

DAY OF THE LORD ?

2Peter 3 captures the tension of the times, as we read God's promises about Christ's coming again, final judgment, and the consummation of all things. Verse 9 says, "*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.*" God is at work on His own timetable. M.Lloyd-Jones observes, "The plan of God which has been started and which is continuing today, will go on until ultimate and final consummation."

1- God's purpose will be done! Peter says to those who mock God's promises: Scoffers, take note! Jesus has not yet returned because God is giving you a chance to repent of rebellious ways and turn to Him to be saved. Paul gives similar warning in Acts 13 (quoting Habakkuk 1:5 and Isaiah 29:14) "*look you scoffers, be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe.*" While the Jewish audience scoffed, the apostles changed their focus. "*We are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'*" And "*when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.*" And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. Even scoffers have a role in God's drama of redemption. And we must use every opportunity to spread the Gospel.

2- God's judgment will appear! verse 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.*" There were many instances of "day of the Lord" in the Old Testament. Theologians note this term can be a short time (even one day) or a long period punctuated with judgment, which will culminate in a time of judgment. And there will be a final Day, as theologians explain how God's kingdom features inauguration, continuation, and consummation.

3- On an unexpected day! Jesus said in Luke 12:39, "*if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect.*" Paul echoes in 1Thessalonians 5, "*now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying 'peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come like labor pains and they will not escape.*"

4- In an unequalled way! Peter echoes Psalm 102 as he dramatically describes the Day of the Lord: the heavens passing away with a roar and being burned up and dissolving, and exposing the earth and the works done on it. This is much like a forest fire that consumes brush and refuse and buildings, but lays bare the landscape, exposing the rubble of trunks, structures, machinery, and the relics of human activity. Jesus underscores the surety of this coming judgment in Luke 21:33, "*heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.*" Peter says, scoffers, take note! You who despise the authority of God's Word and prefer instead to indulge in sinful passions, don't think it will remain hidden. All will be revealed on the day of reckoning. There will be no place to hide on the day of judgment!

5- So how should you keep time? M.Lloyd-Jones observes, "we must never be too curious about the times and seasons. We must have great concern about the end, but not the particular time. We cannot fully understand the mind of God, but we submit to His absolute wisdom and mercy." In view of God's Word, timetable, purpose, and judgment, what is YOUR response? 2Peter 3:11 prompts us, "*since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?*" Trust and obey, adding to your faith the qualities of Christ as Peter advises in chapter 1. Jesus in Luke 12 said, blessed are the servants the master finds awake and obeying as they wait for Him. 1Thessalonians 5 says to be children of light, awake and sober and wearing the armor of Christ, ready for His coming. Peter continues in verse 12, "*waiting for and hastening the day of God.*" Do you want Jesus to come sooner rather than later? Then get to work. Now is your time for sharing the gospel, making disciples, growing God's family with overflowing good news about Jesus. Trust and obey!

6- What about other end-times views? Don't scoff. JI Packer notes, "Christ will return to this world in glory; personal, physical, visible, triumphant, to end history, raise the dead, judge the world, impart to God's children their final glory, and usher in a reconstructed universe." Beyond the basics, scholars interweave a complex mosaic of theological understandings, along with different presuppositions. But this gives the rest of us great confidence in Christ's coming and eternity future. There are details and timings, yes, "BICBW" but I could be wrong about those. Peter's focus isn't nitpicking but enlarging the big picture, the great truth of Christ's coming again and judgment. That's a good example for us today, as we make disciples. Because there's room for us all at the foot of the cross, as we busily await His coming! □