

Dear Friends,

As much as we think, preach, and long for the Lord's return, we often neglect 2 Peter 3. While Paul (1 Corinthians 15 KJV) emphasizes our personal literal physical resurrection, Peter highlights more the "Cosmic" events that shall accompany the Lord's return and our resurrection. I believe the events in 1 Corinthians 15 and the events which Peter describes in 2 Peter 3 shall be simultaneous.

Our study passage for this week sets the stage for the glory of the Lord's return and our resurrection in the verses we shall study next week.

How do you refute an unbelieving scoffer? Peter heard their claims, everything continues as it has always been, with the reminder of the creation and the flood. Matter is not eternal. And this material world has, more than once, suffered massive changes from the Lord's righteous judgment against rampant sin and believers abandoning their faith. If we accept these two events, the long delay of the Lord's return is immaterial, a thousand years or tomorrow. The glorious comfort of Biblical teaching always takes us to this glorious truth. He shall return, victorious against sin and all His (Our) adversaries, to raise and transform His beloved children to enjoy Him throughout eternity.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus,

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What Does Scripture Teach Regarding the Actual Event of the Lord's Return?

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:10-12 KJV 1900)

In terms of the literal events surrounding the Second Coming, 2 Peter 3 may well reveal more details than any other single passage in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 15 extensively teaches us about the miracle of our resurrection change, our literal physical bodily resurrection. Peter looks at a more "Global" image of that Day. Other than the symbol of a thousand years, indicative of a large indeterminate number, this chapter is quite literal. There are no signs of typology or symbolism in the lesson. Symbolism or types would not refute the scoffers. Only literal truth could do that. When Scripture uses symbolism to teach complicated truths simply, the symbols are obvious. I subscribe to the cliché, "When the literal sense of a Scripture makes sense, look for no other sense." Peter refers us (And them) to two literal historical events, creation, and the flood. He continues his dual-purpose writing, 1) to refute the scoffers, and 2) to comfort and assure believers of the reality of the Lord's return.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. I suspect that wannabe prophets have been predicting the date of the Lord's return from the first century. And they all have one thing in common. Not a one of them was correct. A **"thief in the night,"** a burglar, doesn't send you a formal notice, "On this date at this time, I intend to break into your home and steal as much as possible." His goal is privacy, plus choosing the time when you will be least expecting him to break into your home. Revelation 1:7 teaches that The Lord's coming and appearance shall be public, not private or secret, **"...every eye shall see him,"** including the wicked men who crucified Him. The most devoted of believers cannot know precisely when the Lord shall return. However, we should live every day longing for His return, **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."** (Revelation 22:20 KJV) We don't know when He shall come, but we live everyday longing and hoping for that day.

...in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (KJV), Paul teaches that our resurrection and change shall be an instantaneous event, **"...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..."** In that context, (Verse 52) Paul refers to **"...the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."** In our study passage, Peter refers to **"a great noise"** at which time **"...the elements (Matter) shall melt with fervent heat."** It seems that all these events occur simultaneously.

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:17 KJV 1900)

The Greek word translated **"consist"** means to hold together. We can study the "Glue" of natural creation in chemistry and physics, but those sciences do not reveal the source of the laws of nature that hold things together. If Jesus is the "Glue" of the universe, whenever He chooses, He can immediately withhold that glue, and all the universe will implode. Peter brings perspective to this final day. Our resurrection will be accompanied by the "Melt down" which Peter described in our study verses.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. So long as this world exists, it shall faithfully manifest its divine purpose.

**The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament sheweth his handywork.** (Psalm 19:1 KJV)

When godly believers ponder the wicked world in which we live, we feel like visitors in a strange and hostile country. However, when we look at the amazing miracle of God's creation, we can find a reminder of our God and His glory still shining brightly. As much as possible, instead of focusing on "This low ground of sin and sorrow," we should remind ourselves, "This is my Father's world," and live close to Him.

So, how do we answer Peter's question considering what he wrote regarding the certainty of the Second Coming, as well as passages such as Psalm 19:1? In Peter's words, **"...what manner of**

persons ought” we to be? Of the various clear New Testament teachings regarding the Second Coming and our literal bodily resurrection, most lessons include specific admonitions to believers to live their faith, to manifest a “Resurrection ethic” in the way they order their lives. If we truly believe the Lord has purposed to come at His time and in His way, that belief imposes a life transforming ethic onto all who believe it.

