

God's Fireworks



Bro. Ricky Cunningham
2 Peter 3:10

I don't know about you, but my family loves fireworks. I remember being a kid and when it was the Fourth of July, Mom and Dad would load my sister and I up and drive down to Eggner's Ferry Bridge. It would seem like there would already be 100's of cars trying to find parking spots. We'd find a parking spot and Mom and Dad would take us down the levy and we would get to a seat. We had been doing this for so many years that we'd always go to our favorite seat hoping that nobody had it. We'd spread out our blanket, wait for it to get dark, and then they'd begin to shoot the Kenlake fireworks. We just loved that! I always thought that was the greatest fireworks show in the world until I got married and we had children. When Celisa and I got married we took the kids to Disney World. Can I just say nobody does fireworks like Disney! WOW! It is absolutely amazing. Here I am standing with Celisa and my kids in front of Cinderella's castle and all of a sudden it gets dark and the fireworks begin. It was just absolutely phenomenal! Then we went over to Epcot and Illuminations just blew my mind! Now, we still love fireworks on the Fourth of July but my family doesn't go to Kenlake anymore because our family personally does fireworks on the Fourth of July. My nephew, Michael, has all of us over and it's a big group of people. We get together, we celebrate the Fourth of July, and when the sun goes down, we all get excited because we know that

Michael is going to provide this fireworks show that is second to none except for Disney World. All of a sudden, when the sun goes down, the guys start going over across the road. All of us are at our tables, we start looking, and then.... WOW! It is just phenomenal. I'll never forget there was one year when we were all watching the fireworks when all of a sudden instead of the fireworks going up into the sky, the fireworks started going at the guys who were shooting the fireworks. The next thing you know, instead of fireworks going everywhere, the guys shooting the fireworks were running because they were caught in the middle of the fireworks and they were trying to get away. It was absolutely total chaos! So can I just say, it's better to be at a distance watching fireworks than to be in the midst of fireworks being shot when things aren't going right.

Over the next few week we're going to learn about the greatest fireworks show humanity is ever going to see. It's the fireworks of God. So if you have your Bibles, stand with me and let's open to 2 Peter, chapter 3, verse 10.

Scripture

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare."

Last week Kory revealed the five lies the false teachers were teaching about the second coming of Jesus. Basically, they were denying a second coming. Peter revealed and Kory pointed out that God is not slow. Time is a little different with Him than it is with us. He is in time and outside of time at the same time and that is just neat. It's just who He is. The reason it's been so long, from our viewpoint, is because of the very nature of God. He's patient, He's long-suffering, and in His character, He doesn't want anyone to perish but wants all to come to repentance. He knows that when He sends Jesus back time will be no more and the fate of mankind is eternally secured. Therefore, there seems to be a delay when there's really not.

Now, I want you to hear Peter's answer, "But the day of the Lord..." Peter is going to draw from his Old Testament experience as a Jew and he's going to remember all of those time that God stepped in warning the nation of Israel that if they kept doing what they were doing one day they would face Him in judgement. There was going to be a day of the Lord coming and it wasn't going to be good. What Peter is going to do is associate the return of Christ with the day of the Lord. The return of Christ fulfills the day of the Lord concept in the Old Testament.

One of my favorite pictures of the day of the Lord in the Old Testament is in the prophet Amos. I love Amos. He was a farmer called to preach. He was reluctant to do what he was doing, but he was doing it because he knew he had a call from God. He announced to the Northern Kingdom, "Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!" Now, woe means cursed. See, they thought they were God's people and they thought it was going to be a day of salvation, but Amos was going to reveal to them that it was going to be a day of judgement to them not a day of salvation. He says *cursed* are you for this is not going to be a day of light it's going to be a day of darkness. He says it would be like a man who was running from a lion and he escapes the lion only to meet a bear. Whoa! When you think this couldn't get worse, you're now running the opposite direction from a bear and you're trying to get to home as fast as you can. You finally get home, you outrun the bear, you go into the house, close the door, and you lean on the wall and a venomous snake bites you. What is the picture? You can't escape the day of the Lord. He said it's going to be a day of gloom. It's not going to be a day of light for you. Peter takes this concept and applies it to the return of Christ and now he's going to answer the question of why it seems to be so long. He says that day is going to be like a thief. Wow!

