

GOD IS ALWAYS ON TIME

II PETER 3:8-10

GOD HAS DELAYED THE TIME FOR JESUS' RETURN BASED ON HIS LOVE AND PATIENCE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE WILL COME A TIME FOR JESUS TO RETURN AND JUDGE.

Outline

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BECAUSE GOD'S JUSTICE AND HOLINESS DEMANDS IT, JESUS WILL COME ONE DAY TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

- A. PROMISE TO RETURN

B. PROMISE TO JUDGE

C. PROMISE TO SAVE

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II PETER 3:8-10

We must keep in mind that at this point in the letter, Peter is encouraging his congregations. The false teachers were trying to seduce Peter's people into believing they could still be Christians and live the way they wanted. They could be sexually immoral, and they could seek all the pleasure they wanted, because since the flesh was evil, it was unimportant.

It was important, because there would be no future judgment for our actions. We as believers obey God's commands primarily because we love God. In other words, we remain sexually pure because we love God. We follow and obey God's commands because we love Him and want to please Him. But further, we know that God will judge us. In fact every human being that has ever lived will be judged by God. And that judgment will take place when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead.

Many people expected Jesus to return within a couple of years. But now, about thirty-some-years have passed, and Jesus still had not returned. So the false teachers were saying, "Jesus hasn't returned because He is dead. And since He is dead, He is not coming back to judge. Therefore, as long as we continue to seek knowledge, it doesn't matter what we do.

Remember, we said that people distort Jesus and His teachings primarily because they don't want to live life the way God designed it and spelled it out for us in the Bible.

Here we are, 2,000 years later, facing the same kinds of issues that Peter's congregations were facing. Jesus promised to return. And yet, He has not returned. Where is He? Those of us who were raised in the United States, don't have a generational perspective of time. We are used to expecting things to happen in a

matter of minutes, days, or at most weeks. We don't even have a waiting tolerance of years. We become extremely impatient.

We have to remember that God's view of time and His view of value is much different than ours. For example, again, I think this happened at our church. One day, I came to church early and noticed that the people who handle our money were up in the sanctuary praying. I was impressed, so I quietly slipped into the back, and observed. I heard them praying the text we are studying this morning. They prayed, "Lord with you a day is like a thousand years. Is it true?" I sensed that God was answering them, "Yes."

They went on, "Then it must also be the case that a million dollars is like one dollar to you." Again I sensed God saying, "Yes."

Then they got bold, "In that case, do you think we could have a couple of dollars?" The answer came back, "Sure, no problem. I'll have it there in a couple of days."

We have to always keep in mind that God's time, God's ways, and what God values, is often much different from ours.

The false teachers in Peter's day and the false teachers of our day made the mistake of forgetting that not only was Jesus fully human, He was fully God as well. The end of the story was not that Jesus suffered and died. The rest of the story was that Jesus bodily resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will one day come back to earth and judge the living and the dead. Jesus will hold each person accountable for either rejecting Him and His commands, or for receiving Him as Lord and obeying His commands. There will be a day of reckoning. That's why Christians should not be in the business of hating or planning revenge or being discouraged. We serve a living Jesus. To be sure, He promised that He would return 2,000 years ago, and as of today, He has not yet returned.

The scoffers of Peter's day, taunted the church with the fact that Jesus had not returned for them. False teachers today would like to believe and would like for us to believe that Jesus is dead and never returning. But the answer to them is the main idea of this morning's text. **GOD HAS DELAYED THE TIME FOR JESUS' RETURN BASED ON HIS LOVE AND PATIENCE. NEVERTHELESS,**

THERE WILL COME A TIME FOR JESUS TO RETURN AND JUDGE.

As Christians we are to continually look forward to that day. We are to anticipate it with great enthusiasm. From our perspective, it does seem that we have been waiting a long time for Jesus to come and destroy evil and set up His kingdom of peace.

