

Protection in Sanctification, part 2

2 Peter 3:1-10

(preached Pine Grove 7/12/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

Grab your Bibles and lets open up to 2 Peter 3.

We are almost at the end of Peter's second and final letter to the church in which he aims to guard the church from false teachers.

He has helped us understand biblical salvation in order to protect us from the unbiblical salvation that false teachers spout.

He has increased our confidence in the Scripture, which false teachers try to twist and distort.

He has given us a picture of the false teacher so that we can see through their lies by looking at their character.

And now as he ends the letter, he wants to point out one area of false teaching that false teachers spread.

And this is their detail of the return of Christ.

WE got through about 6 verses last week, but let's read 2 Peter 3:1-10 to remind us of what we are looking at.

1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

The Coming Day of the Lord

3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5 For [a]when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Let's pray.

My dad and I have been building a new deck behind the parsonage.

The one that was there was pretty deteriorated.

The wind and the rain and the cold and the hot eventually have their way with wooden decks.

But as we work, I can't help but think of the men who built the deck that we are replacing.

They measured, they cut, they framed and installed a new deck with new boards.

And now here we are some years later doing exactly the same thing.

This is the way of the world.

Though those men may have never considered it, one day, that deck would be old and need to be replaced.

Look, this keep me grounded as I help my dad.

He likes to do things perfect and I do too, but I also realize that even a perfectly built deck or house or whatever will eventually need to be replaced.

On a grander scale, one day the world in which we live will have to be replaced.

In fact, the Bible predicts the destruction of the current world over and over.

In fact, we are now living in a 4th world order already.

The first world order was perfection.

Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve lived in a world without death and disease and thorns and thistles.

Then after sin, the second world order was created.

It was different than the first.

Disease and violence and death now were a part of this second world order.

But then as sin spiraled out of control, God sent a flood to destroy the entire world except for 8 people from the family of Noah.

After that flood, a third world order was established.

Not only was the face of the earth different, the lifespan of man was shorter.

Man was no longer given 900 years to commit his sin.

He was now given only 70 years.

And this has been the order of the world up until today.

But the Lord is not done.

This current world system is going to change again a couple more times, and this is the subject that Peter addresses as he closes out his second letter to the church in 2 Peter 3.

Now why is Peter talking about this?

Well to put it simply, Paul is talking about this because false teachers love to deny the fact that another change is coming.

Specifically, false teachers love to deny the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

And they love to deny it for a couple reasons.

One, they deny it as a way of shaking the confidence of true believers in hopes of gaining a following to their view of what is coming next in world history.

They mock the truth with the aim of spreading more lies.

And two, they deny the return of Christ because they love their sin.

Peter says that they follow after their lusts as they deny Jesus' return.

The thought is this.

If they deny the Second Coming, they can fool themselves into believing that their sin will never face judgment.

And they likewise fool others into thinking the same thing.

Look, turn on Joel Osteen.

Turn on Joyce Meyer.

Turn on Benny Hinn.

They rarely if ever talk about sin or judgment or the Lord's return.

You know why?

Judgment and sin and the return of Christ are not part of their agenda.

It doesn't fill stadiums and sell tickets when you talk about coming judgment and accountability.

It sells tickets and books when you avoid the idea of Christ returning to judge sin.

Now how do false teachers deny Jesus' return?

First part of verse 4.

They mockingly say, "Where is the promise of His coming??"

They simply ridicule those who believe in the return of Christ in hopes that shaming them will make them change their mind.

And their second tactic is to claim that the world has never had such an event as a Return of Christ.

They claim that the world has simply evolved over time into what it is, and nothing has really changed.

They would say that nothing major ever happens to disrupt the world order, especially the idea of Jesus returning to earth.

And this is where we left off last week with Peter answering the ridiculous nature of those claims by saying in verse 5 and 6 that God does intervene in the created order.

The greatest examples of that would be his act of creation but even after creation, God sent a worldwide flood.

And the point is that God can intervene in the world.

Things don't continue on just as they are from the beginning.

Peter cites the flood, but even beyond that, God intervened at times in the world.

Things about the plagues that he sent upon Egypt.

The God intervened in world events as He led Israel out of Egypt as a cloud by day and fire by night.

He parted the Red Sea.

How's that for things continuing on as they always are.

Then there are other miracles in the OT and in the NT that point to God acting in the world.

Ever seen a storm stop by someone simply saying, "Peace. Be still"?

Ever seen a blind man get new eyes or a lame man get new legs?

The teaching that Jesus can't return because things on Earth can't change ignores the changes that God has brought on the earth since HE created it.

