

INTRODUCTION:

Over the last several weeks on news channels and radio we have been hearing about the China earthquake.

- As of this morning, the death toll was over 69,000 people with another 368,000 injured, and almost 18,000 still missing.
- I have heard incredible rescue stories of people escaping landslides and toppled buildings.
- After the minor earthquakes we experienced a few weeks ago, I cannot imagine an earthquake as strong as the one that struck China and the aftershocks that have continued to cause damage and loss of life.

In my lifetime there have been a number of major natural disasters:

- We remember, the TSUNAMI just 3 years ago that claimed the lives of more than 226,000 people.
- HURRICANE, Mitch claimed 10,000 lives just nine years ago in Central America.
- A MONSOON in Thailand in 1983 killed 10,000 people and caused 100,000 people to contract water born diseases.
- A LANDSLIDE in Yungay, Peru took out basically the entire city of 18,000 in 1970.
- EARTHQUAKES in 1976 in Tangshan, China officially claimed 255,000, but estimates say it could have been as many as 750,000 total lives taken!
- In Bangladesh in 1970, a CYCLONE killed 500,000 people.
- And in 1984 and 1985 the Ethiopian FAMINE claimed an estimated 900,000 lives.
- All of these things have happened, just within the last 38 years!

I found a study on the internet done by some students at a St. Louis University and they also listed some of the worst natural disasters in the history of the world.

- Some of the ones this listed included a FLOOD from the Yellow River in China in 1887 that claimed the lives of 900,000 and an EARTHQUAKE near Shaanxi (Shensi), China in 1556 that killed 830,000.
- This website also mentioned what they called a “MAJOR GLOBAL PALEOCLIMATE EVENT.”
- An event that we all know as the GREAT FLOOD found in **Genesis 5**.

All of these events are horrible catastrophes that have shattered the lives of millions of people who have been plunged into the depths of despair, many of whom feel a tremendous burden of guilt having survived.

- I simply cannot imagine the emotions that are going through the minds today of the people that are there in China today.
- I am sure there is not a word in the English Language that describes the devastation that they are feeling as a result of this incredible natural event.
- What is even more tragic, however, is that much of the world has failed to acknowledge that there is going to be a supernatural event that is going to take place that will cause all of these world tragedies to pale in comparison.
- We learn from Scriptures that on Judgment Day, the Lord will release His wrath on Earth and everything will be destroyed once and for all. Please turn with me to **2 Peter 3**.

In **2 Peter 3**, we find that the people had forgotten what the Lord is capable of.

- The Apostle Peter was reminding Christians about how God created earth and how He destroyed it with the great flood during the time of Noah, and how he will destroy it again with fire.
- Yet now, nearly 2000 years later, the world is teaching the Theory of Evolution as if it is a proven fact and the great flood is simply a “**Global Paleoclimate Event.**”
- The world has once again forgotten what the Lord has done.
- Listen to what Peter said in **2 Peter 3:5-7**, “*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, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 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.*”

This morning, I would like us to think about the earthly disasters and to compare them with the impending disaster that is described in the pages of the Bible.

- I hope that our study this morning will help us all to put things into a more proper perspective of priorities in our lives.

Back in 2004, when the Tsunami hit Indonesia, I found a cartoon in the paper that showed a man who apparently had just arrived home from a day at the office to find his home in complete shambles.

- There is a Newspaper on the kitchen table with the headline, “**Earthquake triggers massive tsunami killing thousands.**”
- The man is looking at his wife as she describes her day. She says, “The water heater burst, the basement’s flooded, the dishwasher overflowed. The dog has been going everywhere, the kids are tracking mud all over the house and yet... I feel like the luckiest woman on earth.”

This cartoon does an excellent job of describing the importance of having the proper perspective in our lives.

- All of the family tragedies we might face in our daily lives, pale in comparison to the world tragedies that occur today, however, when we understand what the Bible says about the Day of Judgment, we also need to acknowledge that even the worst world tragedies pale in comparison to the day God’s wrath is released.

On TV these past couple weeks we have been able to witness some of the world’s most awesome powers that can strike with little or no forewarning.

- We have seen the amazing destruction that can occur within a matter of a couple of hours.
- The tsunami a few years ago traveled at a speed of 500 MPH, which means it could have gone from Chicago to St. Louis in a matter of about half an hour! Faster than the average commercial jet!
- As the wave of destruction arrived, many people had no time to find safety and were washed away like ants being drowned by a spilled glass of water.
- They were absolutely powerless and were at the mercy of the wave.

In our text, I believe this is the point that Peter was trying to get across to the people regarding God’s power.

- Peter said that by God’s word, the earth was created and when God wanted to destroy the entire face of the earth with a flood, he also had the power to do that.
- In **2 Peter 3:8**, Peter acknowledged that God is eternal when he said, “*with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*”
- Peter was telling them not to forget that we are at the mercy of God and He has the ability to create and destroy us like ants if He chooses.

