

What Kind Of Person – 2 Peter 3:10-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Lord of the Rings*

1. I've read Tolkein's fantasy trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, a dozen times now.
2. Needless to say, when *The Fellowship of the Ring* recently came out, I was one of the first to see it.
3. I have to credit Tolkein's story with being instrumental in helping shape my personality.
 - a. I spent so much time in the books growing up that they helped frame my worldview
 - b. I didn't just read about the hobbits and their great adventure,
 - c. I went with them!
4. It wasn't till years later I discovered that Tolkein was a deeply committed Christian – in fact, he was instrumental in leading CS Lewis to faith in Christ.
 - a. Lewis was a hard-boiled agnostic
 - b. but his friendship with Tolkein and their many walking trips together through the English countryside, resulted in Lewis' conversion.
5. Tolkein's keen grasp of the Christian faith is woven all through the story of *The Lord of the Rings*.
 - a. it's not an allegory of the Bible - but a classic story of the conflict between good and evil;
 - b. of the power of simple virtue overcoming ugliness and setting great evil right.

B. *Our Story*

1. During my high school years, my parents, who had been married for over 25 years, got divorced.
2. It was a bad time; and not an amiable breakup by any means.
3. I think one of the ways I dealt with the pain of seeing my family fall apart was by retreating into the world Tolkein created.
 - a. it became my *hiding place*
 - b. but even more, it allowed me to enter into a story in which I felt like I could play a part just by being there.

- c. I didn't know how my *family story* would end
 - d. but I knew how *The Lord of the Rings* ended – victoriously!
 - e. so I climbed into the books and followed Sam & Frodo into Mordor
 - f. I ran with Legolas and Gimili and Aragorn as they chased the orcs.
4. Then there came that day I committed my life to Jesus Christ, and it wasn't long till I realized that I *am* living in the midst of a story very much like *The Lord of the Rings*.
 5. The great difference is that this isn't *fiction*; this is the *real thing*!
 6. A great evil has risen in the land that wants to steal, kill, and destroy.
 - a. it delights in brutality and violence
 - b. it hates all that is beautiful and wants to dominate everything.
 7. But there's an army of light that stands against this evil and is overcoming it with quiet good and common virtue.
 8. You & I are a part of that army of light.
 9. And we are indeed part of a great story, a tremendous drama that began long ago in a Garden and is moving steadily toward it's climax.
 10. It's to that climax that we turn today . . .

II. TEXT

A. V. 10

¹⁰But 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.

1. This earth we live on, as solid and permanent as it appears, will in fact one day pass away.
2. Right now we're making plans and preparing for our Special Easter Service at Pacifica High School.
 - a. one of the things we have to do is arrange for a stage to be set up on the field
 - b. so we've contacted a couple different companies that do that kind of thing and secured bids
 - c. we selected one of them and have made the arrangements.

- d. on Easter morning very early, they will arrive at the high school, pull their truck out onto the field, unload the parts and construct the stage.
 - e. then the rest of our crew will show up and do some decorating
 - f. the sound crew will come and set up the sound
 - g. the worship team will arrive and run through their set
 - h. then the stands will fill, we'll hold our service, and depart.
 - i. at that point, the company that's built the stage will start tearing it down.
 - j. the stage won't be needed anymore because it was merely the *platform* for our Easter service
3. This thing we call the physical universe is but the theater or stadium God built to erect a stage in, the stage we call Earth.
 - a. and on that stage a great story is being played out
 - b. when the story is done – there is no more need for the stage, or even for the theater
 - c. so God will tear them down!
 4. That is what Peter is describing here – he's telling us how God will deconstruct the universe.
 5. Peter calls this *The Day of the Lord* - a well known OT idea.
 - a. in the OT, *The Day of the Lord* is the time in history when God intervenes directly and specifically to bring an end to sin and evil.
 - b. in Jewish thought, *time* was divided into two ages
 - 1) *this present age*, which is marked by sin and rebellion
 - 2) and *the glorious future age*, when evil is erased and only righteousness is known
 - c. *the Day of the Lord* is the critical period when this present age transitions over into the glorious future age.
 6. Peter says that the Day of the Lord will come in the same way a thief comes when he burglarizes a house in the middle of the night – it will be sudden and unexpected!
 7. It's crucial that we understand this!
 - a. things are not going to just go on forever and ever as they are now!
 - b. a great story is being played out – history is His Story
 - c. and there will come a day when there will be a *radical change*
 - d. in fact, Peter warns about this in the previous verses

f. look at v. 3 –

3knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, **4**and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.”

