
The Day of the Lord

DARRELL DELANEY

Have you ever wondered what will happen when Christ returns? Are you prepared for what the scriptures call: The Day of the Lord? The Apostle Peter gives a vivid picture of what we should expect, and how we can live in light of the coming Day. Peter's words challenge us to think about our lives now in light of eternity. Stay with us as we explore this final chapter, and uncover the implications of Peter's message for us today, next on *Groundwork*.

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And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are at the final episode of our eight-part series on 1 and 2 Peter. I would advise people who haven't listened, or they are just joining us now to go back and listen to those. We covered a lot of ground, and Peter has been encouraging these Christians, who are in a situation of persecution in the Roman Empire. He is trying his best to get them these parting words before his own martyrdom. He wants to make sure that they know the difference between truth and lies, and how to actually persevere in these tough times.

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Just three chapters in 2 Peter. It is quite a bit shorter than 1 Peter; and so, now we have arrived at 2 Peter Chapter 3; and it really, Darrell, focuses on a powerful and often misunderstood topic, and that is what we often call: The Day of the Lord, or sometimes we call it Judgment Day; sometimes we call it the Second Coming. In theological circles, it is called the *Parousia*, which kind of means the presence of Christ. Christ will be present to us again when he returns in glory.

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So, Peter wants, in this final chapter...and again, this is probably the last thing Peter wrote. He did probably die not long after he sent this letter, and he seemed to sense that that was the case. This is sort of his last will and testament. So, he wants to have people live in the light of the reality that that great Day of the Lord will come.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, let's get right into it. This is the first part of 2 Peter Chapter 3, and Peter says: Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ²I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

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So, Peter has wanted to make sure they understand this isn't something he came up with. This isn't just his imagination. He is literally taking the words from the Old Testament and from Jesus, and passing them on to them. It is kind of like passing the baton of truth to the next set of generation of leaders.

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And as we saw in the first program on 2 Peter, Peter reminds his readers that: Hey, I was personally with Jesus. I witnessed the Transfiguration in person. I heard God the Father give his approval to Jesus. So, I know what I am talking about here. And we also...as you just said, Darrell...we also have the words of the prophets all the way in the Hebrew Scriptures, or what we call the Old Testament sometimes. We have the commands of Christ, the teachings of the Apostles like Peter and Paul, because, you know, we need to stay grounded in the truth. In the previous program, from 2 Peter 2, it is a pretty dark chapter that went after these false teachers, who were eroding the very existence of truth itself, and corrupting the gospel; and so, Peter wants us to stay close to Jesus—stay close to the commands, to the words of the prophets, the teachings of the Apostles now, to the Scriptures—because that is how we stay close to Christ.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is a great reminder for us, too, Scott. Whenever we doubt, whenever we have these unsure moments, it is a great thing for us to pick up God's Word and to pick up the truth of what he has spoken to the people, not just before us, but to us right now today. We can pick up his Word and we can be encouraged and strengthened by the truth that is written and carried on by the Holy Spirit. That is actually something we can do each and every day.

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Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he (Jesus) promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

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So, these scoffers, Darrell, they ridicule, they dismiss the truth, and here in particular, they are saying: Well, you know, you kept saying Jesus is coming again, but where is he? Life is just going to keep going like it has since the dawn of time, you know, so we don't think this Jesus is coming back...not ever!

So, these scoffers, Darrell, they ridicule, they dismiss the truth, and here in particular, they are saying: Well, you know, you kept saying Jesus is coming again, but where is he? Life is just going to keep going like it has since the dawn of time, you know, so we don't think this Jesus is coming back...not ever!

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Yes, it is interesting that there is no shortage of scoffers throughout history. There were scoffers by Noah when he was saying: Hey, you are going to build this ark. So, what is rain? What are you talking about? What are you doing? We don't believe that it is going to rain; it has never rained before; what is rain? Even in the book of Genesis, all over there are scoffers and people who mock; and so, you know, when we talk about today there are people who are skeptical and cynical of what might happen, Peter is just reminding the people here that just because it has not happened right now doesn't mean it isn't happening, because God has a date on the calendar for everything that he is doing; and just because it hasn't happened according to our timeframe, doesn't mean it won't happen at all.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; Peter here...he is filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and so he addresses that kind of flawed thinking. Peter reminds his readers, and now us, that God's perspective on time is really different from our own. We will go now to 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 is like a day. ⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

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Well, there have been people who have tried to take this and turn it into a math equation and say: Oh, yes; well, that means 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,000 years; but it is not designed to be a very literal translation. He said a day is *like* a thousand years and a thousand years is *like* a day; and so, because God is an eternal being, time doesn't matter that much to him as far as how he exists outside of it; but in our time, because we are connected to our watches, we have issues with this; but it isn't because God is slacking; it is because he is merciful and patient that he doesn't bring the judgment now.

