

“A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL”

“The Lord Is Coming”

Scripture Reading – II Peter, 3:2-14

I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation”.

But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

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 in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

‘Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him”.’

Jude, 1:14-15, NIV

This series, ‘A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL’, is based on THE LETTER OF JUDE.

To protect from harm, to guard from attack, to repulse enemies – for centuries rugged defenders have built walls, launched missiles, and waged wars, expending materiel and human resources in the battle to save nations and cities. With total commitment and courageous

abandon, individuals have fought for their families. It is a rule of life that we fight for survival, defending with all our strength what is most precious to us, from every real or imagined attack.

There are many people who live in opposition to God and his followers.

They twist God’s truth, seeking to deceive and destroy the unwary, but God’s truth must go forth, carried and defended by those who have committed their lives to God’s Son. It is an important task, an awesome responsibility, and a profound privilege to have this commission.

This was Jude’s message to Christians everywhere.

Opposition would come and godless teachers would arise, but Christians should ‘**CONTEND FOR THE FAITH**’ by rejecting all falsehood and immorality, remembering God’s mighty acts of rescue and punishment, and the warnings of the apostles. His readers are encouraged to build up their own faith through prayer, keeping close to Christ, helping others, and hating sin. Finally, Jude concludes with a glorious benediction of praise to God.

There are many false teachers waiting to destroy your Christ-centred life, the credibility of God’s Word, and the unity of the Body of Christ. THE LETTER OF JUDE calls Christians to stand firm in their faith and defend God’s truth at all costs, because nothing else is more valuable...

“THE LORD IS COMING”

We have already noted that an apostate is a snake in the garden of God.

An apostate is one who has slithered in. The Bible says they ‘**HAVE SECRETLY SLIPPED IN AMONG YOU**’ – they have just slithered in through the grass, but they are full of deadly venom. We have acknowledged an apostate is like a crocodile who slides quietly and unnoticed into the water ready for the kill. Just as a ‘spiritual crocodile’ can be dangerous and deadly, a ‘spiritual snake’ can bite Christians and pollute their lives with deadly poisonous venom.

Last time, we considered an apostate as ‘a spiritual criminal’, whose characteristics and identity must be clearly established in order that we are not drawn in to his wicked crimes.

Today, I want us to consider our response to those who question the Lord’s return.

Throughout history, men have sniggered and scoffed at that which they did not understand. The Bible tells us that people laughed at Noah when he was building a huge boat in the middle of a desert, but they stopped laughing when the rain started to fall. People laughed at Jesus when he made amazing claims about his person and work. They scoffed when he was nailed to a cross, and they scoffed at those who claimed to have seen him resurrected. People today still scoff when we claim that this same Jesus will one day return to claim us for his own.

‘You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation”.’

II Peter, 3:3-4, NIV

Jude warned about those who would scoff at the Lord’s sudden return.

‘Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him”.’

Jude, 1:14-15, NIV

Jude centred his argument upon the Prophecy of Enoch...

Legend tells that Enoch made a compact of friendship with the Angel of Death.

Enoch made three requests of him: (i) To die and come back again so that he might know what death was like – a request that was granted. (ii) To see the abode of the wicked so that he might know what the punishment of the evil was like – a request that was also granted. (iii) To be permitted to see into Paradise, so that he might understand what the blessed enjoyed – this request was also was granted. However, when Enoch caught a glimpse of Paradise, he was so happy with what he saw that he never came back to earth!

‘When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.’

Genesis, 5:21-24, NIV

‘This simple statement has a kind of mystical quality. In itself it does not say how Enoch died. It simply says that in God’s good time he passed serenely from this earth. The most famous interpretation of the death of Enoch has the idea that God took Enoch to himself when he was still young [365 years old!] to save him from the infection of this world. This is another way of putting the famous classical saying: “WHOM THE GODS LOVE DIE YOUNG”. It looks on death as a reward. It means that God loved Enoch so much that he removed him before age and degeneration descended hand in hand upon him.’

William Barclay

1. A SURROUNDING GLOOM

‘Enoch was taken away while he lived amidst sinners... he was snatched away lest evil should change his understanding or guile deceive his soul’.

The Book of Wisdom, 4:10

In Enoch’s day, there were two kinds of people on the earth: (i) The Descendants of Seth and (ii) The Descendents of Cain...

The Descendents of Cain lived for this world.

*We read about them in **Genesis, Ch. 4** – where we find them in the marketplaces and the great cities. They are proficient in art, experts in the sciences, and the original captains of industry. They desired to build with their own hands a pain-free and pleasure-filled society.*

The Descendents of Seth did not live for this world, but for the world to come.

*We read about them in **Genesis, Ch. 5** – where the Word of God does not take us into the marketplace but to the morgue. Throughout these verses, repeated over and over, we read the words: ‘HE LIVED, AND HE DIED ... HE LIVED, AND HE DIED ... HE LIVED, AND HE DIED’.*

Every time we read these words, we should be reminded that the devil is a liar.

