

I have some great news for the New Year today. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. He came to deal with sin, and He'll return to set everything right that is now wrong in the world. This has been the hope of believers for 2,000 years. We just celebrated Jesus' First Coming, and we begin 2 Peter chapter three with words of comfort concerning His Second Coming. In fact, when we sang Joy to the World just a couple of weeks ago, you might have noticed that the last verse was about His Second Coming. (*"He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love."*) We casually talk about Jesus coming again, but we must wake ourselves up from time to time and remember that this is a reality. It is a certainty. He will come again. Hallelujah!

Next to faith, the return of Christ is one of the most spoken-about topics in the Bible. There are approximately 300 prophetic references to His coming in the Old Testament, and the theme of the return of Christ is mentioned at least 300 times in the New Testament.¹ That's why in the New Testament, we often see statements such as: *"These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled."* (John 19:36a, NIV). Prophecies in Scripture are silently being filled whether we know it or not.

For every verse for His first coming, there are eight that speak of His second coming. Scripture tells us to be ready for His coming 50 times. Church, His return is one of the promises of God, and God fulfills His promises to His people. He said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also.* (John 14:3, NKJV). In both 1 Peter and 2 Peter, Peter was dealing with people that denied everything about Jesus, and he was reminding the faithful (you and me) to keep on keeping on.

Peter begins this last chapter of his letter reminding us that God's promises are not slack. They are sure. They have been fulfilled, and they will be fulfilled. In these letters Peter has told us all about false teachers, and now he speaks about the scoffers who say that Jesus was a fake and a phony and will never return.

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.⁷ But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.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.⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise,

¹ *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 403). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

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. (2 Peter 3:1-10, NKJV).

Vv. 1-4 Peter begins looking back at the prophets. These told of the coming reign of the Messiah. Peter says he writes this to “stir up our minds.” I don’t know about you, but sometimes I need to be woken up and reminded that JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. On Christmas Eve during the service I spoke of eight prophecies that were spoken by the prophets of old concerning Jesus’ coming. I mentioned that not only was the town of Bethlehem mentioned, but in the mid 1800’s, according to a Messianic Jew named Alfred Edersheim, the specific field where Jesus was born, Migdal Eder (The Tower of the flock), was prophesied precisely in the Book of Micah.²

Peter tells us to not be surprised because scoffers will come in the last days, and they will be driven by nothing but their own desires. It sure seems like this is going on today. We see the steady spiritual and moral decline of the West both in America and in Europe. These once great bastions of spiritual light are now returning to their pagan gods of old. The West is moving from being a Christian based civilization to being a neo-pagan based civilization. These descendants of Christians are trading the truth for a lie. And interestingly enough as Peter explains, their ideology revolves around the lusts of men and women. The world is trading the truth of God’s word and His order of things for illogical presumptions that defy nature itself.

The main scoffers at present are the children and grandchildren of people who were once on fire for Christ. They say, “Where is He?” “He never came.” I am so glad and blessed that my children have remained faithful. I am thankful to the Lord for that. I know some of you have faithful children along with other kids that are just wicked and apostate. Peter is saying, “don’t be knocked off course because of this.” Stay the course. Don’t waver. He is coming again.

Vv. 5-6 In verse five he says that they have just forgotten how God’s prophecies of bygone things came to pass. Peter speaks specifically of the flood that destroyed the wickedness that prevailed on the earth in those days. God destroyed it. He did away with it.

Vv. 7-9 These verses remind us that there is a day of reckoning coming. Wrongs will be righted. Justice will prevail and be restored. This is a going to be a great day of rejoicing for the saved and a terrible day of perishing for the unsaved. These scoffers will get what’s coming to them. It reminds me of Paul the Apostle’s words to that little church in Philippi. ⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of*

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Edersheim

those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11, NKJV).

Jesus came as a lowly Servant, and He seeks to save the lost. But friends, a day of judgment is coming. In that day, EVERY KNEE shall bow and EVERY TONGUE will confess that Jesus is Lord. There will be a day when Nero, Caligula, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Kim Jong Un, and every person who has brought misery on others will be brought before the judgment seat of the King of the Universe. These who have brought misery to millions made a decision in their day to reject the Lord even though He was patient with them. So how and when will this happen?

The Day of the Lord

V.10 Then Peter tells us in verse 10 that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” The “day of the Lord” is mentioned in 86 verses in the Bible.³ It is predicted by the prophets Isaiah, Zephaniah, Daniel, Job, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, and others. In the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, John, Paul and others mention the “day of the Lord.” It is going to be a day of vengeance and retribution, but it will be wonderful. God will intervene in human history which will bring the Great Tribulation, and God’s judgment will be poured out. But it will end with the Second Coming of Jesus. Hallelujah. There is a comfort in knowing that wrongs will be righted and those who have hurt others will be held accountable. Peter then shifts and tells the believer that given that this is all to come, we ought to live in the right way. He calls it a manner of holy conduct and godliness.

So Knowing All of This, How Should We Then Live?

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons 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 dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:11-13, NKJV).

