

Until the Final Day: Following Jesus

2 Peter 3:3-13
October 21, 2018



Please take time to read 2 Peter 3:3-13 before reading this manuscript. As we go through this message today, you'll probably notice how often Peter uses the word "day." In 2 Peter 3:3-13 he mentions the word "day" seven different times. Just in these few verses you just read, it mentions the "last days," the "day of judgment and destruction," a "day that is like a thousand years," the "day of the Lord," and the "day of God."¹ This section from 2 Peter forces us to think about time. Our present-day time, which is ironically called "the last days." But also a future time, called "the Final Day," AND even beyond that, the eternity that then follows that "Final Day."² It can actually get a little confusing.³ But also... a little exciting, and really VERY encouraging! The more we come to understand this important perspective on how time moves along day by day, the more we come to understand the value and importance of the Final Day that God has planned. And that's why we're considering this idea: Until the Final Day!⁴ Following Jesus "Until the Final Day" reminds us that...

1. Our current world is only temporary. This is a very basic yet profound concept. We tend to forget this simple but important fact. The scoffers in Peter's day didn't believe the world was temporary. In fact, they were so bold as to basically call God a liar and to mock the very idea that a Final Day would ever come. 2 Peter 3:3-4 tells us, "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 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

This "coming," of course, refers to the coming of Christ. Have you ever had someone ask you a question like this? "Do you really think that Jesus is going to come back to earth again? After almost 2,000 years of waiting, don't you think it's probably about time to give up on that fairy tale? Christianity is so antiquated and outdated; you need to get with the times my friend!" This kind of perspective on life, reveals a belief that God is unconcerned and uninvolved in the course of human events. Peter actually gives a bit of an apologetic concerning this idea. It's as if he gets a little ticked off when he recalls their words at the end of verse 4 "Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." Peter takes issue with this. He goes on to explain that our current world shows evidence much to the opposite. Peter addresses these scoffers by correcting their false statement. He says, in essence, you're wrong, "everything has not gone on 'as it has since the beginning of creation'"⁵ He explains in 2 Peter 3:5-6, "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."

So, Peter reminds them that the same God who created the current world where they themselves are living, is the same God who destroyed it with the flood waters in Noah's time. Just by His very Word, God created all things, and then Peter goes on to warn them in 2 Peter 3:7, "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." Peter is reminding them of some earth history: creation and the flood. And he is also giving them a prophetic glimpse into our world's future days: By His very word, God will destroy our current world with fire. It's only temporary; it will only last until the Final Day. The

¹ Peter's first reference in this letter to the day of God was actually back in 2 Peter 1:19, "...until the **day** dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

² Peter's 2nd letter urges us to think carefully about the Final Day. Peter is not by any means referring to the final day of our existence. Far from it! For those of us who are Following Jesus Until the Final Day, an incredible eternity with God awaits!

³ The more I mulled over this passage, the more I decided not to try to navigate if or what precise end times details Peter may have been referring to: i.e. the tribulation, millennial reign, etc. This didn't seem to be Peter's driving concern. He just focuses on the big picture which I have referred to loosely and comprehensively as "the Final Day," with no particular event or eschatological framework in mind.

⁴ This Final Day seems to have been on Peter's mind because he was nearing the end of his own life. He alluded to this back in 2 Peter 1:13-15, "I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that **I will soon put it aside**, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."

⁵ NIV Zondervan Study Bible, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2556.

reality of God's power and His activity in the course of human history serves to humble the ungodly and it causes them to consider their need for God. It also serves to encourage the godly, that God is not failing to keep His promise of Jesus' return.

What Peter wants us to see, is that we humans view time through an entirely different lens than God does. Peter reminds us of a key truth in 2 Peter 3:8, "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." Peter likely carried this teaching over from Psalm 90:2-4, which says, "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals." A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." This describes just how different a day can feel, from the perspective of the Eternal God. He is not in a hurry but neither will He wait forever. Our human flesh, on the other hand, is mortal, not immortal. Psalm 90:10-12 later go on to say, "Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

The false teaching that Peter is correcting shows that these scoffers have not gained this heart of wisdom; they have not learned to number their days. They are making a mockery of God by suggesting that He will NOT keep His promise. They have no respect of proper regard for God's awesome power. These scoffers are not only mocking Christ-followers for expecting Jesus' return but they are also deceiving themselves into thinking that Jesus will never return. Thus, they've fallen into the lie that they'll never be held accountable for their sinful behaviors. V. 3 told us that are not only "scoffing" but they are also "following their own evil desires."

Ironically, these evil desires are precisely why the Lord seems SO slow to these scoffers. Verses 9-10 go on to explain the Lord's patience with sinners, by giving them time to repent.⁶ To come to repentance before the Final Day when "the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare." We'll talk about this more next Sunday.

This future destruction of our current world, is not only motivation for people to come to repentance, but also a reminder of how Christians ought to live. 2 Peter 3:11-12 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 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." Following Jesus "Until the Final Day" also reminds us that...

2. Our current living should be forward-thinking. I really appreciate the way that one guy puts it, "That is, there is no reason to adjust one's life to the values...of this [current] age...for this age is coming to an end. It would be like investing in a [company] that was about to crash."⁷ He goes on to say, "Given the massive investment of contemporary Christians in the nationalism, materialism, and pleasure orientation of Western culture, this passage should serve as wake-up call. When the Day comes, one's retirement fund will not be important, but rather what one has invested in the kingdom of our Sovereign Lord."⁸ You see, sometimes we are motivated by the fear of judgment and hell, and other times we are motivated by the joy and reward of making wise investments that have eternal value. Both are motivations to the same end, godly living. Overall though, Peter is trying to put greater emphasis on what we have to look forward to after that Final Day. This idea of "looking forward to the day of God" is repeated 3 times in a row: it's in verse 12, then verse 13, and then in 2 Peter 3:14, "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

This is also now the third time in 2 Peter that we've heard this phrase "make every effort."⁹ Peter began his letter back in chapter 1 with this idea of "making every effort" and now, as he approaches

⁶ "the point being that **he never expects to be called to account for his actions** because the delay indicates that the coming will never happen." (Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 278). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.)

