



BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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SERIES : Studies in 1 Peter - "A Living Hope"

August 19, 2007. Study 10

"Living in the Light of the End" 1 Peter 4:7 -11

THE STUDY SERIES

The first 8 Studies each highlighted a principle from Peter's letter. The final group of studies have a different slant - not so much highlighting the principles that guided Peter's life and that he wanted to pass on to his readers, but the general application of those principles to daily life. So then, the remaining Study titles commence with the word "Living." This week, "Living In The Light Of The End."

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY 10

The passage for today (1 Peter 4:7-11) is short and, unlike last week's, fairly simple.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen

This passage of Scripture falls naturally into three parts :

- 1. The Foundational Statement - 4:7** The end of all things is near.
- 2. Ethical Considerations - 4:8-10**, beginning with the word, therefore ...
- 3. A Doxology - 4:11** To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen

A. The FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENT (4:7)

What did Peter mean that the end of all things is near? There are 2 main possibilities :

1. A SPECIFIC Alert to Peter's first readers : He saw the impending outbreak of persecution by the Roman authorities toward the Christian community in the area where his readers lived as the start of a period of persecution that would grow in intensity and spread to include Christians everywhere . As a consequence, Jesus would soon return - within the life-time of his readers. The following verses seem to support this possibility :

I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. **Mt16:28**

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." **Mk16:41-42**

"Immediately after the distress of those days " 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and all the nations of the earth (tribes of the land) will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ... I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **Mt24:29-34**

Jesus firmly expected - no, PROMISED - that some significant event would take place within the lifetime of his contemporaries. However, the language in these references is borrowed from Dan7:13 and refers to the exultation of Jesus following his resurrection and NOT his Second Coming. The event referred to is, I believe, the complete destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in AD70; Jesus demonstrated that he reigns in this act of judgement, just as he promised :

... you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sins of your forefathers! ... How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood ... all this will come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate ... I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down. **from Mt23:31-24:2**

Many understand everything up to Mt24:35 as "second coming to the earth" rather than "coming in judgement to Jerusalem." (Mt24:26 thru 25:46 is the "second coming" material) Consequently, Jesus' statements in the verses (over) never get adequately addressed.

But Jesus was not WRONG (expecting his Return to be only a few years after his resurrection) and neither is Peter. There's another explanation of The end of all things is near! It is:

2. A GENERAL Call to all Christians in every era; irrespective of the circumstances of life, live in the light of Jesus' second coming and in expectation of it. This is a common NT theme:

... understand the present time. The hour has come to wake up from your slumber; our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over, the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. **Rom13:11-12**

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **Php4:5**

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ... publicly exposed to insult and persecution ... You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded ... For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay." **Heb10:32-37**

But how can Jesus Return be "near" in 60AD, and still be "near" in 2007? Surely that does constitute a "delay?" In 2Ptr3:4-9, Peter suggests that God's time frame is not ours and the delay, as we perceive it, is due to God's patience with mankind - willing all to come to repentance.

There is another reason. Consider:

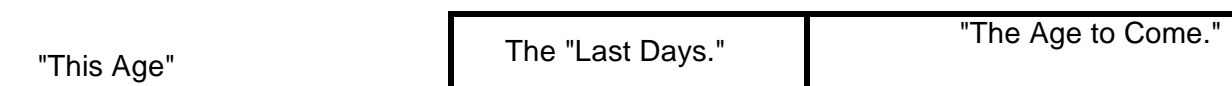
Because of Jesus' resurrection, the "Age to Come" has already STARTED (1st vertical line)

"This Age" has not ended, but CONTINUES until Jesus' Return. (2nd vertical line)

The "time space between the two is designated as the "LAST DAYS"

Therefore, the "gap" between the two ages can be bridged in the "twinkling of an eye."

Thus, Jesus may come at any MOMENT. This may be represented diagrammatically :



These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. **1Cor10:11**

... in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son **Heb1:2**

... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people." **Acts2:16-17**

B. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS. 4:8-10

Read again these verses from over the page. Note how they ECHO common NT ethical teaching. Check the verses under 2. (above) Note how these "Jesus' Return" verses also have an ethical CONTEXT. Peter's message is :

1. DON'T PANIC! : Typically, when people get caught up in an expectation of "the end" they exhibit quite bizarre behaviour! What does Peter require? Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled.

2. BUSINESS AS USUAL : Nothing "out-of-the-ordinary" is required. Just, love deeply, show hospitality, serve each other, be faithful stewards of God's grace.

C. DOXOLOGY. 4:11

When "the End" does come, God's glory will be evident in, well, all its glory! In the mean time, Peter suggests we should give witness to the "invisible" God by our sober, prayerful dependence on him (v8) and by the quality of our relationships together. (v9-10a) so that, in all things, God may be praised through Christ Jesus. (v10b)