

I. Introduction

- A. There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is determined by what people think. Because what people think will determine how they act.
- B. And if we go a little bit deeper, we could say that in many cases, what people think about the future will determine how they act.
 - 1. We save for the future.
 - 2. Raise our kids for the future.
 - 3. We may try to avoid the future..
 - 4. Or to deny the future.
 - a) Your beliefs about the future, your hopes for the future, and your fears about the future define you, determine you, and either liberate or imprison your soul and spirit today.
- C. So I invite you to think with me today about this topic:
 - 1. **The Future**
- D. This is the title of my message.
- E. This is the main Bible verse we will be looking at:
 - 1. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (2 Peter 3:10, 11, NKJV).*
- F. You can see how that verse says a great deal about the future. It also says a great deal about the present... It is saying that who we are today is indelibly shaped by how we see tomorrow's future.
- G. And this is what I want to say to you about the future today:
 - 1. **The future of every individual, of every nation, and of the whole world is in the hands of God.**
- H. Not only is the future in the hands of God... but it is in the hands of God for both time and eternity.
 - a) Not in the hands of politicians.
 - b) Not in the hands of the electorate.
 - c) Or of armies...
 - d) Or of the climate or the environment...
 - e) Or of DNA or processes of evolution...
 - f) Or of the stars...
 - g) Or of luck or fate or chance...
 - 2. The future and the eternal destiny of every man, woman and child in the whole world is in the hands of God.
 - 3. This is the Christian message. This is the biblical core.
- I. So this is our message. Because what you think determines how you act. And what you think about the future—one year, three years, ten years, forever—what you think about the future, or IF you think about the future... this defines you.
 - 1. And if you want to have peace, and hope... if you want to be free to be yourself, you have no better option but to place all your hopes and dreams into the hands of the God who loved you and gave himself up for you.

II. Second Peter

- A. We have been studying this book of Second Peter one paragraph at a time. Today, we are close to the end of it.
- B. We have seen that Peter's main concern is false teachers. I need to say that he means false teachers in the Church... society has always been corrupted by philosophies and religions that oppose Jesus Christ. That's not changing till Jesus comes back.
- C. But when those philosophies get into the church, somebody has to sound the alarm!
- D. And somebody has to pull Christians everywhere back to truth, back to reality, back to God, and back to the Bible. Peter wrote this letter to do just that.
- E. Peter gives us a powerful way of looking at our lives...

III. The Reality Triangle

- A. All of us live and move in three realms:
 - 1. **The Outer World of the Streets**
 - a) This is where you live and operate every day. Your job. Your marriage. Your family. Parenting. Dating. School. Relationships. Physiology. Health. Finances. All of that.
 - b) This is the daily stuff of everyday life.
 - c) When people talk about life in the real world, this is what they're talking about.
 - d) But there's another real world.
 - 2. **The Inner World of the Soul**
 - a) This realm is the real world that is inside you.
 - b) This is your psychology. These are your instincts and habits. Even your addictions and obsessions and dysfunctions.
 - c) This is your ability to give love and to receive love.
 - (1) Your history is here.
 - (2) Your family tree is here.
 - (3) Your memories are here.
 - (4) Your scripts are here — the way you talk to yourself about yourself and your world.
 - (a) All of these are gigantically powerful forces in your life.
 - d) The Bible calls all this your mind, and your heart, and your soul, and your strength.
 - e) This inner world is every bit as real and impactful as your outer world.
 - f) There is a third world that is more impactful than these first two:

3. The Invisible World of the Heavlies

- a) Here we are talking about God and the devil, heaven and hell, truth and deception, angels and demons, sinners and saints.
- b) Right now, this invisible world is veiled from our sight. We can't see it. But it is every bit as real as the other worlds. It is actually more real because it is the foundation of them both.
- c) Can you imagine what we would see if the veil between the two realms were lifted? Even in this moment, in this room, if we could see the angels and demons and spiritual warfare going on... if we could see heaven itself and Jesus seated on his throne.
 - (1) The whole thing would be overwhelming.
 - (2) So God keeps it hidden, and the only way we know about this realm is written in the pages of Scripture.
- d) This invisible realm transcends — it goes above and beyond — the space-time continuum. This is the realm of the spirit, which is deeper than your soul. It is the realm of meaning and purpose and ultimate reality.

B. These three realms are separate, but they overlap.

C. They all exist. If you try to ignore one, it won't go away.

- 1. Ignore your finances and health, the realm of the streets will not go away.
- 2. Ignore your heart and your emotions, the realm of the soul will not go away.
- 3. Ignore God and his truth, the realm of the heavenliness will not go away.

