

# Holiness and Godliness

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 February 2021

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[ 0 : 0 0 ] morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's word to you. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together we become convinced there's no one so good they don't need God's grace and no one so bad they can't have it which is why we turn week after week to hear from God in his word because we believe that God has something to say to everyone. And so I invite you to turn with me now we're continuing our series in the book of 2nd Peter. We're nearing the end and we're again in 2nd Peter chapter 3 and you'll remember that 2nd Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter and he writes it to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire in the 60s AD. Peter writes this letter with one hope, one desire.

He wants these people to grow. And as we've seen he wants them to grow in two ways. He wants them to grow in grace and he wants them to grow in knowledge. We've been looking at chapters 2 and 3 which address the danger of the false teachers and you'll remember the false teachers are threatening both of these things. They are threatening knowledge and they're threatening grace.

And in threatening knowledge they're attacking two things in particular. They are attacking the authority and reliability of the Bible and they're also attacking the reality of Jesus' second coming. They've been saying, and this is what we've been looking at, that Jesus is not coming back. His judgment is not real. And for that reason Peter's been teaching us about his judgment, his second coming, and that's what we looked at last week when we were in verses 10 through 13. We looked at the end of the world and we saw there's going to be two stages. It's going to be stripped down and remade. We are going to have a new heavens and a new earth. It's going to be renewed and restored. And we saw as one theologian says, it's not new, it's new in quality, not new in time or origin. And I explained that using the illustration of the new kitchen, right? It's new in its quality, it's not new in its location. That's what we think about when we see the new heavens and the new earth being restored. This week we're only moving forward one verse. So last week we looked at 10 through 13. Now we're looking at 11 through 14. And so we're going to cover some of the same ground. But remember we did not look at verse 11 at all last week and we didn't look at part of verse 12. And so that's going to be our focus this morning. And I have a different question for you today. Last week I asked you, what do you think the end of the world is going to look like?

This week I want you to think about this. Why do we care what the end of the world is going to look like? Why does it matter? Why does the Bible tell us about it? Many people have different answers for this. Some people are interested in the end of the world just out of curiosity. Some people are interested because it's fascinating, it's interesting, it's exciting. Some people are interested in the end of the world because it's a good distraction. Some of it I think it's something that God's put in the heart of man. So of course Christians are not the only ones who think about or talk about the end of the world. Some Christians come to discussions about the end of the world and they think it's about predicting the date and the time. They're into numerology. They're obsessed with figuring out the exact date of Jesus' return. Of course that's inconvenient because in the Gospel of Matthew we're told that even Jesus doesn't know. And so those who are seeking numerology to figure out the exact timing of Jesus' return have missed the point and are trying to find out something that even our Lord and Savior and his humanity was unaware of. But we're told in this passage verses 11 through 14 why it is that God wants us to know about the end of the world. In fact we're told in verse 11 and we're told in verse 14.

[ 3 : 56 ] We see the word since twice. Since the end of the world is coming, verse 11, live lives of holiness and godliness. Verse 14, since these things are coming, be diligent to be found without spot or blemish.

In other words, the purpose, the reason that the Bible has us study the end times is not so that we would know how many cans of tuna to stockpile. It is in fact that we would live lives of holiness and godliness.

It is not so that we are building a bunker, but instead that we would understand God's call for growth on our lives. And of course this goes with the logic of this entire book. I've been telling you all along that knowledge and grace go together. Why do we have knowledge of the end times? So that we would grow in grace.

And so it's with that that we turn to 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 11 through 14. We have a fun challenge this morning which is one of the challenges of the Christian life to be able to talk about the importance, the necessity of holiness without falling into legalism. And so it's with that that I invite you to turn with me either in your worship guide or your phone or on your Bible or in chapter 3 verse 11.

And no matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. In Proverbs chapter 30 verse 5 tells us every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. And so that's why we read now starting at verse 11. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

[ 5 : 55 ] Verse 14. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you again as we do every week for your word that you've given to us, that you speak to us. And we also ask for your help. We know that we need the Holy Spirit to understand what you've given us. And so we ask for that help this morning, that you'd give us the spirit, you'd pour out the spirit on us, that we would be able to see and hear and clearly understand and believe what you have written for us in your word. We are grateful that we don't have to worry about earning or deserving these things, but instead we look to Jesus and his life of holiness and godliness. And we ask these things in his name. Amen.

