

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

2 Peter 03: 10-13

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thanks to the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We will continue to read 2 Peter chapter 3. Let's read from verse 10 to 13 today.

Yesterday, we read that the Lord considers one day as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; in other words, time is in the Lord's hands. We live within the limitations of time and often cannot comprehend the Lord who is not bound by time. Therefore, we should not use our narrow perspective of time to predict the Lord's work. The Lord has firmly promised that He will come again. This promise has not been fulfilled yet, not because the Lord is delaying, but because the Lord is patient with us, giving us time to preach the gospel and bring people to salvation, for the Lord is willing that everyone should repent and that no one should perish. When the Lord's patience in love and the Lord's judgment in righteousness reach a balance, it will be the time of the Lord's return. The promise of the Lord's return is certain and will inevitably happen.

Verse 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."

This passage covers a very long span of time. Firstly, it mentions that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," referring to the beginning of the day of the Lord. Then it says, "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," which speaks of the end of the day of the Lord, when the old heavens and earth will be completely destroyed. Despite this lengthy time span, Peter summarizes it all in just one verse. This also indicates that the revelation about the day of the Lord was not primarily given to Peter but to John. To truly

understand what Peter is talking about here, we need to go back to John's Revelation, where many details are provided. Here, we can only provide some foundational explanations based on Peter's burden.

First, let's look at the first part where the Lord's day is said to come like a thief. The Lord's day refers to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the day when He will reign as king on earth. In the Bible, the Lord's day is often associated with the Lord's judgment. Here, saying that the Lord's day will come like a thief means that the beginning of the Lord's day will be extremely secretive. Matthew 24:42-43 says, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into."

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ first compares His own return to the coming of a thief. According to the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." Paul's statement is very similar to Peter's, that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. This reveals the condition of the external environment: when the day of the Lord comes, this sinful world will have fallen deeply, like the darkness of night, and most people will be in a state of sleep, unable to perceive the Lord's return. The Lord Himself will come like a thief, at a time when people least expect it, and He will come to steal precious items: these precious items are the saints whose lives have matured.

The day of the Lord begins with the mature saints, or the first group of overcomers, who will be raptured. This is what Revelation 12:5 refers to: "She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne." Here, the woman represents the church, and the male Child born from the church represents the overcomers within the church. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, God calls for overcomers in each of the seven churches. These overcomers are the male Child born from the church and will be the first group to be raptured, directly to God's throne. Please note, this does not mean being caught up into the air like the general rapture of the saints. They are directly raptured to God's throne. They are God's first fruits and must be raptured to God's throne first

to satisfy Him. After the male Child is raptured, Revelation 12:6 says, "Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." After the first group of overcomers is raptured, the church will be taken to the wilderness and nourished by God for 1260 days, which is three and a half years. This three and a half years is the period of the great tribulation, during which most of the saints will be left behind to endure the trial of the great tribulation.

Here we need to understand the coming of Jesus Christ. In 2 Peter 3:4, it speaks of the Lord's coming, and the Greek word for coming is "parousia," which means presence, advent. It mainly refers to having the presence of God and speaks of the coming of Christ. This "parousia" is a process, not something that happens immediately as we might imagine. In Acts 1:9, it describes the ascension of Jesus, "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." In this verse, Jesus' ascension occurs in three steps: the first step is that He was taken up while they watched, which is public and seen by everyone. Then a cloud received Him, and He was in the cloud. The third stage is that He was out of sight, having reached God's throne. In Acts 1:11, after Jesus was taken up to heaven, an angel said to the watching people, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Jesus' ascension occurred in three steps, and His return will also have three steps. Therefore, the first step of Jesus' coming, or "parousia," starts from the throne. The first group of overcomers has already been raptured to the throne. In Revelation 14:1-5, we see the 144,000 who are the first fruits, redeemed from the earth by the Lord. The Lord will begin His return with them from the throne.