D. This is what today's culture has done. Our society has turned secular. Secular means the opposite of sacred. They lop off one corner of the triangle. They have nothing to replace it with. They are two dimensional people in a three dimensional world. (Four dimensions if you add eternity.)

E. As Christians, we believe in the reality triangle. You simply can't change it. It is what is. It is the way things are. You might not like it. You might not agree with it. But it's like not agreeing with gravity. Gravity doesn't change with your opinion of it, and neither does reality.

F. Now, let's go back to this urgent message passed on to us from St. Peter.

IV. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.* (2 Peter 3:10)

A. This is a revelation of the future world. Peter is talking about the invisible world of the heavenliness. It's a matter of faith. No science can prove it. No math can figure it out.

B. Here is the future... it is in the hands of God.

C. Peter talks about the Day of the Lord.

D. The Bible also talks about the Day of Christ. And the Day of God. These are related but separate.

- 1. *In the Day of Christ* (2 Thessalonians 2:2, Philippians 1:10 and 2:6), Jesus will return in the air to call up believers to be with himself. This is also called the Rapture.
- 2. *The Day of the Lord* follows after the Day of Christ. This is a time period when the judgments of God are being poured out on the earth. It goes through the Tribulation, through the Battle of Armageddon, through the Millennium, and then into the Eternal State.
- 3. At the close of that, something happens that crosses over all three realms and even impacts eternity.

E. What happens is what Peter talks about. This is called the Day of the Lord.

F. Imagine the size of the whole cosmos. The whole universe. From massive galaxies so far away their light hasn't reached earth yet, down to the tiniest life form wiggling in the deepest sea.

G. The sheer quantity of energy and matter and dark matter and all the material elements in existence... all that mass, all that weight, all that energy... suns and planets and stars, and all of it...

- 1. According to Peter and Isaiah and other places in the Bible, this universe is destroyed, and God creates a brand new one.
- 2. He brought it into existence, and he will take it out of existence when the time is right.

H. This new day of God is unending; it includes all the ages to come when sin will be forever banished from the universe, and righteousness will be everywhere manifest. Righteousness suffers during the present age. But in that day all that is good, and pure, and loving, and human, and holy will prevail once for all.

I. The brand new universe is called the New Heavens and the New Earth... it's better than paradise, better than the Garden of Eden, better than the best world you could ever imagine.

J. Peter says it comes like a thief in the night...

K. Why will it come like a thief in the night?

- 1. Why so unexpected?
- 2. Because Peter is talking about Mockers. He is talking about atheists, and agnostics, and religious people, and even backslidden Christians who deny the return of the Lord.
- 3. He calls them mockers.
- 4. These are people who have **lopped off one corner** of the reality triangle.
 - a) To them, there is no Day of the Lord. There is no such thing.
 - b) And that is why it will be such a shock to the system when God finally rolls out his whole end time scenario.
 - c) Like a thief in the night.

L. The language Peter uses is apocalyptic.

- 1. He says the heavens pass away.
- 2. He speaks of a great noise.
- 3. He says the elements shall melt.

