

I've given today's message the title "New Kingdom Living".

Last week, we were talking about the 2nd coming of Jesus. And the 2nd coming of Jesus and the Day of Judgment accompany one another – we cannot have one without the other.

But the thing is, "Are we "Disciples of Jesus" because we're afraid of Judgment, Hell, fire and brimstone???" Or are we Disciples of Jesus because we love Jesus, and He's called us to follow Him???

One method of evangelism, is to preach the message "Turn or Burn"... But for Disciples of Jesus, that's not our concern... Yes, the heavens and the Earth will be dissolved. The whole cosmos will be vapourised. But we're not afraid of this, because: ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

*In the main street at the moment, they've just demolished the old library & other bits and pieces – they've come to an end... But I don't think anybody's really too cut-up about it because there's going to be a **new** library and the trendy word at the moment "precinct"... The new Library and Community Centre precinct. And I'm pretty sure it'll be all very flash.*

But much, much more exciting than this, is God's promise, that there's going to be a **new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells**, ... That's His promise, and that's what we're waiting for...

Now, if that's what we are waiting for – if that's what the beloved are waiting for, and we are “the beloved”, Peter says, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

You may not have noticed this, I don't get dressed up very often. I hate it... Particularly if I have to wear a coat and tie. It feels so wrong. I get so uncomfortable...

But I think the worst part is I've gotta be really careful. I've got a really nice shirt or a coat on, and so I've gotta be careful that I don't get any grease on it, or whatever... And quite often, I'll have a nice shirt in the cupboard that I've only worn once, and Robyn will announce that it's condemned because it's got a grease stain on it...

Some people don't seem to find it too much trouble, but I seem to find it really hard work to keep my clothes clean. If I'm going to a wedding or a funeral, I leave it until the very last minute until I put on my 'glad rags' ...

But if I'm dressed for a wedding, it's really important (at least to Robyn it seems important), that when I get there, I'm suitably attired and not a grub.

And that's what Peter's getting at here. We're destined for a new heavens and a new earth – a place of righteousness. In fact, on this Earth, “righteousness” is the only thing that's going to survive... Every physical thing, and everything that's evil – everything that's fleshly, will be judged and

burned... And so, if we're destined for righteousness, this is how we should live (now).

New Kingdom living – Keeping faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; righteousness in conduct...

Now, living righteously – living a Godly life – how we feel about that, is a pretty fair indicator of how our walk with God is going... You see, if the Holy Spirit is within me, the prospect of living a Godly life, is an exciting thing... To be free of:

- bitterness;
- lust;
- selfishness;
- greed

and to be filled with:

- truth;
- love;
- joy;
- peace...

I can't think of anything better. To have an innate honesty and goodness... Yeah!!!

To the Spiritual man, that sounds really good. But if I'm feeling "Oh man, do I have to be good all the time???" That's a pretty good indicator that, maybe my walk with God isn't in a very good place at the moment.

And some people might be like, "Yeah, I can be well behaved (without spot or blemish) if you like, but how long has it gotta be???"

V¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation

The reason Jesus has been a long time coming (We talked about this last week), is because He wants more people to have the opportunity to repent. It's because God loves people so much, He wants us to repent of our sins, and He's been patiently waiting..... ...

But I think it's more than this... The longer I live as a Christian, the more I have been experiencing the salvation of our Lord...

- sadly, I still sin;
- thankfully, when I repent, He forgives me of that sin;
- but, by His Holy Spirit, He is also changing me. (sanctification).
- the Fruit of the Spirit, growing in our lives. God is making us more Godly, and this is part of the salvation of our Lord.
- And yet, the further I come, the more I realise "I'm still not perfected"; and so
- the more I look forward to His glorious coming, where the fleshly nature will be gone forever..

And so, we look forward to His coming, wishing He were here now. But even now, we're at peace, because we know that He **is** coming...

When the world seems to be turning up-side-down, and people of the world start to panic, Disciples of Jesus won't panic. We won't worry like the people of the world worry, because our

heart isn't set on this world, and we know our Lord is returning...

Righto. Now, a quick reminder, "In all of what we've just talked about, Peter's actually in a section where he's warning us about false teachers." If we follow down a path, led by false teachers, we're probably not going to be ready for Jesus (spots and blemishes).

Sometimes when false teachings become so popular/accepted/widespread within the Christian culture, it can **seem** like "This teaching's 'the norm'"...

