

# Bristol Conference 1964 (Apostasy) - Part 7

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living in holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, and understanding the reasons for God's delay.*

**Duration:** 57:22

**Topics:** "Apostasy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses a vivid analogy of a skydiver to illustrate the urgency and importance of accepting Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the need to make a decision before it's too late, comparing the green light for the skydiver to the opportunity for salvation. The preacher also highlights the biblical concept of the destruction of the world and the solemnity of standing before God. He urges the audience to consider the temporary nature of worldly pursuits and the inevitability of bowing before Jesus Christ in the end.

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## Transcript

■Hallelujah Choir■ ■In perfect harmony, oh■ Return to 2 Peter chapter 3 for our last study in this epistle. 2 Peter chapter 3. I think we'll begin with verse 3 tonight. 2 Peter 3, verse 3, Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us. We are not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and

hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we according to his promise look for new heavens, and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Therefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wretch, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever.

Amen. As we've noticed in our outline, this epistle has to do with false teachers, and in the third chapter we find this special aspect of these false teachers, that they're scoffers. They're scoffers.

They arise in the last day, and they scoff at the whole idea of the coming of the Lord. They say, we can live it fast and loose, we can play both ends against the middle, there's nothing to worry about. And they base their loose living and their scoffing on what we called last night the doctrine of uniformitarianism.

That is the same. There have been no changes, everything works according to natural law, and the world is just going to go on at that whole idea. And we noticed last night that this doctrine, this basic doctrine of his faith, works this way, and there have not been any great catastrophes or cataclysms in the history of the world.

And that brings us to verse 5. Verse 5 says, For this they willingly are ignorant of, willingly are ignorant of, but that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, were by the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. Peter refutes their doctrine by saying, look here, God did intervene, there was a great cataclysm that took place, and that destroyed the theory of evolution. Now notice what it says.

It says that the world was stored with the seeds of its own destruction. There was water above, you know, the clouds in a sense, or some other power, we literally would, springs with water. And this tremendous flood took place, and was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, cataclysms that the world has ever known.

Now it's an interesting thing to me that in our day, and in evangelical circles, a new theory has been propounded, and that was that it was just a local flood. And it's interesting how all of the things we've been studying in 2 Peter are the very things that are being brought in. And so you're really not in the theological swift.

But I want to tell you, if that flood was local, you'd have to picture a gigantic flood in a little place. And yet this is what men are saying today. They have to attack the universality of the flood in order to get on with their man-made theory.

Now what Peter is arguing is this. You say all things continue the same since the Father slept, but now he said God is going to do it again. He did it once, he can do it again.

And he's going to do it again, only this time. And so he says in verse 7, but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Now he said in the verses above that in the days before the flood, this was filled with the seeds of its own destruction, the water.

Well now it's an interesting thing that in this atomic age, man has come to realize that the world is also filled with the seeds of its own destruction, namely atomic energy. And they've been able to take and split the atom. And man has been able to take and cause explosions.

And man is invading this whole area of matter. And well, it's kind of amazing. They know that when they can break that, there's a tremendous explosion.

And for the want of a better name, they say that matter is held together by cosmic glue. Well, that's one word for it. Another word for it is, and what this passage of scripture is saying is that someday God is going to release the restraint that's holding things together.

It'll make an atomic explosion. And that's exactly what it's, by the same word, have, this is the Isn't that interesting? Stored up for fire. If you told that to an atomic scientist twenty years ago, he might have been, but not today, or at least thirty or forty years ago.

By the same word, are stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. And so Peter teaches us here, I think I explained, all right, then in verses eight and nine, Peter gives the reason for God's delay. Everything's gone along and evolution will continue to take its course.

And so Peter, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Now this is interesting.

Peter tells us in the eighth verse that God doesn't live in a sphere of time. We think in terms of time, four years, year of our Lord, but that's only because we live on this earth. And time is made because of our relationship to the Creator.

