

4. The Suddenness of the Last Day

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Date: 24 May 2009

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[0 : 00] If you would, to Peter's second letter in chapter 3, page I think 1019, wasn't it, in the Church Bibles. And we're focusing especially tonight on verse 10, which is all about the suddenness of the last day.

As we said, it's Peter's second letter that he has written to ordinary Christians living in difficult days, not just under pressure from a hostile world, although they were, but under threat from destabilizing influences within the Church.

There were leaders, and it seems likely that they were there in number. Ministers, teachers, theological teachers, if you like.

Churchmen, who ought to have known a great deal better, and probably did. But who were not true to the Lord, who were bringing in what Peter calls destructive heresies in chapter 2, verse 1.

If you look down to chapter 3, verse 16, you'll see what these destructive heresies will do. These people, they twist the Scriptures, says Peter. Because, says verse 17, he says, they are lawless people.

[1 : 27] They're in great error. Notice he does not say they are people with a slightly different perspective on interpreting the Scriptures from you. They're in great error, says Peter.

And, moreover, they're motivated, do you remember, from verse 3 of chapter 3, they're motivated by their own sinful desires. That's what will shape their teaching and their beliefs, says Peter.

Motivated much more, you might say, by their glands than by godliness. And, these are the people that Peter calls scoffers. And, he says that they are inside the church, not just outside.

That's clear all the way through the letter. Scoffers teaching dangerous error, motivated by their own sinful desires, and inside the church.

It's all very painfully close to home, isn't it? In this ancient, irrelevant document that we have before us tonight. And, Peter says, we characteristically recognize them, and we've looked at this already, by their two-fold emphasis.

[2 : 40] First of all, they play down the authority of God's Word. Verse 4 of chapter 3. Where is the promise of his coming, they say? God's Word can't be trusted. We've got to set aside the Bible after all this time, they say.

It can't possibly be our only rule and guide. It was written so long ago by people who couldn't possibly know all the things that we know now. About science, and biology, and all these sorts of things.

So, they deny the authority of God's Word. And, secondly, always alongside, they deny and play down the reality of God's wrath. Verse 5.

They deliberately overlook the fact. What fact? Well, the fact, says Peter, that God is a God who judges sin. That he's judged the world in the past, and that he will undoubtedly judge the world finally in the future.

Verse 7. Very clear. By the same Word, the heavens and earth that now exist are being stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

[3 : 46] The scoffer, well, he sets all of that aside. And he would rather tell people exactly what they want to hear. He tells them what the press want to hear, what the columnists want to hear, what the opinion formers in our popular culture, what they want to hear.

But there's no such judgment coming. Of course not. And because of that, obviously, we can choose to live in any way that we please.

We can define our own personal morality. And I can live by what's right for me, and you can live by what's right for you, and we'll all be fine together. That we are the only judges of our own lives and of our ways and of this world.

Just imagine that you have a school teacher who says to the class, there's never going to be any exams that come, so you can all do exactly as you please in the class.

Well, what do you think is likely to happen? Well, of course, it would be very popular, wouldn't it? And so these false teachers are very popular with the world outside, because they have only a message of affirmation.

[5 : 05] Live as you see fit, and we in the church, we will affirm you in whatever you want to do. There's never any examination coming at all, in other words. Very, very familiar, isn't it?

It's exactly what we are living through, this very precise moment in the churches of the West in general, and alas, in the Church of Scotland in particular. It's been all over the papers, and last night I spent four hours listening to exactly those kind of things being said by the high and the lofty ones sometimes in the church.

People flying absolutely in the face of everything that the Bible consistently teaches about the sanctity of the marriage relationship between a man and a woman as the only place for the expression of sexual relationships.

But have you seen anything in the newspapers, anything in the commentary that's been written supporting that point of view?

Have you? Every single thing that I've read has been unanimously in favor of rejecting that point of view, the point of view of Christ and of the scriptures and of the church through all the ages, and not just rejecting it, but heaping scorn in it as bigotry, as hatred, as backward, as wrong, as despicable, as dangerous.

[6 : 29] One report from a chaplain described people who think like that as fundamentalist terrorists. I was just thinking about many of the elderly ladies from the island of Lewis signing up to the online petition.

Fundamentalist terrorists. Better watch out, they're dangerous people. Well, just one expression, just one expression of what Peter's talking about precisely in this letter, in our chapter.

