

Protection in Sanctification, part 3

2 Peter 3:1-10

(preached Pine Grove 7/19/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

You may not know it, but we dodged a bullet a few weeks back on June 21st.

Now, it wasn't an asteroid that barely missed our planet.

It wasn't someone who almost fired a nuclear weapon at us.

It wasn't a resurgence of some deadly virus.

It was the prediction that the sun would appear like a ring of fire in the sky and burn the world to a crisp.

The prediction came from the Mayan calendar, which is an ancient system of keeping time among the ancient Mayan people of Central America.

The Mayan calendar first predicts the end of world would be December 21, 2012, but when that didn't happen, they had to recalculate.

So they went back and added all the minutes that occur each year along with the extra days for leap years, and the end result was June 21, 2020.

And those who watch such things were on the edge of their seat, considering the current world climate of violence and disease.

But you guessed it.

No end of the world on June 21, 2020.

I am sure they will find more time to add to it somewhere and in a few years, there will be another doomsday date.

Now understand, those date setting practices sell.

A few year back, a book about blood moons had folks all excited.

Then a book called the Harbinger had people looking for the return of Christ.

And I am sure with all the craziness in the world today, another book is being written about the end of the world.

Now understand, why would God give the date of the end of the world to a godless group of Mayans in the 5th century BC.

But furthermore, why would God give the date of the end of the world to some self professed Christian so that he could sell some books?

The truth is that the end of present heavens and earth will happen when the Lord says it will happen.

Even Peter who was given the privilege of writing about the end of the current heavens and earth was not given a date.

But date setting the end of the world along with the return of Christ has happened and continues in happen in the world.

However on the other end of the spectrum, there are folks who say that Christ is never retuning.

There are folks who don't set dates at all.

They simply say that things are going to go on like this forever because they always have.

And these are the folks that Peter is warning the church about in 2 Peter 3.

Men and women who deny the return of Christ.

Now I want to be clear here.

Folks who set dates can be just as harmful to the church as those who deny the return of Christ altogether.

In fact, there are a lot of harmful teachings surrounding the events of the end times.

This is why we need to be sanctified in our view of all the events of the end times.

And the way to be sanctified in our thinking about the events of the end is to let Scripture speak about what is coming.

We don't need a system that tell us what to expect.

We need Scripture to speak and present the truth to us.

And why should we pursue a proper biblical view of the end times?

Well, in the context of 2 Peter 3:1-10, a biblical view of the end will protect us from a false teacher who offers an unbiblical view.

Second, a proper biblical view gives us certainty in uncertain times.

Next week, we will see that a proper view of the end times provides motivation to live rightly knowing that we could see the Lord at any moment.

I can't wait to get to that section of this letter, but for tonight, let's continue to grow in our understanding of the events of the end.

Last week, we only examined verse 7.

Tonight, we will be ambitious and try to examine verses 8-10.

Let me verses 1-10 though to get us started.

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. 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.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and [b]its works will be [c]burned up.

As Peter begin his final words to the church in 2 Peter 3, we need to remember that Peter was a man of many words.

Sometimes he said just the right thing like the time he told Jesus on behalf of the apostles.

“We believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Or like the time when Jesus asked if Peter and some other disciples were leaving him and Peter responded, “To whom shall we go only you have the words of eternal life.”

Other times, Peter had just the wrong words like the time that he told Jesus that he wouldn't let him die, and Jesus responded, "Get behind me, Satan."

And then there are the 3 occasions where Peter simply denied Christ before others.

So Peter knew what it was like to speak rightly and to speak wrongly.

Therefore, it is quite fitting that Peter is concerned about what the false teachers are saying as he finishes up his second letter.

And as Peter speaks to address them, there is no danger of Peter putting his foot in his mouth because he is speaking and writing under the inspiration of God.

So he goes after the false teachers by identifying what they are saying and then shows why they are saying it, followed by how they say.

And the summary of that is simple.

False teachers deny Jesus' return by saying that God has never intervened in human history, and they deny it because they want to satisfy their lusts and avoid any future judgment for them.

But Peter answers their argument by saying that God has intervened and does intervene in the world at times.

And the greatest examples of that are when God made the heavens and earth in creation and then flooded the earth with water.

But Peter is not done.

Not only has God intervened in the world in the past, he is going to do it again.

In fact, God is bound by his word to reserve the present heavens and earth for a time when he will destroy them with fire.

And we noted that event is found at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ upon the earth but before the new heavens and earth.

Now, let me share a couple thoughts about this event that I wasn't able to share last week.