Last week Kory put up four views of Eschatology. I don't know if you did any research or if you know exactly where your beliefs are at, but if you have views of the return of Christ then you fall into one of those camps, so to speak. Now, I want to be clear this morning. I am in a camp that I didn't

use to be in and I want to be clear that this is not a test of fellowship for us here at Hardin, but I have to present the view that I believe. In Matthew chapter 24, Peter was with Jesus when Jesus compared His return to like a thief in the night. Now, in John's gospel right before Jesus gets ready to leave, He reminds them that it is to their advantage that He goes away because when He goes away the Holy Spirit was going to come and one of the roles of the Holy Spirit was to be our teacher. Then He tells the apostles that the Spirit will remind you of all the things that I talked about. So I think they went... *Whew! Praise the Lord!* Can you imagine Jesus getting ready to leave and He's going to leave it all in your hands, and you're thinking... *what did He say? What did He teach? I didn't listen well enough!* Now they are assured that the Holy Spirit is going to bring what He taught back to their memories. So, here is what I believe, Peter is writing about the return of Christ, the Holy Spirit of God is both reminding him of what Jesus said AND inspiring him to say that the day of the Lord is like a thief, but he didn't originate this, Jesus did. So, here is what we're going to do. We're going to go back to the gospel of Matthew this morning and look at the 24th chapter. So, if you have your Bibles, open there to Matthew chapter 24.

Now, I just want to remind you that when I came to Hardin as a pastor I was 22 years of age and the first book that I decided to preach through was the gospel of Matthew. You know my style and you know my method. I just preach through books of the Bible verse by verse. So I was preaching through the gospel of Matthew, got through chapter 23, finished the 23rd chapter, and the next Sunday morning when everybody came back to Hardin at the downtown location and everybody had opened to Matthew chapter 24, verse 1, I said, "Let's open our Bibles to Matthew chapter 26, verse 1." Everybody kind of looked at me and here is what I said, "The church is not ready for what Brother Ricky believes about this passage and Brother Ricky is not sure he has it all figured out yet so I'm not going to teach Matthew 24 and 25." Now, let me tell you what was going on with me. I was raised at Ledbetter Baptist Church. Praise God for my upbringing. Any time I had heard anything about the second coming of Jesus Christ it would scare me to death because I was taught that it was

going to be this secret coming of Jesus, all of the believers would be taken off the earth, and all of the unbelievers were going to be left on the planet for seven years and it was going to get really, really bad. There would be times that I would look around, and Mom and Dad weren't there and Gina wasn't there, so I'd call Granny Bogard. Granny Bogard was always home, Granny Bogard always answered the phone, and on this day Granny Bogard wasn't answering the phone and I would have this thought... *Did I miss it?! Did I miss the rapture? Am I really not a believer?*

When I surrendered to preach God's word Ledbetter Baptist Church gave me an ordination Bible. It was a C.I. Scofield Reference Bible. Did any of you have a C.I. Scofield Reference Bible? Did you know that all of Western Kentucky had a C.I. Scofield Reference Bible? Do you know why we all had a C.I. Scofield Reference Bible? It is because in that day if you lived in Western Kentucky then you bought your Bible in Paducah, Kentucky at the Sears and Roebuck store. They sold Bibles and they sold Bibles that had notes in it- C.I. Scofield notes. Now, my Granddaddy Bogard taught me that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and from the first verse in Genesis to the maps, it was all inspired and it was all of God. My granddaddy thought those notes were inspired too. So I was raised in a church that taught dispensational premillennialism and that was all I knew. So when I started pastoring Owens Chapel Baptist Church with my C.I. Scofield Reference Bible, guess what Owens Chapel wanted me to do on Sunday night? They wanted me to preach the book of Revelation. I was only 21 years of age and they wanted me to preach the book of Revelation. I'm bivocational. I'm preaching on Sunday morning, going to preach on Revelation on Sunday night, and I'm teaching on Wednesday night. Now, we had twice as many people coming on Sunday nights than we had on Sunday mornings because this little guy was preaching the book of Revelation and they were coming from other churches to hear me teach. So I had a book called, "The Late Great Planet Earth" by Hal Lindsey. Now you have to remember it's Sunday afternoon and I have to get a sermon so I would read Hal Lindsey's chapter then I would read my Bible and everything that Hal Lindsey said I saw in the Bible. So I want to be clear, when I preached the book of Revelation I preached Hal Lindsey. I didn't

read Hal Lindsey in light of the Word of God. I read the Word of God in light of Hal Lindsey. Does that make sense?