If you are familiar at all, as I know many of you are, with the Star Wars universe, you know that there is a special group, a special brand of Star Wars fans.

And these folks call themselves the 501st Legion. They're unofficial. I didn't realize I was going to get that kind of response. The 501st Legion, and they specialize in creating and wearing what is called a screen-accurate Star Wars costumes. In other words, these are not Halloween costumes that you buy at Walmart. These are precise, detailed, authentic Star Wars costumes.

And of course, most of what they do is charity work, and they build and wear these costumes. They don't have a lot of opportunities to use them in other ways, but they came into the news back in 2019 because of the filming of The Mandalorian. Turns out, Disney did not have enough Stormtrooper costumes. And in a moment of genius, they decided they weren't going to pay to develop more Stormtrooper costumes, so they recruited a 501st Legion to help them with the filming. And so these individuals got to live a dream, right? They've been building these costumes. They have them mostly for show, and then suddenly, they get to bring them into action. They get to be extras in The Mandalorian. They get the thrill of being part of the universe that they prepared for. Of course, it also raises a question for us.

Why would they spend so much time building and investing in these costumes? Should not surprise you that these are not cheap? Okay, there's a reason they're called a screen accurate. Well, I think it's a simple answer why they would spend so much time living and building and working towards these things, which is this. There is a love that they have for another world. There's a love that they have for another world that causes them to do work for and towards this world. They love it. They build for it. Suddenly, they get to be brought into it. They're real characters. Peter also here tells us about a love for another world. I've told you before, when we look at the Bible, repetition really matters. And we see repetition here in this passage in verse 11 and 13 and 14. We're told we are waiting for something.

[ 9 : 28 ] Sorry, verse 12. Verse 12, 13 and 14. Verse 12 starts out, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God. Verse 13, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth. Verse 14, beloved, since you are waiting for these. There is a longing, an anticipation, a looking forward to for the Christian, the new heavens and the new earth. What they are looking for and longing for, we are told explicitly. Verse 12, the coming day of God. Verse 13, what comes with that coming day of God?

The new heavens and the new earth. Verse 14, they are waiting for these. Referring back to verse 13, the new heavens and the new earth. The Christian is a person who has caught a vision, a love for another world. They are looking forward to it. It's something that's captured their mind and their imagination.

It's a future, right, that they want brought into the present. And so as we talk about what is a challenging topic, holiness in the Christian life. Holiness comes, at least in part here in this passage, as Christians long for heaven. Holiness comes as Christians long for heaven. They love another world.

There's something about that other world that has captured their imagination. And in fact, this is the command here that Peter is giving. This description of them they're waiting for. Another way we might translate this is anticipate, looking forward to. This is something they think about. The Christian's imagination is captured by heaven. They think about the new heavens and the new earth. There is a joy that comes to them for imagining what this place of righteousness will be like. And so what we're going to do this morning, at least in the beginning, is we are going to do what Peter tells us to do.

Christian, think on, love, look forward to the new heavens and the new earth. Let it capture your imagination. Let it be something that takes up your mind and your thoughts. And because I want to stop with you for a second, and I want you to think about what the new heavens and the new earth are going to be like. What would be good and glorious about a world in which righteousness dwells?

[ 12 : 11 ] And in fact, another question you could ask is, what's your vision of paradise? What's going to be glorious about a world where righteousness dwells?

For some people, their view of paradise is going to be something that's beautiful in terms of creation. Paradise, of course, will be something like that. Maybe you imagine palm trees and a beach.

Maybe you imagine a cabin in the middle of nowhere in the mountains. The problem is that's an incomplete view of paradise. Because, of course, even if you have those things, it doesn't mean righteousness dwells there.

There's this quote that I love from a movie called *The Descendants*. It came out about, I think, I want to say 10 years ago. And it's about this man, played by George Clooney, who lives in Hawaii. And he's dealing with the fallout from his wife's tragic death. And as the movie starts, he talks about the misconceptions that people have about Hawaii. And that is that they think that it's simply this paradise.

[ 13 : 10 ] And he says this, Do they think we're immune to life? How can they possibly think our families are less screwed up? Our cancers less fatal?

Our heartaches less painful? In other words, Hawaii is a beautiful place. But righteousness doesn't dwell there.

And so, as we think about the new heavens and the new earth, as our imaginations are caught up by it, it is something more than just beauty in creation.

