

Title: Are we there yet?  
Text: 2 Peter 3:8-10  
Theme: The Day of the Lord  
Series: 2 Peter  
Prop Stmtnt: The Day of the Lord is absolutely certain.

Read Text:

Costi Hinn had a relative who was diagnosed with terminal cancer. This is hard to bear for any family, but when Benny Hinn is your uncle, and a member of the inner circle receives a diagnosis like this, the stakes are high. According to what Benny preaches to millions of people around the world, God promises a miracle to those who believe enough and who prove that faith by giving money. "The miracle is guaranteed." That is the premise of the prosperity gospel. What happens if he is not healed? There are only two possibilities: 1) His relative did not believe enough. Or 2) The promises of the prosperity gospel are wrong. His relative died and the family was in a dilemma. Do we admit that our message is wrong and we are frauds or do we pretend that part of the family does not really matter? Costi began to realize that the prosperity gospel wrote checks it could not cash.

We are followers of Christ. We believe in God and we believe God. We are believers. We have a posture of belief. But, what exactly do we believe? Did God promise that if you have enough faith that you will never get sick and you will always be prosperous? Does the Bible really teach that? Are your expectations from God based on what God has promised or are they a product of what you want? Prosperity gospel preachers have tapped into what you want and what they want and have twisted the Bible to tell people what they want to hear and they have falsely claimed that they are the promises of God. Therefore, the expectations are high, but reality is different than that.

The apostle Peter is writing to a group of early Christians, who are primarily Jewish believers who had to leave Israel due to persecution and the increasing level of conflict and fighting with the Romans that resulted in the complete ruin of the nation in A.D. 66. These families packed up what they could on wagons, animals, or their own backs. The trips were long, very hard and dangerous. Parents probably heard, repeatedly, "how much longer" and "Are we there yet" without knowing themselves the answers. For the believers there was the question, The Lord had promised to return. That was the expectation. But, did he promise to come back in 10, 20, 30 years? Is that what he said? Why didn't he come back before things got so bad? Why didn't he come back before we had to leave our homes and before our nation was lost? And Peter, who is writing from prison in anticipating of being executed by Nero, why doesn't the Lord come back and rescue him? The unrealized expectations (delay in the return of Christ) is an opportunity for discouragement and for scoffers.

This delay is being interpreted by the scoffers as evidence of not being able to depend on God and therefore, you do not need to be concerned with him or what he says. Live how you want.

It doesn't matter. To which Peter said, "hold the phone." There are 3 reasons why we know God is involved with this world and will keep his word. It was by his word he made the world. It was by his word he judged the world. It is by his word that the world will be destroyed and the ungodly will be judged. In verses 5-7, Peter says that they deliberately forgot these things. But you? Beloved, don't overlook this one thing. You have to remember this because it is very important! God does not experience time like we do. He is not slow, late, forgetful or negligent. He is doing everything exactly as he intends. Rest assured, that the Day of the Lord will come. Peter makes 3 points to support this: 1) The Sovereignty of God; 2) The Character of God and 3) The Certainty of God.

### 1. **The Sovereignty of the Lord** (8) – Relax

Cathi and I have grandchild #7 on the way. The oldest one is 7 today! I told someone recently that I am going to turn around and he will be a teenager. It certainly does not seem like that to him. He doesn't have the same perspective on time as an older adult does.

In a related way, but on an infinitely greater scale, we do not have the same perspective on time that God does. What seems to us to be a very long time, barely registers on God's calendar. This reality is a powerful and humbling challenge to the scoffers who mock believers for anticipating, longing for and living for the return of Christ. God is God over all. God is Sovereign over all. God is so sovereign, that he not only rules over everything in time and in space and in mass, he made time, space and mass. God made time. Before there was time, God was there in the eternal present.

#### a. **God is Sovereign over time.**

In v.8, Peter is quoting from Psalm 90 and telling us that God does not keep time the way we do. Now, this text has been misused to say things that it does not say. Some have said that based on this verse, that the six days of creation are actually six thousand years, since each day is a thousand years. Some have also said that human history is therefore going to be 6,000 or 7,000 years (if you include the Millennium) because each day of creation stands for 1,000. But, that is not what this text says and it is not what Psalm 90 (that this text is based on) says either. It says, that a day is AS a thousand years and a thousand years AS one day. Peter is not giving us a secret decoder that enables us to unlock a mystery in God's plan. Look at the context! The point is clear: God does not keep time like we do. What seems like an eternity to us (a thousand years) is as a day to him. He is never late and he is never in a hurry. He is never early and he never has to slow down.