And so Peter is encouraging his readers in these first 10 verses of chapter 3 to be sanctified in our thinking in order to resist the false teacher.

In other words, don't be gullible to their teaching.

Understand what false teachers says about the return of Christ and then remember the truth, recognize the mocker, and recall the past.

That brings us to the final strategy to guard from the flash teacher and we find it in verses 7-10.

I call this..

4. Rely upon the Word (7-10)

To be clear, the Word of God really permeates the first 6 verses too..

In fact, in verse 1 and 2, Peter instructs us to remember the words of the OT prophets and NT apostles.

In verse 5, Peter points to the word of God in relation to creation and the flood.

Clearly, the truth of the word is your greatest weapon against the false teacher.

WE have seen this over and over.

In chapter 1, the word of God will help you understand how you are saved and how you are protected in that salvation.

In chapter 2, the word of God will provide a very detailed picture of the character of the false teacher.

And now in chapter 3, the word of God will provide the truth about Christ's return to help you resist the lies of the false teacher.

So what do we need to know about the truth of the Christ's return?

Let's begin in verse 7.

7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Bible truth #1 - Christ must return to judge and destroy ungodly men.

When the false teacher says that Jesus isn't returning, the Bible says He must return to render judgment upon unbelief.

Now, let's take a minute to review a biblical look at the end times.

I love what Peter says at the start of verse 7..

But by his word

In other words, God has spoken about a coming judgment of fire.

But more than that, God has spoken about what is coming.

Let me ask you a general question.

Knowing the character of God and His love for His people, would expect God to tell His people what is coming or to leave His people without much clue of what is coming in the end times?

Well hopefully, you know the Lord well enough to say that God's character combined with His love of His people would cause us to think that God would prepare us for what is coming.

However, there are many believers who see nothing but confusion about the events of the end times.

There are believers who throw their hands up and simply say, "I have no idea what is next."

Let me assure you church, God is not a God of confusion.

If there are disagreements and various views of the end times, the problem is with man and not with God.

And clearly false teachers have contributed to this jumbled mess about the end times.

Folks disagreeing about if there is a rapture, about if there is a tribulation period, about if there is a literal 1000 year reign of Christ upon the earth., if there is going to be a new heavens and new earth..

All of that disagreement combined with personal pride has discouraged folks from even studying about the end times.

But let me assure you, by His Word, God has spoken in Scripture about what is coming.

And according to verse 7, ...

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

So let's start here.

According to Peter, there is coming a day where fire will be unleashed upon the present heavens and earth in relation to the judgment of the ungodly.

Ok, so what is this event?

Simple.

It would be somewhere near that purple arrow on our chart.

It would occur at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ upon the earth but before the new heavens and earth come.

I want to take you to the passage that gives us the best look at this, so turn to the end of your Bible in Revelation 20.

When we get to Revelation 20, much has happened in terms of end times events.

If you look at the graphic up here, the events of Revelation 20 are toward the end.

So let me remind you of what has happened up to the point of Revelation 20.

The first event of the end times is the rapture of the church.

WE have talked about this event, so I won't spend much time here.

But the rapture is the sudden snatching away of the church to heaven.

The rapture is a signless event, meaning no signs precede it.

It could occur today or any day without warning.

The NT describes as the blessed hope of the believer.

If believers are alive, they will rise to meet Christ in the air and their earthly bodies will be changed to eternal bodies in the blinking of an eye.

But they won't rise until the bodies of believers who have already passed away are raised and changed into immortal bodies as well.

The rapture will end as all believers in the church age are caught up to heaven to be with the Lord of the church.

And that event will mark the beginning of what the Bible calls the Day of the Lord.

And though there are some single days in history that are referred to as the Day of the Lord.

And though there will be some days in the future that are referred to as the Day of the Lord, the Day of the Lord would include all the events of the rapture to the Great White Throne Judgment.

After the rapture of the church, the world will find itself in the tribulation period.

It will start as a time of peace.

You can read about that in the book of Revelation, but that peace will be broken halfway through the 7 year period and chaos will ensue.

Though there will be fire from heaven during these 7 years, the earth will not be completely destroyed.

And though the existence of God will be very evident to the people on earth during the tribulation, most will shake their fist at God.

And many will join with the Antichrist to fight against God.

This gathering of the world on the leadership of the Antichrist is described in Relation 19.

But the battle will be shortest in history as Christ returns to defeat the armies of the world and cast the Antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire.

That is the end of Revelation 19.

So we arrive at Revelation 20, and the face of the world has changed because of all the judgments that have fallen.

