

2Peter 3:1-4 "A Call To Remember His Promised Return" Part 2

2 Peter 3:1-4 ^{NAU} This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. ³ Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

The last time we were together I had ended this particular passage with Peter's exhortation to look to this second coming of Christ, which Peter says, the mockers will deny, essentially saying that this promise from God has not come to fruition, therefore it will not come to pass, which calls into question the very faithfulness of God.

This mocking, by the way, could come from both within and without the church. The context, up to this point from Peter, is drawing attention to those false teachers in the church, but here in the third chapter the mockers are not specifically identified as those within the church but simply states, in the last days these mockers will come with their mocking.

As I mentioned last time the world has mocked this very truth time and time again as they deny the Lord of glory by giving the glory of creation to the creation itself, (evolution, natural selection, chance and time), as they suppress the truth in unrighteousness concerning God revealing Himself in the hearts of all people and through His creation.

Romans 1:18-20 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Unfortunately, most seminaries in this country have abandoned the clear teaching of Genesis and the creation account as they embrace the "scientific" explanation for our very existence. In so doing, either through an all-out denial of Genesis, (being an historic

account from God's perspective on creation), or a partial abandonment by trying to meld naturalism and the bible, (theistic evolution), they both suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

And so, whether this mocking comes from without or within the church, the church must not fall into the trap of embracing a lie and taking its eye off of the prize who is Christ and His return as He promised.

By the way, there is another angle to this mocking of the return of Christ by false teachers and that is that there is no need for looking for the return of Christ since He has already come. You might remember that the cult of Jehovah's Witnesses teach a form of this doctrine as their "prophets" purport that Christ returned secretly back in the early part of the 20th century in 1914.

But this is not a new teaching. In fact, this was a teaching similar to what Paul warned Timothy, and by extension, the entire church, that this false teaching should be rejected along with the false teachers who promote it.

2 Timothy 2:16-18 ¹⁶ But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

If Christ already came and the resurrection has already happened, then we who are left have no hope, since we missed the big event. Either way, the hope of glory is a mere whim and makes God a liar. But in the context of Colossians 1:27 the hope of glory, which would include Gentiles, is described as "Christ in you" and is clearly a future event, yet unfulfilled.

Colossians 1:26-27 ²⁶ *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The idea of Christ being in you includes what Christ has done for you and to you. In other words, if you have embraced Christ by faith then you have been forgiven of your sin and are now in a covenantal relationship with God as adopted children. But that process of being chosen, called, justified, sanctified and glorified is

a work by the Spirit of God to the end that all that the Father gave to Christ, from eternity past, He would indeed bring home to glory.

John 6:37-40 ³⁷ "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

All who behold the Son and believe in Him are all who had been given to Christ by the Father and have been given life in Christ for a purpose, part of which includes being raised up on the last day.

In what is referred to as the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation, as God has ordained it from before the foundation of the world, being foreknown, predestined, called, and justified by God, it ultimately leads to the last part of God's plan for His people and that is being glorified.

Romans 8:29-30 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Being glorified is what the Lord Jesus alludes to when He says that He Himself will raise His sheep, who have been given eternal life, on the last day.

In fact, in the context of Romans 8 Paul ties this glory that God's chosen people experience to a glory that is extended to the entire creation.

Romans 8:19-23 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

The phrase, into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, that we see in verse 21, is the glory that Paul would speak of in verse 30, which is also the same glory that Christ promises to His people as He raises them up on the last day.

So, is the blessed hope and the appearing of Jesus Christ two separate and distinct events or are they the same thing? Yes and no. While it is true that there is no blessed hope without the appearing of Jesus Christ, the appearing of Christ is the means by which this blessed hope begins to come to fruition.

So, then we need to ask ourselves for what reason does He come? Well, it's tied to when He comes and of course that is the last day. A lot of things happen on this particular day, not the least of which is the resurrection of all of God's people.

John 6:39-40 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:44 ⁴⁴ "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:54 ⁵⁴ "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 11:24-26 ²⁴ Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

But there is also judgment on this last day for those who reject Christ.

John 12:48 ⁴⁸ "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

Acts 17:31 ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Something else happens on the last day, the day of judgment.

^{NAU} **2 Peter 3:7** But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

This is the final judgment of sin and the curse on the physical universe which is tied to the resurrection of God's people as Paul points out.

Romans 8:20-23 ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

All of this is tied to the same event the false teachers in Peter's letter are denying. So, you can see that if you undermine the coming of Christ you undermine the resurrection, the judgment of all people, and the blessed hope that we have in Christ which includes our future eternal dwelling, the New Earth, which gets to the heart of the matter as to why we have been saved in the first place.

