

Sermon Brief

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Text: 2 Peter 3:8-10

Title: “Where is this Coming? pt.2”

Subject: False teachers deny the second coming.

Complement: Believers need to remember that God will be true to who He is.

Textual Idea: The false teachers deny the second coming, believers must not.

Sermon Idea: Remember who God is as you anticipate the end.

Interrogative: How should we respond to the end times?

Key Points:

Believers need to remember that:

1. God is Eternal: God’s time is not like our time. (v.8)
2. God is Merciful: God’s delay is an act of His love and kindness. (v.9)
3. God is Just: Be ready – Jesus will return suddenly and make all right! (v.10)

What do I want people to know? I want people to know that Jesus will return to judge the world and that believers must know God well in order to respond well during the end times.

What do I want people to do? I want people to (1) focus on knowing God intimately, (2) be merciful as God is merciful, (3) repent and call others to repent.

What need am I addressing? I am addressing the need for a proper attitude toward the second coming of Jesus.

“Where is this Coming? pt.2”

2 Peter 3:8-10

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I receive emails from The Christian Post and last week, perfect timing, I received one that had **(LCD) this headline: End Times being fulfilled? Federal Reserve, major banks launch 'digital dollar.' 'The stage is being set,' pastor says.** Hmmm. Of course, this article is referencing the passage in Revelation 13 that talks about some kind of world currency in the end times – one with ‘666’ in it. The pastor comments, *“The digital currency testing and discussion does not mean this is the mark of the beast, but it means that we are getting so much closer,”* he said. *“In a word, the stage is ... being set for the End Times to be fulfilled and we’re witnessing that now.”* This immediately reminds me of all the times in history when people were sure the end times were upon us. I’ve shown **(LCD) this list of predictions before.** Is this finally the time? At least one person has confessed to me that they react to articles like this one and other predictions of the end times with fear and anxiety. Others just ignore them. How are we to respond?

Turn with me to 2 Peter, chapter 3. We’re in a sermon series on **(LCD) 1 & 2 Peter** entitled “Alien Living in a Chaotic World.” We live in an upside-down world, from a biblical perspective, and it seems to be getting dicer by the minute for those of us who have sworn allegiance to Jesus as Lord. It’s nothing new - it was true in Peter’s day too. Last week, we looked at one aspect of what should inform our alien mindset: Jesus is coming back. This isn’t our final home. We need that mindset; yet the false teachers are denying Christ’s return, verse 4, *“Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”* Peter refuted this assertion with **(LCD) three things the false teachers deliberately forget:**

1. **The world had a supernatural start.**
2. **Things haven’t continued uniformly – remember the Flood?**
3. **I have news for you – judgment by fire is coming!**

I summarized these points with **(LCD) this chart.** What this shows is that our linear history, human time, has been punctuated with acts of divine judgment. The false teachers, then, are wrong about Christ’s return because they’re wrong about God.

Having point out three things the false teachers deliberately forget, Peter continues his argument against this denial of the return of Jesus by focusing on three realities he doesn’t want the believers to forget. And what’s cool, is that these three realities center on who God is. Let’s take a look. 2 Peter 3:8, *“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. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 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 done in it will be laid bare.”*

The first trait about God that Peter extrapolates from comes from verse 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.” Notice that Peter again says, “dear friends,” or “beloved.” He truly cares about these brothers and sisters, and he reminds them of something essential when it comes to God, **(LCD) God is Eternal: God’s time is not like our time.** If we try to understand “where is this coming” using a Swiss Rolex watch, we’ll be sorely disappointed. Why? Because God is not like us, He’s eternal as Psalm 90 says, *“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”* God was, is, will be, and always has been. He is timeless. He exists above and beyond time. If we forget this, we can easily misjudge what He’s up to.

I like how one commentator, David Helm, illustrated the experience of different timeframes. *“As a parent of five, I recall the days when the children were little, and my folks were coming for a visit. My dad and mom, driving all the way from their mountain home in northern Georgia, had told us, ‘We think we will get there sometime around three o’clock in the afternoon.’ In anticipation, Mariah, our youngest, dashed to the window by 2:40. By 2:43 she wondered aloud, ‘Where are they? When are they coming? Why aren’t they here yet?’ When they hadn’t arrived by 3:05, Mariah, now exasperated, said, ‘Dad, are Grandma and Grandpa really coming?’”* Child time is not adult time. and our time is not God’s time. We need to remember that when we’re feeling exasperated about why God hasn’t moved in a certain way yet.