Therefore, if anyone ever tries to tell you or sell you that they know when Christ is returning based on some "biblical formula" run away and hold on to your debit card. Some of you (my age or older) may remember Edgar Whisenant's book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture will be in 1988*. It sold really well until 1989. In 1991 The Gulf War created all sorts of interest in end-time events. For two Sundays, we had more people than ever before, but that quickly passed. In

1995, Tim LaHaye, (author of the Left Behind series) wrote an article on 12 Reasons why this could be the terminal generation. One of the 12 reasons was the one-day = 1,000 years view which meant that the year 2,000 had to be considered as a prime time for Christ to come back. Here is my caution. Don't get sucked into the hype of people like Jack Van Impe or Pat Robertson who act like every world event may be the trigger point for end time events. People like that, just keep you stirred up and fearful. Over time, it is easy to be hardened to the reality that Christ IS returning. He is returning. I want you to be prepared and longing for his return whether or not an international event is taking place. I do not want you to be given false hope based on hype.

**b. God is infinite.**

Peter's appeal to Psalm 90 is a comfort to the believer and a rebuke to the scoffer. To the believer he is saying to relax. God is so much bigger and greater and absolutely in control of all things. God is from everlasting and to everlasting. He cannot be measured in time or in space. He is before all things and he is everywhere at the same time. He has always been. He has always existed and will always exist in the future. God never began. He has always been. He does not age nor will ever cease to be. The eternity of God blows all of the fuses in our mental electrical panel. God is way, way above us. And, he is immutable, he does not change. Therefore, it is laughable and seriously pathetic and completely absurd for a scoffer to act as if he can scoff at God. The French philosopher and playwright, Voltaire lived in the 1700's, and reportedly used to go into the town squares and challenge God, if he was actually there, to strike him down dead. This would, of course, attract a crowd, but after Voltaire was not struck dead, he would say, "You silly people, you see, there is no God."

Does this make Voltaire, brave, edgy and attractive? It simply reveals that he is an idiot. He is like an amoeba challenging Einstein to a debate on the theory of relativity. It reminds me of Genesis 11. The word leaders in that day (v.4) decided to build a city and a tower "with its top in the heavens" in order to "make a name for ourselves." In their view, this was massive. This was awesome. We are amazing! We can do anything we want. In verse 5 we read, "And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built." In other words, the tower was so small that God (in a sense) had to come down in order to see it because its top clearly did not make it to heaven. How absurd! God is so much bigger than we can imagine, so much greater, so much wiser, so much more complex and so perfect in wisdom and infinite in power, that he will come when he means to come. He promised. He will do it. In fact, his "delay" (slowness) is not because there is a flaw in his character, but the timing of his return is a reflection of his character.

Application: Am I anxious? God did not come when I thought he would, or when someone said he promised to come – now what? God did not do what I prayed about and what I committed to him, now what? Are my expectations of God based on what God has actually said, or are they based on what I want him to do?

## 2. The Character of the Lord (9) – Don't Relax

God is not getting old and slow. God is the ancient of days. He is before all time. God is eternal. He does not age and is not forgetful. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness." Do not interpret what seems to you to as a delay in the return of Christ as if God has lost some of his edge. Oh no, this is not a delay because he got caught in traffic or has to adjust his plans, he planned this time because God is patient.

### a. **The Patience of God**

The patience of God is driven by the mercy of God. God is not slow, like we are slow. God's timing is intentional. God is patient because his patience provides time for you and others to repent. What if God instantly judged you and me for every sin? If he did, we would all be dead. He is patient. He is patient waiting for you and others to come to repentance. His patience should not be misunderstood as complacency, ignorance or tolerance. Those who reject Christ and use his patience as evidence that they are getting away with it are simply storing up more and more wrath against their sin. I cannot talk to everyone in this world, but I can talk to you. If you are ignoring the warnings of the Spirit to turn to Christ, to stay away from sin, to deal with your issues, know that Christ has given you time to repent. So, repent. Turn to him. Trust in him. There will be a day when you cannot; when it is too late. But today is not that day. Christ is patient with you and is giving you this day to change. He is patient because he is compassionate.

### b. **The Compassion of God.**

God does not wish that any should perish. Perish is the word that speaks of facing judgment. God does not desire the death and judgment of the rebellious, but the rebellious will face death and judgment. This verse does not mean that those who reject Christ will not face judgment. The fact that God does not wish/desire/enjoy the death and judgement of those who reject him does not mean that there is no death and judgment. Isn't God Sovereign? Can't God do anything that he wants? If God does not wish that any should perish, then doesn't that mean that no one will perish and that everyone will come to repentance? After all, if God doesn't wish it to happen and God is able to do everything that he wishes, then why wouldn't that mean that it won't happen?

Deuteronomy 29.29 makes it clear that the will of God has two aspects: 1) The Secret will of God and 2) the Revealed Will of God. God does not reveal everything to us. He does not tell us all of the details of his plan. It is not necessary for us to know and not helpful for us to pry. The secret will of God is the Sovereign will of God. This is his detailed plan that is going to be carried out, no matter what. No one can frustrate the Sovereign will of God. God will do what he says and no one can thwart him. God's secret will is his Sovereign and decreed will. He has decreed it and it will happen. On the other hand...