The serpent had told Adam and Eve in **Genesis, 3:4**: ‘YOU WILL NOT SURELY DIE’ when they disobeyed God’s command not to eat from the tree of knowledge between good and evil. When they believed Satan’s lies, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and sentenced to death. Mankind has been living with the consequences of their actions ever since.

Scripture records that Enoch was ‘THE SEVENTH FROM ADAM’.

Instead of a tomb, Enoch experienced translation. Instead of death, he experienced departure. Instead of a grave, he entered Glory. When Enoch was born, Adam was 622 years old and Seth was 492 years old. Enoch, a contemporary of Adam, lived alongside him for 308 years.

I wonder, did they ever speak together? Did Enoch ever ask Adam what life was like in the Garden of Eden? How would Adam have described walking through paradise hand in hand with the Living Lord? Eventually one afternoon, when the Lord walked in the garden, Adam and Eve hid away from his presence. However, Enoch walked with God for 300 years.

I believe the life of Enoch is a type of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Just as the prophet was translated into Heaven, so will believers when Jesus returns to collect them. The characteristics of life in Enoch’s day somewhat parallels that of our own...

AN AGE OF PERMISSIVENESS

Enoch lived during a time of social permissiveness.

There were no restraints on crime, therefore lawlessness flourished. Immorality was rampant. Marriage was viewed only as a convenience, not a commitment. Polygamy was the lifestyle of the day. It was politically correct and socially acceptable to be and do anything that met with one’s own conscience.

If ever there was a day like that of Enoch’s, it is surely today!

AN AGE OF PRESUMPTUOUSNESS

Enoch lived when secularism was the rule of the day.

It was an age when men did not follow or obey the Lord. People were occupied with what they considered to be the necessities of life – eating and drinking. They were also interested in the pleasures of life. People were more interested in the present world than in the world to come.

They were more interested in accumulating gold than in knowing God. They were more interested in collecting silver than receiving the Saviour. They were more interested in their work than in the Word of God. They were more interested in the kingdom now than in the Kingdom to come. Secularism was as influential then as it is today.

Enoch lived when spirituality was being explored.

During these days, cults and the occults were prevalent. It was a time when ancient myths were being forged. The love stories of the gods became so prominent that they greatly influenced the religions of the Greeks. Beliefs and behaviour that started in those days and yet they are still practiced today.

If ever there was a day like that of Enoch's, it is surely today!



AN AGE OF PROGRESSIVENESS

Enoch lived when men began building great cities that flourished.

They were trying to create their own paradise based on science. The population exploded. It was an age of technological advancement and scientific sophistication – much like our own today. It was during this time that Enoch was translated. He did not see a tomb, but he did see the face of God. I believe we are living in the day and hour when we are going to be caught away and we, too, will see the very face of our God.

If ever there was a day like that of Enoch's, it is surely today!

The society we find ourselves in is racing towards the point of no return.

Sins that used to happen only down back alleys within our cities, now parade on our main streets. Sins that used to embarrass us, now entertain us. Sins that used to amaze us, now amuse us. Things that used to be sacred, now are sacrilege. Men and women around this world have so sinned that they are quickly coming to the point of no return. The time is coming when Jesus will catch away his Church, and God will judge this world.

Enoch lived during a time of surrounding gloom.

As we look around, the signs of the times tell us that Jesus is coming soon. We do not need to be looking out for the signs of his coming because they have all been fulfilled already. We do need to be listening out for the sounds of his imminent coming, for he is on his way!

2. A SAVING GRACE

‘When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters.’

Genesis, 5:21-22, NIV

Enoch began to walk with God after he became a father.

The Bible does not tell us anything about Enoch's life for the first 65 years. Perhaps he was enjoying a wicked life with most of his contemporaries, or perhaps not! However, the birth of his son changed Enoch beyond all recognition. He changed the way he lived – for the better.

Enoch rejected the popular way of life of the day.

These days were terrible to live in. 'THE DAYS OF NOAH' became almost a catchphrase for days of wickedness. Because the people lived in sin and with a mentality that God would never

judge their wickedness. However, for many, many, years, the waters of God's wrath were surging against the dam of God's mercy.

Enoch knew what lay ahead, and he wanted nothing of the ways of the world.

Enoch must have had a righteous relationship with Almighty God because God has never walked in the sinful ways of man. Enoch experienced the saving grace of God. For a person to be ready for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, he has to experience the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some say there are many ways to God and Heaven, but the Word of God is clear – there is only one way, one door, Jesus. 'ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD'.

Those who walk with God are those who are going to go be with God.

Those who are half-hearted, apathetic, cold, carnal, critical, and who do not care less, are not walking with God and are in danger of missing the Rapture. Day in, and day out, we need to know how to walk with God. If we are going to be ready when the Lord Jesus returns, we need to learn how to walk with God. Enoch knew God and God knew him. That is why God took him.

‘By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.’

Hebrews, 11:5-6, NIV

Our faith in God grows as we fellowship with God.

