

Peter emphasizes that belief in the great truth of the second coming of our Lord is a present incentive to holiness of life and dedication to his service. If we believe that Christ is coming again this impacts our behavior. Notice in the following references that the truth of our Lord's return is linked with the question of conduct and service – **Luke 12:43; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 1:10; Colossians 3:2-5; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:11-13; James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3.**

2 Peter 3:10: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."

- **Grammatical Usage:** "**pass away**" or in the Greek, "pareleusontai" meaning, "come to an end"; "**heavens**" or "ouranoi" meaning, "visible heavens"; "**heavenly bodies**" or "stoicheia" meaning, "fundamental components of the physical world"; "**exposed**" or "heurethēsetai" meaning, "disclosed".
- **Literal Interpretation:** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the earth's atmosphere and space will come to an end with a terrific tearing blast, the very elements will disintegrate in heat, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. In **2 Peter 3:10-18** there are five characteristics or marks of the Christian in whose life the truth of Christ's return is a practical hope:

1. If we believe that Jesus is coming again soon, we shall seek to live lives that are Christ-like, holy, blameless and God-glorifying.

Study **vv. 11 and 14** carefully. What would my immediate reaction be if I were suddenly told that the Lord was coming in two hours' time? Many Christians, on receiving that message, would need every bit of two hours to prepare. Apologies would have to be made (**Matthew 5:23-24**); debts would have to be paid (**Romans 13:8**); books would have to be burnt (**Acts 19:19**); loved ones would have to be warned (**Genesis 19:14**); checks would have to be written (**Malachi 3:8**); confessions would have to be made (**Matthew 18:15-16**)! Well, the fact is, He is coming – and He may come tonight – and the practical effect of this truth should be an incentive to holy living. If we are expecting Him to come we shall desire to be found of Him "**spotless**" and "**blameless**" (**v. 14; Colossians 3:2-5; 1 John 2:28**).

2. If we believe that Jesus is coming again soon, we shall be far more interested in the world to come than in this world.

Study **v. 13** carefully. That is not to say that we as Christians are not in any way to be interested in the improvement of social conditions. Most of the relief agencies that exist today for the care of the poor, the suffering and the abused in our world have been initiated by Christians, and so we should not be 'so heavenly-minded that we are no earthly good'. We have a definite contribution to make to society. We are to shine as lights (**Matthew 5:16**), to be as salt (**Matthew 5:13**), exercising a purifying influence in the community – but this world is not our home because we are only passing through and travelling on to heaven. We are citizens of heaven (**Philippians 3:20**). Some people look upon us as pessimists because we believe that this poor world is doomed, but in reality we are optimists, for while we do not believe in the dissolution of the present order of things, we also "**look for a new heaven and a new earth.**" We cannot afford to be 'worldly' Christians, living in bondage to the sins and pleasures of this world (**Matthew 6:19-21; Titus 2:12-13; 1 John 2:15-17**).

3. If we believe that Jesus is coming again soon we shall be deeply concerned for the salvation of those who are not ready to meet Him.

Vv. 9 and 15 remind us of the Lord's wonderful compassion towards those who are perishing (**John 3:16**), and you and I who belong to Him and who are His servants should share His deep concern for the salvation of men and women. All the signs of the times tell us that the coming of the Lord is very near (**James 5:8**). How wonderful it will be for us when He comes! – but how solemn it will be for those who are not ready to meet Him, and to whom He will say – **Luke 13:27**! Let us use every opportunity to bring the gospel to those whose need is so desperate (**John 4:35**).

4. If we believe that Jesus is coming again soon we shall be steadfast in the midst of worsening conditions in this world.

V. 17 tells us this. Of course we must expect conditions in the world to get worse, though there are some strange prophets who tell us that the world is getting better! But a world which has rejected God and His Son, and which has spurned the divine remedy for sin, can never get better apart from divine intervention. It is in this desperately dark and sin-stricken world that you and I, who love the Lord, are to find encouragement, hope and inspiration in the calm assurance that our Sovereign Lord, who is on the Throne, will shortly step down and put all wrongs right. To know God and to be initiated into the mystery of His intention for the coming days is our assurance and peace (**Isaiah 26:3**).

5. If we believe that Jesus is coming again soon, we shall desire above all to grow in the grace and knowledge of Him.

This is what **v. 18** suggests, with Scripture providing seven key points:

(1) We must be truly born again – we must have LIFE. There must be life before there can be growth – **John 3:3-6; Ephesians 2:1; 1 John 5:11-13**.

(2) We must have the care of others and the comfort of HOME. As a baby is entirely dependent upon its mother, so we need the care of spiritual foster-parents, and the comfort and help of a Christian church. Spiritual isolationists do not grow. Link in with a live fellowship of God's people (**Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:23-25**).

(3) We must have plenty of REST. Before we can become strong, mature, robust Christians we need to know how to rest upon the promises of God (**2 Peter 1:4-12; Isaiah 26:3; Matthew 11:28-29; Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7**).

(4) We must have plenty of fresh AIR – this is prayer! Look up **Isaiah 40:31; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 6:6; Luke 18:1; James 5:16**. A prayerless Christian will always be a stunted Christian – look up the Psalmist's prescription for growth in **Psalms 55:17**!

(5) We must have plenty of good FOOD. We grow by what we eat (**Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; John 6:51; 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2**). If we are to grow we must not only have plenty of food, but plenty of the right food. Regular devotional Bible reading is essential to growth in grace.

(6) We must have plenty of EXERCISE. There must be the exercise of open confession of Christ (**Matthew 5:16; Mark 5:19; Romans 10:9-10**); soul-winning activity (**John 1:41**); and generous giving (**Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:7**). Spiritual exercise in these three ways will soon result in spiritual growth.

(7) We must GO ON GROWING in grace until we see Him face to face. We should never stop growing in this life – look up **Philippians 1:6** and compare **Revelation 22:4**. Please take careful note of the last fourteen words in this letter.

Let us pray that the daily anticipation of our Lord's return will inspire us to live lives that are well-pleasing to Him, to live in the light of eternity, to reach out for the salvation of others, to be quiet and confident in the midst of national and international cultural confusion and chaos, and above all, to know Him as our Savior, Anchor, Sustainer and Nurturer!

➤ **Conclusion:** Am I living in the grace and knowledge of Christ?