Then I came to Hardin, but when I was at Owens Chapel, I enrolled in Mid-Continent Bible College through the urging of an older pastor. At Mid-Continent, I learned how to study Scripture from the Greek text, the Hebrew text, and I learned to study verse by verse. So when I started through the gospel of Matthew I had no idea that when I came to chapter 24 and I started teaching this that for the first time I wasn't going to teach this from the perspective of a dispensational premillennialist. I don't know exactly what I am, but I know I'm not one of those anymore.

Now, if you're not sure what a dispensational premillennialist is then here is the view—there is going to be a secret coming of Jesus that no one knows about and He's going to rapture all of the Christians, He's going to leave all of the unbelievers on the earth, there is going to be seven years of tribulation, it's going to get really, really bad, and then at the end of that seven years of tribulation Jesus is going to come back. And when He comes back, there is going to be a millennial reign of Christ for the nation of Israel and us Gentiles will get to participate in that as well. Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth later on. So there is a second coming of Jesus but it has different phases.

I knew I didn't believe that anymore, but I didn't know if Hardin could handle it and I didn't know what I really believed yet, but I knew in Western Kentucky that I'd be labelled a heretic so I just skipped it. When I skipped it I had two men come to me, Ron Thompson and Stephen Hutchens, and they said, "Brother Ricky, what is it in this passage that you disagree with?" I got to disciple them and then people began to talk to me individually and I got to share with them my view. Then the next time, I started teaching exactly what I believe. So I want you to know that I'm now comfortable sharing with you fully what I wasn't comfortable with 39 years ago. I'm not going to preach this in light of anybody else; I'm going to teach what I believe to be the Word of God.

Peter is comparing the return of Christ to a thief because Jesus compared His return to a thief. Now, let's go to verse 3 of Matthew chapter 24. Jesus has left the temple. He's going away and one of the disciples turned to Him and said...*Hey, Lord, look at this building. Isn't it awesome?* He was talking about the temple. Instead of Jesus admiring the building, do you know what He said? Look at verse 2. There isn't going to be one stone left upon another stone. This temple has stones that weigh 70 tons a piece, and Jesus says it's going to be torn apart stone by stone. That shook them because this was the house of God.

So now, they go up on the Mount of Olives, they're looking down, and they could see the temple mount. It was one of Celisa and I's favorite views when we were in Israel. We got to go up to the Mount of Olives and look down at the temple mount. So they're looking down at the mount, they come to Jesus, and they have three questions. When is this going to happen? (When is what going to happen? When is the temple going to be destroyed?) Then they ask what will be the sign of your arrival? (Some translations say coming.) And what will be the sign of the end of the age? So they are asking those three questions, but I want you to remember this, when you read Matthew 24 and Matthew 25 Jesus is answering these three questions. I wish he would have said Ok, this is answer one; this is answer two; this is answer three, but He doesn't do that. So you and I have to kind of pick and choose when He stops answering one, when He starts answering two, and when He starts answering three. Does that make sense? So, let's be patient with each other. Let's not this be a test of fellowship, but I ask to be able to share with you what I believe.

The first thing Jesus does is He gives signs of the destruction of Jerusalem and they are clear. He says there is going to be wars, pestilence, famine, rumors of war, nations will rise against nation, and when you hear about this just know it's getting close, but what you're waiting and watching for is the abomination of desolation to take place fulfilling what the prophet Daniel talked about. What He's saying is when you see the armies of Rome start marching on Jerusalem get out of the city! You better wish that you're not pregnant and you better pray it's not the Sabbath because it's going to

be bad. They're going to surround the city, destroy the temple, and destroy the city. So when you see the armies coming get out.

By the way, those who believe Jesus' word—when the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem in AD 67 and sieged it for three years—they lived; those who stayed in died. When Titus, the Roman general, rode his horse into the city of Jerusalem, the hooves of his horse never touched the ground according to Josephus, the Jewish historian, because there were so many dead Jews laying on the ground. Josephus tells that once the siege started the Jews tried to flee the city. Rome had set up crosses all around the city of Jerusalem, and when they would catch a Jew fleeing the city, they would crucify them upside down. Then they would cut their belly to extract the gold that they had swallowed when they left the city. It was horrible and Jesus clearly gave signs. Then He switches to start talking about the sign of His arrival.