We must have both the desire to please him and the diligence to seek him. Prayer, meditating on his Word, worship, discipline – all of these help us in our walk with God. Enoch walked with God in the wicked world, before the Flood came; he was able to keep his life pure. Enoch was taken to Heaven one day and seen no more. Abel died a violent death, but Enoch never died. God has a different plan for each one who trusts him.

Our walk with God commences with the birth of Jesus in our hearts.

‘To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.’

John, 1:12-13, NIV

3. A SIMPLE GOSPEL

‘Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him”.’

Jude, 1:14-15, NIV

What does Enoch's prophecy say about the coming judgment?

GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE PERSONAL

'THE LORD IS COMING WITH THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF HIS HOLY ONES'

The Lord himself will come to judge the world.

He will not send a famine, or a flood, nor will he assign the task to an angel. He himself will come. This shows the seriousness of the event, and also its finality.

'The Judge is standing at the door!'

James, 5:9b, NIV

The Lord will not judge alone, the Saints of God will be with him.

The word translated 'HOLY ONES' is the Greek word 'HAGIOS'. Sometimes it is used to refer to 'ANGELS', but other times in Scripture it refers to 'SAINTS'. Undoubtedly, Jude was not referring to Angels in this verse, but to Christian Saints. It will be the People of God who will accompany the Lord when he returns to earth to defeat his enemies and establish his righteous Kingdom. Over the centuries, the People of God have suffered at the hands of the ungodly, but one day the tables will be turned – as the ungodly suffer justly at the hands of the godly!

'When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.'

Colossians, 3:4, NIV

GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE UNIVERSAL

'TO JUDGE EVERYONE'

Jesus will come 'TO JUDGE EVERYONE' – so no one will escape.

Just as the Flood destroyed all who were outside Noah's Ark, and the fire and brimstone destroyed all in Sodom and Gomorrah except Lot and his wife and two daughters, so the last judgment will encompass all the ungodly.

'By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.'

II Peter, 3:7, NIV

GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE JUST

'TO CONVICT ALL THE UNGODLY OF ALL THE UNGODLY ACTS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE UNGODLY WAY, AND OF ALL THE HARSH WORDS UNGODLY SINNERS HAVE SPOKEN AGAINST HIM'

The word 'UNGODLY' is used four times in this one verse!

God will convict them of their sins. He alone will declare them guilty, pass sentence on them, and then execute the punishment. There will be a Judge, Jesus Christ, but no jury. There will be a prosecution, but no defence – for every mouth will be stopped. There will

be a sentence, but no appeal – for there can be no higher court than God's final judgment. The entire procedure will be just, for the righteous Son of God will be in charge.

The Lord will have the record of all their 'UNGODLY ACTS'.

He will have a record of their motives and hidden desires as they committed these deeds and even these will be ungodly! He will recall 'ALL THE HARSH WORDS' that they uttered against the Lord. The word 'HARSH' carries the idea of 'ROUGH, HARD, STERN, UNCIVIL'. They were not afraid to speak, but at the judgment their words will testify against them. Their words, spoken with pride and arrogance, will only bring down the wrath of God upon them.

'These men are grumblers and fault-finders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.'

Jude, 1:16, NIV

This verse completes Jude's description of 'spiritual crocodiles' or 'spiritual snakes'.

Jude emphasises even more why these 'spiritual criminals' are so dangerous – they are out to please themselves by taking advantage of others. What is their approach? For one thing, they murmur and complain and cause people to become dissatisfied with life. They are grumblers, for ever discontented with the life which God has allotted to them.

Theophrastus was a master at producing a Greek character sketch.

Here, vividly drawn by Theophrastus's subtle pen, is the picture of a man who can find something to grumble about in any situation. He can find some fault with the best of bargains, the kindest of deeds, the most complete of successes, the richest of good fortune...

'Querulousness is an undue complaining about one's lot; the querulous man will say to him that brings him a portion from his friend's table: "You begrudged me your soup or your collops, or you would have asked me to dine with you in person". When his mistress is kissing him he says, "I wonder whether you kiss me so warmly from your heart". He is displeased with Zeus, not because he sends no rain, but because he has been so long about sending it. When he finds a purse in the street, it is: "Ah! but I never found a treasure". When he has bought a slave cheap with much importuning the seller, he cries: "I wonder if my bargain's too cheap to be good". When they bring him the good news that he has a son born to him, then it is: "If you add that I have lost half my fortune, you'll speak the truth". Should this man win a suit-at-law by a unanimous verdict, he is sure to find fault with his speech-writer for omitting so many of the pleas. And if a subscription has been got up for him among his friends, and one of them says to him: "You can cheer up now", he will say: "What? When I must repay each man his share, and be beholden to him into the bargain?"'

Theophrastus

'Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.'

II Timothy, 2:16, NIV

"DAY OF JUDGMENT! DAY OF WONDERS! HARK THE TRUMPET'S AWFUL SOUND!"