⁷ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 288). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

⁸ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 289). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

⁹ Back in 2 Peter 1:5 we learned that we should "make every effort" to add to our faith the list of godly virtues in verses 5-7. Then, in 2 Peter 1:10 we learned that we should "make every effort" to confirm our calling and election. In other words, since we have been called by God to live godly lives, then let's do that! (See also Hebrews 4:1-13, especially verses 1, 6, 11, & 13.) σπουδαίω = "to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, be

the end of his letter, he repeats his point in 2 Peter 3:14, "...since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."¹⁰ Peter urges us toward godly living because something new is right around the corner. God will KEEP His promise; "Jesus will return right on schedule!"¹¹ This creates within us a sense of excited expectation, a sense of getting ready, a sense of watchfulness! One person writes, "Being watchful does not mean that we should sit out on the porch like a lonely dog, pining away until our master returns. Instead, we are to live with the certainty that Christ is coming, and when he does we will be [rewarded] for how we have lived."¹² In Matthew 24, Jesus urges His followers to be good stewards who are busily doing the master's work.¹³

Back in the 1800s there was an English social reformer named Lord Shaftesbury.¹⁴ He "worked tirelessly to improve conditions in the London slums...near the end of his life [he said] 'I do not think that in the last forty years I have lived one conscious hour that was not influenced by the thought of our Lord's return.'"¹⁵ That's amazing to me! Imagine 40 years of service motivated by the hope and expectancy of the Lord's return. I'll be the first to admit how hard it is to keep this in the forefront of my own mind, especially on a consistent, hourly basis. It's not a simple thing to live in the light of eternity. There are so many activities and responsibilities throughout this life that distract us from this important point of view. It's not easy to make sure that our priorities are consistently informed and influenced by the Lord's promised return. And yet, our goals and desires in life are probably most inspired by Matthew 25:23, "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"¹⁶

That happiness will be enjoyed in a new place. 2 Peter 3:13 says, "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells." Following Jesus "Until the Final Day" reminds us that...

3. Our current realities will be radically different AFTER the Final Day. Let me give you two examples. The 1st example is...

1) The Problem of Evil, which asks the simple question: "If God is so good and all-powerful, then why is there such terrible evil in the world?" A radically different future in the new heaven/earth gives at least a partial answer to this question. The current reality of evil and wickedness in our world will only last a short while. There will be a final reckoning and it will happen on that Final Day. In other words, the Final Day is a Judgment Day! This is what 2 Peter 3:10 is talking about, "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." We look forward to the Final Day because of the final justice it will bring on all things evil and wicked. And, as I mentioned in my sermon last week from 2 Peter 2, God brings this perfect justice because He has perfect discernment. In fact, God knows which of the people reading this transcript today have placed their faith in Jesus and those who have not. If you have not yet trusted Christ, I hope that you will before the Final Day, when it will be too late.

The 2nd example of a radically different reality is...

2) The Problem of Pain/Suffering, which asks a simple question: "Why do good people encounter pain/suffering in this world?" The Final Day brings with it, a once and for all, final relief from all of the

zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort, be conscientious." (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 939). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.)

¹⁰ Looking forward to our heavenly reward helps us to persevere in our present-day faith. Until that Final Day, when God brings His final judgment and His final blessing, we just need to keep following Jesus. Therefore, let us press on. Let us run the race with perseverance! 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 asks us, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."

¹¹ *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2556. Hebrews 9:28 tells us that Jesus, "...will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

¹² *Evangelical Convictions*, Free Church Publications, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, p. 229.

¹³ See Matthew 24:45-47.

¹⁴ Pronounced "SHAFTS burr-e."

¹⁵ Quoted in James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986, p. 707 (found in *Evangelical Convictions*, Free Church Publications, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, p. 230.)

¹⁶ See 1 John 2:28.

pain/suffering in our current world. The final reward for believers is described in Revelation 21:1-4,¹⁷ “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The old order of this sinful, fallen world will have passed away. And now, there will be:

No evil. No dark, scary places. No danger anywhere.

No war. No racism. No politics.

No financial debt. No bills. No losing your job.

No arthritis. No headaches. No body aches. No flu.

No disease. No cancer. No loss of loved ones.

And this list goes on. I bet each person reading this could add a few more. Heaven is fabulous for all of the things that it is not. BUT let’s also remember that it is fabulous for what it is: the very presence of God dwelling among His people.¹⁸ He, God Himself, is the one wiping away every tear. Don’t miss how personal and intimate this new heaven and new earth will be. I can hardly begin to imagine the splendor and wonder of such a place; perfectly restored fellowship between us and God, much like the kind Adam and Eve had back in the Garden BEFORE mankind’s fall into sin.¹⁹ Life as we know it will be radically different! The early Christians had a phrase from the Aramaic language, “Marana-tha,”²⁰ which means “Come, O Lord!” We look forward to our Lord’s return. **Until that Final Day, let us live lives that are fully devoted to Him!**

*This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
on October 21, 2018 by Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson*

¹⁷ See also Isaiah 65:17-25

¹⁸ See T. D. Alexander’s article, “The City of God,” in the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, pp. 2,666-2,667.

¹⁹ See *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* text note on Revelation 21:3, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2623.

²⁰ See 1 Corinthians 16:22. μαράνα θά