Now, I want you to watch this. I struggle with believing they were asking when He was coming back when they didn't even think He was going away the first time. How many times did He tell them he was going way? How many times did He tell them He was going to die? And they didn't believe Him! They didn't even believe the women when they said He was alive. They had to check it out for themselves. Thomas said he wasn't going to believe unless he saw! So, understand they were not asking when He was coming back; they were asking Him if the temple is going to be destroyed and you're the Messiah, how are you going to reign over Jerusalem with a city that is destroyed? You're supposed to sit on the throne of David! Does that make sense? So they are struggling, but you know that His kingdom isn't a kingdom like they're thinking so He tells them about the sign of His arrival. He said there is just one sign, it is in the heavens, and it is ME. He said here is how you'll know—you will look up into the heavens and you're going to see me. I'm going to send out all of my angels, I will gather the elect from the four corners of the earth, and it's going to be immediately after the tribulation of those days—not before tribulation but after tribulation, not a secret coming but a visible coming. Then He says, 'But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of

heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." Whoa! Only God the Father knows when the Son is coming back. When the Son was on the earth in a human body just like us, fully man relying totally on His humanity, HE did not know when He was coming back. None of the angels who minister in the presence of God know, God has never told them! So no one knows! And the only sign is in heaven. It is when Jesus appears. Wow! That is what Scripture says! It says in Matthew, "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark." So Jesus is drawing from the Old Testament.

Now remember in Peter when the false teachers said since creation everything has been the same, Peter said no something big happened...there was a flood. God got so upset with the sinfulness of humanity that He destroyed the world with a flood. Then he says there is another judgement coming, a day of judgement when the ungodly will be destroyed, and they will be destroyed with fire! But Peter was remembering Jesus' words. And if we go to Jesus, Jesus compared His return to the day of Noah. Do you remember Noah? Did anybody believe him? Did anybody think a flood was coming? No. So what did they do? They kept eating, they kept drinking, they kept marrying, and they kept giving their kids away to marriage, and just lived life as they knew how to live life. They were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away. Only eight people were ready. Only eight people got in the ark. The rest of humanity was judged by God and they were destroyed. It swept them all away! "So will be the coming of the Son of Man." Now, let's keep this in context. What is Jesus saying? He is saying when he comes that most people are going to be unaware. And what is going to happen? They will all get swept away. They will all be judged. That is the context. So the idea here is judgement.

Now, watch this. Verse 40 says, "Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left." Then, not to leave you ladies out, verse 41 says, "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left."

I remember the sermon where I was warned that if my mom and my dad were believers and I wasn't, and my dad was driving the car when Jesus came, they would be taken and disappear and I would be left. So if I was in the backseat, the car wouldn't have a driver and there would be crashes. That's not what this teaches. Who was taken in judgement in the day of Noah? The unbelievers. Who was left on the earth in the ark? The believers—Noah and his family. When Jesus Christ comes, according to Jesus as a thief in the night, who is going to be taken in judgement? Unbelievers. Who is going to be left? Believers. When is this day going to be? When He appears in heaven in glory with His angels. We don't know. In His humanity, He doesn't know.

Look what Jesus says next starting in verse 42, "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." This is not teaching in the context that Jesus is coming stealthily or secretively and nobody sees Him. That's not the context! The context is this—you don't know when He's coming, but He's coming, and He compares it to a thief. If you would have known when the thief was coming then you would've been ready, but if you're not ready, the thief will come and he will take everything he wants because you're not ready.

A long time ago when the Swains first started coming to Hardin, they invited us over to their house. We went to their house for supper, had a great time, left, and came home. When we came home, we had been robbed. We were visiting a prospective church member and somebody broke into our house and stole from us! Now, if I had known that was going to happen, I wouldn't have gone to the Swains. I would have been home and I would have been awake and ready with a 270 double barrel shotgun. This is Western Kentucky, amen? But I didn't expect it, I wasn't ready, and they stole from me. I was in Brazil once and somebody broke into our house. Now, I wouldn't have stayed home from Brazil but my

brother-in-law would have had the gun. You get the point! Jesus says you don't know when I'm coming. Be ready!