First of all, why would God need to destroy the present heavens and earth?

Well, part of the reason is the corruption and toll that sin has taken on this earth.

Listen to Romans 8:18-21..

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, [i]in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Now understand, the earth doesn't have a soul.

It is not a person but Paul makes it clear that sin has bound the world in corruption.

Before sin, there were no natural disasters.

They were no thorns and thistles.

But sin has left a mark upon creation so much so that Paul says that creation groans to be set free.

Now as I said last week, Jesus on the throne for 1000 years will do much to reverse the curse.

But even at the end of his kingdom, there will be a final sinful rebellion.

However, once that is put down, the present heavens and earth will also be put down by fire.

And the disappearance of the present heavens and earth will set the stage for the Great White Throne judgment where all unbelievers of all time will stand before God's throne to be sent to a lake of fire.

And following that removal of sin and sinner, the final stage of the end times will commence with the creation of a new heavens and earth.

And let me take you to this event in Rev 21:1..

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will [a]dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them[b], 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He *said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

The void that is left after the destruction of the present heavens and earth will serve as backdrop to judgment but it will quickly be filled with the creation of a new heavens and earth.

And the earth will quickly be filled with heaven.

This New Jerusalem as it is called will descend down upon the earth, and this is truly a picture of heaven on earth.

Remember, heaven is anywhere God is.

And though heaven has been distant since the introduction of sin in Genesis 3, heaven comes near once sin is eradicated.

And the best part is that God can one again have fellowship with His people.

And that fellowship will occur as God originally intended it, which is on the earth that he created.

Remember, God walked and talked with Adam in the original creation but HE departed when sin came.

But in the new heavens and earth, God will live among his people, and how sure is the promise of this time?

End of Revelation 21:5.

“Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

Once again, the sureness of the end times is found in the sureness of God’s word.

And how sure is that?

Absolutely certain.

Now this brings us back to 2 Peter 3 and a question that both the false teachers ask, and sometimes we as believers ask it too.

And the question is this.

Why in the world hasn’t God already returned to do all these things?

Well, that takes us to verse 8..

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.

Though this verse has been abused and applied to teach all sorts of erroneous things, it is truly a simple verse with a simple explanation.

And the explanation is this.

God is not on our time table.

He operates in his perfect time and in his perfect will.

And time to an eternal God is truly irrelevant.

Look, our lives revolve around time.

All we think about is time.

Time to get up, time to eat breakfast, time to go to work, time to eat lunch, time to go home, time to eat supper, time to go to bed, time to get up.

We wear watches and carry phones to keep up with time.

We celebrate birthdays related to the time we have been on earth.

We celebrate the new year.

Though time is not bad since God established time in the sun, moon, and stars, God is not bound by time.

He exists in the past present and future, and while your minds struggle to grasp that, God is above it all.

So when man asks why hasn't God come yet, Peter's point is that a 1000 years is like a day to God and a day is like a 1000 years.

This does not say that a 1000 year is a day to God or a day is a 1000 years, as some have taught about this verse.

Though God is not bound by time, he has set times for man.

A day has always been a 24 hour period based upon where God placed the earth in relation to the sun.

The same would be true for a year and so on.

Again, the point of the passage is not to address a timetable for how God works, it is to say that God's timetable is beyond our understanding.

So if God is operating on a different schedule, what is He waiting for?

Verse 9..

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.

This is another verse that has been abused through the years as well for various reasons.

The point of the verse is simple.

God delays the events of the end times so that His people are saved.

This is the nature of God.

Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness.

This is who God.

He is not eager to populate the lake of fire, so he delays judgment and destruction to allow for repentance and salvation.

Now what do we do with this phrase, “not wishing for any to perish.”

Some translations say, “not willing for any to perish.”

Does this mean that God is going to save everyone?

Well of course not.

There are dozens of verses that teach the reality of hell and a lake of fire.

There are even more verses that speak of those who are going there.

So if it God's will that none perish, why will hell be populated with unbelievers?

Here is great time to teach about God's will.

God's will can be thought of in 3 ways that all begin with the letter D.

God has a will of decree.

God has a will of desire.

God has a will of direction.

God's will of decree relates to things that God has brought, is bringing, and will bring to completion.

You can see God's will of decree right there in verse 7.

God's will is for the present heavens and earth to remain until the day of judgment and then be destroyed by fire.

He has said it and he will bring it to pass.

This is God's will of decree, and that aspect of God's will is found everywhere in Scripture.

Then skipping down to the third one, we need to understand that God has a will of direction.

