

Empowering Grace Pt 4

2 Peter 3:1-13

1. The End Times

1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

Just as the Old Testament prophecies pointed to the first coming of the Messiah, the prophecies in the New Testament give us hope by pointing to His Second Coming. Jesus Himself said that He was coming back, and we should be stirred up by that promise. It is so important that Peter wrote about it twice.

Again, we need to remember that Peter is in jail awaiting his demise. And yet, here he is encouraging and stirring them up. As he faces death, his hope is in the fact that Jesus will return and that he will live with Him forever. So, while his immediate circumstances are dire, he is not focused on that, he is focused on Jesus' return.

3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

Just like now, people have always had short attention spans. To be fair, many of the Apostles themselves hoped Jesus would return in their lifetimes. While they held out his hope, they also knew, from knowing Old Testament prophecies, that it could be many years before He came back.

However, these false prophets were ridiculing the Apostles because Jesus had not fulfilled His promise in their lifetimes. They were saying, "hey, nothing ever changes". They give us all these promises, but we are still here, so why not enjoy this life and live for ourselves. There is nothing else.

5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Peter turns their own argument against them. He reminds them that it was God who created the world and God who brought destruction in the flood. The first time was only a partial destruction, the second time His judgment will be complete and only the faithful will survive.

2. God's Patience

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

This is a key passage to helping us understand the Word of God. Too many people are literalists and look at certain passages out of context and come up with teachings that are not part of the spirit of the law in the context of the whole Bible.

A literalist will tell you that in the Old Testament when it talks about "chariots of fire", they were literally chariots made of fire. We have to understand that so much of the language of the Bible is meant to be descriptive and not normative.

Imagine meeting some of the occupants of the Mayflower and trying to describe to them the launch of the space shuttle. What language would you use that would make sense to them in their historical context?

The same thing can be said about the Genesis account of Creation. Remember, Moses wasn't there. He knows what has been passed down to him through generations of oral tradition that start with Adam and Eve. God described to them how they came into existence and used descriptive language. The creation account is not meant to be a historical or scientific account, it is a descriptive account of God's power and creativity.

And yet, many are convinced that the earth was made in seven literal 24 hour days.

In this passage Peter is reminding us that God does not measure time the same way that we do, because He is not limited by time and space the way that we are. What to us might seem to be an eternity, is a blink of an eye to Him.

9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

As Christians we say, "Maranatha" or come Lord Jesus. We look forward to Him establishing His Kingdom and our participation as co-heirs with Him.

But just because it hasn't happened yet, doesn't mean that it's not going to happen.

I have lived through many end time movements. Did you know that the 7th Day Adventists started out as a group of people who were sure they knew when Christ was coming back? When it didn't happen the way they thought it was going to happen, they adjusted their theology and became pre-Jerusalem Council Christians. That means that they still observe the dietary laws of the Old Testament.

Why hasn't He come back yet? For the same reason He came the first time, because He doesn't wish for anyone to die without having a relationship with him. He wants to give time for more people to be saved, for His Kingdom to be expanded.

The Word is VERY clear that in spite of all the prophecies that predict His return, NO ONE will know when He is coming back.

Having said this, Peter expects all us to live as if His return could happen tonight.

How would you live if you knew that He was coming back this Friday?

That leads us to verse 11.

3. Living in the Now

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

So much of what we hold dear will disappear when Christ come back. We work so hard to have a nice house, clothes, and cars. There is nothing wrong with that. It's just that everything we own decays and grows old and has to be replaced. The only thing that is lasting and leaves a legacy is our relationship with Christ and those that we have shared it with.

If Jesus is holding off so that more people can have a relationship with him, then the more people we help usher into thing kingdom, the quicker His return will be.

But it is also a reminder that if He were to return tonight, how many of our friends and family members would not make it.

13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Our hope is in the fact that we will never endure pain, suffering or death again.

Jesus will completely establish His Kingdom and we will live in paradise with Him forever. We will worship Him and enjoy His presence and will join with the angels singing His praise.

Conclusion

While we are not end-timers looking at prophecies and tying them to all the news headlines and predicting that His return is imminent, we still need to live with the urgency that He could come back at any moment.

Are we ready for His return?

Are we living with urgency expecting His second coming?

Are we making disciples?

Are we expanding the Kingdom of God?