- g. one of the marks of the last days is that people will scoff at the idea that there’s a God Who’s sovereign over history and that there’s any kind of grand overarching story being played out.
- h. they will mock and say that the universe came into being by chance and that we are all here as the result of purely natural causes.
- i. they’ll say that the key for understanding the future is by looking to the past.
- j. and since they claim the universe has been around for 10 billion years, we can expect it to be around for at least another 10 billion
- k. but then Peter writes -

5For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old,

- l. these scoffers choose to neglect the evidence for the fact that *God* created the universe.
- m. and that because He is a God of order and design, there has to be a *reason* for the creation!
- n. what they also choose to forget, is that God has demonstrated in the past that He *will* break into history with judgment -

and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

- o. the Flood proves that God does break into history to reveal His mighty hand of judgment.
- p. and just as God brought the heavens and the earth into

existence in the beginning, His word now sustains and holds that creation together.

q. when it has served its purpose and is no longer needed –God will withdraw His word and it will vanish away!

8. In v. 10, Peter simply tells us how that will happen

. . . 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.

a. what's amazing is the *way* Peter describes this

b. you simply couldn't find more accurate or descriptive terms to explain what would happen if the physical *substance* of our universe was let loose.

c. what Peter says here proves the Holy Spirit inspired this!

d. you see, in Peter's day, they didn't know about atoms and elements.

e. they had no concept of atomic theory – and yet what he says here aligns perfectly with what we now know about the structure of matter and space.

9. One of the first things you learn in chemistry is that like charges repel while opposite charges attract.

a. if you try to push the north ends of a magnet together, you can't do it because like charges repel each other.

b. the electrons, which are negatively charged, fly in orbits around the nucleus of the atom, which is composed of protons, which are positively charged.

c. one of the great mysteries of physics is what holds the nucleus of every atom together since like charges repel?

d. we know just how much energy in the form of heat is released when you find a way to overcome the forces that hold the nucleus together –that's what a nuclear bomb is.

e. it's the nucleuses of a small amount of uranium or plutonium flying apart.

10. Still, physics is stumped, what holds the nucleus of every atom together?

11. Science may not be able to explain it, but the Bible does in Colossians 1: 16 & 17

16 For by [Christ] were all things created, that are in

heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

- a. that word “consist” means adhere, or are held together.
- b. Jesus created all things and *sustains* all things
- c. He is the One who holds the nucleus of every atom
12. But what of the time when the *purpose* for all the atoms is complete?
13. What of the time when the physical universe has served it’s purpose?
14. Well, Jesus will let it go – and all matter will melt down into one final nuclear explosion
15. Peter describes this perfectly in v. 10!
16. Note carefully what Peter says at the end of the verse -

both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

- a. the word “earth” means *soil* – he means the physical planet we live on
- b. by “works” he means everything that man has done
- c. how he’s taken that soil; the rocks and lumber and metal and fashioned such great monuments and tools
- d. from Stonehenge to The Golden Gate Bridge, all of it will be burned up!

B. Vs. 11-13

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved,

1. What things? The great works of mankind, all the things people spend their time and energy on thinking that in them they will find some meaning and purpose to their lives -

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* 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 dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

2. Peter's question and challenge is a simple one – simple, yet profound!
3. In light of the fact that the earth and its works are going to pass away so utterly and finally, what kind of a person ought you & I be?
 - a. should we be the kind of person who's life is defined by those things that do not last?
 - b. or should we be the kind of people who's life is founded on that which is eternal?
4. Picture a rich kid and a poor kid sitting down to a game of Monopoly.
 - a. as they play, the poor kid secures all the property while the rich kid falls behind and ends up losing the game.
 - b. at the end of the game, the poor one sits there with all the cards and money and little plastic houses and hotels.
 - c. the rich child has nothing, but rises from the game board to climb into the back of his limousine for the drive to the mansion where he lives, for a gourmet meal cooked by a world-class chef.
 - d. the poor child wanders down the street to a refrigerator box where he lives; his lunch is leftovers from a dumpster.
5. Friends, this world is like a Monopoly game.
 - a. people think what it means to win is to acquire property and house and hotels and lots and lots of cash!
 - b. one day they'll realize they've been living life by the wrong set of rules and values.
 - c. it may appear that the Christian is a loser gauged by the world's standards,
 - d. but when this little game of Monopoly is over, the Christian will rise from the board, climb into the back of a fiery chariot and go home to his or her mansion in heaven where they will enjoy glory forevermore.
 - e. look at v. 13 -