It's the relationship of the earth to the sun that makes us think in terms of days and months and years and millennia. But God doesn't live on either the earth or the sun. He's above the reach of all that, and there is no time with God.

And so it says here, a thousand years, beginning of creation, up to the present. A long time, but it's not a long time with God. God can crowd into a day with ordinarily you'd think it would take a thousand years to do, and he can stretch out in a thousand years long-suffering mercy that might last a single day.

Isn't this a wonderful picture of God? God lingering in loving kindness over this earth, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And I can't help wondering as we come to verse nine of this chapter, and God has spared you. God's wrath has been withheld, and time and again he's spoken to you to come to his son's savior.

I wonder what it's going to take. Before your stubborn will will be broken, and you'll bow in confession at the pierced feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a picture of God bending over this scene tonight, souls in the balance, God's mercy and long-suffering being extended so that you might be saved.

It reminds me of the Lord Jesus when he was up there on the top of the Mount of Olives, looking down over the city of Jerusalem and weeping over it. I wonder if he's weeping over some... The poet said he wept alone, and men passed by the men whose sins he bore. They saw the man of sorrows weep, they'd seen him weep before.

They asked not who those tears were for, they asked not whence they flowed. Those tears were for rebellious men, their source. The eye of God is downward bent, still ranging to and fro, where'er in this wide wilderness.

And if the rebel should come, God mourns his death. Deep breathing from the heart of God, but he would not. What a tremendously solemn thing.

What a picture. Long-suffering. He's not slack concerning his promise.

He hasn't forgotten the promise that he's going to step in and bring sin to a climax. He hasn't forgotten that. But in the meantime, he's lingering with long-suffering and love and grace, not willing that any should perish.

Then it says in verse ten, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, the which the heavens shall pass away with a great fire, shall be dissolved with fervent heat. The earth also, with the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Now here we're introduced to an expression, the day of the Lord, and I'd just like to say a word about that tonight.

The day of the Lord is not a single day of twenty-four hours, but the day of the Lord is an expression used in the Bible to speak, to describe any period of time in which God punishes his enemies and marches forth to victory with his people. Let me say that again. The day of the Lord is any period of time in the history of the world in which God punishes his enemies and in victory for his people.

For instance, in the Old Testament, when the armies of Israel would march forth to battle, the people would say, the day of the Lord. In fact, that's what the writer of the hymn, The Battle Hymn of the Republic, had in mind. He is transfixed on the idea of the day of the Lord, the day, any day, any battle when God is enemy.

So in the Old Testament, for instance, in Joel 1.15, and in Ezekiel 13.5, which we're not going to turn to, Joel 1.15, Ezekiel 13.5, the day of the Lord. But this expression, the day of the Lord, will always be used. After the church is taken out of this scene, there will follow a tribulation, and this is the day of the Lord.

First Thessalonians, chapter 5. First Thessalonians, chapter 5, and verse 2. It says, For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. And it goes on to describe this terrible period, when God is going to pour out the day of the Lord. Then thirdly, the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord's victory, the day when he will have been sitting on the throne of David.

That's going to be the day of the Lord. If you'd like to see that, you might turn to Isaiah chapter 11. Isaiah chapter 11, and we'll just read a few verses there to give you the picture.

It's a picture of the millennial reign of Christ, and it uses that expression, the day of the Lord. Isaiah 11, verse 10, first of all, says, And in that day, and if you go back in the chapter, you'll find it's the day of the Lord he's talking about. In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an instant of the people.

To him shall the Gentiles seek, and his resting place shall be glorious. It shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people. This is the regathering of the remnant of Israel, which shall be left from Assyria, and Egypt, and Patras, and Cush, and Elam, and Shinar, and Amath, and from the islands of the sea.

And then verse 16, And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria, like as it was in Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. Now this is a picture of millennial conditions, and God gathers his people from all over the world, the Jewish people, back to the land again. And verse 12 gives you further millennial scenes.

