

A Hopeful People

God's Word:

II Peter 3:1-13

Key Verse:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

--II Peter 3:10-11, 13

Breaking It Down

Both of the epistles (letters) of Peter talk about “hope.” But biblical hope is different from what we commonly mean when we speak of hope today.

Hope in today's culture is defined as a feeling that something we want will come to pass. You might hope for a car for your 16th birthday, for example. Depending on your family's financial situation and your parents' judgment, that may not happen.

Biblical hope, on the other hand, is an expectation of a future event based on trust in what God has said will come to pass.

The first hope is wishful thinking. The second hope is eagerness to see something come to pass that is certain to occur; the only question is when.

In II Peter 3, we're urged to remember what God has said will happen and to dismiss the “mockers” who suggest Christ isn't really returning and there won't really be a new heaven and new earth.



These mockers are no different from the serpent that in Genesis 3 told Eve that she wouldn't really die if she ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Mockers want us to doubt God's word.

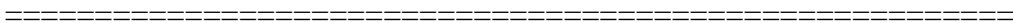
The apostle Peter, who penned both of these epistles, knows God's word is true. He lived with and was taught by Jesus, the foretold Messiah and Savior. He lived to see everything come to pass that was foretold about Jesus except His Second Coming.

Peter refutes two key points of the mockers. He addresses the issue of timing. Mockers suggest that because Jesus hasn't yet returned, He won't. Peter notes that God counts time from the perspective of eternity. For Him, one day is like 1000 years (verse 8). He explains that God has delayed Christ's return because of His great love for mankind – out of a desire for people to repent of their sinful lives and turn to Him for salvation and eternal life (verse 9).



Peter also refutes the notion that nothing has happened yet. He notes that God created the heavens and earth (and thus is in control) (verse 5) and that He already demonstrated His willingness to punish the wickedness of man with a flood in Noah's day (Genesis 6-8), and with fire in the case of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19).

Peter urges us to live with an eye to the future. He notes two important things are soon to come. First, Christ is to return (verse 10) and second, that things of this world will one day be gone, making way for a new heaven and new earth where righteousness will dwell instead of evil (verses 10-13).



Living It:

People diagnosed with a terminal disease routinely reflect on the time they have left in this life and prioritize how to spend the remaining time. This passage urges us to have that same perspective by stressing two points.

First, we need to appreciate God's greatest desire is for our salvation. This is why He has delayed Christ's return.

Second, we're reminded that this world will not last but will be replaced by a new heaven and new earth. As a result, we should live for the things that make an eternal difference.

If we are not saved, we need to recognize that we, like everyone else on the planet, are sinners in need of a Savior. We need to make a decision today to accept the gift of salvation that God offers. God offers this gift, based not on anything we have done or ever could do, but out of the outpouring of His love. He sent Jesus to die so that our sins could be forgiven. All we need to



do is acknowledge that we are sinners, we need a Savior and accept Jesus Christ as that Savior. God is holding out His hand, offering us this gift. Will you accept it?

If we are saved, we need to begin prioritizing our time, investing it in things that last for eternity, rather than whiling away the hours on things that don't last. Ask yourself how you spend your time each day. Are you spending it playing video games? Updating your every move on Facebook? Endlessly texting friends about trivial things? Spending your time and money trying to stay up with every fashion trend or the latest

celebrity gossip?

A few years ago, everyone was asking: What would Jesus do? It's not a bad question. How about considering: How did Jesus spend His time? Then, see how your activities compare.

Questions:

1. Review II Peter 3:1-13 and read Revelation 21:1-6. What do these passages say will be the future of this earth and all that's in it?
2. Read Genesis 6:5-8 and 17-19 and Genesis 7:7-10 and 21-23. What do these verses say happened to the earth in Noah's day? Read Genesis 18:20-26 and Genesis 19:12-13 and 24-25. What do these verses say happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?
3. How does the information in Question 2 help you in trusting what God has said about the future of heaven and earth?
4. How does knowing what the future holds impact your thinking about how you should begin to live each day?

Do It!

This week, make a record of how you spend your time. Then pray and ask God to help you see at least 2 activities that you need to eliminate or at least spend less time pursuing. Also ask Him to show you at least 2 things He would like you to begin doing or devoting more time to doing.