Then the second step is to come to the clouds, which is recorded in Revelation 14:14-16: "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap,

for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." This reaping of the harvest refers to the rapture of the majority of the saints in the church. This will occur near the end of the three-and-a-half-year great tribulation. The saints left behind during the great tribulation will go through fiery trials, and many will mature. This rapture of the majority of the saints is also recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." Those who are alive in Christ will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. They will be brought to Christ's judgment seat, where the victorious saints will receive rewards, and the failed saints will suffer loss. This is the second step of Jesus' coming.

Afterward, this brings about the public coming of Jesus, which will be visible to everyone. This is recorded in Revelation 19:11-21, where Christ will ride a white horse, His eyes like a flame of fire, and on His head many crowns; the armies in heaven will also ride white horses. The armies in heaven are the overcomers, all clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Jesus' army will battle against the army of the Antichrist, resulting in the beast and the false prophet being captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, and Satan will be defeated and bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years.

After Jesus completes His coming, as mentioned in Matthew 25:31, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another," it will usher in the reign of Christ for 1,000 years, also known as the millennial kingdom. This period of almost 1,000 years, including the three and a half years after the great tribulation, is briefly mentioned by Peter in one sentence, stating that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Peter does not include any further details.

The revelation of this period was entrusted to John, especially in the book of Revelation that he wrote. Peter kept to his own responsibility; he only recorded what God entrusted to him, and then he recorded events after the millennial kingdom. We know that besides the first four Gospels, which record Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, the main responsibilities were entrusted to Peter, Paul, and John. To fully understand the New Testament appropriately, we must balance and place Peter's writings, Paul's writings, and John's writings together; their works do not contradict each other but complement each other. Therefore, we must understand the roles of these three apostles, the responsibilities they received, and balance their writings within the same framework without creating contradictions.

In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The Lord's way was specially revealed to Peter, the Lord's truth was revealed to Paul, and the Lord's life was revealed to John. The Lord's way is righteous, leading us to the hope in Him; thus, He specifically entrusted it to the apostle of hope, Peter, who primarily executed judgment in His righteousness. Judgment for unbelievers is destruction, but for believers, it is purification. Today, we undergo trials by fire from the Lord, so that our souls may become holy. When we are brought before Christ, we will attain our hope. Therefore, Peter's writings focus particularly on the salvation of the soul, allowing us to partake in God's nature in our souls and ultimately become holy.

Paul was the apostle of faith, emphasizing that everything we receive comes through faith and we accept grace through faith. Because we believe in the grace of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven, and our spirits are reborn. In faith, we come to know the word of God, and His word becomes our truth. In truth, we are built together, and the process of building is our unity in the true doctrine, enabling us to fully understand the Son of God. Paul, the apostle of faith, interprets the truth of Jesus Christ most fully in his writings.

John, on the other hand, is the apostle of love, emphasizing life in his writings. We see the way, we see the truth, but we must also manifest them in life; this process of manifestation is a journey of love. Through life experiences, we come to know the many details along the Lord's way. When Peter wrote his epistles, his view of

the way was directional, with many details to be supplemented by John nearly 30 years later. John's ministry completed this aspect. We see that the Day of the Lord is a period starting with the secret rapture of the overcomers, as Peter describes it coming like a thief; then, the general saints will be caught up into the air; finally, Christ will come down with His army to battle the forces of the Antichrist. After Christ's victory, He will establish His throne on earth, judge mankind, and initiate the millennial kingdom.

Next, "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." This passage refers to the end of the millennial kingdom. Initially, it uses "that day" because earlier it mentioned the Day of the Lord; within this segment of the Day of the Lord, there is a specific day, which is when the millennial kingdom is about to end. This corresponds to Revelation 20:11-15, where a great white throne is set up for judgment of the dead. Verse 20:11 states, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them." After the throne is set up, a significant event will occur where the heavens and earth will flee away, disappearing entirely. How will this happen? John does not elaborate on this, but the details are in 2 Peter 3:10, where Peter tells us that there will be a great noise causing the heavens to pass away, akin to a massive explosion creating an extremely high temperature that will dissolve the heavens.