It says, And in that day, and it goes on to describe what it's going to be like in the millennium. And so the day of the Lord is, first of all, in the Old Testament, any time when the armies of Israel went forth to battle, and the Lord defeated his foes, and brought victory to his people, the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord, this is the destruction of the heavens and the earth at the end of Christ's thousand-year reign.

And the idea of a thief in the night, that idea of a thief in the night has two thoughts connected with it. A thief comes to steal, to take, to rob, and a thief comes unexpectedly. If you knew the thief was coming, you wouldn't like the house to be broken into.

And this speaks of the terrible loss that will take place, and the unexpected character of this day of the Lord. Notice what's going to happen. The heavens shall pass away with a tremendous explosion, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat.

Once again, I say, God doesn't have to use atomic energy to do this, but all he has to do is release the restraint that he is now holding. And every great explosion, and with a tremendous burst of energy. Now, notice what Peter, the exhortation he bases as a result of that.

The believer's conduct and attitude in view of the day of the Lord. He says, verse 11, seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? I'd like to just take those words, all these things shall be dissolved. All these things shall be dissolved.

Look about you in the world today. Look at every created thing. Think of this country of ours, of the world of ours, in Chicago.

The man who lives for material things is living for past. Somebody has said, a fool is a man all of whose plans end at the grave. A man who's lived for what he can touch and handle and taste and feel.

The word of God is ever trying to draw us from material things to that which is eternal, to spiritual reality. May the Lord speak to hearts tonight through this verse of scripture. All these things shall be destroyed.

Should speak first of all to those of us who are Christians, that we won't go through life hugging material things, but that we'll go through life with a vision of that which lies beyond. It should speak to those who are making their nest in this world, unsaved people who are making their nest in this world. It's all going to be destroyed.

One day Spurgeon was walking down in a park in London, and he saw a bird building, and the axmen, people who are living for this world, who don't trust Christ, who don't live for eternity, that soon pass away. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conduct? Just think of it. Just think of it.

Every person in the room tonight is going to stand before God. It makes some of the things we're living for today look pretty sick, doesn't it? Pretty worthless. Every one of us is going to stand before God.

Reach down and feel your knee. That knee is going to bow to the Lord. Feel your tongue in your mouth.

That mouth of yours, that tongue, the Bible tells us if we don't do it willingly down here, the glory. Then it says in verse 12, looking for eager expectation, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Now you say, why should a believer be looking for and earnestly desiring the day of God? Here's a day when this universe, the way of smoke, and the Bible says we ought to be looking for.

When all the wicked will be destroyed and cast into everlasting perdition, the Bible says we are one. Well, we ought to look at things for a while from God's standpoint. Sin and immorality.

And there's a day coming when God has allowed men to shake their fists, and everyone who, and that sin might be put down once and forever. The coming of the day of God. But you know, that's quite a mistake.

You can't hasten the coming of the day of God. By lives of holiness and by lives of debt, the day of God is fixed in God's eternal purpose. Hasten it, but we should be hastening or earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God.

Now I noticed that three times in this chapter, the Apostle Peter speaks about the heavens and the earth being destroyed by fervent heat. Why three times? Well, a three-fold cord is not easily broken, and the mighty thing be established. And I think the Spirit of God is purposely repeating this over and over again to show the solemnity.

This world is going to be destroyed by fervent heat. The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Dear friends, when that day comes, there'll be only one thing that will really count, and that will be, what have you done with the Christ of God? Nothing else will be of importance in that day.

He says in verse 13, Nevertheless, we according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein the theme where the Lord Jesus Christ will have delivered up the kingdom to God might be all in all. This is the eternal state that Peter is speaking about in verse 13, the eternal state, a new heaven and a new earth. Now a lot of people want to know, well, what's the difference between the new heavens and the new earth, and who will dwell on the new heavens, and who will dwell on the new earth? Well, a lot of Bible teachers suggest that saved Israel will dwell in the new earth for all eternity, and that the church will dwell in the new heaven.