The Revealed Will of God refers to the things that God has revealed so that we might obey God. God reveals his will through his word so that we will know what we are supposed to do. The revealed will of God is the basis for our responsibility. We have God's Word, therefore we are responsible for what God has revealed to us. We can disobey the revealed will of God. The revealed will of God is what God desires and we clearly do not do all that God desires. The Sovereign will of God is the decreed will of God and the revealed will of God is the desired will of God. God reveals his desired will that we might love him, trust him and obey him.

The 10 commandments would be an example of the Revealed Will of God. God desires our obedience, but you can disobey that. The advent of Christ would be an example of the Secret Will of God. Christ was coming to the earth and no one could stop that. We did not know exactly when. We knew that he would be born in Bethlehem, but that he would come out of Egypt. So, there was a level of mystery even to that.

The question is, how do we understand our text? Is Peter talking about the will of God (wish) as the secret, decreed will of God or the revealed, desired will of God? You can actually make an argument for both, but I find one more compelling. If the sovereign decreed will of God was that no one would perish but that all would come to repentance, then no one will perish and all will come to repentance. Well, that is clearly not the case. But, (v.8) isn't Peter talking to believers? So, is Peter saying that since God is not willing that any of his chosen ones to be lost, but that since he has determined that each of them will repent and believe, that we should understand God's patience as the time that God has established for every single person he has chosen to come to faith in Christ. According to this view, the "any" in v.9 refers to the "beloved" in v.8. This is supported by the "you" of verse 9. He is patient toward you. He is patient toward you – beloved. This interpretation fits well with 12 which speaks of "hastening the coming of the day of God." How could we hurry up the day of God? Could the answer to that be, sharing the gospel with others so that, when the last person chosen by God to believe, believes and the Bride is complete, then Christ returns?

That has some good points to commend to it. But, could verse 9 be referring to the Revealed Will of God? The example that Peter just used was Noah. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He preached the Revealed Will of God. Repent of your sins, believe God and get in the ark because the flood is coming. Noah invited the people around him to be saved. He invited them to come into the ark. There was no other means of salvation. But, they rejected the offer of salvation. Noah worked on that ark for 120 years. God was patient, but God was not slow. He did not desire that any should perish because God is grieved over rebellion and the failure of people to repent and believe. In fact, the Bible presents God as holding out his hands to lost sinners all day inviting them to come to him. I think that this is the best way to understand this text. Just as in Noah's day, the flood was decreed by God, the death of the wicked was not God's desire. God was grieved.

Luke 19.41-42, *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes."*

Matthew 23.37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*

We do not know the secret will of God. We do not all the details of God's Sovereign plan. We know that he knows and that he is carrying it out. What we know is God's revealed will. God wants you to be saved. God desires for you to escape from his judgment. So do it! Do it, because his judgment is certain. The Lord desires for people to trust him. So, while we can relax in knowing (v.8) that God is going to carry out his plan, we do not relax in our responsibility to share the gospel. The patience of God is our opportunity to share the gospel. Who are you praying for?

### 3. **The Certainty of the Lord** (10) – Be Ready

The return of the Lord is certain. Jesus told the parable of the 10 virgins, then the parable of the talents and emphasized this point. The Day of the Lord is a major theme throughout the Bible. There are a number of major events that are described as the Day of the Lord, but all of these are smaller reflections of the ultimate Day of the Lord which Peter is referring to. Beloved. This day is coming. The first coming of Christ was in humility, his return will be in power. His first coming was in gentleness, his return will be in wrath. Peter describes it in 3 ways; Sudden, Severe and Revealing.

Last night I was on I-75 in Ohio, which is generally populated with State Troopers and last night was no exception. I came over a crest and saw a trooper on the side of the road and he was scrambling to get buckled back into his seat. He was in a hurry and I figured that he was after someone and he was. Imagine that he was after you and you had a suspended license, were driving a stolen vehicle, had several warrants out for your arrest, had a back seat full of drugs and a couple of dead bodies in the trunk. You can't drive relaxed. Every time you see a police officer, your gut goes into knots. That is what it is like to live without Christ. The return of Christ, (which is certain) is terrifying because you are not ready. Christ is Lord. He is either the Lord you love and happily submit to, or he is the Lord you are forced to surrender to. But, he is Lord and his return will be sudden.

#### a. **Sudden**

The day of the Lord will come like a thief. He will come when you least expect it. He will come when the world acts as if they can live anyway they want without consequence. He will come.

#### b. **Severe**

The return of Christ will bring about the destruction of the earth and heavens as we know them. This will be apocalyptic. I take this to mean that just as the flood wiped out life as it was known in a way that figuratively cleansed the earth (i.e., the literal flood was a picture of God cleaning the earth of its sin), so the fire will be purifying the earth and destroying everything on it since it is so polluted with sin. This will leave a fresh canvas for God to create the new heavens and new earth and new Jerusalem. But, the return of Christ is personal.

### **c. Revealing**

*“The works that are done on it will be revealed.”*

Revealed in confession and forgiven by Christ or revealed in judgment and judged.

Two choices: driving down the road with a bad record and car full of incriminating evidence, or driving down the road, where the patrol officer is your older brother who will do anything for you?