Here, the term "heavens" refers to the celestial realm, indicating a significant transformation within the cosmic order where the heavens will be burned up, and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat. The term "elements" refers to the tangible components, which can also be translated from the Greek text. It signifies that all earthly elements will be melted by intense heat, and both the earth and everything in it will be consumed by fire. God entrusts judgment to the Lord Jesus Christ, and through His judgment, the old creation will come to an end. This description portrays the terrifying events that occur as the old creation concludes. It aligns with what is mentioned in verse 7 of this chapter, stating that the present

heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people.

According to the understanding of Peter and others at that time, they couldn't even imagine the immense power required to melt celestial bodies and the entire Earth. In modern warfare, humans have invented nuclear bombs, hydrogen bombs, which generate extremely high temperatures and can melt various materials in a short time. However, human technology can only achieve the destruction of a city. Here, when God intervenes in judgment, melting the old heavens and earth completely, it signifies an unimaginably powerful judgment.

Verse 11: “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,”

Peter reminds us here that everything in the old heavens and earth, as well as everything we cherish and collect in today's world, will all be consumed on that day. What we love and gather today will be completely burned up and cease to exist. Seeing the old heavens and earth being consumed in this way, Peter reminds us of how we should live in holiness and godliness. Just as earthly things will be melted by fire, it corresponds to the trials like fire that we go through today in the environment God has prepared for us. These trials burn away all the base and lowly things in our hearts, allowing us to become holy and live in godliness.

Verse 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?”

The Day of the Lord refers to the judgment executed by the Lord Jesus Christ, ultimately judging the old heavens and earth. Everything in the old heavens and earth will be consumed, and it's then that we earnestly look forward to the day of God. It's as if after Jesus Christ deals with all the old creation, a completely new one

will begin. Peter refers to this as the day of God, which seems to correspond to the day in the new heavens and earth.

The Israelites were God's chosen people in the Old Testament, and the prophets of the Old Testament often mentioned the day of the Lord to the Israelites. The day of the Lord for them signified a day of distress and judgment. Sometimes in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, it was applied to the time when the Babylonian Empire destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah, which seemed to be a manifestation of the day of the Lord, although it was just a foreshadowing. The fulfillment of the day of the Lord is expected before the Second Coming of Christ, during a period of great tribulation. During that time, the Israelites will indeed face distress, as it will be a day of testing by the Lord.

For New Testament Christians, there will be the Day of the Lord, the Day of Christ, and the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will begin before the great tribulation, when the overcomers are caught up, and will continue until after the end of the millennial kingdom, when the entire old creation is judged. The day of God refers to the emergence of a new heaven and a new earth after all created things have been judged.

Verse 13: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

After the old heavens and earth are melted by fire, there will be a fundamental change in essence and structure, resulting in the emergence of a new heaven and a new earth. All those who are saved by grace will share in God's promise of the new heaven and earth. Therefore, Peter encourages us to hope for the new heaven and earth according to God's promise, where righteousness dwells. Because Satan has been thrown into the lake of fire, along with his followers, and all unrighteous and unlawful things have been dealt with, even including the old heavens and earth being melted and reformed into the new heaven and earth, where righteousness will dwell.

Peter didn't provide many details. God gave the revelation of the new heaven and earth specifically to John. It was recorded in Revelation 21 and 22. Peter faithfully wrote his epistles according to the commission given to him by God. He clearly explains the path to reaching the new heaven and earth, emphasizing that God is a just God who will execute judgment, and judgment has been entrusted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, we must value the trials of refinement, which produce the fruit of faith, that is, the salvation of our souls. When Christ comes again, He will judge the ungodly and unrighteous and bring an end to the old creation, ushering in the new heaven and earth. May all who are saved by grace dwell forever in righteousness and holiness, in the presence of the Triune God.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You. Through Peter's life experiences, he teaches us that everything on earth will pass away, but only God's righteousness will endure eternally. One day, everything on earth will be consumed by fire, so we should pursue holiness and godliness, eagerly anticipating the arrival of the new heaven and earth where we will dwell forever. This is the hope of our faith. Lord, expand our horizons, elevate our visions, so we can truly see the glorious future You have prepared for us. Let us not dwell too heavily on today's temporary troubles, for these fleeting afflictions will result in eternal and incomparable glory. Bless my life, I pray in Jesus Christ's holy name.