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Exactly; Peter says: Look, the fact that it is taking a while is a good thing because more and more people get to hear the gospel; more and more people get to be saved; and that is a good thing. So, you know, God has...his timing is perfect; and the fact that Jesus hadn't come back yet then...and now, here we are two thousand years later...wow! If they had reason to wonder what was taking him so long just a few short years after the resurrection and the ascension, we've got two millennia on them now; but still, Peter's words come to us and we need to hear it two thousand years later. God isn't forgetful...

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He hasn't forgotten that Jesus needs to come back. He hasn't forgotten that this world needs full redeeming; but he is patient. He is waiting for the right time; he is bringing more and more people to faith. So, you know, don't be discouraged, Peter is saying. Don't listen to the scoffers, just because they say: Well, obviously it is not going to happen. They don't know what they are talking about. In the previous chapter Peter said: They blaspheme in things they don't even understand. They are like unreasoning animals. So, don't be taken in by them. Don't let them make you worry that Jesus is fake, that his promise to return again is fake, that maybe he has just forgotten or he has gone to sleep. No, no, no; he will come back: Promise! And God has this thing.

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So, Peter is trying to give them an eternal perspective on these things. We have a temporal perspective from our timeframe, but because God is eternal, even Jesus mentions this when he says: In a little while, you are not going to see me; and then in a little while, you will see me. And so, he is trying to help them understand that, even though while that is not happening, God still has a plan; and we have more to say about this, specifically talking about the Day of the Lord. So, stay tuned.

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And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are talking about 2 Peter here; and this is the concept called the Day of the Lord that we want to talk about. This is not a new phrase. It is the first time Peter has used it, but it has shown up quite a bit in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

The Great and Coming Day of the Lord. We said earlier sometimes we call that Judgment Day; sometimes we call it the Second Coming; some call it the Parousia, which means literally the presence of Christ. He will be present with us on this earth again. That is what is going to be God's definitive intervention in human history. Again, a lot of this talk is in the Old Testament. Here is Joel...the prophet Joel...one of the minor prophets: Joel 2:31:

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The Great and Coming Day of the Lord. We said earlier sometimes we call that Judgment Day; sometimes we call it the Second Coming; some call it the Parousia, which means literally the presence of Christ. He will be present with us on this earth again. That is what is going to be God's definitive intervention in human history. Again, a lot of this talk is in the Old Testament. Here is Joel...the prophet Joel...one of the minor prophets: Joel 2:31:

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So, Peter picks this up when he preached the first message after Pentecost. He just cuts off right at this part. He says that the sons and daughters will dream dreams and have visions, and that is where he explains what is happening, the fulfillment of the prophecy when they are speaking in many languages and tongues, but he cuts off right here; and now, in this book, he brings this part up to make sure that they know that God has a great and dreadful day. These vivid images that are being used and borrowed from the prophet Joel in this situation means it won't be any ordinary day. They are going to recognize this day is absolutely, starkly different than any day that we have ever seen; and they made note of that.

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different than any day that we have ever seen; and they made note of that.

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And Joel wasn't the only one. Isaiah often spoke of this, too. For the longest prophetic book in the Old Testament, here is Isaiah 13:9: See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and to destroy the sinners within it.

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So, this tradition of the Day of the Lord is what Peter is picking up here now in this final chapter of 2 Peter. So, this tradition of the Day of the Lord is what Peter is picking up here now in this final chapter of 2 Peter.

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Yes; he says it in verse 10, here. It says: 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.

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Yes; he says it in verse 10, here. It says: 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.

So, he is bringing the Day of the Lord up like a thief. He is saying that no one is going to know, and no one is going to be able to anticipate. It is going to surprise folks, and he is letting them know that that day is sure and it is coming.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And probably just throw in here...and we will return to this in the final part of this program...to nuance this a little bit. So, Peter paints a picture here of the complete destruction of everything. God is just going to burn it all up; and some people in the Church have used that as an excuse...particularly in more recent years, when we have had more thoughts about species extinction and pollution...some people use a verse like this to say: Well, what a waste of time. Who cares about the snail darter; who cares about the spotted owl or the whales. It is all going to be destroyed anyway...God is just going to wipe it all out anyway. Well, we want to nuance that later because Peter will have something more to say; and this is certainly not a call for ecological or environmental carelessness, much less just destroying the world because: Ah, who cares?! The ship is going down anyway! No; we don't want to quite go that far; but Peter does want to be very clear. That day will come like a thief in the night. (He uses Jesus' image from Matthew 24:43). There is urgency here; there is surprise; but it also contains the hope that God is going to purify the world. Sin and evil do not get the last word. God does; and that is the good news of judgment.

