

THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH

2 PETER 3:8-10

World's Greatest Events #10

John Nash was a very successful architect who built mostly cottages and country houses. Now when I say successful, I mean in a financial way. The leading architects in John's day did not consider him to be anything special. In fact, they were quite critical. They accused him of loading his designs with too much detail. They accused him of not having any feeling for fine points, for depending too much on gables and dormers to create atmosphere. But John Nash went with the times and made quite a living for himself. He built stucco front houses until that novelty wore off. And then he often designed additions for existing homes, he renovated dilapidated ones, and as mentioned before he built mostly cottages and country houses. In time John Nash retired rather comfortably.

It was in John's retirement that a friend came to him asking him to remodel his home in the city. Now John was 73 years old, but he decided that he would like this new challenge. So while his friend went for a vacation in the country, John began work on the old town house. Originally, the plans had been to only move a wall or two. But John's plans just got carried away. One thing lead to another until the whole home was completely demolished, and a new one was erected, one built entirely as the product of Nash's limited imagination. It took several years to complete the house. And when it was finished, it was greeted with laughter and ridicule. It was called a 'white elephant', it was called 'uninhabitable', it was called 'an eyesore to the neighborhood'. In fact, nobody did move into it, and it remained empty until after the deaths of both John Nash and his friend. And John Nash, the architect, died in disgrace, the butt of jokes, ridiculed wherever he went.

But then after Nash's death, the original owner's niece decided to move into this house. She felt quite cramped at Kensington, and was in need of a London residence. And with her move, John Nash was finally vindicated. For Nash's friend had been England's King George 4th. And George's niece was Queen Victoria. Today, England is proud of John Nash's creation, the remodeling project that got out of hand, now called Buckingham Palace.

Many who are recognized today as being people of great genius, were scoffed at and ridiculed in their own lifetime. They were scoffed at because people did not have the ability to recognize their genius or the foresight to see the potentials of their creations. In fact, it used to be that most artists or musicians were really not recognized for their true abilities in their own lifetimes. Today, the impatience for immediate success is so strong, that most are willing to popularize their abilities for success now, giving the people whatever they want right here and now. But in former centuries, many were willing to endure a lifetime of

ridicule in order to change the course of their profession in the future.

Nowhere is this tendency to mock seen more clearly than in the history of the church. In every generation, people blinded in their sins to the truth of God's word have scoffed at the Bible, have ridiculed the miraculous, and have even doubted the existence of God. Yet in every generation, there have also been those willing to endure that derision for the sake of Jesus Christ, and the church of Jesus Christ has grown and developed until it has permeated every corner of this world.

We would like to focus our attention this morning on one specific theme that has been attacked with special venom. We want to look at this event as the final of our top ten of the World's Greatest Events.

During these past Sunday mornings, in this year when we are celebrating a milestone in the history of our church, we have been looking at the 10 most significant events in the history of the world. We have already seen:

- *The Creation of the Universe

- *The Fall of the human race into sin

- *The World-wide Flood

- *The confusion and scattering of peoples at Babel where languages and national identities were created.

- *The calling of the nation of Israel through whom God would bring redemption to the world

- *God entering human history through the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ

- *The atoning death and resurrection of the God-man upon the cross of Calvary

- *The Day of Pentecost when the Church was born.

- *The Rapture when the Lord Jesus Christ will come back to take his church to their heavenly home.

Now we conclude our series by looking at an event that is the flip-side of the first event. Whereas creation was certainly an indispensable event for it brought the entire material universe into existence, so there is an event that is clearly predicted in the Bible that will bring about the destruction of this material universe. Just as many scoff at a personal God creating the universe claiming this to be a pre-historic, unscientific legend, so many ridicule the idea that this world will come to a sudden, cataclysmic end. But the Bible tells us that this is exactly what is going to happen.

Listen to these words from 2 Peter 3:3-13:

2PE 3:3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters

also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2PE 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2PE 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

2PE 3:11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Now there are 3 prophetic truths that Peter brings out in this brief statement that we have already seen fulfilled today to a greater degree than any other generations have, and this would lead us to believe that we are indeed living in the last days.