It is the beauty of God's righteousness being full in that place. And so I want you to imagine with me. I want you to do what the author of this book, I want you to do what Peter is calling us to, to think about, to set our minds on how beautiful it would be to live in a place where righteousness dwells.

Yes, there's going to be an end to tears and sickness, right? There's also going to be an end to sin and the way it affects us every day. And so here's just a few examples.

[ 14 : 16 ] One of my favorites comes from a man who explains that when we go to heaven, we're not going to worry about food anymore. That doesn't mean we won't enjoy food.

It doesn't mean we won't love food. But people in heaven, they don't worry about eating too little or too much. Food is not something that shame is associated with for them.

Food is only something that they enjoy. That's what happens in a place where righteousness dwells. In a place where righteousness dwells, men and women only celebrate each other's differences.

It is not a place of tension and strife. Okay, think about this. Let these things capture your imagination. This is what we're looking forward to.

In a place where righteousness dwells, there will be peace between people of different races. There will be humility when people from different cultures interact with each other.

[ 15 : 20 ] There will no longer be tension. That's what happens in a place where righteousness dwells. If you know someone right now, if you are someone who's tempted towards gossip, you love to tear other people down.

That's how you deal with your insecurities. In the place where righteousness dwells, we are what Ephesians chapter 3 talks about as being rooted and grounded in love.

That person has a new sense of security and calm to them. They're able to interact with people only to give to them, right? Not for what they can take away.

They are resting in God and his love. That's what paradise looks like. That's what it looks like to be in a place where righteousness dwells. Heaven, the place where righteousness dwells, is going to be a place of sexual integrity.

In heaven, no one will hold their keys between their fingers when they walk to their car. In heaven, the place where righteousness dwells, when people interact with each other, there will be a purity between them.

[ 16 : 34 ] There will be the ability for everyone to look each other in the eyes without shame. There will be the ability to treat people as fully human, who God created them to be.

There will be no dehumanizing of people. That's what paradise is going to look like. People in heaven won't be lonely.

Loneliness is a result of sin, right? Part of what happens with sin is that there's an alienation.

There's an alienation between us and God. Our relationship with God is broken. And so, of course, that flows out into our relationships with other people.

But that's not going to be true in heaven. In heaven, there's going to be unity. People are going to have that wonderful feeling that comes when you're with a group of people that you're close to.

You're able to spend quality time with them, enjoying each other. And you're going to work without strife towards a common vision. That's going to be true of heaven.

[ 17 : 40 ] That is what it's going to look like in the world where righteousness dwells. And so that is our first step here as we work towards holiness, right?

The person whose imagination is captured by this, whose heart is captured by this, their desire is for them to see as much of that as they can now. They want holiness because they love that place where righteousness dwells.

They're not motivated by shame or legalism. They're motivated by a love and a longing and a desire. You see this in people even today, right? You know someone they love to go to the beach? What are they going to have at their house?

Maybe they have some seashells out, right? You don't walk into a house with someone who has seashells and think, that person is so uptight. They're such a legalist. They're just really wound tight about the beach.

No, a person loves the beach. Of course they want as much of it as they can get now. Christian, the same is true for you. Our hearts and minds as believers are captured by the new heavens and the new earth.

[ 18 : 47 ] And so we want holiness in our lives now because we want as much of heaven as we can get. That's what it means to be captured by love for another world.

That is what these people are being reminded of. They are to look forward. They are to be waiting for the new heavens and the new earth.

Of course they would want holiness. Of course they would want lives of godliness. And so we see here not just that there's a longing, but there's also a working.

Because they want to see it, they're working for it. Verse 11, they're meant to be people with lives of holiness and godliness. And then we're told even more explicitly in verse 14, they're to be diligent for this.

There's a work, there's an effort towards this. They should want holiness and do what it takes to get there. Remember I told you earlier that this 501st Legion, when they dress up, these costumes are not cheap, right?

[ 19 : 54 ] In fact, if you look at the news articles, some of these individuals had costumes that were higher quality than what Disney produced. And so it was actually a gain, right, for the Mandalorian to have them as extras.

Why? Why were their costumes so good? Was it because they were neurotic? Were they just like plagued with guilt?

Were they consumed by self-righteousness? No. They had the best costumes because their minds and their hearts and their imaginations had been captured by that world.

Brothers and sisters, we long and work hard for holiness because our minds and our hearts have been captured by heaven. And so, of course, if that is what we want, that is what we work for.

Christians work for holiness because we long for heaven. Christians want as much of it now as we can get. People who love heaven want as much righteousness as they can have.

