

On October 30, 1938, a wave of mass hysteria seized millions of Americans when Orson Welles and his very popular Mercury Theatre went on the air and presented their dramatization of the “War of the Worlds.” I’m going to read a brief excerpt from that program, but before I do, I need to set it up, and I also need to remind you that at that time, radio was the primary means for entertainment and for communicating important information on a large scale. Television wasn’t a common household item just yet – it was just radio.

So, the radio broadcast began with dance music, part of the normal programming, then the announcer interrupted the music to bring a special bulletin. The announcer stated that a professor from the Mt. Jennings Observatory in Chicago reported observing several explosions of incandescent gas occurring on Mars, and this gas was moving towards the earth at a high rate of speed. Another professor at the observatory in Princeton also confirmed this same observation on Mars. Then the special bulletin was over and they returned to the dance music.

Later in the program, there were additional radio broadcast interruptions about possible meteorites, and then there was a report of a huge, flaming object – also believed to be a meteorite, falling on some farm in Grover’s Mill, New Jersey. The radio audience was told that a special unit had been dispatched to that farm along with a reporter named Carl Phillips. Twenty seconds go by, then Carl Phillips comes on the air and he begins his live report from the scene. So, here is the excerpt.

“Ladies and gentlemen (Am I on?). Ladies and gentlemen, here I am, back of a stone wall that adjoins Mr. Wilmuth’s garden. From here I get a sweep of the whole scene. I’ll give you every detail as long as I can talk. As long as I can see. More state police have arrived. They’re drawing up a cordon in front of the pit, about thirty of them. No need to push the crowd back now. They’re willing to keep their distance. The captain is conferring with someone. We can’t quite see who. Oh yes, I believe it’s Professor Pierson. Yes, it is. Now they’ve parted. The professor moves around one side, studying the object, while the captain and two policemen advance with something in their hands. I can see it now. It’s a white handkerchief tied to a pole . . . a flag of truce. If those creatures know what that means . . . what anything means!”

“Wait! Something’s happening!”

IN THE BACKGROUND THERE’S A HISSING SOUND ON THE RADIO FOLLOWED BY A HUMMING THAT INCREASES IN INTENSITY

*Phillips continues and states: “A humped shape is rising out of the pit. I can make out a small beam of light against a mirror. **What’s that?** There’s a jet of flame springing from the mirror, and it leaps right at the advancing men. It strikes them head on! Good Lord, they’re turning into flame!”*

THERE ARE SCREAMS AND UNEARTHLY SHRIEKS HEARD OVER THE RADIO

Phillips says: “Now the whole field’s caught fire. (THERE’S AN EXPLOSION HEARD) The woods . . . the barns . . . the gas tanks of automobiles . . . it’s spreading everywhere. It’s coming this way. About twenty yards to my right . . .”

THEN THERE’S A CRASH OF THE MICROPHONE ... AND DEAD SILENCE

This was meant to be a scary Halloween prank, but for radio listeners who had tuned in, it seemed that we were in the middle of a full-scale invasion by hostile Martians. People took it seriously, and it was reported that panic spread across the country – hospitals treated people for shock and hysteria, and churches were full of people in fervent prayer.

It was fake news, there was no invasion, it was a joke, but this morning in **2 Peter 3**, what Peter tells us is no joke, and in the future, there will be a real full-scale invasion when Jesus comes again with His followers as the King of kings and Lord of lords. It’s gonna happen.

Now, before dive into **Chapter 3**, let’s take a quick look back at where Peter has led us to this point, and actually we need to go all the way back to his first letter.

If you recall in his first letter, Peter was writing to these same believers who were suffering under severe persecution by the Roman Empire. Peter wrote to encourage them, explaining they had found favor with God even though their difficult circumstances might suggest otherwise. Peter made it clear right out the gate that as followers of Christ, they were strangers in this fallen and broken and hostile world. And in spite of their difficult circumstances, Peter told them they had a living hope in a living Savior, and this hope also included a heavenly inheritance that was waiting for them. They had a confirmed reservation for eternal life because of the completed and finished work of Jesus Christ, so, in their suffering, these believers were anticipating – they were persevering and eagerly awaiting the Lord’s return where He would take them out of their suffering to their true home and reward.

While they persevered, Peter sent his second letter to these believers who not only suffered through persecution from the outside by the Roman Empire, but they were also being threatened from the inside by the destructive heresies of false teachers.

So, in **2 Peter Chapter 1**, Peter explained among other things, that Scripture was given through Old Testament prophets and eyewitness accounts of New Testament apostles, who were moved by the Holy Spirit, to give us the inspired and inerrant Word of God. God's Word is the foundation for our faith in Christ, and Peter encouraged believers to stand strong in the truth found in God's Word.