Why does He want us to be ready? He's going to compare people; He's going to say when the master comes home and the servant has done what he's asked him to do, then he rewards him, but when he comes home and finds out he didn't do right then he punishes him. Now, don't make this Christian/non-Christian but make this mankind. Those who are doing what Jesus says will be rewarded, but those who do not do what Jesus says will be punished. Then he goes on to warn us. He says there were five people who were wise and there were five people who were foolish. The five people who were foolish wasted their oil and weren't ready when the bridegroom came, but the ones who were ready enjoyed the wedding. He said it is going to be like the master who went away and gave gifts to his servants. When he came back he rewarded the ones who were faithful, but the ones who weren't he judged.

Then look at Matthew 25, verse 31, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory..." Guys, remember he's already talked about His glory in Matthew chapter 24. This is not two second comings; it is one second coming. There is not two phases of it. There is only one second coming in glory. Picking back up in verse 31, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Jump over the verse 41. It says this, ""Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" When Christ comes, you're either a sheep or a goat. There is no time after the return of Christ for you to get saved! When He comes, if you're not ready, you'll be swept away in judgement. When you do stand before Him on the great white throne of judgement, He will cast you into an eternity that was prepared for the devil and his angels. This breaks my

heart! It's why Peter is writing that God is patient, He is long-suffering, He doesn't want any to perish, He wants all to come to repentance. That is the reason we're still here. Can you imagine being God when God sends Jesus and He knows the eternal fate of everyone is decided? If you are here this morning when He comes, you won't get to come back next week and get another chance. It's over! You may get 70 more years. You may get 50, or 30, or 10. We may not even get to eat lunch today. We don't know when He's coming, but we know He is coming like a thief so He wants us to be prepared.

Paul also, when talking about the return of Christ, compared it to a thief in the night. Paul wasn't with Jesus, but in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 13 through 18, (now, he's mentioned the second coming or the coming of the Lord in the first chapters) he says, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers..." Now, I like what the King James says. The King James says, "But I would not have you to be ignorant." Can I just say, all of you from Dexter, I don't want you to be ignorant. All of you from Hardin, I don't want you to be ignorant. All of you in Benton and Murray, I don't want you to be ignorant. And yet so many people are ignorant of this, about those who are asleep. Sleep here isn't referring to people who are resting at night. This is referring to people who are dead and are believers and their bodies are in the ground. He says he doesn't want you to grieve as others do who have no hope. See, if your loved one dies and they're not a believer there is no hope for them. You don't need to wait until your loved one dies to wonder where they're at. You need to be talking to them right now. But believers who die have hope. Verse 14 says this, "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep." So there is a true sense in which the body of a believer is in the ground in a grave, but their spirit/soul is with Jesus in heaven so when Jesus comes back the spirit/soul of those believers will come back with Jesus. Does that make sense?

Now, look what Paul says in verse 15, "For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord..." See, he got this from the Lord. Paul, after coming to know Christ, went out into the Arabian Desert for three years. The Lord

personally taught him, and He taught him about His return. Paul says...*I got this by a word from the Lord, we who are alive who are left until the coming of the Lord (we know He's gone back so we know He's going to come back because He said he would) will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* So get this picture. If Jesus comes back this afternoon, I'm not going to go be with Jesus before my mom and dad and my grandparents' bodies are raised from the ground. The point here is that those of us who have loved ones who have died in Christ, they are not at a disadvantage if Jesus comes back; we don't have an advantage over them if we are alive. Look what it says in verse 16, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words." Now, I want to be serious here. Does this sound like a stealthy or secret coming of Christ that no one knows about? No! What did verse 16 say? "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God." WOW! GLORY, HALLELUJAH! Amen? This is not a...*Shhh, don't tell anybody that I'm coming. I'm going to secretly take those who are mine...* No! A trumpet is going to blow. He's going to shout! He's coming back for His church. He's going to raise those who are physically dead. We're going to receive glorified bodies just like Him and we're going to live with Him forever as we're caught up in the air—those of us who are alive and those of us who died—in glorified bodies. Wow! "Therefore encourage one another with these words."