[ 21 : 08 ] People who love Star Wars, they want to dress in the clothes of that world. We, as Christians, want to dress in the clothes of the world to come. Those are clothes, Peter tells us, of holiness and righteousness.

Holiness and godliness. That is what it means to dress like the world that is to come. Now, this morning, I'm putting an emphasis on looking forward.

Because of our limitations on time, I'm not going to dig as deep into being diligent. We're now on our second sermon, basically, on this section. If we wanted to, we could go into a third sermon. Part of my hope and my confidence as a pastor is that as we work through sections of the Bible, as we go through books, all the way from beginning to end, as we preach the whole counsel of God, we'll get everything that we need.

So I'll simply say this. I've talked before about the importance and what it looks like to be diligent in pursuing holiness. We looked at it in detail when we were in Nehemiah chapter 10.

So if you want to dig deep into being diligent in pursuing holiness, go down into the details of that. I encourage you to go back and listen to that sermon. I would be preaching two sermons today if we went in to be diligent.

[ 22 : 19 ] So my goal this morning is that you would understand the motivation for our holiness, that we're captured by this vision of the world to come. And yes, it involves being diligent. If you want to dig deep into that, that's something we've talked about before.

Because here at this church, we're convinced of the importance of going through the Bible, book by book, verse by verse, passage by passage. And so we have many times to talk about holiness, what it means, and how we pursue it.

So we said this, those who are diligent, there's a commitment to change. If we're pursuing holiness, it's going to require action, right? It's going to require faith, it's going to require sacrifice.

The same is true for people who want their costumes to be good. People who love the world that's to come. Is this out of legalism?

No, it's because we can't wait. We can't wait. We can't wait to see as much righteousness as we can. Okay, I'm also going to take a quick aside here to address one strange thing that I'd be remiss not to address, which is that we're told that we can hasten the world that is to come.

[ 23 : 30 ] Verse 12, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God. Now this sounds strange, right? It sounds like that somehow it's up to us whether the new heavens and the new earth come. I'm simply going to explain it this way.

You already believe this. You actually already believe that you can speed up Jesus' return. Here's how I know. You prayed for it earlier this morning. You prayed, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So either you were insincere in that prayer, you didn't realize what you were praying, or you believe that we can actually bring God's return sooner. Because God answers prayer, right?

And we prayed for that in the Lord's Prayer. Does that threaten God's sovereignty? Only if prayer threatens God's sovereignty. So if you believe in prayer, you have no problem believing that our actions affect Jesus' return.

As I've said before, God works through prayer in his sovereignty. It's not a threat to his sovereignty. This passage is simply telling us what we already know from the Lord's Prayer.

[ 24 : 37 ] We can pray in faith knowing that prayer changes things, that God's kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So we don't need to be afraid of that phrase hastening. As strange as it may sound to us, it's not a threat to God's sovereignty any more than prayer is a threat to God's sovereignty.

If you believe in prayer, no problem believing in that. It might raise the question, how do we hasten the day? Well, Jesus tells us, remember, that he's going to come when all the nations have heard the gospel. So our work in missions is part of that.

We just established we believe that our prayer matters. So when we gather together as Christians on Sunday morning, and we pray the Lord's Prayer together, we are obeying this here.

We are hastening the coming of the day of God. Okay, that's all I'm going to say about that. Lord's Prayer, take what you understand from the Lord's Prayer, transfer it over to here. Finally, we have another difficult thing here in verse 14.

We're told to be found without spot or blemish. This, of course, sounds like we're supposed to be perfect, right, for Jesus to return. Somehow, him coming and finding us has to do with our works.

[ 25 : 45 ] Well, again, why was it that the 501st Legion was chosen to take part in the Mandalorian? They looked like stormtroopers.

And at the danger of beating a dead horse, how did they know to look like stormtroopers? They had knowledge. And so at the coming of the filming, they were found to be ready.

This is not telling us here that we need to be perfect. Of course, we know that we struggle with sin to the end of our lives. But we are to be found as people who are pursuing and loving godliness and holiness.

Spotless and blameless here is the opposite of the false teachers. It's not be found perfect. It is be found doing what this verse tells us to do. Be found longing for God's new heavens and new earth. Be working, be loving the world where righteousness dwells. This Legion, right? They were prepared. They were ready to be found.

