

2 Peter 3:1-13

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[0 : 00] Christianity means a bold claim. It doesn't offer you advice to live your best life. It announces that Jesus, the man who walked around Nazareth 2000 years ago is the son of God. He has been appointed king of all the earth and he is coming back to judge the world.

That's the announcement of the prophets and the apostles. Jesus is coming back. And that's a bold claim. It's not the kind of thing that you can ignore and say, well that's nice for you but it's not high property. If it's true then Jesus is your king. And judgment day is a reality that no one can avoid. This is the bold claim of Christianity. Jesus is coming back.

But there's just one problem with that claim. It's been 2000 years and there's no sign of it. Jesus left this earth around AD 33 and he promised that he would come back. But after 100 years, nothing. After 500 years, still nothing.

A thousand years. 2000 years. We've been waiting 2000 years for Jesus to come back. You might start to think Christians are looking a bit silly. This bold claim, Jesus is coming back, isn't it starting to sound a little less confident?

If Jesus really is coming back. If Jesus really is coming to judge and rule, where is he? Why is it taking him so long? Well that's what people were saying when Peter wrote this letter. There were false teachers in the church and look what they were saying in verse 4.

[1 : 43] They will say, where is the promise of his coming? They scoff at the idea of the judgment day. If Jesus is coming, where is he? You can't seriously believe in a day of judgment.

So in this chapter, Peter is tackling that question of Jesus is really coming to judge. Why is it taking so long? This question is immensely important because what we believe about the future changes everything about how we live now.

What we think about this claim of Jesus' return determines the whole direction of our present lives. Look at the false teachers. They're skeptical about this day of judgment. And so how do they live now?

Well, verse 3, it says, scoffers will come in the last day with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. If there's no future judgment, sin as much as you want. What you believe about the future affects how you live now.

And so Peter really wants to remind the church of the future and how it affects the now. Look at verse 1. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you below it.

[2 : 58] In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder. You should remember, number 1, the predictions of the holy prophets. In other words, the day of the Lord is coming.

And, number 2, the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your gospel. That's the way of life that's expected of us. The fact of godliness matters. These two things go together.

Jesus' return and our present godliness. So we have to tackle this big question. We need to be completely sure about the future. If Jesus is really coming to church, why is it taking us so long?

All we're going to see first is, Peter says, remember the flood. That's our first point, remember the flood. But false teachers have an answer to their own question.

Why is it taking so long for Jesus to judge? Because, they say, God has set the world running and then left it to do his own thing. Have a look at verse 4.

[4 : 03] They will say, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. Things just carry on the way they always have.

People are born, they live their lives, they make a few babies, and then they die. And the cycle continues. The sun rises and it sets. Life goes on, round and round, and nothing ever changes.

So why do you think that God is going to step in and judge? Can't you see that he never intervenes? There's no reason to think he's going to suddenly judge the world. Isn't that pretty similar to what a lot of people think today?

If there even is a God, he must have set the world going, but then it's pretty obvious that he's just left us to it. He never shows up. Everything continues the way it always has.

Peter says that's false. That's complete rubbish. Things have not continued the same way since creation. There was a massive discontinuity. Have a look at verse 5.

[5 : 12] For they deliberately overlooked this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water, by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

Do you see what he's saying? God has intervened before. He has judged the world before. And this was not a small intervention, where he stepped in on a small scale.

The whole world, the entire planet was flooded with water and perished. And they've conveniently forgotten this major catastrophe. He's talking there about the time of Noah.

We read in Genesis that the Lord saw that the wickedness of mankind on earth was great, and it breathed him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out mankind who I've created from the face of the earth.

And he brought a flood on the whole earth, like nothing that had ever happened or has ever happened since. A full scale judgment on the world against sin. This wasn't a local disaster.

[6 : 22] It wasn't like the floods you get in India or a tsunami in Japan. This was a disaster on a scale that we have never seen. Europe, Asia, Africa, every continent, every country was covered in the floods.

No one escaped. We've heard of world wars where the loss of life was devastating. We've heard of genocide where people were being decimated. But this is beyond all of that.

The virtual extinction of the entire human race because of the judgment of God. And the point Peter really wants to make is the flood was decreed by God's word.

God was not passive. He's not a passive observer of our world. He is the creator and the judge.

Look at verse 5. The earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.

God created the world by his word. And verse 6, by means of means, that's by means of his word and by means of water, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

[7 : 32] In other words, God created by his word and he judged by his word. By the same word, he created the world and flooded the world.

The flood was not a tragic accident. God decreed it by his word in order to judge the world. What are you to make of this?

What does this tell us about the kind of future that we should expect? What are you to tell us? Verse 7. But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

God sent the flood by his word and by the same word, he will send fire. This verse says clearly that there is a fire coming on the earth.

This earth that we live in now will one day come under the fire of God's judgment. This is not a myth or a story or something made up by the church to keep people under control, to keep people behaving.

