Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Have you ever been in a situation where your view was different to what everyone else thought about something? Maybe at work or school or at a family gathering? How did that go, for you? Did you share your view and staunchly defend it, regardless of what others said? Or did you share your view but back down when it became obvious that everyone else thought your view was silly? Or did you decide to just keep your view to yourself or pretend that you did not have a view? It is not easy, is it, to be the only one who holds a particular view.

Well, this is the situation that the Apostle Peter found himself in with the church or churches that he originally wrote his letters to. False teachers were teaching that Christ was *not* going to return and that there would be no Day of Judgment. And many in the congregation had been sucked in by their teaching. But there was no backing down from Peter! Throughout his letter, he has restated his conviction that Christ *will* return and that there will be a Day of Judgment. And he has provided lots of reasons for his conviction throughout this letter.

And as we come to our text, Peter is not done yet. For he offers more reasons to believe that Christ will return and that there will be a Day of Judgment. Back in verse 4, Peter described the false teachers as scoffers who say, “*Where is the promise of His coming?*” They knew of the promise of Christ to come again “*soon*,” but they pointed to the days and years that had rolled by since that promise, as proof that He was not coming back. And they were saying this just a few years after Jesus made the promise, while we are over 2000 years since that promise. And from our perspective, 2000 years is not what we would call “*soon*.” Right? Well, Peter could not let this assertion about Christ not keeping His promise go unchallenged. And he answered this assertion by calling on believers to take three key factors into consideration. And they are the **timing** factor, the **patience** factor, and the **surprise** factor. And we are going to look at each in turn, so that our confidence and expectation of Christ’s return might be strengthened.

1. So, the first reason for confidence is the **Timing** Factor. And we see this in verse 8: “*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*.”
   1. Now, to understand Peter’s point here, we must look at the flow of his argument. He is answering the assertion of scoffers that the ‘delay’ in Christ’s return means that He is not coming back. And the way that Peter answers this assertion is by **arguing from the lesser to the greater**. And the way that this type of arguing occurs is you prove something in a lesser example that must also apply in a greater example.
      1. The Lord Jesus did this, for example, when He told us to “*consider the birds of the air*.” He said, “*They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*” And His point is plain: If God cares for the sparrow, the lesser, He will surely care for us, the greater!
      2. Well, Peter is arguing from the lesser to the greater here also. The ‘lesser’ part of his argument is in verses 5-6 – the global flood of Noah’s day.
         1. God told Noah that he was going to send the flood in 120 years. And we can imagine the people laughing at Noah as he built his ark during that time and told them that a flood was coming. Ha ha! Stupid Noah! But did God keep His promise? Yes, He did. Because, to God, 120 years is nothing!
      3. Well, Jesus’ promise to return and to bring the Day of Judgment is the ‘greater’ part of Peter’s argument. Did He promise to return “soon”? Yes, He did. But Peter’s point in verse 8 is that **God’s relationship to time is different than ours**. And his words about one day being as a thousand years to the Lord are borrowed straight from Psalm 90. For there the Psalmist contrasts the *eternal* God with *time-bound* mankind. He says of God, “*From everlasting to everlasting you are God … For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night*.” And it is that entirely different relationship to time that God has that Peter restates here: “*With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*.”
         1. One commentator illustrated different perspectives on time by describing a time when his parents were driving from where they lived to come and stay. And grandad had said he expected to arrive around 3pm. Well, granddaughter was so excited that she was already staring out the window at 2:30. And by 2:42, she was starting to wonder if they were ever going to arrive, and when 3:04 came and they were still not there, she was almost in tears, “Are they really coming?” And finally, at 3:07pm, their car rolled down the street and they were there! Now, the adults in the house were not standing by the window and counting the minutes because their perspective on time was more mature than their young daughter’s.
         2. And that is what Peter is trying to press on his readers: **You need a more mature perspective on time**. God created time. It does not rule Him or govern Him or affect Him. He is not sitting in heaven counting the days and years, as they roll by, waiting. He is not under time. He exists in eternity. And so, what we hold to be a long time, 2000 years, is like a minute for God!
         3. I don’t know if you have heard this before but if you add up the genealogies in the Bible and put them alongside the historical events described in the Bible, there are around 4000 years between creation and the first coming of Christ. And there have been around 2000 years since Christ’s first coming. So, that is just 6000 years of history. Newsflash: All that talk about millions and billions that you hear on TV? That is just not true. God has given us the truth in the Bible. And congregation, from God’s perspective, 6000 years ain’t much! And that is the point! What seems like a long time to us is “*soon*” to God.
      4. So, if you ever have doubts about the return of the Lord, remember that God’s relationship to time is different than ours.

