

## **Think on the Future**

1Peter 3:1-13

People have been talking about Jesus coming back ever since the early days of the church.

I have noticed in my own experience that the enthusiasm for the subject has varied over the years.

When I first became a believer the church circle that I was involved with was sort of on the tail end of a heavy focus on last things.

Jack Van Impe was still popular and the Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins was in full swing.

Not long after that I began to notice that more and more people started avoiding the subject.

As the years went on I started to learn that there was more than one view concerning how the end of days would play out.

I learned that the divisions of those views had become rather deep in some circles with some people considering people who disagreed with them to be unbelievers.

I met more than one person who had been wrongly hurt on account of the subject.

I met many more who didn't want to talk about it for fear of creating division.

Another group of people began to grow as well.

These were people who saw the subject as too complicated and concluded that any firm position on the matter was impossible to arrive at so they became the "Don't worry, it will all work out in the end" crowd.

While I empathize with the challenge of the subject and appreciate wanting to stay away from unnecessary division, I think the trend of downplaying the importance of the subject has been to our detriment as believers.

The fact is that the physical return of Jesus Christ to the earth is the hope of the church.

I have said it before but it bears repeating. The hope of the Christian is NOT to die and go to heaven.

Yes that happens. When someone who trusts Jesus as their Saviour dies their souls goes immediately to be with Jesus, but that is NOT our final state.

What we will be in eternity will only be fully realized when the glory of Christ lights up the sky, when He gives the command and the dead in Christ rise.

When He puts an end to every rebellion against Almighty God and when there is a new creation that is totally free from evil and all its effects, that

is when the hope of every believer throughout every age will be fulfilled.

[That is the hope of the church and it is important for us to think about it. That is the subject of our text this morning **2Peter 3:1-13**. As Peter is near the end of his life he writes this letter hoping to give believers safe guards for their faith and life. As we live in a world with many forces that desire to draw us away from Christ we need safe guards for our faith. In these verses the apostle gives us the safe guard of thinking on the future. He gives us four ways to direct our thinking and our life. First of all we must...]

**Point #1 – Fight against the idea that things will always be the same. (Verses 1-4)**

Most people live every day of their lives assuming that nothing is going to change in how the universe operates. Christians should think differently based on the promises of God.

*In verses 1-2 here Peter expresses his concern for the minds of believers. (Verse 1-2)*

Notice he calls the believers ‘beloved’ here.

That is a good reminder. Why does Peter take the time and energy to write this letter?

It is on account of his deep affection for those that belong to Jesus and are under his care.

He is seeking their highest good and ours as well.

What is his goal? It is to stir up their ‘sincere mind’.

Sincere can also be translated as ‘pure’ and suggests that the goal here is to bring to the forefront of their thinking godly thoughts.

This, I believe, is the great battlefield of the Christian life.

*It is in the heart and mind that either evil or righteousness is cultivated.*

Typically the good or evil that we do is preceded by thinking about it.

The Lord wants us to be pure in all that we do and all that we think as well.

One of the ways we make progress in the purity of our thinking is that we intentionally set our minds on something.

It says here that we should be ‘remembering the predictions of the prophets and the commandment of the Lord’ given through the apostles.

That statement certainly includes the entire written Word of God, but Peter is particularly focused on the coming of Jesus and the end of the world.

That becomes clear in **verses 3-4**.

*It is very easy to be pulled into doubt when we limit our reason to our own ability of observe the world around us.*

That is what is happening here. These scoffers are trying to plant the seeds of doubt in the minds of believers by saying things are just going to keep carrying on as they always have.

Their argument in a nutshell is people have been living and dying in the same way ever since the beginning so that is the way it is going to continue to be.

The Lord isn't coming and therefore we can do what we want.

*This is just as much an issue for us today and it was when Peter is writing.*

The evolutionary model of thinking has our influenced society far more than we probably realize.

One of the basic tenants of that philosophy is the uniformitarian view of the history of the earth.

It means the earth (and the universe as a whole) is a closed system, a machine with no outside influence that marches through time doing what it does and will keep doing the same thing without any true meaning or purpose.

No need to worry about God, do what you want.

Rarely is it ever stated in such a plain way. It is most often way more subtle than that and people absorb it into their basic set of assumptions in life and that is how it works its way into the church.