And in times like these, when a Bible teacher is saying "No, that's **not** right. **This** is what's true. And what you believe/doing is very destructive..."... Sometimes, a preacher can stand, declaring the truth, and **feel** that they're all alone. And the people they love and are trying to correct, might think, "Oh, he's got a bee-in-his-bonnet again, and he's harping on about that again – **he's** the one with the problem – **he's** the only one that thinks this."...

Not so. He's not the only one. And in times like these, a preacher needs to say, "It's not only me". Here's this other highly respected man of God. Do you trust him? He's saying the same thing.

And that's what Peter does here. At times, Peter and Paul (these 2 great Apostles) had a few disagreements. And we

saw that in our last series as we studied Galatians... But on **this** matter, they're of one mind.

Peter says:

just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.

And he's absolutely right. Peter and Paul are of one mind on this:

- We **are** eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus;
- we are at peace about it; and
- we are to be ready;
- we are to be without spot or blemish when He comes;

- Basically, "being ready" means Disciples of Jesus should be striving – making every effort to walk in the Spirit.

Now, there's nothing super-spiritual about that. To keep in step with the Spirit simply means to live in the righteousness that God has saved us to. And it's not a difficult thing, because Holy Spirit is living in our Hearts...

Now, that's all pretty simple isn't it...

But Peter reckons Paul's letters aren't always that simple. And they're not. Paul addresses some really 'fine-line' issues... , where the truth is a 'fine-line' – if we go one side or the other, we could fall into terrible error... And a fair bit of

the division within the church (why are there so many denominations), is because we step off the fine line (one side or the other), and make it an issue of faith...

- We're saved by grace (not by being sinless), but once we are saved, we're called to live righteously;
- But even in living righteously, the Holy Spirit within us helps us to do this, and yet we are commanded to make every effort ourselves (to live righteously);
- Think about pre-destination
God pre-destines us – God has chosen us to be saved, and by His Holy Spirit, He helps us to believe. And yet **we** repent, and **we** believe. Is it God who does this, or do we do this? Well, it's both.
- With our salvation, we have the assurance, that nobody can take us away from God. And yet we are reminded over and over again, to hold fast to Jesus/Gospel, or we will have run in vain... Because the only one who **can** take me away from Jesus, is me...

There's a fine line.

But worse than 'misjudging' a fine-line, is when those who Peter calls **the ignorant and unstable**, **twist** the scriptures – they **twist** what the Apostles have said, to make up their own teachings. BTW, to the early church, The Scriptures were the Old Testament. But here (you can correct me if I'm

wrong), but here, I think this is probably the first time the writings of the Apostles were referred to as “Scripture”...

Back in 2:3, Peter used the word πλαστοῖς (plastois) from which we get our word “plastic” or “plasticine” – it can be formed and shaped. And that’s pretty-much what plastois means – they shape words – they construct words and teachings into something new.

But now it gets even more blatant... στρεβλοῦσιν (streblousin) – distort; twist; to torture (put to the rack). And I think that’s probably the best way to understand it – they distort/twist/torture the Scriptures, to try and show that they mean something that they don’t say...

Who does this? **the ignorant and unstable**. Sometimes those who are trying to come across as being more spiritual and knowledgeable, are ignorant. And we talked before about who the unstable are. The unstable are like the foolish man who built his house on the sand.

It’s those who don’t follow the Word of God (without twisting it), and don’t follow the commandments of God...

Now, here comes the crux. He’s been warning us about “they” – the false teachers, and how to recognise them, and why they are so destructive... But he refers to us as “the beloved”. What are the beloved to do???

And some of you may be wondering about this – Why have we bothered to study this 2nd letter of Peter??? Why have we had to listen to Michael rabbit on about false teachers and yada;yada;yada...

V¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

It's important that we hear this and learn this, **before** we get carried away by false teachings.

False teachers used to be able to visit one church at a time, and make an appearance in a church, and a whole church together, and there'd be opportunity for others to say, "Hang on, that ain't right"... And they wouldn't get a look in...

But now, through the internet; television; social media; books, ,,,, our personal access to all sorts of teaching (both good and bad) is virtually unlimited...

And I urge you, to **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability**

Actually, **I** don't urge you. **Peter** does. He urges you and I, to watch out for false teachers, and don't be carried away.

But instead, simply: **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**

That's much better, isn't it... This is our calling... Our calling isn't to have some secret knowledge that nobody else knows... Our calling isn't to go down some different path to what the Christian church have always believed. Our calling, is to:

¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.