

THE HEAVENS AND EARTH SHALL PASS AWAY

TEXT: II PETER 3:3-18

Introduction:

1. We saw last time that just as the Lord intervened in history before, He will surely do it again.
2. Just as the Lord visited this world in judgment before (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the flood in Noah's day -- 2:4-9; 3:3-7), He will surely judge this world again (3:7).
3. In fact, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the flood that God sent in Noah's day are both mentioned by our Lord in reference to His second coming (cf. Luke 17:26-32).
4. Second Peter 3:10 tells us that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
5. Our Lord said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).
6. Isaiah 65:17 says, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."
7. Isaiah 66:22 also says God will make new heavens and a new earth.
8. Revelation 21:1 says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (cf. II Peter 3:13).
9. We do not know how much time we have left, but the Bible teaches we are to be busy winning souls while we can.
10. Our Lord said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

I. GOD IS PATIENT WITH SINNERS (3:7-9).

1. Second Peter 3:9 says the Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (cf. Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11).
2. This is one of God's divine attributes -- His patience and longsuffering (3:9).
3. Nahum 1:3 says, "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." The LORD will not at all acquit the wicked, but He gives the wicked time to repent because the LORD is gracious, and patient, and longsuffering.
4. Psalm 145:8 says, "The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."

5. Numbers 14:18 says, "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."
6. The LORD by no means clears the guilty, but He gives the guilty time to repent, because "the LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression."
7. First Timothy 2:4 says, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
8. Second Peter 3:8 says, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."
9. God is not limited to time the way you and I are. God is eternal. God is timeless. God does not dwell in the sphere of time the way we do.
10. God does not think in terms of yesterday, today, and tomorrow; past, present, and future, and so on, because God is timeless.
11. Psalm 90:4 says, "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."
12. And in II Peter 3:8, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."
13. Therefore, by God's reckoning, our Lord has only been gone about two days. God has His own schedule and He is always right on time.
14. Regarding the first coming of Christ, Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son."
15. Likewise, at God's appointed time, our Lord will return.
16. Hosea 6:2 is very interesting. It says, "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."
17. Some believe that if a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, then Hosea 6:2 is teaching that our Lord will return after about 2,000 years.
18. Furthermore, if we take the genealogies in Scripture literally, this world is about 6,000 years old. According to Scripture, our Lord rested on the seventh day.
19. Genesis 2:2, 3 says, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."
20. Therefore if a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, then after six days our Lord is going to

- usher in His millennial kingdom -- one thousand years of peace and rest on earth.
21. All of this is interesting, but there are two things that are very clear: one is that our Lord will return "as a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:10), i.e., unexpected.
 22. First Thessalonians 5:2 says, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."
 23. Our Lord said in Revelation 3:3, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."
 24. And He said in Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."
 25. So there are two things that are very clear: one is that our Lord will return "as a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:10), i.e., unexpected.
 26. Secondly, our Lord is giving sinners time to repent (II Peter 3:9).
 27. The Lord gave sinners time to repent back in the days of Noah (I Peter 3:20), and He is giving sinners time to repent today (II Peter 3:9).

II. THIS EARTH WILL SOON PASS AWAY (3:10).

1. It is sad to hear worldly people talk about "Mother Earth" and "global warming" and all of this foolish talk. After record-breaking cold weather all over the world, liberals now prefer to use the term "climate change."
2. Well, "climate change" has been around a long time. We call it summer, autumn, winter, and spring!
3. There is a place for environmentalism, but many radical environmentalists are crazy. Some environmentalists are trying to put a limit on how much toilet paper we can use.
4. Many of them are heathenistic and idolatrous. Some proudly admit they are pagans. Romans 1:25 says men have worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. That is a good description of some of these bug-worshipping, tree-hugging environmental fanatics.
5. I am glad we have laws against air and water pollution. In some foreign countries the air is so bad it is hard to breathe. And the water is filthy.
6. However, some of these radical environmentalists have gone way too far. They are opposed to drilling for oil, so we are dependent upon foreign oil, which is very expensive.

7. We should take care of our planet, but we should be more concerned with getting people saved.
8. Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." People grasp for material things, and soon these things will all go up in smoke.
9. Furthermore, we should understand that God is going to judge this wicked world and blow it up (II Peter 3:7-10).
10. This world will not blow up because some crackpot dictator blows up an atomic bomb and starts a major world war. This world will end when God moves in judgment (3:7).
11. Soon the day of man will end in judgment. The Bible calls this judgment "the day of the Lord" (3:10). Man has brought much sin and misery, and so God must judge sinners for their unbelief.
12. The term "the day of the Lord" usually has reference to events surrounding the second coming of Christ. Joel 2:31, 32 says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."
13. As I said earlier, our Lord often described His second coming as like a thief coming unexpectedly in the night (II Peter 3:10; cf. Matthew 24:42-44).

III. THESE PROPHECIES OUGHT TO MOTIVATE US TO HOLINESS AND GODLINESS (3:11).

1. Second Peter 3:11 isn't really a question. It is a statement. It is an exclamation!
2. It reminds us of what Peter said in his first epistle: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (I Peter 1:15).
3. In both these Scriptures, "conversation" refers to our conduct (cf. II Peter 3:14).
4. We have here an important contrast. The false teachers referred to in II Peter 2 did not teach holiness and godliness. In fact, they taught the very opposite (cf. 2:13, 14).
5. The idea here in II Peter 3:11 is that we should be separated from all evil. We should be living our lives in a way that is pleasing to God.
6. And we should be winning souls, for soon there will be no time left to warn them.

CONCLUSION:

1. According to the Bible, there is coming a day, and it could be very soon, when the heavens and earth shall be set on fire and "shall melt with fervent heat" (II Peter 3:12).
2. I read that when the USA dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the temperature at the center of the blast was officially estimated at 60 million degrees centigrade (over 127 million degrees Fahrenheit).
3. This is 10,000 times hotter than the temperature of the surface of the sun.
4. And yet, it will be far worse when God sets this world on fire.