

MASTERPLAN ONE

GOD'S PURPOSES ON THE EARTH

When you get to the end of your life and look back, what things do you think will seem most important?

If we're to live a life of significance, purpose, joy and hope then we need to align our life with God's purposes in creation. This is not just a matter of understanding a set of theological ideas, it's a deeply practical question of how we will invest the time and resources God has entrusted to us. In these studies we'll consider God's purposes in the Earth and our part in them.

The story of the Bible is that God has created the world to reflect his glory, love and goodness. He intends that we should share in his life, purposes and heart. However, the whole creation been broken because humanity rebelled against our maker and embraced evil. God's purposes still stand and he's rescuing a people to be with him forever and through whom he can bless and reach out to the world. Ultimately Jesus will come back and banish sin, evil and death forever.

First read through the passage from 2 PETER 3 (skipping over the verses from Matthew). Then go through the passages one paragraph at a time answering the questions that go with each section:

2 PETER 3:1 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

Verses 1-2

What is Peter's purpose in writing this letter?
How does he explain what this means?

Verses 3-5

In what ways is this attitude reflected in our culture today?
What do we learn about the nature of unbelief?
What do you make of this in your experience?

6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men

MATTHEW 24 v 37 - 39: As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

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. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 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 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 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. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

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. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

Verses 6-7

What Old Testament story is the backdrop of this passage?

Read Matthew 24v37-39

How is the account of Noah and the flood a picture of our times?

How do v6-7 and these verses from Matthew expand our understanding of v1-2?

What does "ungodly" mean?

What event does Peter want us to keep in mind?

Verses 8-10

What do we learn about God's timing?

Why is God delaying the end of history?

What do we learn about God's heart?

How does this affect how we think of him and of people who don't know him?

What do we learn about the return of Jesus?

Verses 11-13

Why is the question in v11 so important?

What would a holy, godly life look like?

How can we speed his coming?

What is our destiny and how does this verse further expand on v1-2?

What has most stood out to you from this study?

If you were Noah, how would you have set your priorities? What does this mean for us today?

How would you summarise Peter's message in your own words?

What practical responses can you make to what we've considered in this study?