Leaders in the Christian church, following their own sinful desires, ignorantly twisting scripture to their own destruction, but as he says in verse 17, worse than that, potentially leading others also to lose their own stability and to be carried away into lawlessness and great error.

And deliberately, deliberately suppressing the truth of God about his coming judgment. Well, what is the Apostle Peter's message then for the person in the pew in the churches of Scotland today? And indeed, the people in the seats as commissioners of our General Assembly. Well, it's there in verse 8, isn't it? Don't overlook the facts, people.

[7 : 50] Don't suppress the truth. Don't be carried away by ignorance and error. Don't be destabilized in your own faith to your own destruction. Don't. Rather, remember.

Remember the truth of verse 2, says Peter. The word of the Lord Jesus Christ himself through your apostles. Remember that and see just how foolish that scoffing really is.

Now, we saw last time how verses 8 and 9, Peter answers the question of verse 4 about the apparent slowness of the second coming of Christ. It is not that Jesus cannot come.

It is not that he is powerless and cannot judge. It's quite the opposite. It's that he's patient. And his power is being made manifest not in the fact that he can't come, but in the fact that he is allowing us a great day of salvation.

Because he desires that none should perish, but that all, he says, should reach repentance. Don't underestimate, says Peter, the love and the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

[8 : 58] Don't ever underestimate the mercy of God. That's why he's slow in coming. But at the same time, says Peter, and this is the message of verse 10, don't ever, ever underestimate the justice of God either.

Because one day, despite this extraordinary merciful patience, one day, his judgment on sin and on wickedness will be fully and finally revealed.

And when that day comes, Peter says there will be no escape, none at all. Verse 10, But the day of the Lord will come. Now friends, if that is true, and let me say that there is no more certain truth in all the New Testament scriptures than that, from beginning to end, then at a stroke, that one fact demolishes all the pretense, all the delusion of every scoffer, of every skeptic, of every revisionist theologian and churchman who seeks to promote a gospel of love without judgment, or a gospel of mercy without righteousness, it takes us right to the very heart of the Christian gospel, do you see?

Because what Peter says here is straight from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ. So if this is wrong, if this is wrong, everything else in the New Testament gospel is quite wrong and false. But if this is true, then it is certainly the most important warning you will ever receive from the mouth of God himself.

[10:46] I think we better take it seriously, don't you? The day of the Lord will come, says Peter. And it will be a day, he says, which is marked out above all, do you see?

By the blazing fire of divine judgment. I want to look at what this verse, verse 10, tells us in answer to two questions.

Here's the first. What will the day of the Lord mean then? The answer Peter gives is that it will be a day when all will be revealed.

Look at verse 10, carefully. 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.

The overwhelming image is that of fire. Verse 6 says that the heavens and the earth are stored up for fire. And here Peter talks about a roaring fire burning and dissolving everything, dissolving the whole earth and everything in it.

[12:01] Think of those terrible pictures we had a few months ago of those dreadful bushfires in southern Australia. Do you remember? Ferocious burning fires and in some cases people were looking at them from a long distance away and seeing them and all of a sudden just like that the wind changed and they rushed towards them and absolutely consumed everything in their path.

It was terrifying even to see it on the television. And this is a terrifying picture that Peter paints for us here. Roaring fire that dissolves everything in its wake.

And it's meant to be terrifying. It's imagery of course that he lifts directly from the prophets who always use this kind of language to describe the coming day of the Lord.

The great finale of the universe. And of course it is pictorial language. It's a, I suppose you call it apocalyptic language. But I suppose it has to be.

It's like the story of the creation of the world. It's something so far beyond our finite comprehension that it requires that kind of imagery to convey something of its reality, something of its enormity to us.

[13:14] But the fact that it is pictorial language does not mean for one moment that it's not real the thing that he's talking about. It's very real. Peter's describing for us the end of the world as we know it in great fire.

Everybody today is talking about global warming. It's on the agenda big time. But friends, this is something of a totally different order altogether than that. No amount of cutting carbon dioxide, no amount of wind farms, no amount of green energy policies is possibly going to stop the fire that Peter is talking about here.

Let's be clear on that. It is the destruction of the whole cosmos that he's speaking about and the recreation of a whole new order. Verse 13, a new heaven and earth.