* 1. Now, before we move on, some of you may have heard this verse referred to in relation to **debates about six-day creation**. Do you know what I am talking about? You say that God created all things in six, ordinary days, and someone says, “But it says in the Bible that ‘with the Lord one day is as a thousand years.’” And so, according to them, this verse proves that you can’t take the days of creation as ordinary days.
     1. Well, we have already seen that the context of this verse relates to Christ’s promise to return “*soon*.” It is not speaking about how long the days of creation are.
     2. And the creation account is very plain; it tells us about the evening and morning of the first day of creation and the second day of creation, etc, and how God rested on the seventh day. And then, in the fourth commandment, we are commanded to work for six days and to rest on the seventh, following the pattern God set for us in creation week.
     3. So, to use verse 8 to ‘prove’ that God did not create all things in six ordinary days is just nonsense.

1. Well, that’s the **timing** factor that explains the apparent ‘delay’ in Christ’s return – God’s relationship to time is different than ours. But in verse 9 we are given the **patience** factor. For there we read that “*the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*.”
   1. And while the timing factor was about God’s perspective on time as the eternal God, this verse is about the **character** of God as a patient God.
      1. Do you boys and girls remember when God told Abraham that He was going to **destroy Sodom and Gomorrah**? And Abraham said, But Lord, what if there are 50 righteous people in Sodom? Will you still destroy it? And God said that He would not, for the sake of 50. And then Abraham said Well, what if there are just 45 … 40 … 30 … 20 … 10 righteous persons! And each time, God agreed not to destroy Sodom if that number of faithful persons were there. And Sodom and Gomorrah were extremely wicked cities! This is an illustration of God’s patience with sinners.
      2. But we see this also with **the people of Israel**. They grumbled and complained and rebelled, again and again and again, on the Exodus out of Egypt. But God kept supplying them with Manna and water from rocks and quail for meat. And only after they rebelled for the umpteenth time did He condemn them to wander in the wilderness for those 40 years.
      3. And once they were **in the Promised Land**, it was only a matter of years before they had forgotten His law and turned to idols and immorality. And then we get that repeated cycle of restoration and rebellion, repeat, repeat, repeat. And this went on for 600 years before they were finally sent away into exile.
      4. And this is the character of God. In **Exodus 34**, God revealed Himself to Moses. We read, “*The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty*."”
         1. So, He will not clear the guilty. He cannot, because He is holy and just. But He is also patient and merciful and gracious and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness and keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.
         2. And He is able to be patient and merciful because He has dealt with our sins by putting them on His Son, and punishing Him, on the cross.
         3. And this is the glorious gospel! It is why God is free to not treat us as our sins deserve and to remember our sins no more. And I hope that you have understood this about Jesus and received Him and believed in Him as your Saviour and Lord?
         4. But I for one desperately need the patience of God and His grace and His slow to anger-ness. Do you need this also? I am sure that we all do!
   2. Now, as you read this verse, you might be wondering **how it relates to the doctrine of election?** For, if God has only chosen some to salvation, which is what you have heard taught from this pulpit, then how does that stack up with the statement here that He does not wish that “*any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*”? Well, notice who it is that Peter is speaking to. It says that God is “*patient toward* ***you***.” And who is you?
      1. Well, 1 Peter is addressed to the elect exiles, those who God caused to be born again, the chosen race, the people of God’s own possession. And 2 Peter is addressed to those “*who have obtained a faith of equal standing with [the Apostles]*.” In other words, Peter addressed his letters to *all* believers, to *all* God’s elect, including those who had not yet been born.
      2. So, this verse is not saying that God really wants every single person to repent, but that the return of Christ will only come when all those whom God has chosen to salvation have come to repentance and faith, and not a day before!

