

God's Time

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. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise (1 Peter 3:8)

When we speak of things durable, we'll say its "Solid as a rock". Ford, when its advertising its F-150, will have it traverse rugged rock country. But if you're smarter than a fifth grader you'll know that even rocks melt and form hot lava. Frost seeps in and breaks them apart. Foundations collapse. Some of the things we consider most solid, upon second thought are not.

Time also seems to be a steady constant. In physics, time is one of the few fundamental quantities upon which others are based. But when you begin to dig to determine upon which foundation time is measured it no longer seems so solid. The seasons and rotations of the earth have some discrepancies. We have our February 29th for leap year. We have our leap second. We have our atomic clocks based upon the constant radiation of caesium (pronounced /'si:ziəm/, SEE-zee-əm) giving us only seconds of variation over thousands of years. But there is no absolute concerning time here.

The more we study this concept of time we quickly move from the hard sciences to philosophy. Physiologists will talk about your biological age. Your wife talks to you about your mental age. The pet owner talks about dog years.

For those having, fun time flies. For those in prison, they serve time, like it's the burden it's designed to be. For those waiting in India, an hour is expected. In Canada it's an outrage. What seems soon or late, has variation between cultures, times and places.

So if there is such variation of what time means even amongst human beings, or between animal and man, what about between man and God? For God whose lifetime is eternity, who never wearies, and never is bored all time is but a moment.

The apostle John, recording the words of the Christ "Behold I am coming soon" can better be understood against the backdrop of our discussion. From eternity, everything seems but a moment. As those made in the image of God, being restored to the image of God, looking forward to eternity, taking on forms of godliness time will begin be a moment also. We hear the promise and rejoice "Behold, I am coming soon".

We begin to resist the attitudes of the sinners who scoff saying "Where is this promise of his coming?" and begin to adopt the attitude and understanding of the apostle Peter.

"The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise remembering that with the Lord a thousand years is like a day and a day like a thousand years".

Remain in the faith that enables you to stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment. Remain and trust in the righteousness of Christ. Peter uses the phrase "without spot or blemish". We know of only one way in which we stand before the judgment seat in this condition. It is through the righteousness of Christ. It is a righteousness given by his grace in Baptism, whereby we receive robes of righteousness. They are righteous

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robes washed in the blood of the lamb. What kind of people ought you to be? People clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Adopt the lifestyle changes that come with such faith. Adopt a sense of urgency. We have a limited time in which to do good. In view of the coming of certain judgment we are not, as Peter says early on in this reading, to be consumed with the fleshly sorts of lusts which consume the scoffers. We who know, believe, and teach the imminent coming of our Lord are consumed with good works. Do your friends and family know the Lord? Have we fed the beggar at our gate? Do we protect the rights to life possessed by the most vulnerable in our society? Have we, as a reading from Mt. 25 suggests, seen the Lord "in the least of these my brethren" and acted on such knowledge? This list is lengthy. The time is short.

Peter points to some good reasons to believe that the time is short and that our Lord's promises to return are certain and true. Peter presents history. People in Noah's Day were where we are now. And consider what was happening.

"they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark"

Matthew says that they were unaware. We know that they were willingly unaware. 1 Peter 3:20 says "God's Patience waited while Noah prepared the Ark". Knowing the kind of massive structure this ark was, it would have taken significant time. Dr. Paul Maier says in his book on Noah and the Ark "we do not know how long". But it must have been a significant amount of time. It was a true window of mercy for others, other than the 8, to repent.

Now the study of apologetics cannot convince you of the veracity of Scripture, but it does make it credible. We know the flood happened. Of all the things that we could speak of, the thing that catches my mind is the universality of the flood narrative. They differ in the details but every culture from every time and every place speaks of the universal flood. It's because it happened. Another important point is that the Gospels record that Jesus himself taught the flood. To me, that's significant. If the flood had of just been myth or parable to prove a point, Jesus would have clarified it and it would have been recorded in the Gospels. But no. Jesus simply speaks of it as history, as he speaks of Adam and Eve as true historical persons and creation and everything else connected with Old Testament history.

The flood of judgment happened. God fulfills his promises. He has in the past and we can expect him to fulfill them in the future. The time seemed long to others awaiting the flood waters. It seemed long for fire and brimstone to come and descend upon Sodom and Gomorrah. It seemed long before the Egyptians were judged and Israel delivered. It seemed long waiting for Christ to appear in human flesh at Bethlehem. But everything happened. It happened in the fullness of time. It happened according to God's will.

Not only is the time short. He comes unexpectedly. Our God is the God of the unexpected. He chooses those we least expect to do his will. He comes at the most inopportune times. He comes in the most unexpected ways. He comes as a thief in the night.

I just think of our Lord's coming through the locked doors at Easter to demonstrate the point. John 20:19 "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were

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assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you". There is probably something in all of us that says, "I'll hear him coming". Or "I'll just intuitively know". We can't be sure of that. On Easter Sunday he didn't knock at the locked door. He simply appeared.

He will come as a thief in the night.

Time is a theme that unites all four weeks of Advent and the three themes they contain. With the additional lighting of every Advent Candle we are reminded of the ever shortening amount of it. Considering our Lord's Coming in Grace we consider the ever present nature of our Lord's Coming. He comes in His Word which abides forever. He comes in the preaching of prophets, apostles and pastors. He comes in a sacramental presence. Tonight we considered His Coming in Glory – a future prospect yet an imminent one. Next week we consider His Coming in the Flesh. In a sense that covers past, present and future. Most people consider the coming of the Christ in the flesh simply a past event, in the dim recesses of history. Christians seem to celebrate an event 2000 years old. But the humanity of Christ is present with us now every Sunday, such as this Sunday when we hear the Words of Institution "This is My Body". The humanity and divinity of Christ is present. His person cannot be divided. The coming of our Lord in the Flesh is also future. Behold, he comes in the clouds and every eye shall see him. He does not come as a ghost. He raises us up in our flesh as he himself rose up in the flesh and ascended on high in the flesh. He returns in the flesh to wipe away every tear from our eye.

He Comes Past, Present and Future. He Comes and takes us to the land beyond time. He takes us into our heavenly home, our inheritance as children of God. Advent means coming. Our Lord Comes. In this season may we rejoice.

Amen.