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You know, in the Middle Ages, the Church often used Judgment Day as a way to scare people into giving more money to the Church, right? They would put these frescos right over the doors of cathedrals of the Great Judgment Day, and it scared people; but in the Reformation era, when they wrote the *Heidelberg Catechism*, they wanted to turn that on its head; and so, in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, when it is dealing with the phrase from the *Apostles' Creed* that he will come again to judge the living and the dead, the Catechism asks the question: How does that comfort you? And indeed, the answer is, it comforts me because God is going to make all things right again.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, yes; it is beautiful. So, fire does two things in this particular passage. It burns up everything that is not supposed to be here; but it is also purifying and renewing; and so, it is really interesting that Peter brings this up to let us know that there is judgment *and* hope in this situation. For those who are believers, it is the hope of the shalom returning; the hope of the justice; and everything that God is setting right. It is to what he has called us to do. So, it is really powerful to see that God is doing two things with the fire.

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And Peter isn't just talking about this just to say: Yes, well, that will come; that will happen someday. No; I mean, in verses 11 and 12, Darrell, he has something important to say that we can use this belief in the Day of the Lord to do.

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Yes; it says: ¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

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So, we are looking at the Day of the Lord not being something just to be feared, but to be looked forward to, and while we are waiting for that day, we have a certain way that we are called to live, Scott.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; live holy and godly lives in anticipation. You don't know when God will return through Jesus Christ our Lord. We don't know when that Day of the Lord...that Second Coming will happen; but as Jesus said, you know, in Matthew 24 and Matthew 25: You know what you want to be true of you when I come back? That you are just leading a good, faithful life, and he uses a very simple image. He said: Who is the faithful servant? If it is his job to make dinner for people every night, then make dinner for people every night; and if I come back and find you making dinner, and being faithful to what you do every day, good for you. You are ready. So, live like it could be any minute now, and live with the hope of that second coming, because then you will be holy and godly.

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DARRELL DELANEY

So, we live with an eternal perspective, Scott. This will bring us to today really quick. If we live in anticipation of the Judgment Day of the Lord, and we realize that we are being set free from all the things that have held us back and the justice and shalom of God's righteousness will finally reign, we can live in urgent anticipation of that day; and we can also put into practice the things that Peter said in the first set of verses: Growing in our salvation; clinging to the Holy Scriptures, adding to our faith godliness and holiness and love. If we do those things, then we have something to do that can be winsome to the folks that are watching around this world, even though it seems like evil is winning.

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So, we live with an eternal perspective, Scott. This will bring us to today really quick. If we live in anticipation of the Judgment Day of the Lord, and we realize that we are being set free from all the things that have held us back and the justice and shalom of God's righteousness will finally reign, we can live in urgent anticipation of that day; and we can also put into practice the things that Peter said in the first set of verses: Growing in our salvation; clinging to the Holy Scriptures, adding to our faith godliness and holiness and love. If we do those things, then we have something to do that can be winsome to the folks that are watching around this world, even though it seems like evil is winning.

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It does look like that, and as we said in the previous program, too, in that rather dark chapter of 2 Peter 2; yes, it looks like people get away with murder. They literally do sometimes, but we use that metaphorically for all kinds of things. It looks like they are getting away with it, but they are actually not getting away with it at all; and the presence of this great and coming day of judgment says that God will have the final word. He will have the final judgment. He will right all wrongs; he will straighten out everything that has gotten crooked and messed up. The books of justice will balance. I mean, Martin Luther King, a quote we have used before, you know: The arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice, and that is what Peter is saying here, too. But we have a little bit more to go in 2 Peter Chapter 3, as we wrap up this episode and this entire series on 1 and 2 Peter. So, stay tuned for that.

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Segment 3

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DARRELL DELANEY

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And as we wrap up our series on 1 and 2 Peter, again, we have reached that final chapter, 2 Peter 3. We have looked at Peter's reminder of the coming Day of Lord, and his call for believers to live in the light of that day and the light of eternity; but now, let's connect the dots here, Darrell, as we kind of have some practical things to look at as we conclude this series. I think we've got four important takeaways that we can focus on here to wrap up everything Peter has had to say in both of his letters.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; the first thing that comes to mind is spiritual growth, Scott. He has been saying since the beginning of 1 Peter that he wants them to claim and crave spiritual milk so that they can grow in their salvation now that they have tasted that the Lord is good. He told them to add these things to their faith so that they would be kept from being ineffective and unproductive in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. He also says they have everything they need in their salvation according to the knowledge of him who called. So, he wants them to grow so that they will not only be able to discern the false teachings that have been going on, but to persevere in hard times.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And just to loop back to the very first program of this eight-part series, we can recall what he wrote earlier as well. You know, in both letters he expected growth, and he would say things, including here in 2 Peter 1: Add to your faith, goodness; add knowledge; add self-control; add love. In other words, keep adding...don't subtract...keep adding to your faith. Keep adding to your spiritual growth. Keep adding to your faith and

your knowledge and your love. Never stop growing.