4. He predicts fervent heat.
5. He says all these things are dissolved.
 - a) It is as if he describes atomic fission spreading throughout the ultimate created order. .
- M. Peter is giving us the ultimate reality check:
 1. The present space-time continuum is not permanent. It had a beginning. It will have an end.
 2. Because the future is not in the hands of physics... it is in the hands of God.
 - a) The future is not simply about the outworking of material laws and energy. It is about the outworking of the promise-plan of a wise and sovereign and infinite Creator God.
 3. And after that, God will create a new universe with no more weeping, no more sorrows, no more loss, no more grief, no more giant pain machine. The Fall will be undone. Moral rebellion will be wiped away. We will live in a new realm forever with God, with a new kind of physics, a new kind of chemistry, a new kind of everything.
 4. The future belongs to the Lord.
- N. And if all that is true, Peter asks and then answers a question.
- V. **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be**
 - A. God is on his throne. His promises are true. Jesus is coming again. The earth is temporary. The Cosmos is temporary. Heaven is real. God's love is real. The cross is true. Christ actually shed his blood. Salvation is for real. The Bible is real. The universe as we know it will be replaced. There will be a new heaven and new earth that is perfect, and flawless, and righteous, and pure.
 - B. Since all these physical elements of the present day universe will be dissolved, how then shall we live?
 1. It's a totally fair question.
 - a) Because the kind of person we ought to be today should mesh perfectly with the universe as it will be tomorrow.
 - b) It's logical.
 - c) And it's practical too, because the kind of person you are on earth sets the capacities of rewards you experience in heaven.
 - C. Peter gives two answers to his question. (**Arrows**)
 1. Holy Conduct... that's the realm of the streets.
 2. Godliness... that's the realm of the inner world.
 - D. **Holy Conduct**
 1. As a Christian, your moral and ethical system is radically different from the world's.
 2. If there isn't a radical difference, there's something dramatically messed up in your life.
 - a) Your beliefs about the future, your hopes for the future, and your fears about the future define you, determine you, and either liberate or imprison your soul and spirit today.
 3. Holy conduct is you ordering your inner realm and your outer realm according to the spiritual realm.
 - a) Holy conduct is believing that the Ten Commandments are true.
 - (1) They're not just regulations, they're realities.
 - (2) That's why no one can really break God's laws. You can only break yourself against God's laws.
 - b) It is believing that the Sermon on the Mount, the central teaching of Jesus, is real.
 - c) It is confessing that the laws of God and the most liberating laws there can be, because they are laws of liberty and laws of love.
 - d) Holy conduct means making choices never to use, exploit, harm, or diminish another person.
 - e) Holy conduct means respect for yourself that results in a respect and honor for others, in words, thoughts, actions, and facial expressions. And social media posts.
 - (1) **Holy conduct is the outflow of the redeeming power of a Crucified and Risen Savior who lives in you to make you what he says you should be.**
 - f) And all of this is laughed at and sneered at by those who wish to substitute their own moral code which is made up out of thin air.
 - g) But we believe the laws of God are laws of love and laws of life... God's laws flow from God's heart and they reflect his nature and could not be other than what they are.
 - (1) Holy conduct, in the realm of the streets... flows from...
 - E. **Godliness**
 1. ... in the inner realm of the soul.
 2. It is not the biblical view that God's laws are external constraints like handcuffs to limit our freedom.
 3. God says he has written his laws on our hearts.
 - a) **God's Laws become internal powerhouses to unleash your soul and to create the maximum freedom possible to become the person God calls you to be.**
 - (1) That's why the secular society hates them. Secularism hates true human freedom.
 4. God's are to be internalized. Because when you internalize God's written laws and promises and words...
 - a) The Holy Spirit uses them to heal your heart.
 - b) He delivers from dysfunction.
 - c) He brings comfort to your sorrows.
 - d) The Spirit uses the Word to deliver you from addictions and habits and instincts that are backwards and misfired.
 5. Godliness is your heart beating in frequency with God's heart.
 6. Godliness is you beginning to believe in a better future for yourself and your loved ones.
 7. Godliness is your rejection of toxic forces like evil, and sin, and selfishness, and trampling the dominion of others.

8. Godliness is the choice to bow before the King of Heaven and never to bow to the lords of earth.
 - a) Godliness in your heart creates holy conduct in your life and all of that adds to the weight of God's glory in heaven.
 - b) Because in that future day, you will see that every bit of godliness, and every bit of holy conduct in your life will have been worth it.
 - (1) Because the future is in God's hands, and he will make sure of it.

VI. Conclusion

A. The future of your life, your world, and of the people you love is in the hands of God.

B. Be confident. Be at peace. Living in holy conduct and godliness.

VII. Conclusion

- A. God is going to take this world, and He is going to melt it down again; He is going to put it back into its primeval elements, and then He is going to reshape it and remold it, and He is going to make it perfect.
 1. Every tree will be perfect, every river will be perfect, every stream will be perfect, every rock will be perfect, every field will be perfect. Every person will be perfect and beautiful.
 2. And when God has prepared it—the new heaven and the new earth—then we are coming down out of heaven, in the beautiful city of God.
- B. And we are going to live in that beautiful city.
 1. *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."* (Revelation 21:1-5, NKJV).
 2. There won't be any of us that are wounded, or broken, or damaged there, The deaf can hear, and the blind will see, and the wounded can walk. And the sinners are all washed clean and pure, and God's children sing and shout and rejoice in His presence world without end.
 3. Do not fear, child of God.
- C. There was an old street mission in Chicago called the Pacific Garden Mission. I used to preach there and go there and pray with the men. In the cafeteria of that old mission, they had a sign on the wall. It was there for all those men who had gotten into trouble. For all those men whose lives were in shambles, whose hearts were broken. For men on the streets, with addictions and illnesses and despair. The sign was a reminder that would, for most of them at least, pierce their hearts.
 1. The sign said, "God answers Mother's Prayers."
 2. I believe that. Have hope. Thank you Mom for your prayers.
 3. Because every one of those prayers is a declaration of faith that the future is in the hands of God.