

Imagine what it would be like when Jesus suddenly comes again. What if it was at a wedding? One moment, you are sipping champagne on the manicured lawns, and the next, you hear a loud blaring trumpet. It thunders across the heavenly horizon. Before your very eyes, the skies roll up like a scroll. Fire consumes your surrounding landscape. Your shoes, the trees, the buildings are engulfed in this fire. The very elements of this earth and heavens are melted away. You see the Son of God coming in the clouds and you rise up to meet him. Many people on earth are cowed in terror as they realize they have been caught out unprepared! Are you ready?

Some people as we see in 2nd peter scoff at the idea of the 2nd coming. Jesus said he was supposed to be coming. Where is he? He hasn't come. The mockers might say, "it was just a big fat lie. Everything goes on and on as it always did. Where is this "return" that Jesus promised?"

Today, some people, even Christians don't really believe in the 2nd coming. About 1 in 3 people say they have no religion. About 48000 people put their as Jedi in 2016. And the number of people with no religion is accelerating. So how should we respond today to the question of the 2nd coming of Jesus and his judgment? From 2nd peter, we can find 3 responses to help us.

The first is, to trust the authority of God's word. God's Word is all powerful. God speaks and the heavens were created. The earth was separated from the waters.

By God's word, he proclaimed judgment on the people during Noah's time. And the waters flooded the world at that time, destroying it.

The word of God that spoke the universe into creation, the word that flooded Noah's world is the very same word that is held in reserve for the day of judgment. The heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire. Jesus will surely come to judge the world.

Now, when you are sick, who do you trust? Do you trust Dr. Google? Imagine you suddenly got an itchy rash on your body. It's getting annoying and you need some advice. STAT!

I'm gonna give you 2 choices. Put up your hand if you think that authority that I call out is the higher one. Ok? Lets play a little game.

Now you got an itchy rash. Who do you trust?

1) New Idea magazine or your GP.

Ok good. Now be honest now.

2) Google search or your mother-in law.

Ok now we got the penultimate round. Now I want absolute honesty here. Come on guys. You can do it.

3) Your GP or Google search?

Well, perhaps it doesn't matter so much when it's a small thing. But what if it's a big problem? Like there is a lump in your side. Perhaps your answer would be very different because the stakes are lot higher now. Would you trust a google article like "Apple cider vinegar as natural remedy for tumors." No you won't, would you? You would go to the highest authority. Even a GP's opinion may not be adequate. You want to see the specialist!

That's how we should treat God's word. Trust it as the final authority. Some people take parts of the bible as fictional. Some doubt if Jesus rose from the dead or will come again. I realize some well-meaning Christians take bible stories as fictional stories to teach moral lessons about God. But look at what 2nd peter said about the flood. Did you notice that 2nd Peter uses the flooding of Noah's word as a real event, counting it as a fact next to God creating the heavens and the earth? Therefore, if you reckon the flood story as mythical, do you also take the creation of heavens and earth by God's word as mythical too? Consider that for moment. I encourage you to read the whole word of God as real by faith. Jesus is coming again. We need to trust the authority of God's word.

The second response from 2 peter 3 is making the most out of God's patience. There seems to be a "delay" in the 2nd coming of Jesus. This delay is God's will as he is patient with us. Peter also makes it clear the Lord wants Christians to repent and also anyone including unbelievers to turn from their sin.

Peter warns in 2 Peter 2:20, that Christian who have escaped the pollution of this world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ must not get entangled again and fall back in to their old ways. V 21 says, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them."

Peter is warning us of backsliding into our old sinful ways again. This is about purposely forgetting the teachings of Christ and the apostles and going back to your old evil ways and habitually continuing in it. You see just like in Peters day, the way of the world or scoffers had infiltrated the church. Today, we have all manner of strange teachings in church that can cause us to forget the gospel and fall back to our old ways. I will give you a few examples.

The first is that all things are natural.. It's all about natural science and what you can see, feel and observe. Anything that has got to do with God is considered supernatural. All that stuff is just cultural religious stuff that has nothing to do with true reality. Forget about God creating the universe. Forget about this fanciful 2nd coming of Christ.

Another big problem today is that being a Christian is your door to wealth. Health and wealth is a sign that you are blessed.. It's the prosperity gospel. If you walk with God, you will be blessed. Wealth and health is yours. All you need is faith. In fact, if you give more to the church, you are showing your faith and will even more likely to be blessed. This teaching can be very tempting to the vulnerable who want a quick fix. Gain has nothing to do with the gospel of Jesus.

But God is patient with us. He gives time for Christians to turn back to him. He gives time for unbelievers to see the error of their ways. His patience is not a sign of weakness. It is not like God got his timing wrong. God is in control and he is staying his hand. Judgment is at hand but it is in God's timing. It is not infinitely delayed but it will come. A thousand years after all is like a day to the lord.

