

Living Now in the Light of Then

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[0 : 00] Well, as you all know, we celebrated the first advent or arrival coming of Jesus yesterday at Christmas time. And hands up if, like me, you ate way too much.

Yeah, we always do. Actually, there was hardly any hands up. Well, well done. Well done. So I hope you had a really nice day yesterday. And we do spend a fair bit of time preparing for Christmas and celebrating the first arrival or advent of Jesus.

But we don't always spend a lot of time thinking about his second, do we? And so I thought today we would do that and look at how we are to wait until he does return.

So I've tried to summarise that on your outlines in your handouts with one don't and two do's. And we're kicking off. We're going to get straight into it with the first one.

Don't be surprised when scoffers come. So point one, you can follow along the outline because I'll put the verses on the screen rather than you having to flip around if that's helpful for you.

[1 : 05] So point one, verses one and two, Peter begins by saying, Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.

I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles. Peter begins this chapter saying he has written both his letters to spur us onto wholesome thinking.

That is to grow in godliness. It's a big theme of to Peter. It's even how he ends his letter at the end of chapter three, verse 18, about growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

And this is what God wanted for Israel. I remember in the Old Testament, God said, be holy as I am holy. And even Jesus said, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

He wants us to grow in godliness, but not everyone wants that. And so what they'll do is they'll scoff at the idea that Jesus will return and force them to give an account for how they live.

[2 : 20] So verse three and four. Above all, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, where is this second coming?

He promised. Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. You see, Jesus's first advent at Christmas was so that he could grow up and die for us at Easter.

And then everyone who trusts in him can be forgiven and give a new spiritual life with God now.

That's what we heard about yesterday. But Jesus's second advent at the end of time will be judgment day.

And those who have trusted in him like us will be raised to new physical life in a new creation, new bodies, new earth.

No more aches and pains, no more traffic jams, no more disasters, diseases, no more COVID, no more death. But those who don't believe, those who've continued to ignore Jesus to follow their own evil desires, well, they will be raised and face eternal, not life, but judgment, which will be no picnic.

[3 : 40] It will be hell. But people don't want to think about that, do they? Because it means they may have to change how they live now.

And so it's just much easier to scoff and deny at the idea that Jesus will return again, that there will be a judgment day. And it's easier to say, where is this second coming?

He promised. Everything goes on as it has. The world keeps spinning around day after day. That way, they can keep following their own evil desires without ever worrying that there'll be a judgment day where they'll have to give an account, you see.

And people still scoff today at this idea of Christ's return. I remember teaching scripture at a local school. I was talking to the kids about Jesus, as you do for scripture.

And the teacher was sitting in the room because they always had to stay there. She was at her desk and she was marking some of the students' work, some creative writing, I think it was. Now, as I taught them about Jesus, I actually mentioned that one day Jesus would return and he put this world right, which would be a great thing.

[4 : 49] And as I mentioned Jesus' return, I heard this faint snort in the background coming from the teacher's desk. You know, that kind of idea, as if to say, yeah, right.

Now, I can't be sure if the snort was directed at what I said or whether she had just read some bit of hilarious creative writing from her students. But I strongly suspect it was the former.

People scoff and snort at this idea in our day, just as they did in Peter's day. But they deliberately forget the evidence, like the power of God's word, verse five.

But they deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also, the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and the destruction of the ungodly.

[5 : 56] Do you see what Peter's saying here? He's saying in verse five, God's word created the world. Remember our first reading? In the beginning was God and there was, you know, water everywhere.

And God said, used his word. And it was so. God's word is powerful to create. What's more, verse six, it is also powerful to judge because the world was deluged and destroyed by a flood.

You're familiar with Noah and his ark, of course. And his point is in verse seven. By the same powerful word. There will be another judgment and another creation at Christ's return.

In other words, Peter is saying if God's word was able to do that in the past to create and judge, then it's powerful enough to do it in the future to judge and recreate.

But the scoffers in Peter's day deliberately forget this evidence. They would have known these scoffers. They would have known their Old Testaments.

[7 : 03] Although today in our day, the scoffers deny evidence for Jesus. I think I've mentioned before that one of our members had a flat battery out in the car park out here.

And so I remember one day waiting for the RACV with him. And when the RACV man came, you know, the member was keen to strike up a gospel conversation.

And so he kind of looked at me. You're the minister. I thought, well, given, you know, I am the minister and we're in a church car park, I asked him, what do you think about Christianity?