Notice not just the earth but the heavens too he speaks about. It's the spiritual realm that's going to be recreated as well he's talking about there in verse 13. If you look at verse 12 that we read actually, it's quite hard to know how to translate that word that's translated heavenly bodies.

It may well be that Peter there means angelic beings. He uses the same term in Colossians 2 verse 8 and refers to spiritual beings, the elemental spirits.

[14:32] And you'll remember in chapter 2 Peter's already talked about the angels and those being prepared for the lake of fire. Jesus himself talks about the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

It may be that that's what Peter's talking about here but certainly he's speaking about the destruction and the recreation of both the physical and the spiritual realm. But let's not get hung up on the mechanism and the details of all of that of this destruction and rebirth.

We don't want to miss Peter's main point here which is very, very clear. All of this, Peter says, is going to happen for one reason. So that God may expose the whole realm of human existence to an absolute and to a final judgment.

Notice what he says. The earth and the works that are done on it, verse 10, will be exposed, will be laid bare as the NIV translates it. He means laid open to total and complete scrutiny, to just judgment.

That's a frightening thought, isn't it? Exposure. Exposure of private details to the glare of public scrutiny.

[15:50] That's been pretty harrowing for the politicians over this last week or two. Every single day, a new revelation on the front page of the Daily Telegraph. Pretty harrowing. And that's Peter's point here exactly.

God will literally lay bare, he says, the whole of creation. Will he not also then be able to lay bare the truth about every single human being alive and who has ever lived and expose it to his scorching eye?

Of course he will. That's Peter's point. All, he says, will be exposed. That's a fact. The very opposite of what so often happens in government inquiries.

Somebody gave me for my Christmas the complete set of the Yes Minister and Yes Prime Minister DVDs. And I've just finished looking through them. And there's a great bit on one of them where something comes up and they say, we can't have anybody finding out about this, Humphrey.

And he says, oh, well I know how to sort that. Oh, how? Oh, we'll set up an inquiry. That'll bury the truth forever and ever. No one will ever find out. But this is the very opposite of that.

[17:06] Just think about it. Just imagine that these screens behind me and at the side came on. And imagine that your personal history was exposed.

Just all the people in this building. Starting with everything you've done. And then everything you've said. And then everything you've thought. Pretty harrowing thought.

All will be exposed by fire, says Peter. Fire is a symbol all the way through the scripture for judgment. And you know, nobody talked about that more than the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you come to read through the Gospels and listen to what Jesus really did say and teach, you find that nobody else in the whole Bible, Old Testament or New, speaks more often or more solemnly about ultimate judgment of God and about hell than the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've been reading a lot of comments in the newspapers over these last week or two, for example.

Lots of articles and letters. Hearing lots of things spoken even by churchmen. Things like this.

Jesus. Jesus talked all the time about unconditional love and not about judging people.

[18:22] Or Jesus. Jesus was all about love and acceptance always for everyone. He never rejected anybody. Friends, that is absolutely and blatantly not true.

When you actually open the Gospels and you read what's actually in written them, it's not what you think is there, it's what's actually there that counts. And in almost every section of his teaching, Jesus speaks in real and earnest terms about this judgment that is to come that Peter's speaking about here.

And he urges his followers and those who are listening to him to repent so that they will be ready for that judgment. Let me just take Matthew's Gospel for example because it contains Jesus' teaching perhaps in more length than all the others and in a more clearly organized way.

Right at the very beginning of Matthew's Gospel you have John the Baptist clearly stating what Jesus was going to come and do. Matthew 3 verse 11 and following. I baptize with water says John but he, Jesus will baptize you with fire.

His winnowing fork is in his hand and he will gather his wheat into the barn and the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. Oh, that's John the Baptist.

[19:44] That's his fiery language. He's different. Jesus was different from that, was he? The very next chapter Matthew 4 Jesus begins his own ministry and Matthew records it and summarizes it in Jesus' own words.

Jesus began to preach saying repent. Why? For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That is the day of the Lord the day of judgment that the prophets had spoken about and promised from long, long ago.

Well, what about the Sermon on the Mount? Surely that's different. That's all about love, isn't it?

Well, yes it is. There's a great deal there about showing your love to God by truly loving his righteousness and acting his righteousness loving your enemies loving mercy but not loving sin not listening to people who tell you to love sin.

Jesus says explicitly in the Sermon on the Mount beware false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous like wolves you'll know them by their fruit says Jesus and so will I.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit says Jesus will be cut down and cast into the fire. The climax of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount ends with these words you'll know them very well.