[It is why the miracles of the Bible are denied, it is why liberal theologians spiritualize Jesus' resurrection and also His return. These things aren't real they will say, they didn't happen because that is not the way things work in the world. True Christians, however, should know better. We should be humble enough to realize that our powers of observation are extremely limited. The word of God says the world is not going to remain the same and we should fight against that idea. Peter gives us a good reason to think that as he gives us something to remember in verses 5-8. He shows us there to...]

## **Point #2 – Remember God has judged the world before. (Verses 5-7)**

We should realize from the way the LORD has acted in history that He will not let wickedness endure forever.

*Verse 5 begins with something that is very important for us to see. (Verse 5a)*

The word 'deliberately' has the sense of willful ignorance.

This means that a person comes face to face with the truth and refuses to accept it or sometimes even consider it.

This is true for every unbeliever to one degree or another, but the group of people that Peter has in mind have gone all in on this.

He tells us what they have turned away from in **verses 5-6**.

The biblical worldview is far different from a closed system that marches itself through time.

It exists because the Living God created it by the power of His Word.

Think that through. The Bible says that God created everything and if He created everything that means He started with nothing.

He made everything from nothing by the power of His word. Amazing!

Peter mentions water here because Genesis 1:2 says that the initial state of the earth as God began to order His creation was water.

That is important to what he says next.

He says at the beginning of verse 6, 'by means of these' that is the water and the word 'the world that existed was deluged and perished.'

That is the flood recorded in Genesis 6-9.

The flood blows away the idea that the earth is a closed system and things keep continuing as they did from the beginning.

The world was wiped clean in a very short period of time.

There is no shortage of people today that 'deliberately overlook this fact'.

[There is a good amount of physical evidence to support a global flood like what is described in the Bible. What if, for example, it was the flood that carved out the Grand Canyon and laid down the geological layers that we see today? "That's impossible!" Some might say. "That took millions of years." Mount St. Helens showed that is not necessarily the case. Anyone remember Mount St. Helens? It was in 1980. A massive volcanic eruption. That disaster carved out mini canyons and laid down layers similar to those observed all over the world. According to the US department of Agriculture over 150 new lakes were formed and the flow of rivers was permanently altered. All of that is a very short period of time.]

What if the same thing happened on a global scale?

It might look a lot like the world we live in today.

Some might say, "Is that all that important? Who cares if people deny the flood?"

Here is why the Christian should care. **(Verse 7)**

The fact that God wiped out the wickedness of humanity across the face of the earth is important to remember because it shows us that His promise to do it in the future to an even more significant degree will happen.

If God can speak all things into existence, if God can command the waters above and below the earth to cover it completely, then can He not by that same word bring an end to this creation for the purpose of bringing judgment against the ungodly?

[Of course. The Christian reasons with more than what he/she can see and experience on their own. We reason according to God's Word remembering what He has done in the past. In addition to that there is something more that the Christian should remember when confronting the scoffer who mockingly asks, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Faithful believers throughout history have lived with the expectation that Jesus will come soon and yet we are still waiting. Why? The scoffer would say because it will never happen, but Peter shows us this third important truth to keep in mind. He shows us that we must...]

**Point #3 – Remember God is both transcendent and patient. (Verses 8-10)**

Because the LORD is completely distinct from everything in creation it is no surprise that He sees things differently than us and thankfully though He is far above all things He shows His people kindness beyond measure.

Peter shows us God's transcendence (meaning He is separate and superior to everything in all creation) in Verse 8.

This verse raises all sorts of good questions that can help us to marvel at the nature of the LORD.

How does God perceive time?

Does He exist completely outside of time?

Has time always existed since God has existed for all eternity past or did time come into existence when God created the universe?

We know that God is certainly aware of time and acts in time as He wills to fulfill His plans exactly when He wants to.

Pastor Jason has given us a taste of that through the prophet Daniel, how the Lord orders kings and empires, events both great and small, to bring about what He desires at the moment He wills it.

He certainly tracks time, but sees it differently than us.

We see a 1000 years as a long time because our time on earth is so very short, but what is 1000 years compared with eternity?

It's very short, like a day.

We see a day as a very short period of time and to us most of them are insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but God sees everyday as a day that He has made

and He sees all that things that He is doing in a given moment (countless things that we don't see) to accomplish all that He pleases in the history of the world.

So when the scoffer says, "It's never going to happen because it has taken so long!" The Christian should remember that the scoffer's view of time is very small in comparison to God's.

Peter adds to God's transcendent view of time with this in **verse 9-10**.

Verse 10 is a fearful picture of the end.

I don't even know what to compare this too, but the idea is that everything in the universe will be unmade with what seems like fire.