And what about life after death? Have you got any thoughts about that? And the man's response was, I try not to think about those things. He deliberately forgets all the evidence that we will all one day die.

And there's lots of that evidence, isn't there, sadly? And he also didn't want to think about, deliberately forget the evidence we have for Jesus. Even his resurrection, as I said yesterday, which shows he can keep his word about returning again.

[8 : 12] Also, he didn't have to change his life, but keep following his way of life. That's what the scoffers are doing here in chapter three. Having said all that, though, Christ's second advent does seem like it's taking a long time, doesn't it?

So Peter says, not only don't be surprised that scoffers will come, but do realize why we wait so long. Point two, verse eight.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

Now, notice here, Peter says, not equal to, but like. So he's not saying one day in God's time equals a thousand years of our time, kind of like with dogs and people.

What is it? One human year equals, is it seven dog years or something like that? Yeah. Rather, it's like. In other words, God views time differently to how we view time.

[9 : 20] We think in terms of lifespans. God thinks in terms of eternity. Slightly different, isn't it? It's similar with children, young kids in particular.

When you go away on holidays with little kids, you're only 10 minutes down the road, and they say, Are we there yet? You know, 10 minutes for them seems like an eternity, but it's only 10 minutes to us.

Or like that joke where a man says to God, How long is a billion years? And God answers to me, it's only one minute. And the man says, Well, how much is a billion dollars?

And God says to me, it's only one dollar. And so the man says, God, can I have one dollar? And then God replies, Well, wait one minute.

The point is, realize that we view time differently. It may feel so long to us, but it's not to God. But also realize that God is waiting patiently too.

[10:22] See verse 9. You see, we often think we're the only ones that have to be patient.

But God is being patient too. In fact, I think God is being more patient than we are. Because whether you realize it or not, all the suffering and sin in our world actually upsets God more than it upsets us.

He's horrified at it. And yet he's waiting patiently before putting our world right. Why? Verse 9.

Because he doesn't want anyone to perish.

He wants to give people more time so that more people can come to repentance. Peter says a similar thing in verse 15.

He says, Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation for people. Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

[11:37] He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. Although his letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which is a great encouragement for us if we've ever found parts of Paul's letters hard to understand.

But the point here is God is being patient because he doesn't want to judge. He prefers to save. That's what the Old Testament says, actually. So in Ezekiel 33, God says, I take no pleasure, no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather they turn, repent.

That's the same word. From their wicked ways and live, be saved. God is waiting patiently too. But he won't wait forever.

For God has set a time for Christ to return. It is certain. Verse 10. And notice the repetition of the word will, which, you know, conveys this idea of certainty.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire. And the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

[12:47] Do you see his point? It will happen. It is certain. And in the process, you notice what will happen at the end of verse 10. Everything done in the earth, all our deeds will be laid bare, exposed, made known, judged, which is a scary thought unless we believe in Jesus and can be assured of forgiveness.

But Peter's point, as I said, is that Christ's return is certain. It will happen. We just don't know when. Of course, people keep trying to work it out. In December last year, the Bible scholar in America said that Jesus would return in 2021, this year.

It's the 26th today. It's still about five days, I suppose. But I think the journalists actually got their headline wrong there because a real Bible scholar would know that Jesus said in the Bible.

No one knows the hour he will return. Only the Father in heaven. And that he will come like a thief in the night. That is at an unexpected time.

And in fact, that's what Peter talks about in verse 10. The day of the Lord will come like a thief. He's alluding to what Jesus said. But he will come.

[14:16] It is certain. And so how do we live in light of it? Point three. Well, the first way is by doing what he's waiting for us to do.

That is, if you haven't already turned to Christ and believed in him, then that's the first way to get ready for it. To trust in Jesus. And so I don't know everyone in the room, and I certainly don't know everyone online.

Can I ask, therefore, have you done that? Have you put your faith in Jesus so that you can be certain on that last day when he returns, you don't need to fear anything.

But you can stand before the judgment seat assured of salvation. And for us who have put our faith in Jesus, then we can live in light of it in three ways.

First, we are to look forward to this day. That's what it goes on to say in verse 11 to 14. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

[15:22] That day will bring about the destruction by the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heavens, that is

skies, and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, and on he goes. You see, we have to look forward to Christ's second advent, to wait eagerly for it, rather than to be so preoccupied with this life we forget all about it.