[21 : 10] Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day that is the day of judgment many will say to me Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name then will I declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness.

And he goes on to talk about the wise and the foolish man doesn't he? And he talks about the total collapse on that day of judgment of those who have built their lives not on hearing and obeying Jesus' words but just hearing and ignoring.

They'll be found to be fools Jesus says to have built their whole life and their future on the shifting sands of falsity and sin. Then it's Jesus in the very next chapter Matthew chapter 8 who says that there'll be many presumptuously religious people who in fact will be refused entry to the kingdom of heaven because they've refused really to buy the need to Jesus Christ.

There'll be says Jesus thrown into the outer darkness and in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then in Matthew chapter 10 it's Jesus who clearly says in verses 14 and 15 of that chapter that for those who do not listen to the words of his apostles notice it will be more bearable for them on the day of judgment than for Sodom and Gomorrah.

And he goes on and says the same in Matthew 11 about the unrepentant towns and cities that is the societies that had known the privilege of hearing Jesus teach and seeing his actions but still had rejected his authority.

[23 : 00] What happens to them? You says Jesus will be brought down to Hades to hell. And it's Jesus who says in Matthew chapter 12 verse 32 that whoever speaks against the authority of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit mind who writes every word of Scripture that he will not be forgiven in this world or in the world to come.

Or just read the parables of the kingdom in Matthew chapter 13 about the separation of the weeds from the wheat. The wheat into the barn, the tares into the fire. And then Jesus just in case we don't get the point gives us an abundantly clear interpretation in his own words.

Matthew 13 verse 41 Listen. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus, not me, says that. That's why in Jesus' teaching about how we are to live as the church now in Matthew chapter 18.

He warns us to take sin so very seriously. Do you remember? If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off. Better to enter crippled into heaven than with two hands or two feet enter into eternal fire.

[24 : 24] If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better to enter life with one eye than to be thrown into the hell of fire. Jesus' teaching, not mine. When you come to his explicit teaching about the coming day of judgment in Matthew 24 and 25, again, he climaxes with words of terrifying severity, but yet of absolute clarity.

He will come, he says, in the glory of the angels to sit on his throne to judge and to separate the sheep and he says, come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the world's foundation. But to the goats, he says, depart, you cursed into the eternal fire. And although that saying of Jesus is perhaps one of the most abused of all his sayings, the criteria that Jesus gives for that judgment, for that separation, is absolutely plain in the text.

It's based clearly and plainly on whether people of this world have loved and have responded to none other than Jesus Christ himself. And whether they've shown that by their love and their care and their concern for even the least of Jesus' brethren, Jesus' brothers and sisters.

Who are Jesus' brothers and sisters? In case there any doubt, he tells us exactly that himself.

Those who hear my words and do the will of my heavenly father. These are my mother and sister and brothers.

[25 : 56] these alone, says Jesus, are the ones who will find eternal life, not eternal punishment on that day. These are all Jesus' words, friends, from the Gospels, right in front of you.

And there are many, many more of them, just the same, I can tell you. The real Jesus said those things, not the imaginary Jesus, who in an imaginary way didn't say a whole lot of other things. And it's exactly what Peter, Christ's apostle, is passing on here. Jesus said nothing is created that will not be revealed, nothing is hidden that will not be known.

And Peter says here in 2 Peter 3 verse 10, the day of the Lord will come and the earth and all the works that are done on it will be exposed.

I'm telling you, he says, I heard it from the Lord Jesus himself. What will that day mean then? It will mean the total exposure of every human life to the scrutinizing fire of the judgment of God.

[27 : 05] Fire that Peter tells us in his first letter tests the genuineness of your faith. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3, fire that will test every man's work.

The day will disclose it, says Paul. The day will disclose the truth about whether we truly have, every one of us, obeyed the real gospel of Jesus Christ or not.

The fire will show up, the truth, or in fact, whether we've been self-deceived, whether at heart we've been a scoffer, we've been lawless, we've been an enemy of Jesus Christ, even though we've used the language faith, the language of the church.

I remember some years ago, a long time ago, actually, when I was quite young, and we visited as a family in Africa, going to a large open-caste copper mine, a huge, great hole in the earth.