- And yet, we can see by the very next verse, that He loves us dearly and we are far more dear to Him than ants. **Verse 9** says, *“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 morning, I would like us to take a look at what the Bible says about the Day of Judgment.

- It seems that the Apostle Peter may have spent more time with Jesus in His adult life than any other.
- Jesus often spoke about the Day of Judgment with His disciples and I am sure that Peter must have had long discussions with Jesus about what that day would be like and what to expect.
- As a matter of fact, in **Luke 12:45**, Jesus said to Peter, *“I have come to cast fire upon the earth.”*

Let us therefore see what we can learn about the Judgment Day from Peter by reading **2 Peter 3:10-13**:
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.”*

There are three very important aspects about the Day of Judgment that we can learn from this passage.

I. First, we can see from verse 10 that THE JUDGMENT DAY WILL COME WHEN WE DO NOT EXPECT IT.

Verse 10 of our text says, *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief...”*

- I do not know anyone who anticipates getting robbed by a thief.
- My mother and father in law, whom many of you have gotten to know, were once robbed at gunpoint many, many years ago.
- They answered the door, and within moments, someone had pushed their way inside and pointed a gun at my father in law’s head.
- As you can imagine, it was a terrifying experience that happened so quickly there was no way to predict that it was coming.
- Life was absolutely normal at one point, and in a matter of moments, the thieves had arrived.
- At that point there was nothing that could be done to prepare for it.
- I am sure this is the same way that the China earth quake survivors feel today.

Jesus spoke to the disciples in **Matthew 24:43-44** about being prepared for the 2nd coming and He said, *“But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.”*

- Jesus continued on and gave some advice by saying, *“For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”*
- This is also the occasion in which Jesus told the disciples about the 5 foolish and the five wise bridesmaids in **Matthew 25**.
- Only half of the bridesmaids had brought enough oil for their lamps and while they were out getting more oil, the groom came and they were not allowed into the wedding.
- The Apostle Paul also reminded the **Thessalonians** in chapter **5:3** that the Lord would come like a thief in the night and he said the, *“destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.”*

- Paul continued on to warn them by saying, “*so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.*”

Today, we do a number of things to prepare for unexpected events in our lives.

- People put alarms on their homes to alert them if a thief makes a surprise visit.
- A pregnant lady may have a bag packed and a cell phone close by so that she is ready when the time comes.
- Up north when there was a winter snow storm, we would fill our gas tanks and make sure we had a blanket, candles, and a first aid kit just in case we get stuck in the snow
- We try to keep a couple months worth of wages in a savings account just in case of some financial surprise that unexpectedly comes up.
- We buy warranties on cars and other household products, just in case they break down or have a mechanical defect.
- We pay for all different types of insurances just in case we need medical attention, we get in a car accident, we have our home burn down, or we die and want our family to be able to get by financially.

Why is it that the world makes all of these preparations for themselves and yet so easily forget God and so easily neglects to consider what is to come once their lives on Earth have ended?

- Last night, I stood beside Kenneth Eca’s hospital bed and watched him take his very last breath...
- The Bible clearly tells us that we do not know the hour that The Judgment Day will come.
- In many cases, it will be like a “*thief in the night*” and will “*come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman.*”

There is a second aspect about The Day of Judgment that we can learn from the Apostle Peter in our text.

II. THE JUDGMENT DAY WILL BE AN AWESOME DISPLAY OF GOD’S POWER.

As we read **verse 10** again, I would like for us to consider all of the World’s greatest natural disasters in comparison to the Judgment Day.

- Think about the Cyclone in Bangladesh that claimed half a million lives in 1970... the Earthquake that took 830,000 lives in China in 1556, or the famine that took 900,000 only 23 years ago, and the Yellow River flood in 1887 that took another 900,000 lives. How do they compare with the things that Peter describes?
- **Verse 10** says, “*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.*”
- Peter says that the Earth’s atmosphere, “*the heavens*”, will pass away with a “*roar*” or “*great noise.*” (NKJV)
- The New International Version of the Bible says, “*the heavens will disappear...*”

When I was much younger, my brothers and I used to blow bubbles by using Dawn dish soap mixed with water.

- We found that we could make some huge, dome-shaped bubbles on the surface of our kitchen table by using a straw and by blowing very gently.
- Blowing too harshly would cause the bubble to pop in an instant.
- When Peter said that “*the heavens will disappear*” I can imagine that it could be compared to a soap bubble that is gone in an instant.