It is so easy to be consumed by the things of this world, isn't it? You know, there are so many pressures, so many things we need to deal with. And sometimes we want to get as much as we can and experience all that we can, forgetting that this world is not actually our true home.

One of the things that COVID and lockdowns has done is force people to realize that there's nothing certain in this life and that this world is not perfect. Of course, what thousands in Melbourne and Sydney have then done is to look for a better place.

And for them, it was by moving to Brisbane and Bundaberg and Cairns. And this article was posted only a few weeks ago at the beginning of December, and people are still leaving Melbourne and Sydney for these better places, so they think.

[16:48] But for us, it should make us look forward to the best place, the new heavens and new earth when Christ returns, when our world will be put right.

And whatever loss we suffer in this life, whatever we miss out in this world, will be more than made up for in the world to come. And so look forward to that day.

Don't forget about that day. But the second way to live in light of it was back in verse 11. He says, Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

You ought to live holy and godly lives. Why? Well, because the unholy and ungodly, all the bad stuff is going to be done away with.

Verse 11. Destroyed. And therefore, we need to live the new way, holy and godly lives. But also because, verse 13, our new home, the new heavens and earth is going to be a place where what dwells?

[17:53] Where righteousness dwells, holiness, godliness. So then, he says, make every effort to live those righteous lives, to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

In other words, we're to start living holy and godly lives now because they're the kind of lives we're going to live then in our new creation.

I may have mentioned before that we have some friends who are missionaries in Indonesia. And before they left, they prepared for their new home in Indonesia by beginning to eat Indonesian food here.

They started speaking the Indonesian language. They even started wearing some traditional Indonesian clothes. In other words, they started living now in Australia as they would live then in Indonesia.

And that's what we're to do here. To live holy, godly, righteous lives now because that's how we'll live then in our new home where righteousness dwells, you see.

[19:02] And so we're to live in light of Christ's second advent by looking forward to it, by living godly lives in preparation for it. And I don't know if you've picked this up in verse 12. And by speeding its coming, hastening that day.

I don't know if you realize we can do that. Because God often works through his people to accomplish his purposes.

And so we can pray for Jesus' return. In fact, Jesus taught us to pray, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your come. That's right.

And not just spiritually in this world, but physically when Christ returns. And we can also hasten the day by helping the gospel be proclaimed that Jesus might return.

Jesus himself said that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come.

[20:02] Peter says something similar himself in Acts chapter 3. He tells the crowd he was speaking to there to repent, turn back, believe in Jesus, not only for forgiveness, but also so that God may send the Christ, that is Jesus, to return.

You see, once all those God has chosen have repented, once they're all saved, then Christ will return. And so we can speed that day by doing what we can to share the gospel.

That more might repent and be saved. Whether that's praying for your non-Christian family or friends, or speaking to them as opportunities arise, or praying for others to be raised up, who they might listen to, because let's face it, our family don't listen to one another very well, do they?

After all, the only reason God is waiting to put our world right is so that more people might be saved. Well, when I was a youth leader a long time ago, the other leaders decided to take the youth group ice skating.

It took a whole 30 seconds before I ended up on my backside on the ice, and spent the rest of the night skating around with a wet backside.

[21 : 26] Now, for the record, it wasn't completely my fault. I just gingerly pushed off from the barrier, you know, the barriers around the rink, and I was kind of skating like this, finding my way, and then there was a girl coming towards me who was having the same trouble, kind of going like this, and then she saw me and yelled out, move, move!

And I yelled back, I can't, I can't! And then I finally tried to push harder, but my feet went up, I went down, hit the ice, and wet my pants.

From the ice, that is. But here's the thing. I knew that would happen. The moment someone said, let's go ice skating, I knew I'd wet my pants from the ice.

And so certain of my future was I, I prepared for it by packing a spare pair of pants, so that I could walk home dry. And the point is, I was living now, in light of my certain future, later.

And that's what we're to do when it comes to Christ's second advent. So while we wait, don't be surprised when scoffers come. Do realize why we wait so long.

[22 : 37] And do live now, in light of Christ's second certain advent later. Let's pray. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for the first advent of the Lord Jesus, which we celebrated, rightly so, yesterday.

Please help us, though, not to forget his second advent to come. Please help us to realize that scoffers will come and not to fall for their denials.

Please help us to realize why we are waiting for what feels like so long. And please help us to live in light of it, by looking forward to that day, by living holy and godly lives as we'll live in that day, and by speeding its coming, sharing the gospel, praying for others, that Christ may return and put this world right.

Help us in these things, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.