Certainly, we have experienced the scoffers who would deny the supernatural second coming of the Lord. In fact, almost all modern intellectuals look with a smug disdain on any who would be so naive to believe such a truth as this. But also, Peter indicates that these last day scoffers are going to be building their thinking upon the premise that what they experience is the source of all truth. "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has." This is what we have seen and experienced, therefore it alone must be true. Need we even be reminded that the whole modern scientific revolution has been based upon the fact that only that which can be observed and seen can be known to be truth. The scientific method is based upon observation as the source of truth. This, of course, is a faulty premise and it has caused much inconsistency in our living leading to a great deal of skepticism. Abstract qualities such as love cannot be seen- yet do we deny their existence? We can prove scientifically that our senses, our eyes, ears, noses, can and often do deceive us- there are such things as optical illusions. How then can they be the only trustworthy source of truth? Certainly, the Bible does not deny that we can learn by observation - that is the reason for God giving us our senses. But that which is physically observed is not the sole source of truth. Not only will there be scoffers, and not only will they base their thinking solely on what is observed with the senses, but also they will then assume that the world has always operated in the same way that they observe it operating today. Peter says, "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." We have a scientific term for this type of thinking today. It is called "Uniformitarianism". Uniformitarianism is the foundation that evolution is built upon. It is the basis for all of the modern dating methods of ancient fossils and rocks. It simply says that we can know that everything has happened consistently with how the

laws of nature are working today. If we want to know how old a fossil is, we can use the Carbon 14 dating method that assumes that the same amount of radioactive energy from the sun has been showered upon this earth as is being showered today. And on the basis of observation being the source of truth, and everything always operating in the same manner, they scoff at the promise of a destruction of the material universe for that certainly would be out of the ordinary. That certainly would be a supernatural experience. "How foolish", they say, to believe such a thing in this modern day world. Blinded to their own glaring inconsistencies, for uniformitarianism is not even consistent with the scientific method- who was back there billions of years ago to observe if things were happening like they are today? - the scoffers today ridicule the promise of what the Bible claims will happen in the future.

Peter says that there are two great events of the past that testify against this so-called modern thinking in the last days. The first event is the creation of the universe by God. "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the water was formed out of water and with water." vs. 5. To seriously believe that all physical matter came from absolutely nothing is absurd. Even the ancient Greek philosophers when they considered such a possibility laughed it to scorn, and they held to variations featuring the eternity of matter. No, this vast universe had to come from some source. A universe of this magnitude and complexity could not have appeared without any rational cause whatsoever. Peter says that God's creative act in itself testifies against this latter day philosophy. But then Peter speaks also of the world-wide flood in verse 6. "By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed." During the days of Noah there was an example of a time when the theory of uniformitarianism failed. While it is true that usually, during most centuries, God chooses to operate pretty much according to the laws of nature, that belief is not absolutely true, for there was at least one time when God caused a flood to come upon the earth destroying every living, air breathing creature who was not sheltered in the ark.

So then, Peter warns his readers that in the last days there will come scoffers who will mock the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world. How can Christ's followers continue to have a proper perspective during these times? In the midst of the spirit of such an age, how can Christians remain committed to God's truth.

Peter gives to us 3 reminders that can help us to maintain a proper perspective in these last days.

1. First of all, we need to be reminded that God's view of time is different from ours. Peter reminds us of this fact in verse 8. "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

It is difficult, perhaps even impossible for us to fully understand God's view of time in our present circumstances. We have all been born into a world of time. We were born at a certain time A.M. or P.M.

on a certain day, in a certain year. And with that birth, we were immersed into a world of time. Our lives revolve around a schedule of time. And even when we become very radical on vacation, and put away our watches and clocks for a while, we still continue to function in a time oriented world. Our stomachs tell us when it is time for lunch or supper. The sun tells us when it is time to wake up as it rises or go to sleep as it sets. We cannot imagine what it would be like to live completely outside of the realm of time. In fact, what boggles our minds the most as we think of eternity is the timelessness of it all.

And so it is very important for us to realize that God is not like us in that he is outside of the realm of time. God is infinite in all of his being. Just as he is not limited in power or in his presence, so he is not limited by time either. While God does work within our limitations which means that he acts in time and space history, God himself is outside of the realm of time.

e.g. It is as if we are walking on a path thru a wooded forest. This path could represent all of human history and it winds circuitously around the trees. Way back behind us are people like Abraham, and Moses, and Esther, and Peter himself, great church leaders like Augustin and Calvin. We can only see a brief way behind us and before us before the path winds out of sight. But if we could see miles ahead of us, we could see future descendents and events. But we cannot, because we are walking on this path in the realm of time. But it is as if God is in a helicopter hovering over the forest. He sees the whole path all at once. And even though He steps in and acts in all of the periods of time, He himself is outside of the realm of time- He is eternal, not limited by time restrictions. He sees everything in perfect perspective. So while scoffers think that God has forgotten his promise because Christ has not returned for almost 2,000 years, those 2 millennia are insignificant to God. Peter says they are like 2 days. God gave the promise of a seed to crush the head of the serpent to Eve, and it was thousands of years before that promise was fulfilled. But it was fulfilled in God's time.

So then, if we forget the greatness of God, and if we limit God to our own time oriented lifestyle, then we are naturally going to become very impatient with Him, thinking that he should act according to our schedule. But Peter reminds us that God's view of time is different from ours. So the mocking statement, "2,000 years have passed- where is this coming that he promised?" really is a confession of ignorance, trying to force God into our schedule. It is impossible, for God is an eternal God, outside of the realms of time.