Now, everybody stops right here because it ends a chapter and nobody reads chapter 5...but remember man added the chapters, not God. Do you know what chapter 5 says? Look with me. "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you." Whoa. Jesus said day and hour, but Paul says times and seasons so I want to expand this. Some of you aren't going to like this, but it's the Word of God. We don't know the hour, we don't know the day, we don't know the

season, and we don't know the time. We don't know! Why? Verse 2 tells us, "For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." The thief doesn't tell you when he's coming and not even Jesus is going to tell us when He's coming. God's not going to tell us when He's coming, and there is only one sign and that is when you look up and see Him. Wow! Verse 3, "While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." It's the idea of judgement. The thief in the night is going to catch those who are ungodly by total surprise. Ladies, do you remember being pregnant? When that labor pain hit you couldn't stop it, could you? The destruction that is on its way? Can't stop it. False teachers say it isn't going to happen; it's going to happen and the world is going to be totally surprised.

Verse 4 says, "But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him."

I want you to get this picture. At the second coming of Jesus, according to Jesus in Matthew, angels are going to gather all of the elect. Now, Jesus is teaching that we are all going to be gathered up off the earth. You say, "Hold up, Brother Ricky, I thought you said believers were going to be left on the earth?" I did, but watch this. Look at the end of verse 10 in 2 Peter chapter 3. It says, "...and then." And then seven years of tribulation? No. And then millennial reign of Christ? No. What? The heavens dissolve. Heavenly bodies melt from fervent heat and everything that is on the earth gets exposed.

Now, if you've read the book of Revelation lately (By the way, I went back to Owens Chapel and apologized for the harm I did in teaching that book wrong to them) then you know there are five pictures of the return of Christ. The picture in chapter 6 is when Christ comes all of the stars are going to fall to the earth, men are going to try to hide from God, and they will ask, "Who can hide? Who can stand on this day of wrath?" The answer is you can't if you're an unbeliever, but if you're a believer you're either on the earth or you're in heaven, and you can stand. That is what Revelation chapter 7 teaches. Those of us who are on the earth when Jesus comes back are the 144,000. Those of us that have died, we are that great multitude in heaven. Then the next picture is when Christ comes in Revelation chapter 11, the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of Christ. When does that happen? The second return of Christ. Then what happens? Unbelievers get judged and we get rewarded.

Then in chapter 14, we have the picture of the harvest of the earth. In chapter 16, there is a parenthesis where Jesus steps in and says, "Behold, I am coming like a thief!" ...*Stay awake! Have your clothes on! Don't let me find you naked when I come and be exposed.* Then in Revelation 19, He is coming on a horse. The first time He came, He came on a donkey. He came into Jerusalem to bring peace. But when He steps out of heaven again, He is coming on a horse and He is going to put down all of His enemies. Those of us who know Him will be in the marriage supper of the Lamb, but those who don't know Him will be devoured by the birds of the air.

Then in Revelation 20, we see all of humanity (as in Matthew 25) standing before God on the great white throne and there is judgement. Then after that judgment, which is what Peter is talking about here, the day of judgement, what does John see? A new heaven and a new earth. Kory is going to talk about it the next couple of weeks, but we're looking for a new heaven and a new earth. We're not looking for a millennial reign of Christ. We aren't looking for the rapture of the church. We're looking for the second coming of Jesus so that He can bring us a new heaven and a new earth.

So get this picture. We are on the earth, He comes back, and we're going to see the greatest fireworks show the world has ever seen. All of the universe is going to dissolve by fire and the earth is going to be burned up with fire. And guess where you and I will be? We are going to be lifted up off of it because you don't want to be like Michael and those guys in the midst of the fireworks when God is judging the earth. You don't want to be here; you want to be with Jesus. He's going to lift us up off the earth and all around us everything is going to be dissolved. Those of us who didn't get to see the original creation will get to see Him create a new heaven and a new earth. He is going to set us back down on it and we are going to live with Him forever and ever if you're awake when He comes! But if you're not awake, if you let this world entice you, you go for this world, and you're asleep when He comes you'll spend eternity in a lake of fire with no chance ever to repent. The very reason Jesus has not come back yet may be because of you who are sitting here right now.

Do you know Jesus? Is your faith in Him? Does your life reveal that?

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