Peter describes God’s eternity by equating a thousand years with a day. He got that from Psalm 90 again, **(LCD) “A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.”** Now I said that Peter equated them, that’s not quite right, is it? Notice both Psalm 90 and Peter both say, “as,” or “like,” not “is.” Some Christians have taken this saying as an equation when it’s meant to be a comparison. They make computations of 1000 years for each day of creation, figuring 4000 years of history before Christ, 2000 since, then seventh day rest, Christ’s kingdom, was going to start at the year 2000. Again, these predictions all make the same mistake: God’s time is not our time! We get in trouble when we reduce God’s eternity into our earthly time. Again, love how one commentator put it, **(LCD) “In critiquing God for his slowness in fulfilling his promises, human beings are making an honor challenge against God that steps over the boundaries of their sphere of present time and invades his sphere of future time. In other words, they are trespassing in God’s arena, an arena in which human beings do not know what they are talking about.”** Amen.

Secondly, verse 9, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.”* It was easy for people to think that God was slow or, the word can also mean, delayed, in keeping His promise. Don’t we all ask that when things aren’t happening as fast as we think they should? Certainly that was Israel’s experience with God. Here she was, the people of God, yet she constantly suffered from calamities and enemies. In the midst of all this, one Old Testament prophet, Habakkuk, asked God, **(LCD) “How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save?”** Ever feel this way? I’m sure the persecuted Christians we prayed for two Sundays ago ask this question in the midst of murder, rape, and pillaging! Where is He? Why isn’t He returning? Look at all this violence! I know I ask this when I see stories like the people in Ukraine freezing to death with no infrastructure. Where is his

Coming?! Or when I see the mass shooting in an LGBTQ bar or a Virginia Wal-Mart. Where is his Coming?!

God's ultimate response to Habakkuk, **(LCD) "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."** Again, God's wisdom is higher than our wisdom. His time is different from our time. His slowness is not like our slowness. But it God is a promise keeping God, why the delay? The rest of verse 9, *"Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* Patience...or even better, our second trait of God, **(LCD) God is merciful: God's delay is an act of His love and kindness. As Psalm 34 declares, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness..."** Amen. In the Greek version of the Old Testament, "slow to anger" translates the same root word as found in our verse 9 for "patient." Our God is patient, slow to anger. In His righteousness, He could just say, "ENOUGH! And unleash His wrath upon us. But instead he waits; and His delay isn't due to indifference or impotence, far from it! It's because of His heart! He wants us to change our minds and turn to Him!

That's what the word for "repentance" literally means, **(LCD) metanoia = meta – "change" + noia – "mind." Logos Bible software defines it like this, "reconsideration — a change of self (heart and mind) that abandons former dispositions and results in a new self, new behavior, and regret over former behavior and dispositions."** Repent is not just saying, "I'm sorry," it's actually changing! You were going in one direction, and you literally stop, admit you're wrong, turn around and go in a new direction. That's repentance and we all need to repent. The Bible says that we've all sinned, gone against and away from God, He's drawn near to us in Jesus, which is great, but it's worthless to us if we don't admit we're sinners, abandon our former lives, and turn to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

This is what God is making room for. Interestingly, the verb for "come" is actually not the word "come." It's the word for "room" or creating space. In other words, God's delay is rooting in His desire to create room for us to repent! What kindness! What love! What mercy! Thank You Lord for Your incredible patience! Thank You that You are slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness! Yet...God's people often don't repent. It's fascinating to me that in the Old Testament, it's people like the Ninevites, immoral pagans, who repent, while Israel, the people of God, often don't. They are called "stiff-necked" for their refusal to repent.

The same is true in the New Testament. Maybe the coolest part of our Israel trip was taking part in an actual **(LCD) archaeological dig!** It was in the ancient village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. It has just recently been discovered and our tour guide worked it out so that we could see it. The Discovery Channel is going to be doing a special on it. But what stood out to me as we looked at these remains, is what Jesus said when He stood in this exact place, **(LCD) "Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes."** Tyre and Sidon were pagan

towns, just like ancient Nineveh, yet Jesus said that they were more open to the coming of the kingdom of God than the people of God themselves! Listen, just because you've gone to church your entire life doesn't mean that you've repented! Turn to Jesus while there's still time! He's waiting for you, mercifully delaying His return.

Finally, verse 10, "*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*" Yes, God is delaying...but He won't forever. The day of the Lord is surely coming, and it will come suddenly like a thief does – by the way, the Greek for "thief" is "kleptes," where we get "kleptomaniac" from. Jesus taught this, (LCD) **"Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into."** We had our house broken into years ago; I'll never forget getting the call from the police that we'd been robbed. We certainly never expected it and weren't prepared for it. The good news is that we were newlyweds and had little to nothing...but still. It was awful.