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

6. Let me ask what Peter asks – What kind of person ought you & I to be?
 - a. in light of the fact all this stuff is going to dissolve how should we live our lives?
 - b. what should we *invest* ourselves in?
 - c. by what standard should we *define* ourselves?
 - d. what's *important* to us?
 - e. what kind of people *are* we?
 - f. are we earth-bound or heaven-bound?
7. This earth and all it's works will be dissolved!
8. If that's the case, then why did God create it all?
9. Well, what's the one thing out of the physical creation that *isn't* dissolved?
10. In the end, what's the one thing in the universe that *transcends* the end of the universe?
11. People!

III. CONCLUSION

A. What Kind Of People

1. Here's the kind of people Peter is calling us to be.
2. The kind that realize history is *not* some aimless, endless sequence of random events.
 - a. we are people who believe in a God who is moving history forward to a grand climax.
 - b. and in this story, what matters, what's at stake, is not *stuff*, but people.
3. We're the kind of men and women who recognize there's a great struggle going on between good and evil and that we're called to fight on the side of Good.
4. Our enemy is *not* other men and women, but a malevolent and evil spirit named Satan.
5. And God has given us all that we need to overcome the devil's dark plan.
6. Listen to Ephesians 6 -

¹⁰Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the

devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. ¹³Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

7. As the Apostle Paul says in this passage – our enemy is *not* flesh and blood; it's not other men and women.
 - a. actually, human beings are the *great prize* God and the devil are contending for
 - b. the problem is, the lost don't realize this and end up being *used* by the devil
 - c. they are his *captives*; his *hostages* who are suffering with a spiritual kind of *Stockholm Syndrome*.
8. God wants you and I who have been rescued by Christ to see ourselves as a spiritual hostage rescue team!
 - a. we ought to live in such a way that we reveal the excellence of the life and the beauty of the love of God.
 - b. our priority ought to be *people* rather than stuff that will dissolve.
9. Every so often we hear about some poor fool who decides to commit suicide but tries to take as many people with him as he can –
 - a. so he walks into a fast food place with guns blazing
 - b. or he hijacks an airliner and flies it into a building
10. As Christians, we don't want to die, we want to live – and in our living, we want to take as many people along with us as we can.

B. Come Along

1. Let me end with that today – with an appeal to those here who for whatever reason haven't *yet* received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
2. Look at verses 8 & 9 -
3. After speaking of God's judgment in the flood being an example of how God does intervene in history, Peter says this -

⁸But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the

Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

4. We might look at the long passage of years and conclude that God intervenes only rarely and only after great lengths of time.
5. What we fail to consider is the *eternity* of God.
 - a. He exists *above* time.
 - b. a thousand years *for us* is as a single day to *Him*
 - c. then again, in terms of the amount of time needed to *do* something, whereas we run *out of time*, and 24 hours isn't enough to get done what we need to get done, God *never* runs out of time.
 - d. a single day for us might as well be as a thousand years to Him in terms of what He's able to accomplish.
6. And though time may stretch on and on, and the promises of the end may seem slow in coming, know this! The Day will come when History will reach it's Grande Finale!

⁹The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

7. Here's why it seems God is delaying judgment = God is waiting for *you* to come to Him!
8. He's not willing that you should perish!
9. In fact, God has already proven how far He will go to rescue you – He sent His Son to die for your sins.
10. But God will not force Himself on you – it has to be *your* choice to believe in Him and receive His forgiveness.
11. And that's why we're still waiting – that and that alone explains why the end has been put off – God is giving *you* time to repent and come to faith in His Son.
12. Please don't confuse the *delay* with a *reluctance* on God's part to judge.
 - a. the Bible says that God is furious with sin every day.
 - b. even now His wrath is full to the brim and ready to spill over in judgment
 - c. there is only one thing that stays the tilting of that pot – His mercy.

- d. one day the pot will tip and God's judgment will fall
- e. *then* it will be too late.
- f. but *today* is the day of salvation!