

# THE LORD WILL COME

2 Peter 3:8-10

## INTRODUCTION

- The ungodly of this world think they will escape God's judgment because it is a long time coming
- But God has promised he will come and judge the world, and he keeps his promises
- He said he is coming "quickly" (Revelation 22:7,12,20)
- The apostles hoped for his coming during their lifetimes but they all died
- When Peter wrote this epistle, it was about 35 years after Christ had ascended to heaven
- It has been some 2000 years since Christ promised he would come again
- For believers, this delay of Christ's return ought to have the effect of increasing our hope and anticipation, and provoking us to a holy life of faithful service to Christ (Romans 13:11-13; Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 10:25; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:11,14)
- But for unbelievers, the delay of his coming produces another response – scoffing, deeper unbelief, rejection of God's word, persecution of believers, and hearts set upon doing evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11)
- Previously we saw how these scoffers, led by their fleshly lusts, think that the promises of divine judgment have failed, seeing thousands of years have passed without anything happening
- In v.5 Peter pointed out that God previously destroyed the world in judgment by flood – something the scoffers are wilfully ignorant of

- And, having once destroyed the world in the past, he will do so again in the future, but this time by fire
- In these verses, Peter equips the brethren with the truth concerning Christ's coming – the reality of it and the reasons it is delayed – which will help establish us in our hope, and enable us to answer the scoffers

## **I. GOD IS ETERNAL – HIS TIME IS NOT OUR TIME (8)**

### **A. A warning against ignorance**

1. “Beloved” (vv.1,8,14,17) shows Peter's deep love and concern for the brethren particularly that they are clear on this issue
2. The scoffers are “wilfully ignorant” of God's truth, but God's people are not to be so
3. As we grow in the knowledge of God and of doctrine, we become strengthened and mature spiritually, able to withstand the assaults of error (Ephesians 4:13-15)

### **B. This verse has been misused by some**

1. It is used to turn the days of the creation week into 1000-year ages
2. Yet these days were clearly normal, twenty-four hour days, each with an “evening and morning”
3. The verse also says that not only is one day as a thousand years, but a thousand years is as a day
4. Peter is merely using a simile to show that God's view of time is not the same as ours

### **C. God is not constrained or ruled by time**

1. He eternally existed before time was created (Isaiah 57:15)
2. “In the beginning God” (Genesis 1:1) – he created time on the first day of the creation week
3. That God is Creator and Lord of time should be a cause of comfort to the believer
4. God is never in a hurry, he is never too early, never too late, even though we may at times think he is
5. When Lazarus died, Jesus delayed his journey to him, and some thought that he was too late (John 11:21,37)
6. Yet his timing was perfect, fulfilling his intended purposes of showing God’s glory (v.40) and bring people to faith in him (v.15)

D. God does not view time as we do

1. Psalm 90:1-4 shows God’s perspective of time, while Psalm 90:9-12 shows man’s perspective
2. Too many people view God as merely a greater version of man, with greater abilities, who yet thinks like us and acts like us
3. No, God is not a man, his thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9)
4. We ought to conform our thinking, particularly with reference to time, to God’s thinking and perspective of time
5. God has set “the world”, or “eternity” in man’s heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11), giving him an awareness of the divine, of heaven and hell, of the day of judgment, etc
6. Yet man suppresses this light and fills his heart with the temporal and material things of this present life

## II. GOD IS MERCIFUL – HE GIVES SPACE TO REPENT (9)

### A. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise

1. “Slack” (*bradunei*) is to be slow, delayed, negligent
2. Men are slack and fail to keep their promises, but God is not so

### B. God is longsuffering to us-ward

1. This longsuffering is not just his patience in “putting up” with us, but it is his withholding and postponing of judgment upon us
2. It is his being “slow to anger” (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 145:8)
3. This highlights the very heart of God towards sinners – his first response is not anger, wrath and judgment, but mercy, grace and forgiveness
4. He “delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18), while judgment and punishment is “his strange work” (Isaiah 28:21)
5. The “us” in this verse is understood by some to pertain only to the elect, but God is longsuffering to all people