[ 26 : 53 ] Brothers and sisters, when our Lord and Savior returns, will we be ready to be found? Will we be found living lives of holiness and godliness?

They were found ready, right? And they were pulled up into the greater drama. They got to finally live out the world that they've been longing for.

The same is true for us. God's grace is at work in our lives, creating holiness and godliness. We're living towards heaven now so that we can take part in it in the future.

Be found without spot or blemish and at peace. Finally, you may have noticed the word that's repeated here that we've seen a few times before in 2 Peter, and it's the idea of a promise.

We saw in 2 Peter 1, verse 4, remember I gave you a long time ago, the illustration of the child buying presents for his father with the money his father gave him. And I told you that the money our heavenly father gives us is his promises.

[ 28 : 05 ] All the way back in chapter 1. Chapter 3, verse 4, remember the false teachers say, where is the promise of his coming? And what are we told to bank on now as we long for this world to come?

Verse 13, according to his promise. We are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth. And of course, we know this not just from Peter, but we also know it from our Lord Jesus Christ, who tells us, I'm turning now to John chapter 4 now, he tells us, gives us a promise.

He says this, in my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may also be.

Jesus has promised that he's preparing a place for us. It's his promise of a new heavens and a new earth that we rely on. And then he tells us again, John chapter 14, verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Why do we live lives of holiness? Because we love another world. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. But it's not legalism, because Jesus tells us he's going to work it out in our lives.

[ 29 : 28 ] That's verse 15, verse 16. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, for he dwells with you and will be with you. He's given us, Jesus has left, he's given us his Holy Spirit to work out that holiness and godliness in our lives.

And then he says this, I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

In that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

[ 30 : 31 ] And I will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth. Brothers and sisters, we long for another world because we love Jesus.

We want him. We want as much of that world as we can get now, and we know we can't do it on our own, but we look to and rely on the Holy Spirit to work out that love and longing in our hearts, in our lives.

Remember that we're saved by grace through faith alone, and those God saves, he sanctifies. Those who love Jesus keep his commandments.

There's a book from a long time ago that's now become a little bit more popular because there was a movie made out of it called Cheaper by the Dozen. And the reason it's called Cheaper by the Dozen, of course, is because it's about a family that has 12 kids.

And the father brags that he's able to make it work with 12 kids because it's Cheaper by the Dozen. Now, many people know about Cheaper by the Dozen. What they don't know about is the second book, the sequel, that was not made into a movie.

[ 31 : 43 ] Well, it may have been made into a movie a long time ago, but not a recent one. And the sequel follows the death of the father, the patriarch, and it's called Bells on Their Toes. And near the end of these children being raised, they get to the youngest of all 12, and her name is Jane.

And Jane's brothers decide as she gets to high school that they want her to be the most successful high school student possible. They want her to show up to ninth grade and be on top of the world.

And so they begin to teach her what she needs to know to be successful, to succeed, especially socially. And so there's one thing, there's some advice that they give her that seems counterintuitive, and she pushes back on it a little bit, and that is that they want her to dress in a way that's different from all the other students in the high school.

Because they know something she doesn't know. They know how the college girls are dressing.

And so they tell her, look, this is how the girls in college are dressing.

You need to dress that way too. It says this, the Bobby Sox era was making its debut, talking about the 1950s here, after a decade of formal afternoon dresses, spike heels, and kinky permanent waves.

[ 33 : 01 ] The boys wanted to be sure that Jane was among the first on the bandwagon. And so they tell her, you want to get saddle shoes, sweaters and skirts, and those socks that just come up to your ankles.

Jane objects, but she trusts her brothers. And so she shows up on the first day of school dressed like almost nobody else.

And you can imagine, right, the nerves there, the fear. Have I made the wrong decision? If you know the history of the 1950s, you know she did not make the wrong decision at all.

Jane ends up doing very, very well. Brothers and sisters, God has called us to put on the clothes of holiness and righteousness.

They may be out of fashion now and at times. There will be moments when we are the only ones around us who are wearing them. But we know because of his promise that that is the future fashion.

[ 34 : 10 ] Because the new heavens and the new earth will be a place where righteousness and only righteousness dwells. And so we work for it and long for it now.

We trust the promises because we know that Jesus is preparing a place for us. If it were not so, would he have told us?

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. that challenges us and comforts us.

We ask that you would use these passages this morning to challenge and comfort us this week.

That we would be people who love and long for your new heavens and your new earth more and more. That it would change our lives and that it would change this world. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.