

9. The day of the Lord

October 16, 2008

The enemy of the U.S. gloat over our financial crisis. "We are witnessing the collapse of the American Empire." said Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. The U.S. is experiencing the most serious financial crisis since the Great Depression. Our enemies know it. They smell blood in the water like bloody thirsty sharks.

Wall Street stocks once again plunged yesterday in the second biggest single day point loss in history and their worst percentage fall in two decades, ravaged by fears the world's biggest economy is slipping into recession.

In light of what is happening in economy and political world, you have to wonder what the next situation is going to be. At the same time, many people try to read between lines than it actually happens. There is no other topic of Scripture that receives more overzealous interpretation than the end-time prophecy.

Does it mean we are not at the end of the ages before the rapture happens? I firmly believe that we are living in the last days, but I want to caution you that we should not neglect what we are supposed to do for the sake of the excitement of what might happen next.

In tonight's study, once again, apostle Peter exposes the ignorance of the scoffers and unbelievers. Not only were they ignorant of what God had done in the past, but they were also ignorant of what God was like. Since they made their gods in their own limitations, they couldn't imagine the real power and all-knowing knowledge of our God like the scoffers and unbelievers now.

A. GOD'S TIMETABLE

2 Peter 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Peter was quoting this verse from Psalm 90:4. It is truly hard to grasp the idea outside of time for us. Everything we do is limited by time which we can not ignore, nor deny. That is the why unbelievers had a great deal of difficulty accepting the first verse of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

How can God be there to create the heavens and the earth before the beginning? God has neither beginning nor ending. He is eternal. But man requires the beginning even though he is immortal. What do I mean? Man has a beginning, but not an ending. Either he will live forever in heaven or hell. Eternity is not "extended time", rather its existence is above and apart from time we can understand.

Remember, when we were kids long ago, we thought each year's birthday and Christmas would never come. Now we feel like we barely had a Christmas, it is the time for another one.

What is the reason we think that God is not affected by the time we are limited?

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

No matter what time period humans are, God is there in present mode above the timetable.

B. GOD'S PATIENCE

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord is not slow – He is patient.

The Lord is not tardy – He is deliberately waiting.

The Lord is not indifferent – He is merciful.

He is holding back the events of the end to give as many people as possible an opportunity to believe in His Son.

It is worth noting that God revealed this same long-suffering in the years before Noah's Flood. He saw the violence and wickedness of man and could have judged the world immediately. Yet He held back His wrath for 120 years and, instead, sent Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, God patiently waited while Abraham interceded for the cities and He would have spared them had He found ten righteous people in Sodom.

This is the reason why the Lord is deliberately delaying. He is not jumping at His feet to end the time like many of us would. Whether we would like to admit it or not, Jesus died for the ones we don't care for. Whenever I think about that, I give praise and glory to the Lord whose love endures forever and whose mercy renews every morning.

Sometimes in my narrow and prejudiced mind, I ask the Lord, "How can You love those liberals and ungodly people?" The Holy Spirit answers, "In the exact same way I've loved you." OK, this conversation is over.

The Lord is waiting for us to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus with others so they can put their faith in Him.

C. THE END OF THE OLD EARTH

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

It's true that God, in His generous mercy, is waiting patiently for us. But as Peter assures us, even God's patience will come to an end, cutting off abruptly with His final judgment.

When is this going to happen? Jesus and apostle Peter both tell us that it will happen like a thief in the night. No average thief announces his or her arrival to the owner of the house. In other words, the end will come suddenly, unexpectedly, surprisingly and strategically. Of course, this will happen right after the Millennium according to Revelation 21:1-8.

Then you may say, "If that is the case, everyone who is alive during the Millennium would know. What do you mean that no one would know the time when the earth will burn up?" Yes, we and those people will know eventually. But since nobody knows the day of the rapture, the date of this event will also be unknown.

D. THE PURPOSE OF THE END TIME PROPHECY

2 Peter 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

Here it is: the purpose of the end time prophecy. We don't learn the end time prophecy, so that we can run up our credit cards and rapture before the bill comes in. We learn this so that we can live our lives to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, having holy conduct and godliness.

All born-again Christians believe the Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The purpose of prophetic truth is not speculation but motivation. All Christians agree that this faith in future glory ought to motivate the church.

Our marching orders can be summed up in three commands: Clean up. Look up. Speak up.

Since we do not know the day or the hour of our Lord's return, we must constantly be ready. The believer who starts to neglect the blessed hope will gradually develop a cold heart, a worldly attitude and an unfaithful life. If he is not careful, he may even become like the scoffers and laugh at the promise of Christ's coming.

We must live differently from the people in the world. Why? Because this world is not our home. We are "strangers and pilgrims" headed for a better world, the eternal city of God.

Christians should be different, not odd. When we are different, we attract people. But when we are odd, we repel them. Our conduct should be characterized by holiness and godliness.

E. HOW WILL THE EARTH END?

2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Peter says there is a sense in which we can hasten the Lord's coming. It's remarkable to think that we can actually do things that will "help" Jesus return sooner. In the immediate context, Peter says that we hasten the Lord's coming by our holy conduct and godliness.

This brings up a very important question in our heart: Does it mean that we actually can change God's timetable of the rapture and the rest of the end time events to come sooner? Yes and no.

Yes, from our point of view, we are making a change for the coming of the day of God in His plan.

No, from God's point of view, nothing is changed, because He knows what we would pray for and how we would live before the creation of the universe, so He made the timetable according to His foreknowledge.

The second half of v12 gives us a preview of the coming event. I don't believe that the earth will be destroyed by some trigger happy military leaders who push the button of some thermo nuclear bombs, but by the Lord. By this time, the earth will be polluted with all the wars and disasters during the seven year Tribulation period. After the thousand year Millennium period, the Lord is going to make the biggest spring cleaning – burning up the old heavens and earth and making brand new ones. How is He going to do that? I don't know, but I bet it is going to be a sight to see.

By the way, the Jehovah's Witness' doctrine says that they are going to live on earth forever. I don't know which earth they are talking about.

F. NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

I haven't traveled a whole lot in the United States, but whenever I go to new places, I am in awe of God's creations. According to Revelation 21:1-8, the new heavens and earth are going to make the old ones looking like nothing.

Revelation 21:1-8 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Remember, heaven is heaven because Jesus is there, and hell is hell because Jesus is not there.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Clean up your life.

2) Look up and expect His coming.

3) Speak up every chance you get because His coming will not be delayed forever.