As verse 8 points out, God has a much different perspective on time than we do. In know this is kind of hard for us to understand since all we know is tied up in space and time. It is impossible for us to think of an existence that is not bound by space or time. But we must keep in mind that God is bound neither by space nor time. In fact **GOD VIEWS TIME MUCH DIFFERENTLY THAN WE DO. HIS PERSPECTIVE IS BASED ON LOVE AND ETERNITY.** The Apostle Paul once said that in the end, only faith, hope, and love would remain throughout eternity, and that love was the greatest. Here in verse 8, the Apostle Peter links together love and eternity.

First he reminds us that God approaches time from the perspective of love. Again, Peter starts out by addressing his congregations as “beloved.” That is always a reminder to them that God loves them, Peter loves them, and they are to love one another. Love binds us together here on earth and love will bind us together in heaven. One of the horrible characteristics of hell is that people will be isolated and alienated from God and others. They will spend eternity in hell alone, isolated, tormented, ... forever.

But God’s people will be bond together in love, with God, with one another, ... forever. I know that patience is not one of my best qualities. If I know I have something to do, I have to do it right now. If I know I have something coming to me, I want it right now. I’m not very good at waiting. But part of maturing as a Christian is to trust God’s plan, God’s love, and God’s timing. I had a professor that used to say, “God is not often early, ... but He is never late.” I think one of the things that I have been learning as I grow older is that God’s timing in my life has always been perfect. In the middle of situations, I would complain to God to hurry up the process. But now that I look back, I can see that my timing would have been all wrong. These days, I know I’m a lot more trusting in God’s timing.

Here is another thing we need to remember about His timing. Since God’s perspective

of time is based on love, we should not wait or have patience with a fatalistic attitude. In other words, we shouldn't have this gloomy view of, "Well, God's going to do what He wants to do in His time, and there is nothing I can do about it. So I'll just wait." That's not patience built on trust and love.

Mature patience is built on trusting in God's love. In other words, we must learn to approach every stage of life with the faith that God knows exactly where we are. There is always something for us to learn where we are, and there are always blessings for us to find. But if we're always focused on the time when a particular experience will end, we will always miss the blessings and lessons God has for us on the way.

Because God loves us so much, He is never in a hurry. He wants to make sure He accomplishes all He has to accomplish in our lives. Remember, God's perspective is that He will love us forever in eternity.

And that brings us to next way God looks at time. God looks at time from the perspective of eternity. He is not just interested in our short time here on earth. He is preparing you and me to live in heaven, eternally with Him. It's not that God is not interested in healing our illnesses. It's not that He is not interested in finding us a job or a husband or a wife. It's not that God is not interested in helping us get what we want and what we have been asking from Him. It is just more important from His perspective to prepare us for heaven. Heaven is our eternal home. We will only live here on earth for a hundred years or so at the most. But we will live in heaven for eternity. Peter quotes the psalmist here. He says that with God, "A day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day." I know we get overly concerned over this life and the things of this world. But God has an eternal perspective. It would help us to enjoy every day more if we could just remind one another and ourselves that we will spend eternity in heaven. There, there will be no illness, no sorrow, no tears, and no pain. In heaven we will experience perfect peace, perfect joy, and perfect happiness, because we will experience the fullness of perfect love. That's the perspective God approaches time with. **GOD VIEWS TIME MUCH DIFFERENTLY THAN WE DO. HIS PERSPECTIVE IS BASED ON LOVE AND ETERNITY.**

And from this perspective of eternity, we can see from verse 9 that God has a purpose

for waiting so long. **GOD PASSIONATELY DESIRES FOR EVERYONE TO BE SAVED.** I think oftentimes we end up with an unbalanced view of God. Some tend to think of an angry supreme being just waiting for them to screw up so he could punish them. They view God as an ogre. On the other side of the spectrum, some people tend to look at God as this gentle grandfather who dotes over his grandchildren, and that anything they do is o.k. with him.

Both of these views are dangerously wrong. The Bible paints a complex view of God. On the one hand, God is a holy and just God. He cannot and will not tolerate sin and evil. Sin and evil will be judged and punished. We will all have to stand before the judgment seat of God.