I thought it was marvellous. They had these trucks that the wheels were twice the height of my father. And when you're a boy of 11, that's really quite impressive. We watched all these trucks. But I think the most impressive thing of all was that we went to see the copper smelter.

[28 : 23] And it was a furnace of white, incandescent heat. And into this great hopper at the top, these huge trucks tipped the boulders, the stones, the broken up rocks of the copper ore.

And out of the bottom, white hot, flowed this pure copper metal. And that was taken off and used and made into pipes and all sorts of things.

But the rocks, the spent ore, was dumped. That's the refining fire of the day of the Lord, says Peter. And it will come. And it will separate. And it will purify. What will that day mean then? It is a day when all will be revealed.

But secondly, what does the certainty of that day coming mean for us now, today? Well, says Peter, it's a day for which we must all always be ready.

[29 : 36] Because, verse 10 again, do you see, it's a day that will come like a thief. It doesn't mean it will come silently or secretly, but that it will come suddenly.

That's plain because Paul uses exactly the same expression in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 3, where he says the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, while people are saying peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them.

And again, Paul and Peter are simply passing on Jesus' own words. In Matthew 24, verse 43, Jesus says this, if the master of the house had known at what point the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake, not had his house broken into.

Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour which you do not expect. He's coming suddenly, when you don't expect him. And so says Jesus, you must be ready for him, you must be ready always, because you never know when Jesus will come.

And that's Peter's message here. He's saying don't think that you can escape that exposure. It will be absolutely impossible. He is coming to judge, and you must be ready. Don't ignore the fact.

[30 : 50] Don't think that you can live as you please, and this will never happen to you. He will come like a thief. As you know, when we moved to Glasgow, well, I guess we never really thought we would be burgled.

But within three months, the thief came suddenly in the night, and we were not ready. And I lost all my computer files, and my computer, and all sorts of things.

So we thought we mustn't be caught again, and we took some what we thought were reasonable and modest protections, precautions. Not enough for the Glasgow thief, because a few weeks later, he came again in the night, and did just the same thing.

Well, I'm ready now. And when we were on holiday some time ago, and the alarm went off falsely, and Alison here had to go around and sort it out.

Not even the police could get broken into our back garden. So if you've got any ideas, forget it. I am ready for you, all the time. That's Peter's message.

[31 : 57] You've got to be ready, always, all the time. You do not know when the Lord is going to come. And it's Peter's message because it was Jesus' message. Absolutely clear, explicit.

How many warnings do you need? God's not slow, says Peter. He's patient. He desires all to be saved, to come to a knowledge of the truth, to reach repentance.

But, despite all of that, the day will come. Nothing is more certain, says Peter, so you better get ready now. Make sure that you'll reach repentance in time.

Don't be caught out by the suddenness of his coming. Let me give just three clear implications for what this means for us today. First, the church's chief task is always to prepare people for that day, to prepare others and ourselves for that great day of exposure and divine judgment.

That's what we're all here for. That's the gospel that Jesus Christ came to preach. Acts 10 verse 42 that we read the other week tells us plainly, Peter said then, Jesus commanded us to preach that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

[33 : 12] That's the central New Testament command that Jesus told them to preach. And, of course, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness through his name and is ready therefore for that day.

That's our primary task as the church of Jesus Christ. Just as the teacher's primary task is to prepare the students for the day of reckoning of the final exams. Maybe all sorts of other useful things that they can do, but if that falls and that fails, everything is lost and pointless.

And that means that the church mustn't ever be sidetracked down all kind of blind alleys and bypass meadows into hosts of other things. The latest flavor of the month, whether it's global warming or whatever it is next, these things may or they may not have some value.

But regardless of that, our focus as the church of Jesus Christ is a far, far more urgent priority. It's the infinitely more fearsome fire of the judgment of God and the return of Jesus Christ.

It's one of the tragic features of the modern church and increasingly it seems even the evangelical church. There's more and more talk about the great task facing the church today being in terms of focusing on the present and not on the future.

[34 : 34] Whether it's social concerns or political concerns or climate things or whatever it might be. No! These things are not the Christian gospel.

They never have been, they never will be. And so they can never have the place of priority in the church's life. Never. When they do become the church's priority or the priority of a mission agency, the gospel will ultimately be lost totally.

Believe me. And we have to realize that. It's always been that way. It always will be so. Jesus' command is clear. Our priority is to go and make disciples of all nations to prepare people for his coming in glory.