Well, it's an interesting thought. I think it's just enough to have a new earth, and God will be all in all. Well, then in verse 14, we learn that we should have as believers a zeal for peace and spotlessness and blamelessness in his sight.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless. Now, every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and has a positional standing before God where he's without spot and blameless. But this is speaking of the believer's practical condition, and it tells us that we should be looking for the coming in the midst of turmoil and changing circumstances and rising and falling kingdoms.

And it also tells us that practically our lives should be without spot and blameless in his sight, so that when he shall appear, we might have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. It's all too possible for a Christian person to be saved by the peace of God, and yet go home to heaven in a very real sense with stained garments, and with a wasted life as well. Then the apostle Peter tells us also that we should understand the reasons for God's delay.

An account that the long sighted that means that we as believers are just to understand that the reason for God's delay is that we might go out to men and women throughout the world. And that doesn't mean that we should just sit back passively and see it take place, but that the Lord should use us in seeking to win others to himself during this day of God's wonderful patience. Now Peter says that Paul had written to them in a similar vein according to the wisdom given to him, and he had said the same thing.

As in all his epistles, speaking in them of those things in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable rest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own distrust. He says, I'm not the only one that says this of Paul. He says the same thing, and in all the other scriptures they have a united testimony.

And incidentally, it's nice to see that Peter here puts Paul's writings on the scriptures of the Old Testament. He says that the writings of Paul are just as the writings of the Old Testament are. And then in verses 17 and 18, you have closing exhortation and benediction.

First of all, you have the negative. Don't be led astray. He's been speaking about the false teachers that would be abroad in the last days, and he says now, don't be led astray by them.

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. Be on your guard, he says to these Christian believers in the last days. You're going to see your friends drift off into evil doctrines and evil practices.

Be on your guard, see it doesn't happen to you. And then the positive side of it, the growing grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the way he began the epistle, telling us of the knowledge and safeguard of God's people in the day of apostasy and declension.

And then I'm especially pleased with that last part, to him be glory both now and forever. To whom? Well, the preceding words tell you, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He says to him be glory both now and forever.

Now, you know, if the Lord Jesus Christ were not God, it would be blasphemy to say that. Because God has decreed that only God is to be worshipped. Only God is to be revered and homage done unto him.

And here is Peter saying to Jesus Christ, be glory both now and forever. What does it mean? He believed in the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing, an epistle, dealing with false teachings in the last days.

That Peter's closing note should be the deity of Christ. That's the cardinal truth of the Christian faith, and that's the day. Now, in the closing moments, I'd like to speak especially of the Savior.

This is a very solemn chapter of the word of God, and it's to my shame and to the shame of God's people that we can even speak about it without tears in our eyes. But I want to tell you it's a solemn thing to think of living souls, perhaps in our meeting tonight, men and women, born for eternal glory, and yet, by

deliberate choice, refusing the soul, plunging down to eternal fire. And I'd like to tell you, as simply as I know how, what it would mean to you tonight to trust the Son of God and to go out one of those doors as saved as God can make.

We have a young fellow at our school. Some of you know him. His name is Larry Smith, and he was down at Fort Bragg.

He was a paratrooper. And one day he was in my office, and I said to him, tell me about your first parachute jump. He said, I'll do it.

He told me about this plane flying over the countryside in North Carolina, a thousand feet above the ground. Two doors open at the front of it, one on either side. The fellows are sitting there, the command comes for them to stand up, and Larry moves toward the front door.

And there's the plane, and it's way above the North Carolina country. He's got his parachute, his main parachute on the back and his reserve on the front. And he's standing there at the front door of the plane, and the noise is deafening, the noise of the engines and the noise of the wind hissing by the door.

He has to wait for a green light to go on. The green light goes on above him, and he doesn't even see it. But the man behind him sees it, and gives him a slap on the side.