2. But notice in the second place with me that we must remember that God's love and compassion is greater than we can imagine. Peter reminds us of this in verse 9. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Peter tells us that the purpose of God's patience in tarrying is that more might be given an opportunity

to come into the family of God. Each day that he patiently waits, more are given an opportunity to respond to the free gift of salvation offered thru faith in Jesus Christ. And so it is his patient mercy, his love that motivates Him to wait. God is waiting for his family to be complete.

Imagine that a father has promised his children a vacation in Washington D.C. when they are old enough to appreciate the meaning of what they will see there. As the children are reaching this age of maturity, they begin to look forward in anticipation to the trip. But the trip is delayed because the parents have been contacted to be the adoptive parents for an orphaned young boy. The parents don't believe it wise to divulge all of the reasons because of the adoption proceedings, so the children wait impatiently. But then the time comes when the adoption procedures are finalized, and the young man is able to join the family. The unit is now complete, and they can all take the trip together. And the joy of everyone in the family is multiplied because there is now one more member of the family to share in the expectation and fulfillment of the vacation.

So God is forming His family. And one day that family will be complete. The bride will be ready for her marriage to the groom, Jesus Christ. In the meantime, we must not mistake God's patience for slowness, for everything is working exactly according to His timetable. No, Peter says that God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

3. And so we must remember that God's view of time is different from ours, and that God's love is greater than we can imagine. But finally, remember with me that God's character demands that His promise will be fulfilled.

READ 3:10.

2PE 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

It is interesting that humans have speculated for thousands of years that God would one day judge the earth with fire. In fact, it was just after the world-wide flood, after God had promised that he would never again destroy the earth by water sealing his promise with a rainbow, that people suspected that the next judgment would be by fire. And so, puffed up in pride, they decided that this time they would be ready for God. And they began to build a tower, a tower of kiln dried bricks, a fire proof tower whose top would go into the heavens to protect themselves against the wrath of God. You might recall that we looked at this time as our 4th greatest world event. Little did those ancient Babylonians realize about the nature of God's capabilities. It has only been in our day with the emergence of nuclear energy that we have begun to realize the devastating realities of Peter's prophetic prediction. For before this time, the human race was under the delusion that there were certain fire-proof materials. Now we know that nothing is really fire-proof. As I

walked thru the museum in Hiroshima several years ago, and saw those bicycles that had been literally melted together in a twisted ball by the heat of that first atomic explosion, I was overwhelmed by the potentials found in nuclear energy. And it certainly appears that Peter is describing some kind of nuclear reaction. The roaring noise, the raging heat (the KJV translates it "the elements shall melt with fervent heat), the barrenness of the devastation, all are terms that could just begin to describe the scene in the pictures taken just after the explosion at Hiroshima found in the museum. And if one, relatively small nuclear bomb could perform that kind of devastation, what if all of the atoms were released at the same time. The Bible says that Jesus Christ holds all things together by the word of his power. If he just released that word for a moment, the earth would melt away in nuclear reaction. And that is what will take place during the Day of the Lord according to Peter's prophecy. The blessing of that day will be the fact that this old earth will be destroyed in order to create new heavens and a new earth.

God's word should motivate each of us to action in our own lives. If we have not received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we should realize that God's patience is not a manifestation of weakness, but rather it is a demonstration of his love for us. But there will be a day when it will be too late. Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. Peter tells us in verse 15, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation." If we are wise, we will respond to God's invitation before it is too late. If we are Christians, Peter tells us how we should respond to God's word. "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" he says in verse 11,12. "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" he says in verse 14. What a tragedy to know of Christ's coming, but not to be ready when he appears! How much better to be found ready and waiting, doing his will when he comes for us!

It is no accident that Peter uses the illustration of the flood in the passage for there are so many parallels. God had come to Noah, and had given to him a monumental task, one that would take him 120 years to accomplish. Noah believed God, and he began to build his large ship preparing for the flood. As people asked him what he was doing, Noah told them what God had promised. And they laughed, and they mocked, and they ridiculed. But Noah continued to patiently build. And one day, 120 years later God directed Noah and his family and the animals 2 – 2 into that ark, and God shut the door, and the rains came just as God had promised. Everyone who had not prepared themselves perished in the flood. So one day, according to the prophecy of Peter, the day of the Lord will come. Christ will have come back to receive his church to himself. And all of those who scoffed and ridiculed saying, "where is this coming" will find themselves unprepared.

Bear in mind that the Lord's patience means salvation, Peter says. We are wise indeed if we do not

follow the modern day scoffers who would lead us to follow them in destruction, but rather if we trust in the faithfulness of God and the surety of His word. That will lead us to make sure that we are ready for His coming.