

PEOPLE OF HOPE – Part 4

Hope Realized

Preaching passage: **2 Peter 3:13**

Subject: What followers of Jesus look for in keeping with God's promise

Complement: a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells

Exegetical idea: Believing God's promise, followers of Jesus for a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

Preaching idea: **Be glad and rejoice forever because God wants to spend eternity with you.**

Purpose: To encourage my hearers to believe the promise of God that He will make all things new.

Summary paragraph: God has promised that He will create a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells. He wants you to be a part of that new creation where all things will be made new. In that new heavens and new earth we will be glad and rejoice forever.

I am so thankful today for the promises of God's Word. Aren't you? The apostle Peter was right when he said that we have been given "exceedingly great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4). My wife Bodil and I hide those exceedingly great and precious promises of God's Word in our hearts by singing Scripture songs. We sing the promises of God during family worship, while we are taking our morning walks, while we are driving in the car. We'll never become famous roving minstrels but we do want our hearts to be filled with the exceedingly great and precious promises of God's Word.

One of my mentors who filled his heart with the exceedingly great and precious promises of God's Word was Elder N. R. "Reggie" Dower. Some of you may

remember him. He served as a local pastor, president of the Texico conference, the Texas conference, and the Washington conference, before becoming ministerial director of the General Conference. About 10 years ago, shortly before his death, I was visiting him in his home in Ooltewah, Tennessee, near the campus of Southern Adventist University. He had survived a brain aneurism but now his health was failing. As I sat by his bedside, I read to him some of the exceedingly great and precious promises of God's Word. It was obvious that Elder Dower had hidden many of those promises in His heart. I could see his lips moving while I was reading! Have you ever met anyone like that? Filled up with the promises of God's Word. I will never forget the comment that Elder Dower made that day as we were sharing the promises of God together. "They're all true," he said. "They're all true!"

Today, in part 4 of our series on People of Hope, we are going to consider one of those exceedingly great and precious promises from the Word of God. We have been studying Peter's inspired testimony to those of like precious faith, recorded for us in 2 Peter 3. We have discovered that our hope in the glorious return of Jesus is assured. That hope is not based on our feelings, or the tide of popular opinion, or our mathematical calculations. Our hope is based upon Jesus. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And when you trust Jesus, you believe His promise.

We have also learned from our study of 2 Peter 3 that while we wait for the glorious return of Jesus, we are called to live holy lives, in speech and action, and to have a reverent attitude of heart and mind. Just trying harder, or attempting to enforce a list of rules and regulations does not accomplish that holy way of life. It is

only possible through a personal life-changing relationship with Jesus. He is our Hope embraced. When you embrace Jesus and rest in His loving embrace, it changes everything.

In part 3 of this series, we were reminded that God does not want us to keep this hope to ourselves. It must be shared. The people of hope will look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God. As we join the Lord of the harvest in His work, blessings will not only come to those around us—our own lives will also be blessed. As our earnest desire for the coming of the day of God moves us to action, we will remain focused with anticipation and eager expectation as we wait for the return of Jesus.

Now, Peter reminds us of another precious promise from the Word of God. I have entitled this message Hope Realized. We can read Peter’s inspired testimony in 2 Peter 3:13. “Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

The apostle Peter has told us on several occasions in this chapter that this world as we know it will come to an abrupt end. Look at 2 Peter 3:10. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” And again in 2 Peter 3:12 we read, “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.”

That sounds like really bad news. “Nevertheless,” Peter says. You see, when God shows up, it doesn’t matter how bad things are, it doesn’t matter how hopeless things might appear, when God shows up there is always a “nevertheless.” Almost all strength is gone...nevertheless. Almost all hope is gone...nevertheless. When God is by our side, there is always a nevertheless. The apostle Paul declares, “He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him give us all things!” (Romans 8:32) It’s true that the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, Peter says, “we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

The most common word in Greek translated promise is *επαγγελια*. In 2 Peter 3:13, Peter uses another word, *επαγγελμα*, which is only used twice in the entire New Testament. The other place is at the beginning of Peter’s second letter where he speaks about “exceedingly great and precious promises.” Which promise is Peter referring to in 2 Peter 3:13 when he says, “Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells? Can someone quote for me a specific promise that Jesus gave to His disciples regarding the creation of a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells? Any volunteers? If Jesus did make such a promise to His disciples, those words of Jesus are not recorded in the New Testament. So which exceedingly great and precious promise is Peter referring to? We may find a clue in 2 Peter 3:1-2a. “Beloved, a now write to you this second epistle...that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets...” Perhaps when Peter

speaks in 2 Peter 3:13 about “according to His promise”, he is referring back one of the promises of God recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Perhaps Peter is thinking of the exceedingly great and precious promise recorded by the prophet Isaiah, 700 years earlier. Look with me at the promise of God recorded in Isaiah 65:17. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind (literally “come upon the heart”). And again in Isaiah 66:22, the Lord reminds us of His promise: “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “so shall your descendants and your name remain.”