1. And so, the second factor for the apparent ‘delay’ in the return of Christ is God’s **patience**; He will ‘wait’ until all His elect have repented and believed. But the third factor for the apparent ‘delay’ is the **surprise** factor.
   1. Verse 10 begins with: “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief*.” And I think we all know that **thieves** do not send their victims an appointment card, do they; they just turn up. And if you were sitting in your living room and all of a sudden a window or door smashed and a masked thief burst in, that would be terrifying, wouldn’t it! Well, that is how it will be with the return of Christ.
   2. But notice **who** it is that will be terrified. Think back, first of all, to the flood of Noah’s day. Was the flood a surprise to Noah and the seven people with him in the ark? No. The surprise and the terror were for **those outside the ark**. And verse 7 connected the Day of Judgment with the “*destruction of the ungodly*.” So, again arguing from the lesser to the greater, just as the flood was a surprise to the ungodly in those days, so the Day of Judgment will come as a surprise to the ungodly who are alive when Jesus returns.
      1. I know it is hard to imagine, but we are told in the Bible that the return of Jesus will be accompanied by the sound of a trumpet. And so, if in a few minutes, you heard this incredible trumpet sound, and the sky somehow lit up, and you went out and looked up and saw what appeared to be a whole group of people coming down out of the clouds, as a believer, you would know what it is happening. There would be joy in your heart! But if you were not a believer, it would be terrifying! You would be clueless! What is going on!
      2. In **Luke 23:30**, Jesus said that people “*will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us,'*” because of their terror. But very soon their hearts will be filled with dread, once they realize that it is too late for them, and that hell awaits. And they have no one to blame for this but themselves.
      3. But not you, believer! You would know that your Saviour has come, exactly as He promised, and you are about to enjoy eternal life!
      4. And so, I must ask you, how would you react if you heard the trumpet in a few moments? Are you certain that there will be joy in your heart? You can be certain. We saw in chapter 1 how we can confirm our calling and election. And ultimately, it has to do with your relationship to Jesus Christ: Is He your Saviour and Lord? Are you following Him, which means to walk with Him in a lifestyle of love and obedience and confession and repentance?
   3. The next part of verse 10 says, “*And then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be* ***burned up and dissolved****.*” It is a pretty vivid description, isn’t it! Can you picture it in your minds? Maybe you have seen video clips of wildfires in California or Australia, or of a nuclear bomb going off. The devastation is immense! But they are small events on one tiny planet in one solar system in one galaxy, in a universe if billions of galaxies. And when Jesus comes again, all the elements of this whole, vast universe are going to be burned up and dissolved by fire. And that is what it will take to rid the universe of sin and bring in the new heavens and the new earth.
   4. But notice also that **last sentence of verse 10**: “*And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed*.” Now, literally, the Greek of this sentence is that “*the earth and the works in it shall be found*.” And if you have a note in the margin of your Bible, it may say that the words could be “*will be burned up*.” And commentators really struggle to be certain about what Peter meant here.
      1. The major possibilities are that the earth itself and all our buildings and cities and dams and airports, etc, will all be destroyed, or that the true condition of all our deeds will finally be exposed or revealed or made manifest to God and to everyone else.
      2. Well, in my view, because **verse 11** refers again to “*all these things being dissolved*,” the idea of the earth and all the works done on it being burned up seems most fitting with Peter’s main point here. In other words, all the blood sweat and tears that we pour into buildings and cars and airports won’t ultimately count for anything, but every ounce of effort we pour into godliness will endure. And that is not to say that we should just live in grass huts and be anti-technology. It is just about focus and about what truly matters, which is exactly where Peter will point us in the next verses.

But congregation, the key point here is that we ought to live in the expectation of the return of Christ and the Day of Judgment. And it does not matter if we are one of a very few who believe this. We can be sure that Christ is coming back because the Bible tells us so! And so, I end with this question: At school or work or home, do you keep one ear open for the trumpet blast? You should! Amen.

Recite Q/A 52