Then in **2 Peter Chapter 2**, Peter makes a shift as he describes the alternative to the truth – that being the destructive heresies that came from false teachers. Peter spoke about their false doctrine, he described their behavior as being predatory in nature, and he revealed it was better they had not known the truth. In the last verse, Peter summed it all up by telling us, ***“It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”*** The point Peter made was that, in time, the real character and the true nature of these false teachers would be revealed – it would become clearly evident by their actions, by their fruit, they were not in Christ – in fact, they never were.

Now, we come to **2 Peter Chapter 3**, where Peter brings it all together in a sense, and focuses our attention to the truth spoken by the prophets and the apostles which speak about the promised return of Christ, and the heresy from the false teachers who denied it's gonna happen. So, if you have your Bibles, turn to **2 Peter 3**, and we will begin with **verses 1-2**. And Peter says,

¹This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

Here, Peter explains the purpose for his letter, that being to stir them up – to wake them up by reminding them of the truths they already know. Peter did not want them to “nod off” so to speak – instead they were to **remember the words spoken** by God's real messengers from the Old and the New Testaments. In light of their difficult circumstances and the threat of false teachers, Peter knew they could easily become distracted, and discouraged, and even doubtful of the truths found in God's Word, so he reminded them to keep God's Word in the forefront of their minds – to keep God's Word stirred up.

As I said in a previous sermon, some of God's Word is hard to understand and sometimes even harder to accept, but we have to be in His Word and be willing to submit ourselves to His Word if we are going to call ourselves people of the Word. We are not free to call ourselves Christians, only to toss our Bibles on a shelf to collect dust, and then go live as we please. We do not have that freedom as followers of Christ – that is the truth, and Peter wants to remind us of the truth.

Now in contrast to the truth, this brings us to **verses 3-4**.

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."

Peter begins by saying, "**know this first of all**" meaning we should not be surprised to learn that there are people out there – **mockers**, who scoff at the idea of Jesus coming again. They make fun of our faith in Christ, suggesting they have an intellectual problem with God's Word, when their real problem is a moral problem. They reject the truth about Christ and His second coming because they are **following after their own lusts**. That's their real motivation – to do what they want to do, and to do what they want to do, means they have to deny the return of Christ which ultimately results in accountability and the judgment of sinners. If you want to follow after your own lusts – then you certainly don't want to hear about Christ coming again and the judgment He brings with Him.

So, the false teachers sarcastically ask, "**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.**" In other words,

"You Christians have talked about the Second Coming of Christ for a long time, and He still hasn't come back yet. Things have always been the way they are right now and they will stay that way. So, give it up. Jesus is not coming back."

As far as they could see, the world was going on just as it always had. The sun had come up and gone down, the seasons have followed each other, the tides had risen and fallen for thousands of years in perfect order. People are born, people live their lives and people die – nothing has really changed, so they concluded that the promise of the Second Coming of Christ isn't going to happen and therefore, the Word of God is unreliable, it's suspect, it's filled with error, and it cannot be trusted.

Well, Peter had a response, so let's look at **verses 5-7** where he says,

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.

Peter warned believers that they should not buy the argument of the false teachers because it was based on a false premise. He says the truth **escapes their notice**, meaning they shut their eyes to the facts. These false teachers held that nature had remained constant since the beginning of creation – nothing had changed, suggesting that God had not and would not violate the laws of nature.

But Peter responded by explaining that the God who created the earth from a watery mass – the God who had blessed mankind with water – for we can't live without it, is the same God who took the blessing of water, and turned it into a devastating flood in Noah's day to judge the wickedness of mankind. To suggest that nothing had changed since creation was wrong – and the flood proved that.

The false teachers, just like those people in Noah's day, disregarded the truth. They lived as if tomorrow would never come. They sinned in every way possible, but one day, for the very first time, rain dropped from the sky and the fountains of the earth opened up and water covered the entire earth. Judgment came.

The fact is, God had overruled His own natural laws in the past, things have not remained constant as the false teachers claimed, and if God judged the world once, He will do it again – only this time we are told He will do so with **fire** at the final **judgment**. Peter might say wake up and take the truth seriously.

I was reminded of the eruption of Mount St. Helens in May of 1980, which was not a sudden event and it was not taken seriously by everyone.

For two months prior to the massive blast—the most deadly and destructive in American history—earthquakes and volcanic activity signaled a major event was about to happen. A sleeping mountain had started to awaken, and one expert declared the chance of a major eruption was virtually 100 percent. Authorities had plenty of time to sound the alarm and warn those living nearby of the looming

danger. Warnings were given and residents were asked to leave, yet despite the seriousness of the threat, some people chose to disregard the warnings.

Probably the best known of those who refused to evacuate was Harry Randall Truman. The eighty-three-year-old man was the owner and caretaker at the Mount St. Helens Lodge at Spirit Lake. He had survived the sinking of his troop ship by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland during World War I, and he was not about to leave just because scientists thought there was danger. Truman believed the danger was exaggerated and told reporters, "I don't have any idea whether it will blow, but I don't believe it to the point that I'm going to pack up."