In other words, to what end are we saved. Now that we who are in Christ have been gathered together to be with the Lord on the last day, now what? This is where a lot of writings on the subject of the last day seem to go flat. We seem to have this crescendo of Christ judging the world with great judgment and destroying the enemy and casting them into the lake of fire.

And then He turns His attention to His people who have been raised from the dead or changed in the twinkling of an eye, for those who are alive at His coming, and that seems to be where it ends for many.

I remember when I was a child riding my bike down the street in front of our house. A group of us were on our way to the store. My dog, Tuffy, a black and brown shepherd/pincer mix, would always trot along with us wherever we went.

On this particular day, about a hundred yards down the road from my house, a cat ran across the street right in front of us. Well,

chaos ensued as Tuffy takes off and comes up on this cat. All of us thought that he would rip into it and tear it apart.

But an interesting thing happened. The cat stopped in the middle of the street, turned over on its back and just looked up at this beast of a dog hovering over him. He didn't resist or fight, he just laid on his back. By this time all of us encircled this scene and my dog looked straight into the eyes of that cat, paused, looked back up to me, looked back at this cat, looked back up to me, as if to say, now what?

He had never caught a cat in his entire life and now that the magic moment was here he didn't know what to do or if he did he wasn't willing to carry out his deepest fantasy cornering this fastidious feline. But so as not to incite the situation we all began to ride down the road calling Tuffy to follow us. He paused one last time looked down at his prize and then simply turned and ran after us.

We as believers wait all of our lives in anticipation of the day in which our prize is before us, this blessed hope, and wonder, now that Christ has come for us, what now? And often times that's where we stop because we have a tendency to think that's the end of the story. It's enough to be with our Lord and Savior. And that would certainly be true if that's all Christ wanted us to know about this blessed hope, but it's not.

And then there are those who think, now that Christ has come for us we all get to go home to heaven and enjoy His presence forever. But is that the blessed hope? Not if the heaven you're talking about is the present heaven. But again, that seems to be the end of the story for many who have written on this subject including many of the renowned confessions.

The Westminster confession says this on the subject: "At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever."

Okay, but to what end? I've just cornered the cat. What happens next? Give me a hope of what happens next as God has clearly revealed in His word. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith essentially says the same thing regarding the state of man after death and the resurrection of the dead.

2. At the last day, such of the saints as are found alive, shall not sleep, but be changed; and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other; although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever. ([1 Corinthians 15:51, 52](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [Job 19:26, 27](#); [1 Corinthians 15:42, 43](#))

The phrase, “and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other; although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever”, again leaves me flat. I agree that my soul will be united to my “selfsame” body, but to what end? Is that really the end of the story?

But let’s press on. The Belgic Confession has something to say regarding the return of Christ on this last day when discussing the last judgment.

“Finally we believe, according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare himself judge of the quick and the dead; burning this old world with fire and flame, to cleanse it. And then all men will personally appear before this great judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel, and by the sound of the trumpet of God. For all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their souls joined and united with their proper bodies, in which they formerly lived. As for those who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others, but be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and from corruptible, become incorruptible. the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honour; and the Son of God will confess their names before God his Father, and his elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; and their cause which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates, as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God. And for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory, as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Therefore we expect that great day with a most ardent desire to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." - Rev.22:20.

The last couple of sentences certainly allude to a glory, albeit a glory as never has entered into the heart of man to conceive, but is that what the word of God tells us about this glory, or does it in

fact teach us specific aspects so as to actually be able to conceive what this hope is? Because if I can conceive it I can be encouraged to run this race with more vigor.

The last sentence of the Belgic Confession is certainly one every Christian should hope on a daily basis. **Revelation 22:20** ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

But what happens after He gets here quickly? These confessions and many authors and theologians wax eloquent about the truth of the coming of Christ and the resurrection, but unless it is followed by the blessed hope intrinsically tied to that resurrection that Paul speaks of clearly in Romans 8:19-23 then it becomes almost anticlimactic.

It's no wonder few Christians are really excited about their faith other than to rest in a hope that their sins are forgiven in Christ and that when the roll is called up yonder they will be there, but where and what is there?

In fact, let me just point out that the author of the hymn, "When the Roll is Called up Yonder", makes a classic statement that many hold to, and is indicative of the present day flavor of the understanding of this blessed hope, but it is a statement that is not supported by the word of God.