That will come as part of what Peter calls the 'Day of the LORD' at the beginning of the verse.

When we see that phrase "Day of the Lord" in our Bibles it is usually means all the events included in the end of the world.

I believe that begins with Jesus' coming which fits with what we read earlier in verse 4.

Jesus comes, wickedness is wiped out, and the universe is re-made.

All of that is included in the phrase "The Day of the Lord".

Here is the question, "Why hasn't that happened yet?"

The answer of verse 9 is God's patience.

Notice he says God "is patient with you" meaning believers.

God is waiting for every last person who will turn from their sins and trust in the Person and Work of His dear Son.

[Imagine for a moment you are booked to go on an all-expense paid cruise. All the best food and entertainment you can handle. Everyone you love most in the world is invited to come, but one of them hasn't arrived yet. Would you want the captain of the boat to wait? Now, what if a total stranger was running late? Would you still want the boat to wait?]

Here is the thing, God loves every single one of His people with an immeasurable love according to Ephesians 3 and so He is waiting for them all.

If you don't know Jesus as your Saviour that invitation is open to you today!

You can admit that you deserve God's eternal wrath because you have broken His laws and there is nothing you can do to save yourself.

You can look to the cross and believe that Jesus died in your place and suffered the consequences of your law breaking for you!

You can look to His empty grave and know that He really can rescue you from death.

You can accept Him as your Saviour and be made right with God today!

You have that opportunity today because the Lord is patient.

[If we keep these things in mind, that the world will not always remain the same, that God has brought judgement in the past, and that the LORD is both transcendent and patient, it will be a good safe guard against those who want us to have doubts about Jesus' coming. That leads us to a very important conclusion in verses 11-13. If we are setting our minds towards the end of everything then we should...]

**Point #4 – Strive to enjoy now what will be when everything is made new. (Verses 11-13)**

Knowing that every ounce of evil will fall under God's wrath and have no place in the new heavens and earth, how can we say we want eternity with the LORD if we have no desire for righteousness now?

*We can miss the mark in at least a couple of different ways when we set our minds towards these future things.*

One way we can miss the mark is to be motivated only by fear of what is to come.

I'd be the first to admit that thinking about things melting in fire is a fearful thing.

We would be foolish to have no fear regarding these things, but it is insufficient to bring us where the LORD wants us to be in regards to His coming.

We will see that in a moment.

Another way we can get off track here is to adopt the "It's all going to burn so why should I care mentality."

That misses the point entirely.

*Verses 11-13 put us on the right track.*

Setting our minds toward the coming of Jesus, the end of the universe, and making of a new heavens and new earth is supposed to result in lives of 'holiness and godliness'.

Why? Because we are fearful of being punished or lost in the fire?

It has to be something else because of what it says in verse 12.

It says there that we are to be "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God."

You might read that and think, "Wow, can we change God's time table?"

Peter has been pretty clear in the verses leading up to this that things proceed according to God's timetable so he has to be pointing us to something else.

*The idea here is an eager longing for His coming.*

God is doing His work in the world through His people until it is complete and we should want to be a part of it.

This is why fear is an insufficient motivator. If all we are is afraid then it will be impossible for us to have this kind of eager expectation.

[Think for a moment about a child. If a child is only afraid of his dad he may obey his father in many things, but he won't be excited to have him come home.]

In order to want Jesus to come you have to have some kind of affection for Who He is and you have to see the goodness of His rule to want to live under it.

That is where all this is ultimately headed.

Yes the present heavens and earth will be dissolved with fire but that is not the end.

They are replaced with a new heavens and a new earth.

Look again at the end of verse 13 because it says there the new heavens and the new earth will be a place where "righteousness dwells".

*Every time we reject sin and embrace what is good we are living for the future.*

Yes this current creation will come to an end, but as we live upon it now we should do so as subjects of the One Who owns it.

We should not say, "Who cares it is all going to burn." Instead, we should say, "How can I best live to show the world that Jesus reigns!"

Because He does and when He comes the whole world will realize what every Christian should already know, that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father.

*Thinking about the end is something every believer should do on a regular basis.*

We may differ on some of the particulars and we need to be careful about what we elevate to a very high level of importance, but we need to understand that it is good for us to turn our minds there.

We need to protect against thinking that things are just going to keep carrying on as they always have, we need to remember the judgments of the past as evidence of what is to come, we need to keep in mind God's transcendence and patience, and all of that should lead us to live like we want Jesus to come.

Think on the future brothers and sisters because the coming of Jesus is the hope of the church.