

Ministry of Grace Church

2 Peter 3:8-13 - Speaker Notes



Background

Last time we were together, we went through the first seven verses of 2nd Peter chapter 3. It was there that Peter warned about the mockers who would appear in the last days. These mockers think Christians are fools because we believe what the Bible says. They don't believe the Bible because it says, among other things, that the heavens and the earth are only about 6,000 years old. They believe the universe is more than 12 billion years old and they believe in uniformitarianism, which speculates that all things go on today just as they have since the beginning, which they believe was the big bang.

These mockers don't believe that God judged the world with a flood, and they don't believe that He is coming back to judge the world again. However, Peter points out that they don't believe in the flood and the 2nd coming of Christ because they choose not to believe. And - Peter is not the only one who warned us about these mockers. Jude, in his letter, said almost the same exact thing as Peter.

Now in this section of 2nd Peter he will get into some very interesting, dare I say fascinating and yet misunderstood ideas, some of which are debated among Christians and others that many Christians are completely ignorant about. The first misunderstood notion is this.

2 Peter 3:8-9

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. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

The words "escape your notice" are translated from *lanthanō*, which was also used back in verse five. It means "to lie hidden" or "to be unaware of." An equally valid translation of the beginning of this verse would be, "But do not ignore this one thing ..."

This verse is one of those which people seem to delight in pulling out of context and using as a proof text for bizarre doctrines (like claiming that the earth wasn't really created in six days but in six eons). However, instead of talking about what this verse doesn't mean, let's talk about what it does mean.

First of all, if you remember from last time, Peter is countering those who claim that the Messiah (the Christ) is not coming back because the message of His coming has been proclaimed for thousands of years, and there is no more evidence of it today than there was when it was first proclaimed. These mockers claim that everything is continuing on without change for all this time, and there is no possibility of a change any time soon.

As we noted last time, Peter first refuted this belief in uniformitarianism by saying that things have not continued in the same way always, and he cites the flood of Noah's day as an example. He also warns that there will be another judgment of the earth and its inhabitants, this time by fire.

Now for Peter's second rebuttal of belief in uniformitarianism. He starts it by warning his readers, "Do not ignore this one thing." It is his way of saying that the following is a very important thing to learn: "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

So what does this phrase really mean? Just this: God is not bound by time because He exists outside of time. It's as simple as that! He is right now in eternity past, He is also right now in eternity future, and He is right now everywhere in between. Jesus, Himself, expressed it when He was arguing with the Jews:

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)

The expression "I am" means that in every point of time, God is there in the present. We all know that God is omnipresent. We tend to think of this as everywhere present. But it also means everytime present. It is not just a matter that God has always existed and will always exist but that He simultaneously exists at all points of time and eternity. Therefore, to God, a moment in time is the same as a thousand years, is the same as a day. That's what Peter is saying. And, since God is not bound by time, the argument (that it has been thousands of years since the message was first preached and He still hasn't come) has no bearing in the matter at all.

God is very patient with sinners, but His patience will end one day, and many will suffer His wrath on that day. The word in the current verse translated "slow" (or "slack" in some translations) is the Greek word *bradunō*, which means "to be slow or to be delayed." I think a couple of words in our modern vernacular which express it well are "unhurried" and "tardy."

The word translated "willing" is *boulomai*, meaning "to be desirous" or "to be willing." There is another word translated "wish" or "will" in the New Testament. It is the word *thelō*, but it includes the implication of intention and action. To distinguish between the two, *boulomai* refers to "desirous will," whereas *thelō* refers to "determined will."

Now, to answer the question, "Why is God taking so long, and what is He waiting for?" The answer is, "He loves all of mankind and is desirous that all should be saved." Now, let's see what this really means.

Peter tells us in this verse that God is not tardy in keeping His promise. And what is the "promise" that Peter is referring to? It is the promise of the coming of the Messiah, the Christ, on the Day of Judgment.