Of course, of course when people start to follow Jesus Christ as his disciples, they show their love and their concern for their neighbors and for this world in all kinds of ways. living as salt and light in the world.

But you've got to have Christian people before you start getting Christian witness and Christian behavior. And our chief task is always to have that day in view and to be preparing people for it.

[35 : 42] Second, the church must also never forget that Jesus promised that there will be many foreshadowings in history of that last judgment to come. And therefore, the church can never be presumptuous and must always be ready because we do not know when that day of judgment may come upon us.

Jesus does and Jesus will judge slumbering and sleeping and disobedient churches now. He warns churches that if they reject the true gospel, they abandon the true ways of holiness, he will snuff them out.

Jesus' own words. Read the letters to the seven churches, but just listen to these two verses from Revelation 3. Wake up, says God, to the church in Sardis.

Wake up, says the risen Jesus, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of God. Remember then what you received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

[36 : 55] That is Jesus, the Lord of the church, talking to one of his churches. And do you know what? He did come as a thief because they did not repent. And like all those other churches in modern day Turkey, the churches of Asia Minor that were written to them, they disappeared and they were snuffed out of the pages of history because they didn't listen and they didn't believe the warning of Jesus Christ.

Well, I think that should be a warning, shouldn't it, to the churches of Scotland today? Peter says in his first letter, it's time for judgment to begin with the house of God.

I really do hope that we're all listening to that today in the church of Scotland. Wasn't much evidence of it last night in the General Assembly, I can tell you. Came home and said to Rebecca, there are children in the primary Sunday school, by and large, seem to have a better grasp of theology than most of the ministers I heard talking last night.

Third, it's a warning also to each and every one of us as individuals that we too must be ready for that day. Because if Christ delays his great coming, then there will be a coming for every one of us individually, won't there?

Like a thief in the night. It's appointed for man to die once, says Hebrews 9, and then comes judgment. So will you be ready?

[38 : 22] Will I be ready? That's the question that Peter is putting to every one of us tonight. See, the spirit of Jesus Christ is wooing us as well as warning us.

He truly does desire that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Will you be ready in time? Here's another poem. The spirit came in childhood and pleaded, let me in. But no, the door was bolted by heedlessness and sin. Oh, I'm too young, the child said. My heart is closed today. Sadly, the spirit listened and turned and went away.

Again, he came and pleaded in youth's bright happy hour. He called, but found no answer, for fettered by sin's power, the youth lay idly dreaming. Go, spirit, not today.

Wait till I've tried life's pleasures. Once more, he went away. Once more, he came in mercy, in manhood's vigorous prime.

[39 : 23] He knocked, but found no entrance. The merchant had no time, no time for true repentance, no time to think or pray, and so repulsed and saddened, again he turned away.

Yet once again, he pleaded. The man was old and ill. He hardly heard the whisper. His heart was seer and chill. Go leave me.

When I want thee, I'll send for thee, he cried. And turning on his pillow without a hope, he died. God. The risen, glorious Lord Jesus Christ says this in Revelation 16, verse 15, Behold, I am coming like a thief.

Blessed is the one who keeps awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed.

The day of the Lord will come, says Peter, 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.

[40 : 44] The day is coming when heaven and earth will be moved and everyone and everything will be laid bare to the scrutiny, the perfect gaze and judgment of our Lord and Savior.

And if you overlook that fact, friend, if you scoff and you scorn it, and if you scoff and you scorn the other great fact of the Christian gospel, the offer of the salvation of God through repentance by Jesus Christ, you scoff and you scorn at these things, God's judgment and his mercy, then on that day you also will be exposed.

You'll be naked and helpless in the face of the eternal wrath of God, the wrath of the Lamb, the wrath of the one who would be your Savior.

Only you would not scoff but believe. So Peter says, don't be a scoffer. Don't be a scoffer. Don't be a scoffer. Don't be a scoffer. Submit to the Savior in time for eternity.

Well, let's pray. God, we thank you for your great patience. God, we thank you for your great mercy and your great patience. Forgive us for our arrogance, the way we so often deafen our ears to you individually and corporately.

[42 : 24] Touch us, we pray. May we not reject your whisper of mercy to us. Whatever stage of life's journey we are on, but rather, may we welcome you and know for sure that we have a shelter in the great rock of ages, our Savior and our Lord.

Amen. Amen. peeking and see you in a