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DARRELL DELANEY

That is true; and I feel like we should know that about our walk with God. There is no cruise control in the faith. We should continue to add; we should continue to learn from one another; we should continue to worship; we should continue to learn from pastors and teachers, and take classes so that we can apply these spiritual disciplines to our lives so that we can be a blessing to someone outside of ourselves.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, if the first takeaway is growth, the second takeaway is perseverance. Stick with it; don't lose heart, Peter said; and again, his readers were going through a terrible time of persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire and Emperor Nero; but persevere. Stick with it. Nobody wants suffering, but God can make it redemptive; and we persevere because we are waiting for that great Day of the Lord, which is, he is saying...it really is coming.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, Peter wants to make sure that they are reminded of what he was taught, that no servant is greater than his master. If Jesus himself was persecuted and even killed for living the will of the Father, we are not exempt as his followers. This is also a person...Peter...who has been through his own set of persecutions and trials; and so, he is trying his best to, not only with his life, but the testimony of Jesus, encourage these people, because this world is not going to be a place where it is easygoing and fun, pie-in-the-sky all the time. There are going to be some hard times, and you can still have hope in that because God can still work. He is not shackled because of pain and trials and setbacks that we see.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

First takeaway: spiritual growth; second takeaway: perseverance in the face of trials; third: God's patience and God's justice. It is central to Peter's teaching in both of his epistles. God is patient. He hasn't forgotten to come back. Jesus will come back, and then there will be justice. So, you know, rest in that hope, Peter is saying; rest in that hope. God will get everything straightened out.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, it is really interesting that when Peter was talking about the scoffers: Where is God? What is happening? Evil looks like it is winning. He is not coming. That kind of thing. I think every believer has to come to grips with the inner scoffer that could rise up in them; and I think that the way to redeem the scoffing is to turn it into a lament. My definition of lament is one that holds two truths. 1) God is good; and 2) This world is broken, and God makes this make sense, bringing it to God; because if you are a scoffer, you are taking it kind of away from God, but if you are in lament, you are bringing it *to* God, saying: God, could you please give me the encouragement and faith I need in the middle of this stuff? I am not willing to let go of your good, and I am not willing to let go of the world being broken. Please help it make sense in my life. You see that all through the Psalms and you see it in believer's lives when they testify. They have a stronger faith when they come out.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is kind of why our fourth takeaway is that scripture is our reliable guide. Peter keeps emphasizing the words of the prophets; the commands and the words of Jesus; the teachings now of the apostles; they are all grounded in the truth. So, remember that scripture is your reliable guide to keep you close to God, to keep you close to Christ Jesus, and so to keep those false teachers at bay that have been particularly a focus here in 2 Peter; and particularly in 2 Peter 2, as we saw in the previous program.

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But then, we have one other thing we want to look at as we sort of wrap up this series. Take to heart Peter's call to live with expectancy. So, here is 2 Peter 3:13: But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

I like Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this: We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth that will be landscaped with righteousness. That was a nice little touch there by Peterson. This nuances that earlier thing. We said earlier that some people see Peter's words about fire and destruction as meaning that the earth is going to disappear and we will never see it again. We are going to go live in some cloud or something. No; we know that the creation is going to be renewed; and Peter says that here. That is why we still respect the creation yet today. We don't destroy it because it is going to be destroyed. It is going to be renewed. There will be a new heaven; there will be a new earth; the dwelling of God, Revelation tells us, will come down, and that is why, you know, we take care of the earth now. It reminds me of something Martin Luther is credited with saying. Somebody once asked him, you know: Brother Martin, what would you do if you knew for sure Jesus was coming back tomorrow? And he said: I think I would go out and plant an apple tree. In other words, that was his way of saying this creation—this earth—has a future, even when Jesus returns.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and those words should comfort us. So, the Day of the Lord that we talked about earlier is not just for judgment, but it is for restoration; and so, we will have a new heaven, a new earth, and a new relationship with Christ; but until that day comes, we are actually called to borrow some of the hope from that day and live it now. Knowing that it is coming, we can actually ground ourselves with peace and hope, saying: Okay, that day is coming. Here is how I can live now; how I can be a light and a witness in the midst of all of this. These are the things that we are called to do as believers.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; sometimes people think: Well, you are so heavenly minded, you are of no earthly good. No; that is not the point. Peter says: Be heavenly minded; be oriented to the coming Day of the Lord so that you live better now; and be of earthly good. So, that would be the idea, but I think as we are closing out this series, we end with a blessing, and here it is: (2 Peter 3:18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. That is a great blessing with which to conclude this whole series. Thanks be to God.

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