Peter follows that practice in our study verses. “**Holy**” refers to something or someone wholly devoted to God. We can’t devote ourselves to our personal agenda and claim to be holy. We can’t invest more of our time and energy in our preferred political cause and claim to be holy. “**Conversation**” in the New Testament refers to a wholistic lifestyle. The word in our study passage was translated from a Greek word for a lifestyle or manner of life. We might fare reasonably well during our time with other believers in church on Sunday. But does our manner of life on Wednesday after a trying day at work still represent our heavenly homeland? If so, we are living our “**Conversation**,” our manner of life, to God. “**Godliness**” refers to appropriate conduct toward God. Think of “**Conversation**” as primarily referring to our interpersonal conduct, how we interact with each other. “**Godliness**” refers to our conduct toward the Lord. He knows every thought, word, and deed; He knows all about us. If He spoke from heaven and gave us and all around us a report on His assessment of our conduct, would He speak of us with approval and commendation? Or would He rebuke us for our failures? If we truly believe in the Second Coming, including all which that belief involves, how do we manifest the impact of that belief in our conduct? How does that belief change how we might “Normally” react to life? Or do we live life the same as if we didn’t believe it? Peter’s question digs deeply into our personal “Space” and life, into our most private thoughts and deeds. “**What manner of persons ought we to be?**”

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Do we think of heaven and that glory to come only when a friend or family member dies? You know, the cliché, “Pie in the sky bye and bye.” Or do we pull that belief into our personal “Main Street” of our life?

Many years ago, a popular song celebrated a special education teacher in the poverty-stricken hills of Appalachia. She was a strong believer in the Lord and in His Second Coming. In the privacy of her classroom, she would occasionally talk to her students about the Lord and His glorious coming. She made the event so real to those students that they believed her. When she finished telling them about the Lord and His coming, they would gleefully race to the windows of their classroom and look into the sky to see if He was coming today. This happened so often that the inside windowpanes of her classroom were smudged thoroughly with “Fingerprints and noses.” Folks, if we believe in the Lord’s return, we need to live more like those precious students. Are the windowpanes of our minds spotless and clean? Or do they reveal smudges of “Fingerprints and noses” because we regularly look out and long for His coming?

Scripture doesn’t describe in great detail the “Meltdown” which Peter here associates with the Lord’s return. His reference to the “**heavens**” likely refers to the atmosphere surrounding our planet. It might also include the entire creation outside our planet. His use of “**elements**” suggests matter, especially the physical matter that makes up our world. Peter truly described a cosmic “Meltdown,” unlike anything we could imagine.

I marvel at how frequently Scripture associates our firm belief in the Lord's return and our resurrection with our world view and our daily conduct. Consider.

1. **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.** (1 Corinthians 15:58 KJV)

After fifty-seven verses devoted to our personal literal bodily resurrection, Paul concluded this chapter with this timely admonition. Our belief in Jesus and that glorious day of all days should steel us against the onslaught of sin and our spiritual adversary.

2. **Wherefore comfort one another with these words.** (1 Thessalonians 4:18 KJV)

Instead of regarding that day with speculation or wild imagination, our assurance of the Lord's return should motivate us to comfort and encourage each other in our common faith.

3. **And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.** (1 Corinthians 6:14 KJV)

For years, this verse puzzled me. In the heart of some of Scripture's clearest teachings (Outside Proverbs) on sexual purity, Paul injected this verse on the resurrection of our physical body. It finally dawned on me. If we believe the Lord shall raise this physical body in which we live today, and that body shall enjoy Him in glory, it stands to reason—and moral obligation—that we should devote our physical body to the Lord and His service now, avoiding using it for sinful pleasure **“for a season.”** (Hebrews 11:25 KJV)

All of Scripture reminds us that both our spirit and our physical body belong to the Lord, so we should use both in every way possible, and always, for His glory.

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20 KJV)

I fear too many Christians think of glorifying God only in terms of the spirit or “Inner man,” and not also in terms of their physical body. Paul's teaching in Colossians 3 regarding the godly “Wardrobe” we should wear has nothing to do with the clothes in our closet and everything to do with how we use our whole being, spirit, soul, and body, to glorify the Lord. Yes, He's coming. Let's keep that glorious event firmly settled in our minds and active in our lifestyle, all for Him and His glory.

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