Governmental officials implored him to leave. Friends and family begged him to leave, stating that his failure to get out was suicide, but Truman disregarded all of the concerns about the volcano. He said, "this area is heavily timbered, Spirit Lake is between me and the mountain, and the mountain is a mile away, the mountain ain't gonna hurt me."

He actually became something of a celebrity for his defiance, but on May 18th, Mount St. Helens blew, and Truman and his lodge were buried beneath 150 feet of mud and debris from the volcanic eruption. His body was never found.

This man did not heed the warnings of those who tried to save his life and he died because of it. Like it or not, agree with it or not, ready or not, Jesus is coming again, and when He does, He's bringing judgment with Him.

Okay, let's continue with **verses 8-9**. Peter states,

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.

This is a passage that may be familiar to you. In this passage, Peter begins with an honest admission, and he says that when it comes Christ's return and His judgment, and I believe that is the context here, God often appears to be **slow**, meaning He seems to be loitering, slacking off – for with the **Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day**. Hopefully, those in the Revelation study noticed that word "**like**." Peter does not say that a thousand years equals one day, but rather it is like one day – in other words, our view of

time isn't the same as God's view of time, and God's time is often a difficult concept to understand, but let me explain it in a way that we can relate to.

When you get in the car to make a long trip, and you tell the kids that it will take ten hours to get to your destination – what happens within the first couple of hours? “Are we almost there yet?” Children do not have the same concept of time as an adult, and in the same way, we struggle to understand God's time.

So, for us, God may appear to be slow when it comes to His judgment, and this can be frustrating because it seems like the “bad guys” are getting away with murder, and sometimes we look at the evil in the world and ask, “Why doesn't God just put an end to it?” “Why doesn't He stop all the killing in our streets?” “Why does He allow evil to exist?” There are probably many answers to those questions, but maybe the best answer comes from other questions.

For example, why didn't God strike you dead when you shouted, “I hate you” at your parents? Why didn't God send you to hell for lusting after another woman? Why didn't God punish you with fire and brimstone when you spread a terrible lie about a brother or sister in Christ? Why didn't God drop the hammer on you when you got drunk as a skunk or high as a kite? Do I need to go on to point out our arrogant and self-righteous thinking – which God also hates?

God sees the evil in the world, and He also sees you and me. God sees it all, and God's mercy causes Him not to judge quickly, for if He did, none of us would be here. God waits because He knows how blind, how stubborn, how foolish, and how prone to evil we are. God waits because He wants people to turn from their sin and surrender to Him.

God is not loitering, and He's not slacking. God is on time, His plan is right on schedule, but God delays His judgment because He wants people to be saved.

Paul Stanley tells this story from his military experience: “As an infantry company commander in Vietnam in 1967, I saw Viet Cong soldiers surrender many times. As they were placed in custody, marched away, and briefly interrogated, their body language and facial expressions always caught my attention. Most hung their heads in shame, staring at the ground, unwilling to look their captors in the eye. But some stood erect, staring defiantly at those around them, resisting any attempt by our men to control them. They had surrendered physically but not mentally.

On one occasion after the enemy had withdrawn, I came upon several soldiers surrounding a wounded Viet Cong. Shot through the lower leg, he was hostile and frightened, yet helpless. He threw mud and kicked with his one good leg when anyone came near him. When I joined the circle around the wounded enemy, one soldier asked me, 'Sir, what do we do?' He's losing blood fast and needs medical attention.'

I looked down at the struggling Viet Cong and saw the face of a 16 or 17-year-old boy. I unbuckled my pistol belt and hand grenades so he could not grab them. Then, speaking gently, I moved toward him. He stared fearfully at me as I knelt down, but he allowed me to slide my arms under him and pick him up. As I walked with him toward a waiting helicopter, he began to cry and hold me tight. He kept looking at me and squeezing me tighter. We climbed into the helicopter and took off. During the ride, our young captive sat on the floor, clinging to my leg. Never having ridden in a helicopter, he looked out with panic as we gained altitude and flew over the trees. He fixed his eyes back on me, and I smiled reassuringly and put my hand on his shoulder. After landing, I picked him up and walked toward the medical tent. As we crossed the field, I felt the tenseness leave his body and his tight grasp loosen. His eyes softened, and his head leaned against my chest. The fear and resistance were gone — he had finally surrendered.”

That is the way it is when we surrender to God isn't it? At first, we see God as the enemy and we fight Him – claiming the right follow after our own lusts and to do what we want. But in our need, in our brokenness, when we see the truth, when we finally surrender, we realize God is not our enemy, in fact, He cares for us, He loves us, and He's been waiting on us.

God is slow in His judgment to give time for those who will surrender – to come to Him and be saved. He restrains judgment to give people the time to wake up, open their eyes, see their need, and turn to Jesus for salvation. God is patient, but Jesus is coming again, and when He returns, He's bringing judgment with Him – and that's the truth. It's gonna happen.

Source Material:

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