On the other hand, God is a tender, gentle, and loving God. He has provided us with a way to be right with Him. This way came at great cost to Him. It cost Him the life of His Son, Jesus Christ. The only way to be in a right relationship with God is to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. That means that we confess that there is nothing good in us. We ask God to apply the goodness and holiness of Jesus to our lives. We recognize and confess Jesus to be our Savior. And we agree to follow Him and serve Him as our Lord. In other words, we live our lives in conformity to His will as described in the Bible. So we must keep this complex view of God in our minds. He is incredibly loving and He is incredibly holy. He is extremely gentle and He is extremely dangerous.

Again, we may think that 2,000 years has been enough time. The taunt came from the false teachers in Peter's day. And people today don't take too seriously that Jesus could return at any time. But these unbelievers are actually recipients of God's patience. Every minute, every hour, every day that Jesus waits, gives them one more day to come to their senses, repent, and be saved. We as believers have mixed emotions concerning the return of Christ. Indeed we are anxious for Him to return and to take us out of this wicked world to be with Him in heaven. We look forward to that day in which we will no longer suffer with physical, emotional, and spiritual hurts.

But we also thank Jesus for delaying. We hope and pray for unsaved family and friends, that they may come to their senses, confess, repent, and be saved. Because once Jesus comes, everything is set. Those who are believers, will spend eternity in

heaven with Him. Those who are unbelievers will be judged and sent to hell.

God's heart makes Him willing to wait. The Bible is very clear that God is willing to wait. He waited for a long time before judging the world with the flood that wiped out the entire human race except for 8 people. He waited a long time before wiping out the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah . He waited for me to give my life to Him in faith. He waited for you to give your life to Him in faith. Because God was willing to wait, all of us here this morning that have given our lives to Him in faith, were able to be saved. If you are here this morning and have not yet given your life to Jesus in faith, do not wait any longer because we don't know how much longer He is going to wait.

God is not really willing to punish us. This phrase has sparked a great deal of debate over the centuries. Look at the wording. God does not want anyone to perish. God wishes that every human being would come to faith and repentance. God would like every human being to be saved and spend eternity in heaven.

Well, if it's God's will that everyone be saved, then how come the majority of the human race will spend eternity in heaven? I don't want to get into the whole history of this debate. Let's just try and get a feel for this.

When I was in school we used to posit these great theological questions. For example we would approach passages like these and say, "Could God create a rock so big that He couldn't lift it?" We would say, "Yes, ... and then He would lift it."

Most scholars think that Peter is Mark's source for his Gospel writing. Listen to Mark's record of Jesus' encounter with a particular young man. I think it will shed some light on this text. It will give us a first hand look into the heart of God. Listen carefully to the dialogue:

¹⁷As he was starting out on a trip, a man came running up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?"

¹⁸"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. ¹⁹But as for your question, you know the commandments: 'Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Do not cheat. Honor your father and mother.'"

²⁰”Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was a child.”

²¹Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. “You lack only one thing,” he told him. “Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²²At this, the man’s face fell, and he went sadly away because he had many possessions.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God !” (Mark 10:17-23 NLT).

The text said that Jesus clearly loved this young man. Jesus wanted him to find eternal life. In fact Jesus wanted to take the young man with Him. But Jesus didn’t force him. Jesus didn’t run after him and say, “Let’s negotiate.” Jesus let him go. For all we know, this young man whom Jesus loved, died an unbeliever and will spend eternity in hell.

I don’t know why God created us with free will, ... and I don’t know why He allows us to reject Him. But I know from this encounter with this young man that even though Jesus passionately loves us, ... and that He loved us so passionately that He gave Himself to be crucified for us, ... that in the end, He will allow us to choose our eternal destinies. God wants everyone to be saved, ... but he will allow each person to choose heaven or hell.