"When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more"... Really? Have you ever thought what that means? So, what happens to time? Does the fulfillment of God's plan to redeem a people for Himself, raise them bodily and gloriously from the dead and promise a future home with Him preclude that He eliminates time?

Is that what we have to look forward to, timeless eternity? Can a human being, albeit a resurrected glorified human being, really exist outside of time? Will there be no singing praises to our God in eternity? Singing assumes there is a beginning a middle and an end to the music. Tempo necessitates timing. If I walk from one portion of heaven to another portion of heaven does it not require that time has passed unless we think that starting and stopping can be done without time in between?

When the issue of the blessed hope in Christ, that is inescapably tied to His coming, is not expounded upon according to the word of God, but only alluded to in confessions and after-thoughts of

people who write on the eternal state of men, it misses the point of why we are saved and it robs Christians of the assurance of a paradise that is much more than a phantom-like, timeless existence in the presence of God, our Savior and Lord.

It is the kingdom that we anticipate with all of the benefits and blessings that Christ secured for us on the cross. It was His good pleasure and joy to die for us to accomplish all that the Father sent Him into this world to accomplish. And His resurrection sealed the deal, and one day He will come back to move us into our new home with Him forever.

And this is what Peter has been addressing in the previous letter and now in this second letter, that is, the reality of this blessed hope for all of God's people. Let's quickly review Peter's thought in his first letter.

1 Peter 1:3-4 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to **a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,** ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1 Peter 1:13 ¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, **fix your hope** completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:15 ¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for **the hope that is in you**, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Does our defense of the faith include this hope to which Peter addresses? More times than not we only think of our defense of the faith as that having only to do with the redemption of our sins through Christ's shed blood and resurrection.

But, the fact that Christ rose from the dead necessitates that in that resurrection we have the hope of a future kingdom to which we will belong and in which we will reign with Christ.

It is in this second letter that Peter points out how the false teachers want to downplay this hope and undermine it with false teachings that take our eyes off of Christ and His hope for us. The apostle Paul emphasizes this hope throughout his letters, including Titus 2.

Titus 2:13 ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

And note too, that this blessed hope is taking place at the appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But when discussing the blessed hope as Paul does in Titus 2, in association with Christ's appearing in glory, it might be instructive to note that when this event takes place there are other events surrounded by it in the same time frame.

Lots of folks do all sorts of theological gymnastics trying to determine the time in which Christ returns. The answer is rather simple, despite the graphs and charts that have been designed to complicate this appearing of Jesus Christ.

What we notice is that the appearing of Jesus Christ and the raising of His people, together with those who are alive at His coming who are caught up with Him, is on the last day which is also referred to as the last trumpet. But something else happens on the last day that Jesus makes clear in John 12:48 and that is that not only are Christ's people raised bodily from the grave on the last day, so are the those who have rejected Him as Lord and Savior, because as we are told, they will be judged on the last or great day as well.

But not just the unbelieving humans but also the evil angels.

Jude 1:6-7 ⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Where else do we see this event mentioned?

Revelation 20:11-15 ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in

them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Jude and John are talking about the same event, the judgment of the great day also known as the great white throne judgment which also happens to be on the last day. And by the way, this last day, which is also called that Great day is the same day the prophet Zephaniah speaks of.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 ¹⁴ Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. ¹⁵ A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶ A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. ¹⁷ I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Again, this ties right back into the what John tells us in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 6:15-17 ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" The great day of God and the last day and the great white throne are all part of the same day.

Revelation 16:13-14 ¹³ And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; ¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

But how does this square with Christ rapturing His church out of this world prior to the great tribulation if in fact that's when it happens? The problem is that it doesn't square.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and **with the trumpet of God**, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul is speaking to the people of God in Thessalonica and is encouraging them about the resurrection when he references the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God that is directly tied to the Lord Himself descending from heaven with a shout. And notice what is associated with those two things, the dead in Christ will rise first.

Well, who are these dead? They are those believers who had died in Christ and who will be raised with Christ, when? Not prior to the tribulation, nor during the middle of the tribulation, but on the last day, according to Jesus Himself in John 6:44, where He specifically says, No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. This is the day, according to Paul in 1Thess. 4, when He descends from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God.

This is same event spoken of by Paul again when writing to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH,

WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

Notice that in both passages all of this happens in association with the trumpet of God in 1Thess, and the last trumpet in 1Cor. It is clear that this trumpet is the call for God to gather His elect from the four corners of the earth, both the dead in Christ raised up from the grave and those who are alive at His coming, all at the same time. And note in the following verse in Matthew that it is immediately after the tribulation of those days.