Now, if He is not tardy, why hasn't it happened yet? Peter says that it is because God is very patient. The implication is that God is holding his wrath in check, wrath that would destroy all of sinful mankind. And Peter tells us why God is holding back. He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. He wants all mankind to repent of their sins, and He is holding back His wrath to give everyone the greatest possible opportunity to repent and submit to Him. So, what is it that will prevent God's wrath from destroying us? Faith. That is, belief in the sacrificial death of the Son of God as payment for our sins. The Apostle John says it in his gospel account:

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

2 Peter 3:10

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 its works will be found out.

Let's start out this section by looking at a couple more words. The word translated “elements” is the word *stoicheia*, which means “fundamental or elemental things.” Therefore, the term “elements” is an excellent translation of it, referring to the atomic elements of which the entire universe is made. And the word translated “will be destroyed” is a form of *luō*, meaning “to let loose” or “to release.”

Peter has just told us that the reason God has delayed His judgment of the unrighteous is because He is holding His wrath in check waiting for any who will believe and accept His offer of eternal life. God is not desirous that any should perish, but he has determined that He will “drop the hammer” someday and then the unbelievers will receive the judgment which is due them.

That Day of Judgment is referred to as “the day of the Lord.” Actually, it is not a single 24-hour day; it is a period of time in which God executes His judgment against the wickedness of mankind. There are numerous references to the day of the Lord in the Bible, such as: [Jeremiah 46:10](#); [Acts 2:20](#); [1Thessalonians 5:2](#).

So, is this a reference to the rapture of the church? Well – yes and no. The rapture comes with a trumpet blast and a loud shout, but it seems that they will only be heard by believers. The day of the Lord, which begins after the rapture, comes like a thief, by surprise and stealth, when no one expects it. And nearly every reference to the day of the Lord in the Bible identifies it as a day of God's wrath and vengeance. Even in today's verse, Peter describes it as a day when cataclysmic things will occur.

One of the most fascinating statements in the entire Bible is found in today's verse. It says that “the elements will be destroyed with intense heat.” As I just said, this really means “the elements will be let loose with intense heat.” One of the things that scientists have never figured out is how the positively charged protons at the center of all atoms remain together, since like charges repel each other. Yet, these like charges are actually so tightly bound together that when they are finally separated, it produces a tremendous release of energy in the form of intense heat (nuclear fission). The explanation that scientists give for this tremendous force holding the protons together is “cosmic glue.”

Peter says that these elements will be “let loose.” Notice what this means. God is suddenly going to release every proton from its place, which will produce a roar and fire the likes of which has never been witnessed. “. . .and the earth and everything in it will be completely consumed by fire.”

2 Peter 3:11-12

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens burning will be destroyed, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

The words “what sort of people” come from *potapos*, made up of the interrogative *poios*, meaning “what sort” and a modified form of *dapedon*, meaning “a soil.” Actually, *potapos* is a corruption of the earlier *podapos* which meant, “From what country?” Therefore, *potapos* is asking the question, “What kind of people?” but it is implying, “Are you earthly or are you heavenly?”

In light of the fact that the world **will** be judged by fire and all that remains of this earthly realm will go up in flames, we should focus our intentions on righteousness and holy living.

I can remember years ago being in a business management class in which we were all trying to figure out what our real goal in life was to be. We were told to imagine our own funeral, and we were to write our own eulogy, saying all those things for which we wanted to be remembered. This was a really good exercise in helping a person focus on what’s really the central driving ambition in life, it served primarily to cause people to focus on themselves and on what they wanted.

All the earthly ambitions of everyone in that room, everything written down in those eulogies, every accomplishment, every accolade, and every monument erected in honor of someone in that room will be “let loose” and will burn up completely until there is nothing left but the smell of smoke.

Jesus, in his sermon on the mount in **Matthew 6:19-21**, said this about earthly riches,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Peter is saying essentially the same thing in today’s verse. Each of us will stand before the judge of all mankind some day. Those who have rejected Him will stand condemned and will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented eternally. We who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior will stand in Christ’s righteousness with our sins forgiven. However, our works will still be judged, and those who have done God’s bidding in this life will receive crowns as rewards for their faithfulness and service. Any who have accepted the salvation that was offered them in this life but who have squandered their time here in self indulgence and self satisfaction, will enter into glory with nothing to offer the King of Kings.