This is the will of God that people often think about in terms of if I should this person or take this job.

This will isn't found in Scripture

And the reality is that God's will of direction is different than his will of decree in that either choice may be right or neither choice may be right.

God doesn't force his will of direction.

He simply offer freedom given that you live in obedience to Him, regardless of what you choose to do.

And then in the middle of the will of decree and direction is Gods' will of desire.

Let me show you God's will of desire in Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18..

16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

God's will of desire is that his people rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in everything.

But let me ask you?

Are we always praying, always thankful and always rejoicing?

No, we aren't.

Does this mean that God's will isn't always accomplished?

Yes.

It is possible to overcome God's will of desire.

It is not wise since God has revealed it in Scripture, but it is possible to resist.

Now this helps us understand 2 Peter 3:9.

God's will is not for any to perish and go to an eternal hell.

But this is not his will of decree.

It is his will of desire.

Therefore, man can resist it and many do resist it and choose to reject God and spend an eternity apart from him in hell.

But they won't end up in hell and says that God didn't offer an opportunity for repentance.

HE did.

In fact, he has delayed his destruction and judgment of the world to allow for the repentance of ungodly men.

This is what Peter is saying in verse 9.

This doesn't teach universalism which says that all people go to heaven.

This doesn't teach that salvation is simply in the hands of man alone.

This verse teaches that God delays judgment so that His people can be saved in God's perfect timing.

Look down to what Peter says verse 15..

15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation

God is patient, but I can assure that there will be a day of destruction for those who take advantage of His patience and reject His offer of salvation.

Now that brings us to verse 10, which summarizes this section.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and [b]its works will be [c]burned up.

Now, let me make an important note to help provide some clarity where there is often confusion in regards to the end.

When Peter says that the day of the Lord will come like a thief, the idea is an unexpected arrival.

Thieves don't announce they are coming, they just come.

The same will be true for the Day of the Lord, and this is why the rapture must be seen as the kickoff for the Day of the Lord.

It is the only event that will come unannounced.

The tribulation will be expected because the rapture will have occurred and the peace treaty will be signed.

The Second Coming will be expected because the Antichrist will have gathered the armies of the world into valley of Armageddon.

The 1000 year reign of Christ will be expected because the Antichrist and his armies will be defeated.

The New Heavens and New Earth will be expected because Satan's final rebellion will be ended and the Great White Throne judgment will have occurred.

In other words, every event of the end times will be preceded by another event with the exception of the rapture.

It is signless.

It is unexpected.

It will come quickly.

This is the nature of how a thief works.

And this is why the rapture must be prior to the tribulation.

If it were in the midpoint or at the end, it would be an expected event too.

But since it is at the beginning, it can be viewed as coming like a thief.

And that will be a great lead in to next week when Peter begins to tell us how to live now that we know what is coming.

Hopefully, we are raptured before next Sunday night.

If so, I will let yall preach it to me in heaven.

If not, I will see yall then.

Conclusion

So what do we take from 2 Peter 3:8-10 tonight?

#1 - There is a heavenly plan.

If COVID 19 has taught us anything, it has taught us that the world is chaotic.

Plans to shutdown were inconsistent.

Plans to reopen were inconsistent.

Plans to move forward are inconsistent.

Plans to social distance and wear masks are inconsistent.

Stores are inconsistent and enforcement is inconsistent.

But this is life in a fallen world.

Nothing ever goes as planned and chaos, confusion, and disorder are common.

Let me assure you church.

This is not the pattern in heaven.

God is not wondering when the right time is to reduce his church and then unleash his wrath.

Everything is on schedule in heaven for God is a God of order, and His plans are still perfect.

#2 - There is a heavenly patience.

Built into God's perfect plan is a perfect display of His patience.

While we wait on God to act, we marvel at his patience with sinners.

In a world of incredible evil, God is glorified in delaying his judgment.

And he delays to demonstrate his unmatched patience with people.

God delays to save, and He is doing that right now.

#3 - There is a heavenly peace.

If I were too attached to this world, I would be in an insane asylum this year.

2020 has shown that nothing is certain.

Sickness, violence, unrest in general are the norm today.

And if my all my hope were here, how miserable would I be.

But my hope is in what is coming to this world.

My hope is somewhere beyond this world.

And that gives me peace when there is no peace here.

This is why a view of what is coming is helpful.

It assures us that Christ will win in the end.

HE will return to rapture.

He will return to rout the armies of the Antichrist.

And he will return to reign.

That my friends gives me peace.

Let us pray.