But the earth is about to be changed once again in Revelation 20 as Christ will take his seat in Jerusalem as the only King for 1000 years.

His first order of business is to remove a great source of sin in the world.

Verse 1 of Revelation 20..

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain

[a]in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

For the next 1000 years, the world will be as it should be with Jesus as King.

Now to be clear, we will retune with Christ in the 2nd coming and watch as He defeats His enemies, which are also our enemies.

We will then be those who populate this earth for 1000 years under His rule, along with OT believers who will be resurrected and take part in the kingdom.

And even better news.

We will be on this earth under the reign of Christ in resurrected bodies.

Don't have time to get into all the benefits of that, but I can assure you, you won't need a mask or have to social distance.

So this goes on for 1000 years, and then skip down to verse 7 of Revelation 20..

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the [c]seashore. 9 And they came up on the [d]broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the [e]saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and [f]brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Strangely enough, Satan will mount one last assault on Christ at the end of 1000 years but he will finally be drafted once for all and cast into the lake of fire to join his Antichrist and his false prophet.

They will be the first 3 members of an eternal hell.

Sadly, the rest of all unbelievers of all time are about to join them.

Verse 11..

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose [g]presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and [h]books were opened; and another [i]book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the [j]books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if [k]anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Now let's stop right here for a minute.

The 1000 year reign of Christ is ended.

But the new heavens and new earth hasn't begun.

So we are right here at the purple arrow on our chart.

And this is what is often called the Great White Thorne judgment.

This is the judgment of all unbelievers of all time.

And I want you to notice something in verse 11..

Earth and heaven fled away from his presence and no place was found for them..

What does that mean?

It means the current heavens and earth are gone at the Great White Throne judgment.

They have seen a lot.

They have seen perfection.

They have seen sin enter.

They have seen a global flood.

They have seen a great tribulation.

They even saw a little restoration in the 1000 year reign of Christ, but now they must go and be replaced.

So as God prepares to judge all unbelievers of all time, the heavens and earth are gone.

And how did they go?

Well, John doesn't tell how they were destroyed but Peter does.

Back to 2 Peter 3:7..

7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

As God prepares to judge all ungodly men, he simply unleashes the fire of his holiness on the present heavens and earth.

Now understand the fear of these unbelievers now.

They have been raised from the dead.

Cain the first unbeliever is there but so are every unbeliever from all time.

These false teachers will be there.

And guess what all they see is a throne and nothing else.

They are not on the earth.

They are not in the sky or space because the present heavens and earth are gone.

I cannot imagine that scene.

Unbelievers that you know will be there.

IT will be the most frightening moment they have ever experienced.

They will be standing before a throne of God surrounded by a literal outer darkness.

Just the blackness of their sin and the blazing holiness of God following by the blazing holiness of an eternal lake of fire.

No wonder false teachers want to lie about the return of Christ.

No wonder they want to avoid the talk of holiness and sin and judgment.

Look, I am saved and even I don't want to think about it.

But I assure you church by the truth of the word of God that day is coming.

It is as real as the air you are breathing right now.

And for those who deny it, may God open their eyes to the truth before they will be made to believe it with their lives.

Conclusion

With all the virus and protest concerns, you may not have realized that hurricane season began on June 1.

In a normal year, a small cluster of thunderstorms off the coast of Africa would be talked about for 3 weeks.

Forecasts would be made to track its progress and predict its path.

Businesses would shut down and schools would close 5 days ahead of time.

WE have seen this in our own state.

And why would all these precautions be taken and preparations made?

All in the name of saving lives.

Look, safety is the new religion of man.

We do all we can to preserve life.

3 week hurricane forecasts.

Masks must be worn.

Seat belts must be fastened.

Guns must be banned.

All in the name of safety.

Guess what?

You may save a life today, but those people are going to die anyway.

And here is what is ironic.

No one speaks or even mentions the need for safety in eternal matters.

Though the Lord has filled the Bible with warnings of what is coming.

And what is coming is far worse than a hurricane or a virus.

And worse yet, what is coming is unstoppable.

Yet no one goes on the news to help you prepare.

No one seeks to pass a law to protect you.

Instead, we fret over our physical safety but ignore our spiritual safety.

How backward is that?

But this is the new world order and philosophy of life.

Protect an earth that is going to be destroyed and protect lives that are going to be destroyed by sin.

Let me tell you something church.

There is hurricane coming and it is called the Day of the Lord.

But worse yet, there is virus around and it is called sin.

And if you don't seek the cure for sin in Christ alone, the hurricane of God's wrath will sweep you into a very real lake of fire.

Prepare today by putting your faith in Christ.

Let us pray.