For those who aren't ready, the day of the Lord, the return of Jesus, will be an awful day, much more awful than our being robbed, as we read in Revelation: **"Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."** Jesus is returning – repent and believe in Him so that you might be clothed in His righteousness when He comes, instead of in your own sinfulness. We need to take this seriously as the early Christians did. Look at these stats, (LCD) **"Twenty-three of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament explicitly reference Jesus' return, and two others allude to it. Only Philemon and 3 John don't mention it. In the 260 chapters of the New Testament, Jesus' apostles make reference to his second coming about 300 times."** Jesus is returning, are you ready?

Finally, Peter describes what this day will be like, the rest of verse 10, "*The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*" Now to understand what he's describing here, let's look at (LCD) **that same diagram** we looked at last week from Logos Bible software. This is the ancient Hebrew understanding of the universe. God had separated the waters below from above by creating the vault of the sky with all kinds of heavenly bodies like sun, moon and stars. So the first we read is that when Jesus returns to judge the world, the "heavens will disappear with a roar." The word for "roar" is one that sounds like what it describes – "rhoizedon." It is the sound of something flying through the air like an arrow, or the crackling of a huge fire which is probably what's pictured here since verse 7 said that God would judge the world with fire.

Next, the "elements" will be destroyed, literally, dissolved, by fire. The word for "elements" is heavily disputed and can mean (LCD) **several things.**

Option	Result
Basic creation materials (earth, air, fire, water)	Total dissolution of the creation as we know it
Celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars)	Disappearance of sky and destruction of celestial bodies
Heavenly beings (angels, demons)	Destruction of heavenly beings only

Most scholars opt for the second option: that not all of creation is being obliterated, just the heavenly objects. Let's assume that for now.

Third, the most controversial phrase, "*and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*" Like last week, we have a serious translation issue here. **(LCD) Notice that my New International Translation shows a footnote that reads, "or be burned up." This translation is used by the King James Version for instance: "...the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."** Well, which is it? Will the earth and all the works done on it by humans be laid bare or exposed or will they be burned up so that there's no physical creation left at all? That's been debated for many years and the stakes are high. If the earth and all its works are going to be burned up, then things like environmental concerns, and our earthly work, don't matter a whole lot. If the earth and its works are going to be laid bare, exposed to God's unfiltered judgment, then God's fire is going to purge and refine the earth, not annihilate it, leaving behind what's done for Him and giving our work, and the earth, eternal value.

Again, the vast majority of scholars believe that the best reading of the different ancient manuscripts is the word that is translated "laid bare" or "exposed." That is the harder reading and the one found in the earliest manuscripts. If that's true, then the new earth will be a refinement of what we have here, not a completely new entity – meaning that what we do here and now CAN and DOES matter in the new earth!

One book that says a lot about this is **(LCD) Randy Alcorn's "Heaven."** It is outstanding. The chapter on whether the earth will be annihilated or not is excellent. In it, he makes an excellent point that goes back to what we learned last week. Remember the **(LCD) diagram of God's judgment?** The first judgment of God was by water. It didn't annihilate the earth, but it did cleanse and restore it to God's original purpose. So, Alcorn says, the same will occur with God's judgment of fire, **(LCD) "The cleansing with the fire will be more thorough than the Flood in that it will permanently eliminate sin. But just as God's judgment by water didn't make the earth permanently uninhabitable, neither will God's judgment by fire."** You can disagree, but I'm solidly with Alcorn and others that the new earth will be a refinement of this one. I love how he ends that chapter, **(LCD) "The earth's death will be no more final than our own. The destruction of the old Earth in God's purifying judgment will immediately be followed by its resurrection to new life. Earth's fiery 'end' will open straight into a glorious new beginning. And as we'll see later, it will just keep getting better and better."**

So where does that leave us? How are we to respond to the end times? I believe Peter would tell us to **(LCD) remember three things about God:**

- 1. God is Eternal: God's time is not like our time.**
- 2. God is Merciful: God's delay is an act of His love and kindness.**
- 3. God is Just: Be ready – Jesus will return suddenly and make all things right!**

That's our final point: God is merciful, yes, but He's just too and in the end, He will come to judge the living and the dead and restore His glorious creation which is presently groaning for redemption. We need not fear this end – it's glorious! Let's close by affirming what our statement of faith says about the end times, **(LCD) We believe in the personal, visible, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ for his bride, the Church, and his return to earth to set up his kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the judgment, the eternal happiness of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.**