

## The end of the world as we know it 1 Peter 4:1-11

### What would you do if you knew the world was going to end very soon?

This is the theme of many Hollywood apocalyptic movies.

Some global disaster is imminent and the population of the earth is in danger.

In 1998 a film was released called **Deep Impact**. I love this film. The plot is that a gigantic meteorite is fast approaching the earth. Indeed, the result of its impact will be catastrophic. It is called an extinction level event. If you're looking for a romantic movie this is the one you need to choose. In the film it's fascinating to watch how different people respond to the news of a future day that can't be changed.

- Some rush around in the cars desperately trying to flee to a place of safety and then get stuck in huge traffic gridlock
- Some are chosen by lottery for salvation in vast underground bunkers
- Some loot local shops and steal all they can
- Some seek reconciliation with family members before the end

Deep Impact is Hollywood fiction. However, it does raise a fascinating question. **How would our behaviour change if something in the future is destined to dramatically change life as we know it?**

At the moment this is the key question being asked by thousands of delegates in Glasgow as they meet for COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference. The language used by a large number of world leaders is on the apocalyptic scale.

This is our last chance to stop the inevitable disaster. If we fail at this point there will be no return. It's not just rhetoric. There is a demand for action.

The reason is simple. When we believe there is something in the future destined to dramatically change life as we know it then we must analyse our behaviour. We must consider whether our current lifestyle should change in the light of what is to come.

This morning we are confronted with something even **more real**, even **more certain** and even **more dramatic** than climate change. We are presented with the **glorious truth of the personal return of Jesus Christ to this planet**.

Listen to what we're told in verse 7. **Read verse 7a**.

When the New Testament speaks about the end of all things being near it is a shorthand phrase for talking about the visible and personal return of Jesus Christ and all the connected events that will take place when he does.

We've already heard about the return of Jesus in 1 Peter.

**1 Peter 2:12**, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

Here it is again in **chapter 4**.

We're told that the end of all things is near. That is life as we know it will not continue in the same way it always does.

There will be a cataclysmic stopping of everyday life.

This will be brought about not by a dramatic change in the climate but by the dramatic intervention of Jesus.

## Do you think the end of all things is near?

### Why?

I meet some Christians who are absolutely convinced that the return of Jesus is around the corner because of what is reported in the news. For them Jesus' visitation must be near because of the sheer quantity of things like earthquakes and wars and suffering in our lifetime.

I'm not going to engage with the details of this viewpoint today. However, I do want to say that when Peter says the end of all things is near he doesn't mean Jesus is coming back soon because of the things that we see around us.

Of course he can't mean this because he wrote these words in AD 60, about 30 years after Jesus was killed, resurrected and ascended to heaven.

Let's get this clear. Peter didn't make a mistake. It's not that he thought Jesus was definitely returning within the next 12 months of his life and yet here we are in 2021 and the clock is still ticking.

No, when Peter says the end of all things is near he means that the next major event on the heavenly calendar is the return of Jesus. He means that God has already accomplished all his major work on earth and the next big thing will be the return of Jesus to put an end to life as we know it. On the heavenly calendar this is near. On our calendars it might be far. This is because we tend to measure time in small quantities like weeks, years and centuries. However, when we use heavenly measurements the return of Jesus is near.

The key question is, **how are we to live now in the light of this certain future?**

There are **three** points I want to make today.

These are relevant whether you've been a Christian for weeks or years or whether you are still trying to work out if you should allow Jesus to be your Saviour and King.

- Live God's ways (Vs 1-4)
- Spread God's word (Vs 5-6)
- Love God's people (Vs 7-11)

### First, we are to live God's ways (Vs 1-4)

Look at verse 1. **Read verses 1 to 4.**

We are presented with a contrast of how we are to use our brief earthly lives.

On the one hand there is what loads of people do. **Living for lust. Living for alcohol. Living for pleasure.**

They do this either because they think this life is all there is. Or because even though they know this isn't the way of God, they believe that God is that kind of grandfather in the sky who gives everyone an automatic entry to heaven anyway.

The Christians Peter is writing to had this kind of past. He says in **verse 3** that they have spent enough time living this way.

This is encouraging for anyone considering whether to become a Christian. Christians are not the pure saints of the world. No, we have past like everyone else. The difference is we have a Saviour who makes all the difference in the world.