Peter continued on in **verse 10** to say that when the heavens pass away, *“the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”*

- From a purely scientific standpoint, we recognize that if the Earth’s atmosphere disappeared, the Sun would immediately begin burning up everything that it shined directly upon.
- If God, was to take a giant pin and “pop” the Earth’s atmosphere, all life here would be obliterated and the elements of the Earth would melt with intense heat.
- We are not told, however, that He is NOT just going to “pop” the atmosphere!
- **Verse 12** says, *“the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!”*
- I get the impression that everything, including the Sun, and moon, and the stars will be completely destroyed by fire.

No Volcano, or Nuclear explosion comes even close to the kind of destruction that Peter describes.

- When we think of the tsunami three years ago... we recognize that it was like dropping a grain of sugar into a bowl of water in comparison to the kind of destruction that the Lord has in mind for the Day of Judgment.
- That day will come at an hour that we do not expect it, and it will be an awesome display of God’s power.

There is a third aspect about the Judgment Day that we need to remember this morning.

III. And that is that THERE IS NO REASON TO FEAR THE JUDGMENT DAY IF WE ARE MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS IN LIFE.

In **verse 11** of our text, Peter asks a question which he answers in the very same sentence.

- He asks them what kind of person they should be and then he says, *“to be in holy conduct and godliness...”*
- He continues on to say in **verse 12** that they should actually be *“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.”*
- He goes on from there in **verse 13** and says, *“But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”*
- Peter is telling them that if they are making the right decisions in their lives that they do not have anything to worry about and can be assured that they will be saved from the fire and can look forward to *“new heavens and a new earth.”*
- The Apostle John expresses in **1 John 4** that those who have perfected love, *“may have confidence in the day of judgment.”* In that passage, John continued on to say, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.”*
- **Romans 2:5-6** says, *“But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:”*
- **Romans 14:10** says, *“For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God”* and a couple of verses later says, *“So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”*
- **Matthew 12:36-37** says, *“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

I could keep going with passage after passage of God’s word that describe how we will all be judged based on our actions.

- In **Matthew 24** that we read earlier, Jesus said, be on the alert and then He said, “*you also must be ready.*”
- The Apostle Paul also said to “*be alert and sober.*”
- These are all calls for action to be prepared and to not get caught off guard.

If I knew that thieves, such as the ones that visited my in-laws, were coming to my home at a certain time I would be able to make certain decisions in order to be ready for their arrival.

- I could be prepared by having the doors locked and by refusing to allow them to enter in...
- I could have prepared by having a weapon to defend myself...
- I could have called the police and had them waiting to ambush the thieves...
- Or I could have taken the “Home Alone” approach and I could have hooked up electricity to the doorknob or had hot tar in a bucket over the door.
- What do you expect... My name is Kevin...

The point is... Since we do not know when the Judgment Day will be and we do not know when we might die, we need to be absolutely sure that we have done everything that we can to prepare for it!

- If we have made preparations, as John says, we can “*have confidence in the day of judgment.*”

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION:

This morning, we have learned that in many ways natural disasters can be compared to the Day of Judgment.

- The Day of Judgment will be at an hour that we do not expect.
- It will be an awesome display of God’s power and the heavens and earth will melt with the intense heat.
- Finally, we have learned that we should not fear the Judgment Day if we make the right decisions in life.

The good news is that we can all make the right choices and we can be spared of the devastation that is to come...

- When the tsunami hit three years ago, I was reading an article from the newspaper about Moira Lee and Andy Quatham who were over in Thailand at the time the tsunami struck.
- They were supposed to be out snorkeling at the time the giant wave hit, however they changed their minds at the last minute. Most of the snorkeling boats were destroyed.
- They decided to go to a coffee shop and happened to be sitting in the best position to see any danger approaching from the ocean.
- They said that they were probably some of the first people to see the wave coming as they started running down alleys to escape the wall of water that at one point was within about 5 feet of them.
- They made a series of good decisions while running and were able to get out of harms way because of their quick response to the impending danger.

This morning, I want to implore each one of you to take decisive actions that will allow you to be prepared for the day that you will stand before God in judgment.

- In **Matthew 25:46** Jesus spoke about unloving people and He said, “*These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*”
- I would like to encourage you to make a series of good decisions in order to get out of harms way.
- **2 Peter 2:9** says, “*the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.*”

INVITATION:

The Bible tells us that salvation comes by hearing the word and believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

- We are told that we must repent of our sins, change our old ways, and confess Him as Lord.
- The Bible is clear about the fact that baptism also saves us...The apostle Peter uttered forth the words that God inspired him to write and he said in **1 Peter 3:21**, "*baptism now saves you...*"

Many today have forgotten what the Lord is capable of. 1) By His word, He created the Earth. 2) By his word, he destroyed the earth with water. 3) And by His word, He will destroy the earth again... this time with fire.

- If you have not made the right decisions with your life and you would like to be made pure before God today, please come forward as we stand and sing the invitation song...please come forward.