Do you like a cheap airline ticket? I love to fly cheap. But I dislike long plane delays and hate cancellations. Some years ago, my family had booked flight down to Melbourne to visit my family during the Easter holidays. So we got to the airport for a night flight, checked in our stuff and was waiting to board the plane. Then peculiarly, our entire group who were waiting at a particular gate were told to go to another part of the airport. Perhaps to a quieter spot. Then we saw police gathering there too. Then we got the announcement. The plane flight was cancelled! We had to come back the next day for our flight. The next day! We came all the way to the airport. Kids been waiting. We been waiting! No wonder the police were there. Could you imagine Tamara, I and the kids rioting!!!

But what if there was a mechanical fault with the plane? What if we flew and risked a plane crash? Surely it's better to be late than never. If there was a fault in the engine and needed fixing, I would welcome any delay. God is not late. And his delay is for good reason. God is merciful, not wanting any to perish. He is waiting for us to repent.

So what does God want? He is longsuffering with us for a reason. He wants none to go to hell. He wants people to come to him. Who has God commissioned to this job? You are.. Ordinary people like you and I are it. The lives of many in Waitara depends on Christians like you and I. The Holy Spirit uses us to turn people from their sin unto God through the sharing of God's word.

Ezek 3:17-18 Amplified bible "Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You will certainly die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to tell him to turn from his wicked way to save his life, that same evil man will die in his sin, but you will be responsible for his blood."

Moreover in 2nd peter 3:10, Peter tells us that on the day of Lord, the elements shall melt with great heat. The earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Whatever work we have done will be laid bare. It will pass through the fire and all the meaningless things will be burned up. All our prized possessions, our wonderful iPhones, our money will be judged as nothing.

But what remains are the works that last into eternity. Works that pass through God's fire of judgment. That time spent setting up the coffee and tables for ESL class. The time you took to pray with people who are sick and lonely.

Those times you took preparing morning tea for HAWK and for the church on Sundays. Hardly anyone saw you do it. But they are works that count. As they contribute to people coming and listening to the gospel. I believe your work will not go unnoticed.

The times you invited others to church even when you felt a little awkward. Effort is needed to call or follow up or to teach the gospel. That work will not be burned up as nothing.

All this work is crucial even as the Lord tarries. It is not that he is slack nor too busy to return, but he is merciful waiting for the many to come back to him. When he is ready, he will come again.

The third response we can learn from 2nd peter is to live today with the end in mind.

We are to prepare to live in heaven where God is. People generally like idea of heaven. You get to live forever. It's not a very hot place like somewhere else. But people baulk at living under the holy glare and light of God? If your heart is set on evil, you cannot stand the light. It is too much for them to bear. 2nd peter exhorts us to be godly and holy people. To be people who are looking at living in a place where righteousness is.

You might ask... what is the purpose of a holy and godly live? Simply that it keeps us in a right relationship with God, fully prepared for the master when he returns. Now let's be clear. We are saved by grace through faith. When you accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, you choose the narrow road that leads to heaven. But because of the weakness of our flesh

and temptations of this world, it is possible for us to be led astray. God's grace and power keeps us safe. But we are to make every effort to partner with God to walk in the path that he mapped for us. Effort is required. Don't be fooled and think that because salvation is by grace, that there is no effort in Christianity.

2nd Peter 3 NIV teaches us "to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." What does make every effort mean? It means we got to make the effort. There's just no short cut to godliness.

2nd peter teaches us to take action. Put in the hard yards to stay safe. Staying on course in your Christian walk takes time, takes dedication, takes sacrifice. I am not talking about salvation here. Salvation is purely by grace and in fact even after you are saved, God continues to pour out his grace and power through his Holy Spirit in you to keep you safe and sounds. But within us there still lies a constant struggle in us. Even though we have died to ourselves and made alive in Jesus Christ. Our flesh is still ever present. It's like that Terminator scene where, cyborg has already been crushed by that pounding machine. But just when you think it's all over. The Terminator's cyborg arm comes alive again and tries to seize you and get you. Its kinda a little like that in our Christian walk. Jesus has already saved us, set us free. But our flesh still tries to seize us and pull us back. We need to continue to partner with Jesus, with his holy spirit to daily put to death the things of the flesh and sin. It is not easy but God is merciful giving us his grace, his power to stay the course. Innocuous things like turning up to bible study when you feel you had a tough week and should just go home and watch TV, or choosing to listen to the bible or read few chapters of the bible or just going for a walk to spend some time with God are God's disciplines of grace that help us stay on the straight and narrow. Other important spiritual disciples are Christian service ... like helping to set up morning tea, teaching ESL, helping those in need. Such things can be a pain ... laborious even. It seems to take our every effort to do it. But always remember God's Spirit nudges us to go in that direction. And we always can look to him to supply us that grace and power to do this things. We need to rely on him to make every effort to be holy and be at peace with him. Don't make the mistake of doing it in your own strength. Rather, admit you weakness and sinfulness before God, and come to him, humbly asking for grace to do his will and to stay the course that he has chosen for us.

Living the present with heaven in mind is not about the spectacular. Don't be misled by false teachers who promise all kinds of strange and wonderful things. But instead we need to make every effort to stay the course with the 2nd coming in full view. Pray, read your bible, be a godly disciple and disciple others. If we do this, we will be ready to meet our master and hear his words "well done good and faithful servant." Amen.