And when he gets that slap, he hunches his head forward, and he jumps out of the plane. And he counts one thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand. He looks up, and there is a great canopy of the parachute billowing out above him.

And within just a few seconds, he sees the ground racing up at him. And he prepares, and when he hits the ground, he does his, what he calls a PLF, his parachute safely in the ground, and then he's on his feet watching his... Do you know what was an act of faith? It was a real act of faith. Do you know that when that young fellow did that, he trusted himself, every bit of him, to a piece of silk? That's what he did.

He said, I believe that that piece of silk will operate, that it'll save me, that it'll bring me down to the ground in security. Listen, there's more to it than that. I don't know how many of you have ever been in the service, and have ever come in contact with parachute riggers, but I've been in contact with them.

We had them at our base in the Navy. I never knew any fellows who drank more heavily. And you know, that day Larry Smith trusted himself to a parachute rigger whom he had never met.

And for all he knew, that fellow was just a drunkard, for all he knew. But never mind, he trusted himself to him, he hunched his head forward, and jumped out of the plane. You know, men say, I wish I could trust the Lord Jesus.

You tell them your testimony of faith in Christ, they say, I wish I could believe like you believe. Listen, that's just the mix. They can trust a piece of silk.

They can trust a parachute rigger whom they've never met, and who for all they know, might be a deep-dyed drunkard. They can trust him. And my dear friends, when you come before the Lord, that you acknowledge the fact that you are a sinner, when you're utterly broken at Calvary, so that you don't have a good word to say in defense of yourself, and you take that step of faith, and say, Lord Jesus, I trust myself to thee, spirit, soul, and body.

The best way I know how, I commit myself to thee, for the saving of my soul. The minute you do that, God saves your soul, and you're as saved as God can make you. God saves you on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ 1900 years ago.

That was a finished work that cannot be improved on. And the moment you commit yourself to him, you're absolutely saved. And I tell you tonight that God broods over this scene.

God broods over this meeting tonight, and he's waiting for somebody to take that step. I wonder if it'll be you. I wonder if you're going to say tonight, Lord Jesus, the best way I know how, I commit myself to thee.

I've been fighting you, I've been resisting you, and I've been reaping the bitter dregs of my sin. Now I want to turn my back on it, and I want to turn my life over to thee. I wonder if God is speaking to some heart here tonight.

I wonder if the Spirit of God is dealing with someone. Do you feel your heart beat faster tonight? Do you know the issues? I wonder if you're going to yield to the Savior. I wonder if you're going to say, nay, but I yield, I yield.

I can hold out no more. I think my dying love compels and owns thee. He's waiting.

He's been waiting a long time, hasn't he? I wonder if you'll open the door tonight and say, come into my heart, Lord Jesus, there's room in my heart for thee. Dwell in my heart, Lord Jesus. For time, God is waiting, waiting to see you take the step of faith, waiting to hear the cry of the lost sheep.

I'll tell you, if you take a step toward him, he'll run and fall on your neck and kiss you. He really will. Will you do it tonight? Our brother Jim comes and leads us in a closing hymn of invitation.

Will you, sitting there in your seat, say, yes, Lord Jesus, this is going to be the night. This is why you wanted me to come here to Bristol. I'm going to get it settled tonight.

Maybe there's somebody here, and maybe you think in the past you might have been saved, and yet you're not sure. There's a doubt in your mind. Why don't you get it settled? Why don't you say, Lord, if I never was really saved before, tonight's going to be the night.

I see it all. I see how that young fellow took his parachute jump, and I realize that spiritually it's the same idea, only it's trusting somebody who cannot. Will you do it? I pray that you will.

And if you do trust the Lord Jesus, make it known afterward. Don't keep it a secret. If he's worth trusting, he's worth confessing.

If he isn't worth confessing, he isn't worth anything. So if you trust him tonight, make it known, and we'll rejoice with you in your newfound salvation.

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