

**THINKING LIKE A CHRISTIAN
IN A SECULAR WORLD
II PETER 3:1-7**

INTRODUCTION:

In 1963 Harry Blamires wrote a book entitled, The Christian Mind. It was a challenge to the Christians of the 60's that needs to be heard in the 90's. In fact it is more urgently needed in our own situation in the 90's than it was in the 60's. By this expression Blamires did not mean that the Christian is to think only on religious topics all the time but rather they are to view every topic from a Christian perspective. This is another way of describing a Christian "world view."

Thinking like a Christian in a secular world was a concern of the Apostle Peter in the first century. He indicates he wrote this second letter to stir up the people so that they would do "wholesome" thinking. The word wholesome is a word that means unmixed, unadulterated, pure. The tendency in that first century was for those early Christians to mix their Christian ideas of false ideas and the cultures around them to the degree that they allowed their thinking to be mixed, their lives would become confused. This is still our situation.

In this call to a pure mind Peter emphasizes the importance of memory. "I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and that the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles." Memory is an important part of walking with the Lord and doing the work of the Lord. Abraham, Joshua, Heschel expressed this in thirteen words that need to be remembered – "Much of what the Bible demands can be comprised in one word, "remember." Truly this is the way it is in the Christian life. If you are to think like a Christian in our secular

world there are some realities that must constantly be remembered. They become spiritual stack-poles around which you interpret everything that you see and experience in the world. In his warning about “scoffers” that will come in the last day and will scorn the idea that Jesus Christ is coming again, Peter says of them, “But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of the water and within the water.” They did deliberately forget means that they knowingly and intentionally refused to take into consideration some dareities with which the Christian must approach life. These things that they intentionally forget are things that we must constantly remember if we are to survive in this aggressively secular world.

For our own preparation for thinking like a Christian in a secular world, let us consider these three things that Simon Peter felt to be extremely important to be remembered.

I. REMEMBER: THIS WORLD IS A WORK OF CREATION.

The first thing they were deliberately forgetting touches on the very nature of the world in which we live. “But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s Word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water.” In this direct word from Simon Peter we have a reminder of the creation account in Genesis 1. You will remember in that creation account that the earth was covered with water until God by His Word caused the earth to rise up out of the water and divided the water from the dry land. This is the part of creation to which Simon Peter specifically refers to in this statement.

This should not be seen as a statement about how the earth began from a scientific perspective. Rather, it should be seen simply as a restatement of the creation account as it is found in Genesis 1. Peter seems to give emphasis to the place of water in the early creation because of the next statement that he will make concerning the water. The primary thing we should emphasize is that it all happened “by God’s Word.” The very heavens in which the earth exists came into being by God’s word. The very earth itself was formed and molded into its present situation by God’s word. The truth of creation is an important truth to remember if you are to have a Christian mindset in a secular world.

One of the things that sets the Christian apart from the secular world in which he lives is his understanding of the beginnings. Our naturalistic, secular world had a naturalistic explanations for the beginnings of the earth. In our day they are holding on to these understandings in spite of mounting evidence that contradict their commitments to a revolutionary hypothesis. Charles Darwin himself wrote in The Origin of the Species, “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.” In our day the scientific community has experienced some break throughs that indicate that Darwin’s theory never took into consideration. Michael Behe, a biochemist and college professor, has written the book, Darwin’s Box. In the book he demonstrates something that Darwin never took into consideration. He writes, “To Darwin the cell was a black box – its inner workings were utterly mysterious to him. Now, the black box has been opened and we know how it works. Applying Darwin’s test to the ultra-complex world of molecular machinery and cellular systems that have been discovered over the past forty years, we can say that Darwin’s theory has “absolutely

broken down.” Darwin had no idea about the complexity of the cell. Behe and other scientists have demonstrated conclusively that there is no way that the cell could have just happened. But it is amazing how tenacious the scientific community is in holding on to the idea that the world can be explained naturalistically and materially.

If you are to have a Christian mind in this secular world, you must hold even more tenaciously to the Biblical truth that God created the heavens and the earth. This perspective makes all the difference in the world when you began to interpret the world about you. If this world owes its existence to a personal and sovereign God, then man is not the master of his own fate. He owes his existence to another. It is critical for us in our day that we prepare our minds to think wholesomely and purely. We must view everything in our world from the perspective that God made it.

II. THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE IS A MORAL UNIVERSE.

The second reality that the secular world wants to ignore again relates to the nature of the world in which we live. They deliberately want to ignore the moral nature in the world in which we live. Peter brings this before us with his reference to the deluge that came in the day of Noah. “By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.” The same Lord that spoke in creation spoke again in judgment when the world rebelled against him and moved to exclude him from his own world. Peter views the Genesis’ account of the flood that destroyed the civilization of Noah’s day as being a matter of historic record. He reminds us that the world of that time was submerged and destroyed by the waters of judgment. If the Genesis account is accepted as a historic record of what God did in that ancient day, then it will change the way you view the

world in which we live. You can no longer view the world naturalistically. You will have to view the world as being a moral universe in which the deeds of man have serious consequences.

One of the things that modern man has done is deny the historicity of the Genesis account. They have chosen to ignore the fact that there is a geological evidence for such a fact. They have chosen to deny evidences from an archeological perspective. They have also chosen to deny or ignore the different accounts of such a flood that surface among the ancient peoples all over the world. The names change and a few of the minor details from culture to culture, but almost all the world's cultures have a memory of such a flood that devastated the face of the earth.

If you can deny the historicity of the flood, and can deny the moral nature of the world in which we live. It makes it a lot easier to pursue an indulgent lifestyle. It is interesting that Peter indicates that these scoffers who refuse to remember the nature of the world also are people who "follow their own evil desires." Since they want to do the thing they want to do, it makes it very convenient to deny or forget that there is God who holds human kind responsible for their deeds.

This perspective will effect how you see the world. If you accept the truth that this is a moral universe in which the God of creation is still actively judging sin, then you see the things that flow through history as being the out working of the wrath of God. The explanation that the Apostle Paul gives for what happened in the Roman culture of his day in Romans 1 begins to make sense. You begin to see the things that are happening in terms of moral deterioration as being evidence that "God gave them up." This is a moral universe. It is so because it was created by a holy God and is still sustained by this holy and almighty God.

III. THE WORLD IS DESTINED FOR JUDGMENT.

The Apostle states the third sobering thing that we must always remember: “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.” It is not the purpose of the Apostle to give us an eschatological timetable, or the arrangement by which the events of the end time will take place. Rather it is his purpose to remind us of something that secular man chooses to forget. Scoffing secular man chooses to forget that the world is destined for judgment.

The exact description that Peter gives leaves us with some unanswered questions. It coincides with what we find in other places in foreseeing a day in which the earth itself and the heavens will be cleansed by fire. He is talking about “the present heavens and earth.” The word “heavens” should be understood as referring to the physical universe in which we live. The earth is the home territory that we occupy day by day. God by His word has them reserved for fire. He is actively keeping them for a day that He has already appointed – a Day of Judgment and destruction. The focus of this judgment and destruction will be “ungodly men.” These ungodly men are those who have lived without giving God proper place in their lives, without reverencing His name, without acknowledging Him as the creator and sustainer of the universe. They have chosen rather to do their own thing in their own way for their own pleasure. They have denied any responsibility to the creator of their lives. They and the world in which they live are destined for this rendezvous with divine judgment.

Do you think it would make any difference in our society if our society as a whole begin to look at life with the recognition that the earth and its peoples are headed for a horrible Day of Judgment at the hand of almighty God? The loss of the fear of God in our culture is leading us to a horrible harvest of evil. As I drove down our streets this week and passed a police car and noticed that on the side of the police car it read Lubbock Independent School District. This was not a city police designated to control traffic on our streets, this was a policemen designated to keep peace and fight crimes in our schools. What brought about a situation in which our school systems have become so violent and dangerous that it requires precious tax money to support a police department just to keep peace in our schools. I can assure you there was no need of a policeman at the Bluff City High School when I was student there. Mr. John Henry Pearce, the principal, could walk down the hall with a long ruler in his hand and spread enough of the fear of the Lord that there would be no crime in our school. If there had been some breach of right, there would have been a parent at home who would have backed up the action of the school and been supportive of disciplinary action. I was afraid to get in trouble at school because I knew it would be worse trouble at home. We did have problems in our schools – somebody would be caught chewing gum in class, or passing a note to a girlfriend, or being tardy for class. But there was never any hint of violent activity or the bringing of illegal drugs into our class situation. When you begin to explain the world naturalistically and you begin to deny God His place in society, the harvest of evil is certain and sure.

This is the reason that Peter is stirring up our minds. He is calling on us to keep a Christian mindset in the midst of a secular-thinking world. The only way you can live a life that is pleasing to God in a world like this is to keep fresh in your mind that you were created by God,

you are responsible to God, and you are destined for a day of accountability before almighty God. When you keep these things in mind they become a strong encouragement to holy living and useful living.