only. It comes from the life of following Christ who went the way of suffering, death, and resurrection. Apostle Peter said that whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As we know, Peter didn't like suffering. After Jesus' death and resurrection, however, he realized the true meaning of suffering. When he willingly participated in Christ's suffering, he experienced freedom from sin.

Many of us have suffered for the Lord and his gospel. We can rejoice because our suffering will turn into glory. The Lord said that living for him and his gospel involves losing one's life, that means, suffering (Mk 8:35). We should ask to ourselves, “Do I suffer for the Lord and his gospel now?” If we do not, we have lost the way of following Christ. David was a man who loved God and his word. After many victories in fierce battles over the years, he thought that he deserved a vacation. So while his army was fighting, he remained in his palace, relaxed, and enjoyed sleeping until late morning. When his heart was disarmed, he became spiritually powerless and fell into a terrible sin (2Sa 11:1-5). Who is a successful missionary or shepherd? He/she is the one who is faithful to the end. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, **“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”** As we look forward to the new heaven and new earth, may we faithfully participate in Christ's remaining suffering that leads to a holy and godly life.

Third, make the most of every opportunity to share the gospel (vv. 8-9, 15)

Verse 8 says that God's time scale is different from ours. Then he explains why the Lord is delaying in his coming. Read verse 9, **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”** Verse 15 re-emphasizes this: **“Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation....”** We must remember that from the beginning of A.D time until Jesus' Second Coming is the age of salvation for all peoples of the world (Mk 13:10). For the past 2,000 years, God has worked through the church to save innumerable people. We were saved because God patiently waited to give us a chance to hear the gospel. God will work until the full number of his chosen people is saved, not

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missing anyone. We must know that the Lord is delaying every day to save some people. They could be someone in our families, someone in the campuses.

Imagine the cry of those in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev 21:8). With this description, the Bible solemnly warns us of the dreadful destiny of those who are eternally separated from God. As God is, shouldn't we be concerned about the people who are heading toward this horrible fate? We must pray for the unsaved we know and we do not know. When God gives us opportunities, we must share the good news with them. The apostle told us not only to look forward to the day of God, but also to *speed its coming*. How can we possibly speed the Lord's coming? He said, **"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come"** (Mt 24:14). We can speed the Lord's coming by preaching the gospel to all peoples.

Have you seen the movie, "Schindler's List"? The 1993 movie was about the story of Oskar Schindler (1908-1974), a German businessman. During the Holocaust, he saved 1,200 Polish Jews by employing them in his factories and protecting them from the Nazis by using his own fortune. The movie ends with his farewell to the Jews who were delivered from death through his efforts. In spite of their hearty gratitude, he says, "I could have got more out.... I could have got more... I threw away so much money...I didn't do enough!" Pointing to his car and golden Nazi pin, he regretted having kept them. He cried, saying that 10 or more persons could have been saved, had he sold them. By God's grace, we were saved from death. Many of us have lived as shepherds and missionaries in obedience to God's calling, and God saved many through our lives. As I look back on my life, my greatest joy and thanksgiving is that I was saved and could live for God's salvation work. Had I not lived for the gospel, I would have wasted my life for the things that will be burned up on the day of God. But I confess that I didn't do enough. I missed many opportunities to share the gospel with those who needed it. We all would confess the same like Oskar Schindler. May we fully devote the rest of our lives to God's work, making the most of every opportunity to share the gospel.

Finally, Apostle Peter calls us to be on our guard not to be carried away by errors (17). Verse 18 says, **"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."** The time is evil. Let's be awake by looking forward to the day of God every day. As we grow in the grace of our Savior Jesus, we grow deeper in gratitude and righteousness. How deep, wide and high is God's grace of giving us an eternal life in the new heaven and new earth! As we grow deeper in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, we come to know his majesty and glory. Then

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we will yearn for his coming more earnestly. Let's remember that our only true hope is in the day of God. Let's live for the things that will not burn up, but that will last forever. The message of 2 Peter is that the joy of the living hope is the power of holiness and godliness. With the joy of the hope, may we all live holy and godly lives, fully devoting ourselves to the work of the Lord.