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# Sermon Notes

April 28, 2024

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

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## The Certainty of Christ's Coming 2 Peter 3:8-10

### Time is Relative

- ❖ God's perspective on time is vastly different from our own
  - for God, a moment is no different than an eon
  - and, eons pass like moments to our eternal God
- ❖ Although from a human perspective Jesus' return may seem to be far off, it is always imminent in God's perspective
  - God has a plan and a purpose for all He does
  - Jesus will return at the precise moment that was predetermined by God in eternity past

### Speculation

- ❖ The subject of Christ's return has generated much speculation among Jesus' followers throughout history
  - there have been those who have pushed on the boundaries of what the Bible teaches
  - we must guard ourselves against any attempt to interpret God's timetable through the lens of our own, human measurement of time
  - God has a positive purpose in delaying Christ's coming in glory

- ❖ Believers and nonbelievers alike may be prone to considering Jesus' promise to return
  - the false teachers of Peter's day ridiculed and poked fun at Christians for believing Jesus would come again
  - in order for us to be prepared to discuss any challenges we may face over the subject of Christ's imminent coming, we must keep reviewing what Scripture does and doesn't say about this subject
- ❖ In the face of extreme persecution and martyrdom, early Christians found comfort in their expectation that Jesus would come quickly to deliver them from suffering and take them to be with Him in glory
  - Matthew 24, Jesus warns His followers to be prepared for His coming at any time
  - in his first inspired letter, Peter notes that *the end of all things is near* (1 Peter 4:7)

### Solid Truth

- ❖ In light of any question or concern that God is not being faithful to fulfill His promise of Jesus' return, Peter provides perspective from God's point of view
  - Peter paraphrases Moses in Psalm 90:4 to point out that God does not experience time as we do
  - God is patient, willing to let hundreds and even thousands of years pass while He works out His purposes
- ❖ While it is correct for believers in every age to expect that Christ's return is imminent, that does not mean they are to expect it to be immediate
  - we must not grow impatient while we wait on God's perfect timing to fulfill His perfect plan

- we must resist the temptation to set dates or to piece Bible prophecies together to fit our own preconceptions
- ❖ What does it mean to say Christ's return is imminent?
  - Romans 13:11b, Philippians 4:5b, James 5:8, 1 Peter 4:7
  - Jesus' return is near, it may be delayed and its timing is uncertain
  - Jesus' return is the very next event in salvation history, and it will be the culmination of human history
    - Jesus' return will be preceded by certain signs, like war, famines, earthquakes, persecution, false "christs" and prophets
    - however, these signs (which Jesus describes as being like labor pains) have been and are repeated throughout history
    - these "labor pains" will escalate and occur with increasing frequency so closely to Christ's return that they will not be useful for helping anyone to know the specific time and date of Jesus' coming
  - remembering that Jesus' coming is imminent is essential to living with an attitude of joyful anticipation of what God holds in store for those who belong to Him
- ❖ God's positive purpose for delaying Christ's return
  - the Lord's apparent slowness does not mean
    - God's promise has been invalidated or that it should be rejected
    - God is weak or unable to fulfill His promise
  - God's slowness to fulfill His promise is a sign of His great mercy and His amazing grace
    - the Lord waits for people to repent before it is too late

- Peter's words resonate with Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:4, that God *desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*
  - ♦ this is not a contradiction of the doctrine of election but a complement to it
  - ♦ in the perfect will, counsel, and purpose of God, there is no contradiction between what Peter writes and the Biblical truth that God elected some to salvation before He created the world
    - our finite minds cannot balance what seem to be two competing thoughts: the God who saves is the God who wants everyone to be saved (Isaiah 45:21-22, Matthew 11:28-29)
    - but God is clear, the gospel is for **everyone**
- while people are alive, God withholds the full and final outpouring of His wrath and judgment on them
  - no one will be judged and condemned because God did not give them a chance to respond to Him
  - only those who willfully ignore God's patient pleading will receive the justice they deserve for their rebellion against God
- ❖ Peter gives a picture in v. 10 of what things will be like when God moves to decisively intervene in human history by judging His enemies and saving His own
  - Jesus' coming will be unexpected, like a thief
  - when Jesus comes the present heavens and earth will be destroyed and transformed into a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 34:4, 1 Corinthians 3:13)

### Personal Reflection

1. Are you confident that you are in Christ? Are you living in readiness? Are you ready for the return of Christ?