The scoffers mock us saying that the return of Christ and the Day of Judgment will never come. Actually, deep down inside, they know what they will get when He does return, and secretly they don’t want it to be true. We, on the other hand, should be eagerly looking forward to that day. Peter says that we should “look forward to the day of God and hasten its coming.” The word translated **hasten** means, “to await with eager desire.”

We should be like a child whose parents have told him that grandma and grandpa are coming, so the child looks out the window every five minutes and even goes out to the street and looks down the street both ways looking for the coming of his or her grandparents. That's how we should be anticipating His return and we should be urging Him on, even as the Apostle John said in [Revelation 22:20](#),

He who bears witness to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Peter then reiterates what will occur as part of the Day of God, "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will be dissolved [be let loose] in the heat." On this final day of God's judgment, the heavens (the entire universe) and the earth will be completely destroyed. This is also described by John in the book of Revelation when he describes the Great White Throne judgment:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sits upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. Then I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 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. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. ([Revelation 20:11-15](#))

2 Peter 3:13

But according to His promise we are looking for NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH, in which righteousness dwells.

Peter has just told us about the next judgment of the earth and its inhabitants by fire. This judgment will completely destroy the entire universe as we know it. He now tells us not to become too upset over the loss of the heavens and the earth because God is going to fulfill his declaration of a new heaven and a new earth as proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah:

"For behold, I am creating a new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come upon the heart. ([Isaiah 65:17](#))

These new heavens and new earth will be different from the current heavens and earth in that, according to Peter, in them righteousness will dwell. In other words, only the righteous will occupy the new heavens and the new earth. All others will have been cast into the lake of fire for eternity. But **part of each one of us will be missing**, our sin nature, Hallelujah!

Some esteemed Biblical scholars have speculated that the new heavens and the new earth will simply be "renovated" and somehow changed just as the earth was in the flood judgment. However, according to Revelation:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sits upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ([Revelation 20:11](#))

If there was found “no place for them” then they could not exist, otherwise they would be some place. In effect, what the Apostle John is saying in this passage is that they were nowhere to be found; that is, they no longer existed. He goes on to say:

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. (Revelation 21:1)

This new heaven and new earth are not simply a remake of the current heavens and earth because they will have passed away. The new heaven and new earth will be created out of nothing just as the current heavens and earth were created out of nothing.

Why is Peter telling us this right now? So that we can rest assured that God has completely thought out His plan and He will execute it in perfect harmony with all of His promises, whether the scoffers believe it or not.

So What?

Well, I guess it's question and answer time again. As usual, there are no wrong answers, but that doesn't mean that the questions will be easy to answer. The first question is:

Question 1 - After you appear before the great Judge of all time, will you be ushered into the glorious presence of the King or will you be cast into the lake of fire? In other words, are you certain that you are a born-again Christian? Have you accepted the fact that you are a sinner deserving of the lake of fire and have you accepted the payment of Jesus's blood as payment for your sins?

Question 2 - If you are genuinely saved - when you are ushered into the presence of the King, will you have anything to offer Him? In other words, since you got saved, have you lived your life for God or for yourself. Remember, your works will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If you have been living your Christian life for yourself, there's still time to turn it around.

Question 3 – Are you awaiting the return of our Lord with eager anticipation? Or are you secretly in fear of the day? Search your heart!

Question 4 – Do you find yourself getting impatient with God, wondering why He hasn't answered your prayers yet? Remember, God knows the end from the beginning. He is already there, and He knows precisely the right time to help you in your “hour” of need.

Conclusion:

First of all, we should be thankful for the salvation that we have (including a hope for a future both here on earth and eternally in heaven), and secondly, we should be obedient to this Almighty God who has not given us what we deserve. Instead, He has promised us what we don't deserve.

Let's pray.