There is only one way to choose heaven. We must humble ourselves before God and confess that we are sinful and without the blood of Jesus applied to our lives, we are doomed to spend eternity in hell. We confess Jesus as our savior and commit ourselves to living under the Lordship of Jesus according to His will as spelled out in the Bible. The point is this. **GOD PASSIONATELY DESIRES FOR EVERYONE TO BE SAVED.**

For us believers, we are grateful for God’s slowness to come and judge. He gave us time to be saved. If you are here this morning and you are an unbeliever, know this. You have family and friends that are agonizing about the prospect of you spending eternity in hell. God agonizes over your pride and reluctance. Right this moment there

is time to repent. Please don't wait. And please don't continue to put it off. Because even though God has been patient and has waited a long time, there is no guarantee He will wait any longer. In fact, verse 10 reminds us of the promise. **BECAUSE GOD'S JUSTICE AND HOLINESS DEMANDS IT, JESUS WILL COME ONE DAY TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.** God has given us more than enough time to repent and be saved. The problem really seems to be that as race, we humans are getting more stubborn, more evil, and more uninterested in God. Our world has become more sexually perverted. Our world has become more unjust. Our world has become more violent. People are frightened and don't know where to turn.

As believers, we should not fear or be confused because during times of turbulence, we are always to remind one another and ourselves that the Day of the Lord will surely come.

We have Jesus' promise to return. Jesus promised He would return to judge the world. His plan is to reward those who have followed Him in faith and obedience and to punish those who have not received Him and have done their own thing. Another aspect to this future judgment is that Jesus will come when no one is expecting it. He will just show up one day. This Day of the Lord theme is a very important concept to the Old Testament prophets. When the Hebrew society became corrupt, unjust, immoral and indifferent towards God, the prophets would remind them that for certain, the Day of the Lord would come. And He would surely punish them for their evil.

Jesus and the other New Testament writers, combined with the Hebrew prophets remind us that Jesus could return at any time. We believe in the imminent return of Jesus. The signs given to us by the Biblical writers seem to make an appearance almost every generation. There have always been wars and rumors of wars. There have always been extraordinarily evil men and women rise to prominence. There has always been war on the poor in an attempt to keep them down. The whole of human history has been the rise of evil and the oppression of people. For Christians, these are all occasions for us to remember that this world is not our home. When evil starts to rise, our hopes and expectations for Jesus' return are to rise as well.

In our day, all around the world, we could easily identify several figures as antichrist.

We can see many natural disasters leaving many dead and homeless. We can see how governments all over the world maintain power by their self-interest decisions. We can see that there is only justice for the rich and powerful. We see wars and rumors of war. It has become part of our everyday experience. We as the church should not be surprised. We should be counter-cultural in the way we conduct our business inside the church. There should be love, peace, and social justice inside the church. The problem with the church in the United States is that we are no longer counter-cultural. We are happy and content to be part of this culture. Keep in mind, life in the Roman Empire was very similar to life in our modern day United States . The church was extremely counter-cultural and hated. Our society is definitely antagonistic to authentic Christianity but Christians are not happy with that. We want to be liked and we want to be legitimized in society. My personal feeling is that I'm kind of glad that authentic Christianity is being marginalized because that will be God's way of cleaning out the church.

Jesus promised He would return and He promised it will catch the world by surprise. Authentic Christianity is living every moment with the expectation that Christ could return in the very next moment.

Let me just make an aside comment that I found interesting but I don't want to spend a lot of time on it. The false teachers were taunting Peter's congregations with the fact that Jesus had not yet returned. But Jesus kind of indicated that He would not return before Peter died. Jesus predicted that Peter would suffer and die for His cause. So as long as Peter was alive, it seems as if Jesus would not return. Yet Peter talks as if Christ could return at any moment.

The Apostle Paul hoped to be alive when Christ returned.

I think Peter and Paul knew their destiny was to suffer and die for the cause of Christ. But in their minds, the only thing that could change all that would be if Jesus returned and cut short the rest of human history. So they really hoped and looked for Jesus to return. They were hoping it would be soon.

One of our problems is that we have gotten very comfortable in this world. In fact, we have come to love our lives in this world. We do not look forward to the return of

Christ because we enjoy this life.

If all of a sudden our society started to really actively hate the church and if they started persecuting us as Christians, we may then start to look eagerly for the return of Christ. Personally, I believe we Christians will suffer through some of the final tribulation. I believe that is one way Jesus will clean out the church of fake Christians. In Muslim countries, you have to be an authentic Christian because it most likely will cost you your life. In countries around the world where Christians are being persecuted, jailed, and killed for their faith in Christ, the church is eagerly looking for Christ to return. They have nothing here in this world worth hanging on to.