That is an exceedingly great and precious promise of God. What do you say? God will create a new heavens and a new earth. So even though, as Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3, the elements will melt with fervent heat and all this shall be dissolved, we do not lose hope. We are a people of hope. We hold on to God’s exceedingly great and precious promise that He will create a new heavens and a new earth.

I’m fascinated by the last few words in 2 Peter 3:13—“nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth **in which righteousness dwells**” NKJV. How does that read in the NIV? “The home of righteousness.” What a beautiful picture! The place where righteousness finds a home. The home of the righteous. Literally, the place where righteousness settles down.

I’m tired of living in a world where evil dwells. Aren’t you? I could list some of the blatant evils of our day, but you don’t need to hear them. You know all too

well that we are living in a war zone. It's obvious every time you open a newspaper or watch the news. It's obvious every time you drive down the road and look at the billboards. We live in a world where evil dwells. But praise God, He is going to create a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

The apostle John was given a vision of that new heaven and new earth. He records his inspired testimony in Revelation 21, beginning with verse 1. "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea."

Look down to verse 4 of Revelation 21. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death." Someone ought to say "Amen" out there? No more death. No more terminal illness. No more homicide. No more suicide. No more feticide. No more infanticide. No more eldercide. No more genocide. This is a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The apostle John continues to describe this new heavens and new earth with these words: "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain." No more broken bones. No more broken hearts. No more broken homes. No more broken lives. No more broken promises. This is the place where righteousness dwells. Hallelujah. There's a lot that I don't know about this new heavens and this new earth. But I believe the exceedingly great and precious promise of God.

But I don't want you to miss Revelation 21:3. This new heavens and new earth is called the home of righteousness, the place in which righteousness dwells

for another reason—not just because there is no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, and no more pain. This is the most beautiful part of the promise of God. Revelation 21:3. John records this inspired testimony of his vision of the new heavens and the new earth: “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.” I just have to use my favorite Hebrew word: Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

This new heavens and new earth is called the home of righteousness, the place in which righteousness dwells because the Lord our Righteousness will dwell with us there. Just think about that for a moment. We would be honored if for just one moment we could visit God’s home. But God has chosen to make His home with us.

No wonder we look with anticipation and eager expectation. Nevertheless, we look for a new heavens and a new earth. That’s the same verb, προσδοκᾶω, that we found in 2 Peter 3:12, “looking for...the coming of the day of God, with anticipation and eager expectation. We are also looking with anticipation and eager expectation for the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Is there anyone here today whom the enemy has beaten down? Maybe you’ve been on the brink of throwing up your hands in despair and saying, “What’s the use? It’s just too much for me.” I encourage you today to believe the exceedingly great and precious promise of God. He is going to create a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. No more death, no more sorrow, no more

crying, no more pain. And best of all, God wants to spend eternity with you in that place where all things have been made new.

Can you imagine what it will be like when God creates a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells? Just dream your most glorious dream and you're only faintly beginning to imagine what God will prepare for those who love Him. Remember your most joyful moment and you are just skimming the surface of the limitless joys of the redeemed. Right after the exceedingly great and precious promise of God recorded in Isaiah 65:17, the Lord has this to say to us in Isaiah 65:18: "Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create!" **Be glad and rejoice forever, my brothers and sisters, because God wants to spend eternity with you.**

Don't you want to be there? It's not just wishful thinking. It's an exceedingly great and precious promise from God. And all of God's promises are true. All of them. I choose to believe the exceedingly great and precious promises of God today, don't you? Let your heart **be glad and rejoice forever because God wants to spend eternity with you.** We are a people of hope. Our future is bright. Soon we will join with the angelic host and cry out, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever."

Until that day, let us be about our Father's business. The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. Let us cry out to the Lord of the harvest to throw out laborers into His harvest, and let us give Him permission to begin with us. For soon, and very soon, we are going to see the King. And when, in harmony with His

promise, God creates a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, we will be glad and rejoice forever. Not just because this mortal has put on immortality, not just because this corruptible has put on incorruption. **We will be glad and rejoice forever because God wants to spend eternity with us.**