### C. God is not willing that any should perish

1. This verse clearly teaches that God is willing for all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)
2. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11; 18:30-32)
3. God demonstrates this willingness that all repent
  - a. By giving light to all men (John 1:9)
  - b. By being good to all, even his enemies (Psalm 145:9)

- c. By sending his Son to die for all (1 Peter 3:18)
  - d. By having the good news of the gospel proclaimed to all (Mark 16:15)
  - e. By commanding all men to repent (Acts 17:30)
- D. God is willing that all come to repentance
- 1. Repentance is a turning to God and a change of mind toward God and sin that results in a change of life
  - 2. If a sinner is to not perish, he must repent, for without repentance there is no salvation (Luke 13:3)
  - 3. Repentance is not a work of man, as some falsely claim, but a gift of God's grace
    - a. God gives repentance to sinners (Zechariah 12:10; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25)
    - b. God's goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4)
    - c. Every part of God's grace in salvation, including repentance, is given by God from heaven (John 3:27; James 1:17)
  - 4. While it is God's will or desire to be saved, we know that not all people will be saved
  - 5. God's *revealed* will is for the salvation of all, but his *secret* will, known only to him, is that there will only be a certain number of people saved, while the rest will perish

### **III. GOD IS JUST – HE WILL COME IN JUDGMENT (10)**

- A. The day of the Lord

1. The day of the Lord is a major prophetic theme in Scripture, and refers broadly to the time of God's judgment upon both Israel and the world
2. It is the consummation of human history, in which God directly intervenes upon the world, judging the wicked, blessing the righteous, and concluding with a new heavens and earth
3. It begins with the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53), then the Tribulation period (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-30; Isaiah 13:9-11), continues through the Second Advent and Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:6), and is completed in the Eternal Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:28)
4. For the believer it holds great anticipation of hope, but for the unbeliever it holds only judgment and damnation

B. As a thief in the night

1. This describes the *unexpectedness* of Christ's coming, particularly the unbelievers on earth (Matthew 24:37-39, 43-44; Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3; 16:15)
2. For the believer, Christ, like a thief will catch up to himself every child of God living at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
3. But for the unbeliever, Christ, like a thief will take from the ungodly "even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18)

C. The heavens and earth will be burned up

1. This will take place at the end of Christ's 1000-year reign (see Revelation 21)

2. As the old earth was destroyed and completely changed by the flood, so too this present earth will be destroyed and renovated by fire
3. The first heaven and earth “flee away” (Revelation 20:11), “pass away” (Matthew 24:35; Revelation 21:1) and “perish” (Hebrews 1:10-12)
4. The “elements” (*stoicheia*) refers to “the basic parts, rudiments, or components of something”, and
5. The original creation was all “good” (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31), but sin and the curse has universally polluted and marred it
6. The scriptures describe *three* heavens
  - a. The first heaven is earth’s atmosphere (Genesis 1:6-8; 7:11; Jeremiah 4:25)
  - b. The second heaven is the realm of stars, planets and other celestial bodies
  - c. The third heaven is paradise, where God’s throne is (2 Corinthians 12:2-4; 1 Kings 8:27,30)
7. The first and second heavens will undergo this purging by fire
8. Not only the earth, but the whole universe is tainted by the curse of sin and therefore must be destroyed and replaced (Job 15:15)
9. The former heavens and earth shall not be remembered, nor come into mind (Isaiah 65:17)

## CONCLUSION

1. Many great musical composers died leaving unfinished works

2. Many great artists died leaving unfinished masterpieces
3. But God will not and cannot leave anything unfinished because he is eternal
4. It is a great mistake to think that because God has not brought something to pass that he has failed, and will not do so
5. “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Hebrews 10:37)
6. How merciful is our God in prolonging this day of grace so that more sinners may repent!
7. Have you responded to God’s goodness in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ?
8. Are you thankful to him for his longsuffering, for not destroying you the moment you committed your first sin or the first time you rejected the gospel?
9. Do you show your thankfulness by giving your life – body, soul and spirit – unto him?
10. Do you have longsuffering heart towards the lost as our Saviour does?
11. When the Lord comes, will he be as an unexpected thief to you, being unprepared to stand before him?