I'm hoping that the church in the United States wakes up and realizes that life is not about pursuing money, power, fame, or political clout. It is about pursuing holiness and looking for Jesus to return, because as the next portion of this verse points out, Jesus has promised to judge the living and the dead. Look at Peter's description of the end in the rest of verse 10. It is meant to be abrupt and swift. He starts out, "The heavens will disappear with a roar." In one fell swoop, the stars, the planets, and all the heavenly bodies will vanish. The word roar is very interesting. Here is a case where we moderns have a better chance of understanding this word. In Peter's day, this word referred to the sound effect of the rustling of a bird's feathers as he took flight. It referred to the crackling sound a fire makes. For us who grew up with the special effects of television and movies, it is the sound effects like when in a kung-fu movie, we hear the wind of the punches, the slaps as they land, the arrow whizzing through the air, and noises of the fight. When watching a sporting event, we hear the sound of the golf club hitting the ball, and the ball dropping into the cup. In football, we hear the crunch of the collisions. In the day Jesus comes to judge, all we will hear is a loud "swoosh!" We'll look up, and the sky will be gone.

Next, fire will burn up what's on earth, plants, water, animals, everything. And the earth and everything in it will be exposed for what it is. People talk a lot about God with bravado. They say things like, "I'll tell God when I see Him, or me and God are o.k., or I don't believe in God." We as humans talk with pride and arrogance. But the fact is, nobody will be doing much talking on that day. We will be so frightened, we will not speak. I'm urging all of us who are believers, we must live our lives knowing that Jesus is going to come and judge everything that we have thought, said,

and done. And please don't think we will be explaining our actions, making excuses, or justifying our behavior. We will be silent. We will be frightened. We will shake with fear. The Day of the Lord will be a day of judgment. Everything will be exposed and scrutinized by God.

But I don't want us to live holy lives simply because we are afraid of God. We should live holy lives and look for the second coming of Jesus because through it all He has given us the promise that He will save us. Peter has already demonstrated that God not only has the power to create and destroy, He has the power to save. He saved Noah and his family from the judgment of the flood. He saved Lot and his family from the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah . He can save you and I through this terrible day of judgment. It takes faith, trust, humility, and obedience. I know that I spend a lot of time, money, and energy on things that will be burned up on this Day of the Lord. As I look forward to the Day of the Lord, I must consciously build things and spend my time, money, and energy on things that will be brought safely through the judgment, things that are eternal. We must learn to value the things that God values. I don't think I can say this any more clear or graphic than Paul the Apostle does. Listen to what he says, “¹³But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. ¹⁴If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames” 1 Corinthians 3:13 -15 / NLT).

God knows how to judge and punish the wicked. He also knows how to judge and save the righteous. I really want to be on the right side, doing the right thing when Jesus returns. **BECAUSE GOD'S JUSTICE AND HOLINESS DEMANDS IT, JESUS WILL COME ONE DAY TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.**

It has been 2,000 years since Jesus made this promise to return. That means we are certainly closer than any generation that has preceded us. Every day that passes, brings us one day closer to the Day of the Lord's return. I want to receive every new day as a gift from God in which I use my time, energy, and money to build things that are eternal. I want to commit myself to reading, studying, and submitting to the Bible.

In his commentary, Richard De Haan tells this story about his father:

“By the way, this should be a warning for all true believers in Christ to be leery of those who would set the date for the Lord’s return.. Someone is always saying, ‘The Lord will be coming within a few years,’ or even that He will come by a specific date. But they have no biblical authority to speak with certainty. Those who truly know the Lord Jesus are looking for His coming *every* day. I like this motto my father kept in his office: *Perhaps Today!*”

Perhaps Today! Isn’t that a great way to live life for authentic Christians? In other words, if we thought Jesus was returning today ... or if we were going to die today, I think that would help us to decide what’s important and what’s not; what’s worth spending time, money, and energy on, and what’s not. Holiness is worth pursuing, worldliness is not. Perhaps Today!