How are Christians to spend their earthly lives? Not to waste them by living the way we used to. In what **verse 2** calls, evil human desires. No we are to live according to the will of God.

We know God's will by reading his word.

God reveals his ways in the book he has written.

One of the obvious things in life is how difficult it is to stand out from the crowd. We spend most of our time trying to fit in. We do this because standing out is uncomfortable.

**Living differently puts us on a collision course with other people.** This often produces turbulence in relationships.

Who like turbulence? Who fastens their seatbelt hoping it will get rough over the Atlantic?

Peter is very clear about the reaction we'll receive when we seek to live God's ways. People will be surprised that we don't join them in their reckless, wild living, and they will heap abuse on us.

They will mock us for being squares. For being bible bashers. As those who don't know how to let our hair down.

**This isn't easy!**

This is why Peter says we need to arm ourselves with the same attitude of Jesus.

**We need to embrace the suffering that comes from a godly stance if we are to keep on living in a godly way.**

Our constant temptation will be to live like everyone else because this is much easier. We won't stand out and so therefore we won't be teased.

But Peter says, no prepare for battle. Grab your weapon and be prepared to fight.

Arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ and live the rest of our earthly lives according to God's ways in the Bible. And do this knowing that the end of all things is near. Live for Jesus now as we wait to see him face to face.

How does your earthly life compare to the non-Christians around you? Is it any different?

**Does our Facebook feed stand out as different or is it identical to our non-Christian friends and family?**

Peter says, allow the future to impact the present.

Live God's ways.

**Second, spread God's word (Vs 5-6)**

Look at verse 5. **Read verse 5.**

This verse describes one of the dramatic events that will occur when Jesus returns. This is the **total judgement of the living and the dead.**

When everyone who has ever lived will have to give a public account of how they have lived in God's world.

**This is a good thing.** No one gets away with justice.

**This is a scary thing.** When we measure ourselves by God's standards we all fail.

**What's the answer?** Look at verse 6. **Read verse 6.**

The answer is **not moralistic teaching** that says try and do better.

No, the answer to **the badness of humanity** is **the goodness of gospel.**

The declaration that Jesus has come to save us by dying on a cross and has been raised from the dead to show that his death has paid the price for our sins. And that if only we have faith in him that we will be saved from the judgement we deserve.

**What is the greatest needs of our friends and family?** They need to hear the gospel and be saved.

Let's order our prayers, our diaries and our commitments around the great reality that one day those around us will stand before the judgement seat of God and only knowing Jesus as Saviour and Lord will protect them on this day.

Let's spread God's word.

**Third, let's love God's people (Vs 7-11)**

Look at verse 8. **Read verses 8 to 11.**

These verses are a beautiful description of how Christians are to live our earthly lives as we wait to start our heavenly future.

God says we are to love the people we will spend eternity with.

There are so many things we could touch on in these verses.

Notice we are told to love each other deeply. Not superficially but deeply from the heart.

This will help cover over a multitude of sins.

**Christian community isn't perfect.** People will hurt us and let us down. But if we love them deeply we will stick with them and keep going into the future.

**Hospitality is about inviting people into our homely spaces.**

It could be your physical home or it might be another place that you love to hang out in. A place that provides refreshment and relaxation.

Christian, invite other people into this space. Do this without grumbling.

**Please notice Peter doesn't say only do this if you come from a culture that does this kind of thing anyway.**

No, regardless of the culture of our birth or our upbringing, God says to all Christians practice hospitality without grumbling.

Last of all, Peter says use your gifts in the service of others. This is another way we love God's people. Be an active member of the team and serve alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**I think one of the reasons we really struggle to love God's people like this is because our default is to organise our lives around other commitments and then try and practice what God says with our leftovers.**

This never works!

The normal outcome of trying to serve Jesus by trying to fit it in after we've done everything else is that we just end up saying **sorry** and **no** to our church family time and time again.

But friends here's the encouragement. No Christian has ever found this easy. Think about it. If the Christians of Peter's day were doing this naturally, joyfully and easily then we would never have had to tell them to do it. But he did'

He did this because like us they found the practical reality of love a hard thing to do. They loved the theory but the practice was jolly difficult.

So let's be encouraged if this is how we feel. **However, let's not be defeatist.** It's not good enough simply to say it's hard and never live out what these verses teach.

No, let's remember that the end of all things is near. Christ is coming and this is our eternal family. So let's pray for God's help to love his children deeply from the heart

**Let's pray.**