Matthew 24:29-31 ²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

So, what is this great trumpet and when does it sound? In the book of Revelation there are seven angels given seven trumpets related to the judgment of God. The seventh trumpet is the last trumpet which issues in the final judgment of God when all men will stand before Him.

Now keep in mind that we saw earlier where John made it clear in Revelation 20 that the great white throne is when the dead, great and small were judged. This is also known as the great day of God's wrath as we see in Revelation 6.

Revelation 6:15-17 ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Notice what else happens during this time, not just the great day of God's wrath, which is the great white throne judgment, when God will judge and condemn all who have rejected Him and cast them into the lake of fire with the devil, but it is the same day as the resurrection of the righteous, again all of which takes place at the 7th trumpet or the last trumpet according to Revelation 11.

Revelation 11:15-19 ¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸ "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged, and *the time* to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." ¹⁹ And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

The last day, the same day in which Christ says, I will raise all whom the Father gives Me, the great day, the day of the Lord, the great trumpet, the last trumpet, the 7th trumpet, wherein we who are alive will be caught up to be with the Lord forever, the great white throne and the great day of wrath all happen on the same day. The last day of this world when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever.

It is also this same day, the day of the Lord, in which the heavens and the earth will melt with fervent heat and be purged of the curse and God creates out of this present world the new heavens and the new earth. And this is where Peter is going in our text.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of **the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning,

and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Again, notice that it is the day of the Lord in verse 10, also referred to in verse 12 as the day of God, in which He will come like a thief where the heavens will pass away with a roar and ultimately the new heavens and the new earth will be raised from the ashes of this present earth and heavens.

This is the same day of the Lord that Paul was discussing with the Thessalonians when he was talking about the rapture, the resurrection, the day of the Lord and the trumpet of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

It is in this immediate context of resurrection/rapture of the church that Paul then puts a time frame with the above event.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 ^{NAU} Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

The time frame could be any day in the future as long as that day is in connection to the fulfillment of the utter apostasy of the church.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ *that is*, the one

whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

But as Paul says, three chapters later in 2Thess., even though the apostasy of the church is here and the man, or men, of lawlessness are taking the church captive through false teaching, it will still come in the same way as in the days of Noah, like a thief.

But, the imagery of a thief coming when you least expect him, along with a world where peace and safety seems to be the norm, is not limited to the rapture/resurrection as Peter points out in our text.

2 Peter 3:10¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Again, notice the imagery of this coming in the context of a thief, indicating surprise, along with the subsequent burning up of heavens and earth and consider the language Jesus Himself uses of this same event where Noah and the great flood of destruction is referenced to demonstrate the same surprise the world of his day encountered with the wrath of God being poured out in those days.

Matthew 24:34-42³⁴ "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.³⁵ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.³⁷ "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.³⁸ "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.⁴⁰ "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.⁴¹ "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.⁴² "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

In many quarters of the church today verses 41 and 42 are references to a secret rapture where one will be taken to the Lord while one is left. But in the context the more plain meaning has to be tied to all of the other references of the last day that we've been

discussing where judgment will take place and there will be a separation out of the sheep and the goats on that day.

And so, verses 41 and 42 are not describing a secret rapture but a separation on that day of two different types of people; those who believe on Christ and those who did not. One will be taken to be with the Lord as they are resurrected unto the Lord on the last day as Jesus clearly tells us in John 6, and the other will be left in their own sin and judged.

Again, what happens on this day? Resurrection, rapture, judgment, new heavens, new earth. Why? Because it's the last day, (of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Mat 24:36), the great day of God who finally brings all of creation under His rule together with His people who rule with Him in their glorified bodies on the new earth.

There is obviously a lot happening at this last great and awesome day of the Lord as He ushers in His eternal kingdom which includes the new heavens and new earth.

But it is this last day that is really the first day of a new beginning that we long for and is described as the blessed hope and hope of glory and the kingdom of God with our eternal King ruling and reigning in this kingdom that is now located on the renewed earth as God dwells among us, Immanuel in the truest sense of the word.

This is the beginning of the blessed hope, the hope of glory to which we were called as the kingdom of God takes on the eternal signature that was only God's before creation. It is in this hope that our new existence in Christ moves forward in perfection and in resurrection of not just the saints but the entire universe which now becomes part of God's kingdom and rule.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am

making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

This is the context in which Peter tells us in the first 4 verses of the third chapter of this letter, ² ...remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. ³ Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

Do not let the world or its false prophets rob you of this precious hope of glory, the blessed hope for which we should long, and when we press forward into this chapter we will deal with some of the specifics of what this blessed hope actually looks like.