

HOW ARE YOU HASTENING HEAVEN ?

The apostle Peter explains how the new heavens and earth, as the eternal abode of God's people in a new physical existence after their physical resurrection, will be a place where righteousness dwells. In 2Peter 3:10-14, he encourages believers to prepare for God's final answer to all His promises. Let's look at three ways believers are to be diligent as they await God's consummation of earthly history.

1- Are you disregarding the future - or living a life of holiness ? After explaining the burning up of the old heavens and earth, for the coming of the new, Peter asks in verse 11, "*since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?*" Since God will make all things new (Revelation 21:5) how should we live? 1Peter 1 also encouraged believers with a living hope and imperishable inheritance, "*who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*" This faith is now being tested by various trials, even by fire. "*Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, as obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, so you be holy in all your conduct; love one another earnestly, from a pure heart.*" Heaven calls you to holiness.

Brian H. Edwards observes, "Everything we have discovered about heaven comes by reference to the character of God Himself: purity, holiness, goodness, love, communication, appreciation, relationship, wisdom, knowledge, discovery, and construction." For believers, our time on earth is "sanctification," being made holy, more and more like Christ Himself, which comes by growing through trials. Romans 13:11 agrees, "*you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep, for salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*" Heaven is coming, so be holy.

2- Are you datesetting the end - or living a life of hastening ? Peter paints a practical picture. Live a godly and holy life in view of coming judgment, "*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.*" Some people think they hasten this coming by setting a date of the end. In the past 70 years, let alone the past 2,000, many supposedly well-meaning people have tried to set dates for the sure coming of Christ and the end of the world. All sadly mistaken, and teaching falsehood. Others seem to think that if they scare more people into heaven to escape terrible tribulation and persecution, that this will hasten the day of Christ's coming. Peter doesn't take this tack. He says don't be deceived, don't be a datesetter, as verse 10, "*the day of the Lord will come like a thief*" that is, suddenly, when not expected.

Peter agrees with James 5:7-11, "*be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*" James too says this in context of living holy lives in the midst of trials. "*As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*"

In the same way, believers are to hasten the day of the Lord by living holy lives, sharing with others God's grace and eternal life in Christ. DM Lloyd-Jones notes, "Apart from Christ there is no hope whatsoever. But we are looking for new heavens and earth, preparing for it, and hastening the coming of the 'real' world." As believers keep proper perspective, we also point others to that which endures forever.

3- Are you diligently living today - a life hushed with peace ? Rather than being disturbed about the day of judgment and coming of the Lord, Peter says be deliberate, diligently trusting and obeying, as you peacefully await God's time of fulfillment. 2Peter 3:14, "*therefore beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace.*" So Peter closes his letter as he opened it, "*may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,*" the very opposite of how he describes scoffers and false teachers and those who fall prey to them.

The apostle Paul also anticipates the day of the Lord, saying in 1Thessalonians 5:13, "*be at peace among yourselves, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all,*" and closing with verse 24, "*now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, He will surely do it.*" This call to holiness in light of the Lord's sanctifying promise is echoed in Jude 24, "*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever, Amen!"* God will keep His promise, in His time. So be diligent and deliberate. Take heart, be holy, and hasten the day! ☐