

An Exposition of the 2nd Epistle of Peter

“The Cause for God’s Delay

2 Peter 3:8-9

Theme: God uses time so as to fulfill His purposes of grace.

I. THE RELATIVITY OF TIME TO GOD – 3:8

A. God’s Relationship to Time

1. In response to the mockers who are using the “failure” of Christ to return as reason for indulging in sensuality and sinful indulgences, Peter assures believers that there is reason for the “delay.”
2. He says: *“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.”*
3. Although it is impossible for us to grasp, God is not subservient to time as we are – He is eternal (altogether above time).
4. God transcends time – without any of the restrictions or restraints time imposes on mankind who are created within the constructs of time – cp. *Psalm 90:4*
5. Consequently, to God, *“one day”* provides Him as much potential as *“a thousand years,”* etc,
6. However, God does act within time – eg. Creation, prophecy, etc ... , and therefore we cannot ignore the temporal references, and must consider them precise when God makes promises based on time.

B. God’s Reference to Time

1. It is God who created time – “In the beginning ...” – *Genesis 1:1*
2. There are times when God’s references to time seem to be more focused on moral conditions than clock or calendars – cp. *Genesis 6:3; Galatians 4:4*
3. When God makes reference to time, He does it for our benefits who are within time in order that we can place these events within the chronologies that we can use as points of reference.

II. THE RELIABILITY OF GOD – 3:9a

A. The Criticism Against God

1. *“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness ...”* – a defense to the criticism of the scoffers.

2. *“slow”* [βραδύνω] – possesses the idea of “delay,” “hesitate,” or “loiter” – some translate it as “tardy” – the inference is that the time for Him to return has come and gone – since He hasn’t done it, He will not.
3. The idea is that God made a promise and has not kept it.

B. The Confidence in God

1. The attribute of perfection that God’s Spirit provides us here is that God *“... is patient toward you ...”*
2. *“patient”* [μακροθυμέω] – “is a compound word combining ‘large’ with ‘great anger.’ Peter used it here to show that God has a vast capacity for storing up anger and wrath before it spills over in judgment.”¹
3. Believers, however, see no irresponsibility or unworthiness in God at all for the patience the tarrying of Christ requires of us.
4. Rather, we recognize that God uses time so as to serve His purposes of grace in saving the elect.

III. THE RESOLUTION OF GOD – 3:9b

A. The Preservation of His Long-Suffering

1. The description here is of God who is mercifully withholding His wrath from sinners who are testing and provoking Him – *“not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”* – cp. **Exodus 34:6-7; Romans 2:3-6**
2. God has absolutely no delight in such prolonged aggravation and provocation – but, He has a definitive purpose in mind for waiting – the redemption of elect, sinful men – **1 Timothy 2:4**.

B. The Priority of Grace

1. God specifically declares that He takes no delight in the death of the wicked – cp. **Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11**
2. God’s entire purpose is that men be spared spiritual death through the offering of His Son – *“for all to come to repentance.”*
3. Thus, the seeming delay in fulfilling His promise of the Second Coming is not any tardiness on His party to keep an appointment.

¹ MacArthur, p. 122.

4. It is due to His long-suffering with sinners, giving the human race an opportunity, generation after generation, to accept the salvation He has made available through the cross.
5. It must be acknowledged that God's specific focus here is on those who are the chosen and elect sinners – based on the audience to whom He is writing – cp. **2 Peter 1:1; 3:1, 8**.
6. The patience of God and the elect purposes of God will come to an end at the very same time – meaning that when the last sinner chosen by God is saved, the patience of God will expire and He will exercise His wrath against sinful men.