Peter is telling us that given all of these things and what is to come, we ought to live in “holy conduct and godliness.” I am focusing on this because if we have any New Year’s resolution it ought to be this: **“the kinds of persons that we ought to be are persons of holy conduct and godliness.”** About a month ago I passed out a sheet that showed 101 truths about our identity in Christ. Please let me review what exactly this is and how exactly it affects how we should then live. It is tied to living out the new creation that we are and our new identity in Christ. Paul refers to this stage as “working out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Note that it does not say that we are working FOR our salvation with fear and trembling, but we are working it OUT with fear and trembling.

³ <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Day-Of-The-Lord>

The wonderful thing about coming to Christ is that the Holy Spirit is given to the new believer the nano-second that he or she believes. The Bible is clear that if anyone be in Christ, they are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). You are primarily “new” because you now have the Holy Spirit living within you. This means that the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence in the believer. YOU AND I HAVE A NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST AND WE RECEIVE THE INHERITANCE OF ALL OF THOSE RICHES OF OUR NEW IDENTITY. THINK OF IT THIS WAY. THIS IS NOW WHO WE ARE, SO THIS IS HOW WE OUGHT TO LIVE: IN HOLY CONDUCT AND GODLINESS. Although salvation from hell is a one-step operation, we are saved from more than just separation with God. There are basically three aspects of salvation.

Past Aspect of Salvation: Justification and Right Standing (Permanent Righteousness) before God

Although a person’s salvation is complete at the point of belief, it needs to be viewed in what I would call three “tenses or phases of salvation.” **Past:** Justification means saved from the penalty of sin (resulting in the believer now enjoying “righteous standing” in Christ before the Father). This is not the same thing as “living righteously or holy.” Otherwise, Peter would not be calling believers to “holy living and godliness.” The new believer is “justified.” He or she is no longer under the penalty of sin. There is nothing he or she can do to lose his or her “standing” in Christ, but he or she can live in an unholy or unrighteous state. This assurance of heaven regardless of our temporary state of holiness or righteousness is what is referred to as eternal security of the believer, or simply “once saved always saved.” The basis of this deliverance is God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8), purpose (2 Timothy 1:9), and mercy (Titus 3:5). This means that we receive it not by our works or deeds, but by faith in Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, you have been saved from the penalty of sin. You were justified by faith, “sanctified” (now seen as righteous before God), and you are consecrated (set apart) to God.

Present Aspect of Salvation: Freedom from the Power of Sin

In the **present** and on an ongoing basis, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the new believer is being saved from the power of sin. This is traditionally called the “sanctification” process. It is ongoing as the new believer chooses to lay aside self and yield to the Holy Spirit’s direction in one’s life. For some, it might be less confusing to call this the “renewing of the mind” as spoken of by Paul in Romans 12:1-2. However, for most of church history this stage is just referred to as the process of sanctification. The Christian’s salvation doesn’t end with just past deliverance from sin’s penalty, but scripture teaches us that God is also saving us in the present from the power of sin (“being saved” 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:15).

Future Aspect of Salvation: Will be Saved from the Presence of Sin (Glorification)

The final aspect of salvation should fill us with hope and anticipation. It promises us that a final gift of our salvation will come when we are delivered from the **presence of sin** (Romans 5:9-10, Romans 13:11). The writer to the Hebrews stated, “*so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are*

eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:28, ESV). What we are now is not what we will be, and this hope ought to drive us to the pursuit of holiness (1 John 3:2-3).

Pursuing Holiness in the New Year – Tús Maith Leath na hOibre (“A Good Start is half the work”)

The “good start” that you can make this morning is coming to know the Lord if you do not know Him. It’s a matter of coming to the end of yourself and your abilities and surrendering yourself to Him. I’ve gone over salvation many times, but I’ll repeat myself this morning. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you are saved (Romans 10:9-10 pastor’s paraphrase). When you were saved, you were justified by faith. That means you stand blameless before the Father. ¹ *Then being justified by faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ² *By whom also through faith we have had this access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice under the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2, GNV).*

The second part of this “good start” is knowing that God isn’t finished with you yet. You are not perfect. You will make mistakes. You will sin. This doesn’t affect your salvation (your standing), it just affects your temporary “state.” You are not free from sin, but you are free from the power of sin. If you get out of the way, God will do this work in you until you pass into glory. God will do the heavy lifting if you let Him. Paul tells us, ⁶ *And I am persuaded of this same thing, that **he that hath begun this good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,***” (Philippians 1: 6, GNV).

Peter urges us in this passage that if we are in the Lord, the manner of life we should pursue is one of holiness and godliness. It is who you are in Christ, and you have the power (through the Spirit) to live it out. Perhaps this morning, you should pray that the Lord would put an appetite in you to pursue Him in a new way. **Pursue His Word and pursue Him in prayer. Pursue Him in listening. Pursue Him in obedience to what He puts in your heart. I’m not talking about a check list of stuff you do so much as I’m talking about a renewal of your mind to be all that God intends for you to be. That is the “process” of sanctification.**

Be who you are in Christ and conduct yourself in a manner “worthy of that calling.” As Paul urged the little church in Ephesus, *“to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1b-3, NKJV).*

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.