

The Books of 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 12: The Day of the Lord Will Come -- 2 Peter 3:1-13

Every parent who has waited up past midnight for a teenager who said they would be home by eleven knows the strange arithmetic of waiting. Minutes stretch. Doubt creeps in. Did something happen, or did they just forget? Peter writes to a church that had been waiting a long time for a promise to be kept, the promise that Christ would return, and the waiting had begun to wear on them. Scoffers had appeared, asking the question that always surfaces when a promise is delayed: 'Where is the promise of his coming? Everything is just going on as it always has.' Peter writes to steady people whose hope had started to sag under the long silence of God.

His answer is not what we might expect. He does not apologize for the delay or quietly revise the promise. He reframes the whole way we measure time. The scoffers, he says, 'deliberately overlook' two things: that God once judged the world by water in the flood, and that the same word of God is keeping the present heavens and earth in reserve for judgment by fire. And then the line that has reset countless anxious hearts: 'With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' God is not slow. He does not live inside our calendars. What looks to us like delay is, from His side, something else entirely.

What looks like delay, Peter says, is actually patience, and patience with a purpose. '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.' The silence of God is not absence; it is mercy. Every day the Lord delays is another day the door of repentance stands open, another day someone can still come home. The God who seems slow is actually holding the door for the very people who complain about His timing.

But make no mistake, Peter says: the day will come, and it will come 'like a thief.' The heavens will pass away, the elements will be dissolved, the earth and its works will be exposed before God. This is not a far-off cosmic curiosity; it is the most practical truth imaginable. 'Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?' Everything we are tempted to build our lives on is going to burn. Only what is anchored in God will remain. Read this passage and let it do two things at once: settle your hope that Christ will surely come, and sober your heart about how you are living while you wait for the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells.

Group Discussion: Peter says scoffers ask, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For... all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation' (vv. 3-4). Why does the delay of Christ's return tempt people to doubt the promise? Where do you see this same skepticism today, and how does it affect the way people live?

Personal Reflection: Peter says God is patient, 'not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance' (v. 9). Is there an area where you have mistaken God's patience for

God's absence or approval, and put off dealing with something? What is God patiently waiting for you to bring to repentance?

Read 2 Peter 3:1-13

Study Questions

1. Peter writes to 'stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder' (vv. 1-2), pointing back to the words of the prophets and apostles. Why does Peter again emphasize the prophetic and apostolic word as the foundation here, and how does grounding ourselves in Scripture protect us from the scoffing of the age?
2. Peter says the scoffers follow 'their own sinful desires' (v. 3), hinting that doubt often has a moral root, not just an intellectual one. Where might your own desires be quietly shaping what you are willing to believe or obey, and how do you guard against letting what you want determine what you accept as true?
3. Peter answers the scoffers by pointing to creation and the flood, and says 'with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day' (vv. 5-8). What does this teach about how God relates to time, and how does it answer the charge that God is 'slow' to keep His promise?
4. Peter says the scoffers 'deliberately overlook' the facts of God's past judgment (v. 5). When you are tempted to doubt or to live as though judgment will never come, what truths are you most tempted to conveniently forget, and what helps you keep them in view?
5. Peter says, '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' (v. 9). What does this teach about why Christ has not yet returned, and what does it reveal about God's heart toward all people and His desire for everyone to be saved?
6. Peter frames the delay as an open door of mercy, more time for people to repent. Who in your life are you praying will 'reach repentance,' and how does seeing God's patience as mercy rather than slowness change the way you pray and live toward them?
7. Peter says 'the day of the Lord will come like a thief' (v. 10), unexpected and unannounced. What does this teach about the certainty and the suddenness of Christ's return, and why is it spiritually dangerous to think we can predict its timing or to live as though it will never come?
8. Peter asks, 'Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?' (vv. 11-12). If you truly believed that everything around you is temporary and that Christ could return at any moment, what in your daily life would you change?
9. Peter describes one coming day of the Lord in which 'the heavens will pass away,' 'the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved,' and the earth 'exposed,' followed by 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells' (vv. 10, 12-13). What does this passage teach about the end of the present created order and the Christian's true hope, and

how does this single, sudden day of the Lord stand against the idea of a future earthly thousand-year reign and against all attempts to predict the date of Christ's coming?

10. Look back across the whole passage. Peter moves from answering the scoffers, to God's patience, to the certainty of the day of the Lord, to the call to holy living, to the new heavens and new earth. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through these verses. What single truth from 2 Peter 3:1–13 do you most need to carry into this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 24:36–44, no one knows the day or hour; Christ comes like a thief; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, the day of the Lord and living as children of light; Revelation 21:1–4, the new heaven and new earth where God dwells with His people; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10, the Lord revealed from heaven in judgment and glory; Romans 2:4, God's kindness meant to lead us to repentance