

LIVING WITH ASSURANCE

2 Peter 3:3-18

Did you ever stop to think about how much of what you “know” just “ain't so?” We are living in a society that is experiencing an explosion of information. I think that we are in an information overload situation. We have more data than we can process and make sense of it. To make things worse, a lot of the information is in error or is incomplete. Beyond all that, different people can take the same information and come to completely different conclusions about it and all of them could be wrong. As we watch such things as presidential politics, we can see the media distorting what people say and amplifying the insignificant and thus hiding the real issues about what the candidates believe. If you follow the conflict that is tearing apart some of the large religious denominations, you can find various groups doing the same thing as majoring on the minors and glossing over the real issues. We are living in the time of the so-called “sound bites” in which people use a brief and superficial message to mold public opinion about issues. We recognize it for what it is in the political arena, but fail to see it in the realm of our “values” and how they are being changed. The anti-Christ crowd in the news media and in the entertainment field have carried out an effective campaign to distort the truth about spiritual things and have by means of ridicule caused many people to turn away from God and not believe His word.

How many times have you thought, “If I could just know how a certain event will turn out, then I would know what to do now.” For example, if you knew what certain stocks were going to do, then you could make the right investments and become very rich. If we just knew the future, then we could prepare for it. Actually, we do know the future, however, we tend to not believe it because of all the skepticism that is generated by the world system concerning the word of God. Take for example, the Second Coming of Jesus: most people do not let the truth of what is going to happen influence what they do with their lives today. Why? Because they do not believe the truth.

Resist and Rest – 3:3-7

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 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. 2 Peter 3:3-7 (NASB95)

We live in an age of scoffers or people who think themselves to be so sophisticated that spiritual truth is nothing more than fables. Peter probably had in mind the false teachers that had crept into various churches and were introducing doubt and skepticism. There is probably some of this going on today in the more liberal churches, but the most prevalent evidence of such mocking is in the media by which our beliefs and values are constantly bombarded. Today, the false teachers don't need to try to infiltrate our church since we invite them into our homes, via television programming and news commentators. They deny God in His existence or they deny Him His rightful place of rulership in their lives. The reason for such mockery and scorn is because of the moral poverty in which they live. They have a false sense of security in that they have sinned and continue to sin and yet they have not been punished for it. Such people do not realize that what God's *judgment in time* overlooks in mercy, His *judgment in eternity* will recompense with certainty.

Starting in verse five, we see that for people to believe as they do, they have to be very

selective in the information that they accept as true. There are many Christians who treat the word of God as some sort of cafeteria in which they can pick and choose selected portions of the word to believe and just ignore the rest. Peter pointed out that those who think that God will not intervene in the affairs of man and bring judgment have decided to just ignore the truth of the Creation in which God created the water and the land and then used that same water to make the Flood by which He destroyed the world. The controversy between those who believe in creation and those that ascribe to the Big Bang theory and evolution still goes on. The evolutionist would deny God and His rightful place as Creator. If they accepted Him as Creator, then they would have to face the question of accepting Him as Lord of their lives. If such people can be inventive enough to dismiss creation, then they would have no problem in denying the Flood. I can see that if God did not create the heavens and the earth and if He did not bring judgment on the ancient world because of their wickedness, then why should anyone believe that He will do anything in our present situation or that it is by the power of His word that the world continues to exist.

Be Aware and Behave – 3:8-13

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 its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:8-13 (NASB95)

God's time table is not so much in days and years as it is in events and occasions. We live in the realm of calendar and clock time and God lives in eternity. One day and one thousand years are alike to Him. This statement is likely to simply mean that clock and calendar time is of little or no consequences to God. Some people will take that statement literally and attempt to interpret prophecies by seeing some actual equivalency of a thousand year and a day. The point that Peter was making is that we should not interpret His delay in acting to be that He will not be true to His promise. Instead, we should see that the delay is further evidence of His mercy and grace in that it gives us more time to carry out the Great Commission to take the Gospel to ends of the earth so that all will have the opportunity to be saved. We can be assured that since Jesus said that He would return, that He will, in fact, return. It will be as He has said, it will be when people least expect it.

Some think that the universe began with a big bang. I don't know that this idea is true; however, I am certain that it will end with a big bang. I base this on the word of God which says that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise." Peter described how it will be. It will be unexpected and there will be a lot of noise. It will seem that the sky has disappeared and the earth will experience heat so intense that things will appear to just dissolve away.

John described the events leading up to this final conclusion in the Revelation in chapters eight and nine. When the fourth seal is opened, there will be a series of judgments that will come upon the earth associated with seven trumpets. There will be things such as fires that will burn up a third of the earth; a huge object will fall into the oceans and a third of the fish will be killed and a third of the ships destroyed; there will be worldwide contamination of the fresh water supply; and something will happen that will block out a third of the light of the stars, moon and sun. Then it gets worse. At the fifth trumpet, there will be a release of demonic activity and

evil that is associated with the opening of the Abyss and the coming of a horde of locusts upon the earth which some commentators associate with the rise of radical Islam. The sixth trumpet introduces the big war in which a third of mankind will be killed. This is then followed by the seventh trumpet and God's intervention, the rapture of the church and the outpouring of the wrath of God.

This world is not going to be around forever. Knowing this to be true (the word of God is truth) then we should be putting our priorities on things that will last. We should be making our investments in spiritual things, and concentrating on perfecting holiness and godliness in our lives rather than perfecting and getting more and more material things that will be perish.

If our hope is in heaven as based on the promise that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, then our attention should be on righteousness because that is all that will be allowed there. We need to be practicing righteousness here and now so that we can perform righteousness there and then.

Work and Watch Out – 3:14-18

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:14-18 (NASB95)

Diligence is needed if we know and believe that trouble is on the way and there is going to be great testing and trials as the end time approaches. We should be prepared for whatever comes so that we can be at peace when all around us is in chaos. The ability to be at peace in the midst of turmoil is evidence of our faith in the Lord's promises that He will be with us and protect us. Our faith in Christ will give us the peace we need and our faithfulness to Christ (being led by the Spirit) will result in the spotless and blameless evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In verse 10, most translations state that the earth and its works "will be burned up." The NIV renders this as "will be laid bare." If that is the meaning, then we could logically tie verses 10 and 14 together to see that we must be concerned less about outward appearances and more concerned about the inward reality that will be seen when the trials and testing of life expose what we are made of. Actually, we don't have to wait until problems associated with the end times come to realize that many times the day-to-day problems we encounter will tend to show our true character.

There is a real tendency when we see how the world is becoming more chaotic and it seems that we might have a serious situation even in our own nation that we want the Lord to end it all right now. I would imagine that those early Christian had these same thoughts cross their minds. A good perspective on this is that we need to see any delay in Christ coming back to be an opportunity for those who are lost to be saved. Sharing the good news of God's salvation in Christ is what we are called to do and it is possible that we may neglect this calling by getting caught up in controversies that develop because of false teachers. Peter knew that was a general problem that others such as Paul had addressed and his advice was to make sure that those reading his letter would not be deceived and be fooled by the false doctrines. Even today, we need to be on guard for errors and we need to be faithful to do the work of the kingdom for which we were saved.