

Now & Then

- I like, N&T: Fri night fish fry; playing guitar; water, kayak. You like: sure got hobbies/intrsts you enjoy N&T. Not all time but smtms. That's what phrase N&T means: occasnly, ev so often, ev once in a while, fr time/time, N&T. I titled sermon for today N&T, but not using reg meaning/phrase (smtms, occsnly) as if I think you should come ch N&T, or GW/HC N&T. No, today I want us to think re 2 periods/time: now (present, days in which currently live, now) and then (future, coming Day when Xp returns, Last Day, J-Day, then). And I want us think these 2 periods/time bec that's exactly what Ap Pt directs our attn to today, in his letter, 2 Pt 3. He points us ahead to great day/Lord, then; and teaches us how prepare for it, now. So, today we focus on N&T.
- Start w/now: **vs. 8**. Quoting Ps 90: **"1000 yrs in your sight: like day that's just gone by, or like a watch in night" (4)**. Means: God's now: diff fr our now. We live in time, in the chrnlgy God created at (what we say!) "beg/time." So we have: 24 hr days, wkly routine, seqnc/yrs; time marches on, w/un-intrptd precision. That's our now; but God's now: diff fr our now. He: not bound by time/chrnlgy, like we – any more than bound by gravity. Created time; exists outside of time; and can view our time/now all at once. It's all spread out before him, like grand collage – history our lives, this wrld. He's not waiting see what haps future, or trying remem what hapd past. He sees it all in his perpetual now: **vs. 8b**.
- We, on other hand, have very limited now. Ps 90: our lives, 70 yrs, or 80 if have strngth (10). Life is short. We don't have that etrnal perspctv on time that God has. And for that reason, we: easily tempted to doubt God's timing; to think God should be operating on our timetable. In vss rght before text, Pt: **"In last days (now) scoffers'll come, scoffing & [saying], 'Where is this 'coming' he promsd?'" (3-4)**. They: making fun of J's prom to return, saying, "Come on! Been 35 yrs! What's taking him so long? If he actly coming back, would'a been here by now – so much for return!" And we, of course, can chuckle at silly imptnc, since for us, it's been almost 2k yrs, and J still hasn't retrnd. And yet I think we, just like those scoffers, also: guilty of same sinful imptnc, of doubting God's perf timing & qstng his timetable. It can be in own persnl story (why: God allowing this hap now; not stopping this now; when going act, do smthng?); or in grand story of history (why hasn't J returned yet?).
- But Pt gives us insight into God's perspctv on now: **vs. 9**. J's patience, his delay (if call it that) equals his mercy. J wants more Xians/bels w/him in hvn. Paul, same: **"God our Sav wants all ppl be saved, come to knowldg/truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4)**. And the longer J postpones his return, the more ppl will come to faith in him. We might think: yeah, but longer wait, more unbels too. True. But J has promsd to return; and wants save as many ppl as possible. But it's going be in his timing. So for now, we wait – like Ps 27: **"Wait for Lord; be strong, take hrt, wait for Lord" (14)** – for now.
- But what re then, the coming Day. Pt: **vs. 10a**. Paul, same: **"You know very well that day/Lord'll come like thief in night" (1 Thes 5:2)**. J, in Mt 24: **"If owner/house'd known at what time/night thief was coming, he would've kept watch & would not've let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready bec Son/Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (43-44)**. And in Rev 3, J: **"I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you" (3)**. So that day, then, will come unexptdly & suddnly – like master returning fr journey, like bridegroom arriving at wedding hall (Mt 25).
- But when he does come, then, his arrival will initiate a cataclysmic seqnc/events. **Vs. 10; 12b**; and in vs right before our text: **"The present hvns/earth are reserved for fire."** The universe God created in Gen 1 will be entirely incinertd on Last Day. Fire will consume this planet & every planet & every star & evthing that makes up the universe in which we live. Bk/Rev: **"The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up" (6:14, ESV)**. A radical oblitrtn, fiery annihltn is in store for this wrld, right down to very elements (mentioned 2x: **vs. 10, 12**). Think: periodic table, atoms, protons, neutrons, very building blocks of creation. The Lord who made them will smday disintegrate them. Think Sodom/Gomorrah on universal scale – creation undone. Think flood. When God destroyed world in flood, promised to never again flood world w/water; but flood was a foreshadowing of day when God'd flood wrld w/fire. And Pt here says: that day is coming, then.

- So, how should we live now? Let's think again re now. **Vs. 11-12a; 14b**. This wrld: not our permanent residence, so we should not live like it is. Do not fall in love w/wrld arnd you: its comfrts, pleasures, trsrs. It means nothing; it will all burn away. What you see arnd you, what you enjoy on day/day basis: fancy house, cars, boats, campers, nice clothes, fancy shoes, stuff you own/love, whtvr \$ can buy – it'll all be destrdy; none of it matters; you can take none w/you into etrnal life; it's all just a temp pleasure (perhaps distrctn) on journey to hvn. Analogy: our time here on earth like plane ride or trip in car. In car/plane, you have nice things arnd you for journey (certain comforts). But when you reach your destntn, that stuff stays in vehicle. When your plane lands at terminal, you don't stay on plane, as if that's your home. You get off plane, out of car! The trip was a temp transit to your final destntn.
- That's what life is like for us now. And that impacts how we live now. **Vs. 11bc; 14b**. Now is the time for living in your baptismal identity. You've been baptized in CJ. He has redeemed you, claimed you as his own. So live like it. Put your faith in crucified/resrctd Son/God, who paid for your sins, opened hvn for you. Follow him as his disc by following his will, in how you serve God & neighbor. Repent sins, cling to Xp, live for Xp as one of the baptized, as a dghtr/son of Fr in hvn. That's our baptismal identity, and that's how we live right now.
- But one more thing re the now: we also look forward to the then. Phrase **"look forward"** used 3x in this text: **vs. 12a, 14a**; and here's **vs. 13**. We're looking forward to being w/Lord. J calls it by sevrl diff names: paradise, Fr's house, hvn, etrnal life. Here: new hvn/earth. All way back in OT, in bk/Isa, Lord: **"See, I will create new hvns & a new earth. The former things will not be remembrd, nor will they come to mind" (65:17)**. And bk/Rev: **"Then I saw a new hvn & a new earth, for the 1st hvn & 1st earth had passed away" (22:1)**. Evthng was perf in Eden; then evthng was corrupted by sin; so Lord promsd: smday he'd renew evthng – not a repeat of Gen 1, but a new life w/God, an uncorrupted but very tangible existence, in our resrctd/renewed body. This new hvns/earth: prom of grace, which is why right now we look forward to it, not w/fear, but w/eager expectation, joyful anticipn. It's gonna be perf!
- So today we ponder things N&T, things present & things future. Right now we wait, hope, live, look forward, to then. But soon, the then will be our new now. Xp will come; he promises! So as we pray that ancient Advent prayer, "Come, LJ," it's more than just a request; it's a confession/faith in the one who entered into our now, and abides w/us now, to prepare us for then.

2 Peter 3:8-14

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.