[8 : 41] This is God's word. Judgment day is coming and the ungodly will be destroyed. So Peter says remember the flood. There is a precedent for the coming judgment.

Just as he sent the flood on all the ungodly, it is certain he will send the fire too. Even when we're kids, we learn to expect things in the future based on what we've experienced in the past.

When you're a kid, you test your parents. Kids will always test you. That's what they do. They push boundaries. But if you have parents who are consistent, you soon learn that that's not going to work.

When I was a kid, it took me a while to learn that if my parents said something, they will always follow through. If they told me, be home by this time, or they will be troubled the first couple of times, I was like, not worried.

I wasn't taking them seriously. But I soon learned. So the next time, I knew what was coming. They set the precedent.

[9 : 46] When you've pushed the boundaries a few times and you've felt the consequences, you learn to know what to expect. You know from previous experience. Peter is saying, we have previous experience.

That God will follow through on what he says. There will be a judgment on the ungodly. But the false teachers say the reason judgment is taking so long is because God has left the world to just carry on the way he always has.

But Peter says, no, we know he's coming to judgment because we have a past example to float. But that still leaves us with the question, why is he taking so long?

And what we're going to see is he delays so you will repent. That's our second point. And he delays so you will repent. Verse 8 says this.

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. Peter's quoting Psalm 90 here.

[10 : 50] And Psalm 90 compares the shortness of human life with the infinite length of God's life. We are bound by time. We have a very limited amount of time.

Our lives are just a tiny glip in the face of eternity. It's a bit like a mayfly. Do you know how long the lifespan of a mayfly is?

It's 24 hours. They live for one day and they die. Now if mayflies could think, they think, we're crazy. You know, we spend eight hours, eight hours a night sleeping.

That's a third of their whole life. If a mayfly could talk, he'd say, why on earth do you spend so long lying in bed doing nothing? Because the mayfly's perception of time can't be compared with a human.

A day is like a thousand years. God is outside of our tiny time frames. When humans criticise God for his slowness in fulfilling his promises, they don't know what they're talking about.

[11 : 54] It's like the mayfly criticising your schedule. But having said that, God is not oblivious to the passage of time. He created time. He has a reason for setting the appointed time for the judgment day.

There's a reason that the judgment day wasn't yesterday. What is that reason? Verse 9. The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise, as some count slowness.

But is patient toward him. Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. Peter says God is not procrastinating.

He's being patient with you. He delays so that you will repent. Isn't that amazing? These false teachers are scoffing. Where are you then, Jesus, if you're coming to church?

It's been a long time. And all the while, he's being patient with them. He's giving them a chance to repent so they won't perish when judgment comes. It says there, God does not wish that any should perish.

[12 : 59] He doesn't please God when sinners get destroyed. In Ezekiel 18.23, God says, Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? It says there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

He's a God of great grace, mercy and compassion. you know with all this talk of the judgment of God against the ungodly the flood and the fire and the destruction you could think that God is an angry, tyrannical God who just flies off the handle and wipes everyone out and everything gets better that couldn't be further from the truth God is incredibly patient why has Jesus waited 2000 years to return because he's patient he warns and warns and warns he warns us to repent and be saved, he doesn't want you to be destroyed in the fire God is just and he will punish sin in justice but he gives us chance after chance to repent so we will not perish when that day finally comes we know don't we that God is sovereign, he's in control over salvation but that doesn't change the fact that his heart loves to see sinners saved, he delays so you will repent this word repent isn't really used much outside of church but if you're new to church this word repentance just means to have a complete change of mind you are heading in one direction and you're converted your mind is changed you do a 180 and go in the other direction in other words we turn from living a life of sin and rebellion against God and we start to live for him but the shock here is who has been told to repent who is God waiting for verse 9 says he's patient towards you

I've often heard this talk evangelistically God is holding back the judgement so that the people out there in the world will be saved and come into the church and they won't face judgement and that's true isn't it but that's not actually who Peter's focusing on here he's talking to people who in the

church just before he calls beloveds these are people in the church the same people he's been addressing the whole letter so when he says God is patient towards you he's talking to us he's talking to people in the church the whole point of this letter has been that the church the visible church is a mixed bag you've got those false teachers in the church who Peter says will face judgement then you've got people in the church who escaped from the sinful ways of the world but are being enticed back to a life of sin and Peter is saying to them repent before it's too late God is being patient with you if you're part of the church don't miss the fact that this message is for you don't think this is for my unbelieving friend who doesn't come to church

Peter's speaking to us sitting in church today he's saying if you're in the covenant community if you're in the church but you're living in sin you need to repent God is being patient with you so that you won't perish in the church imagine a father who sees his kid steal gum's purse from the dresser he sees it happen but he doesn't do anything he could have gone straight down there to punish his kid for what he's done wrong but he waits why?

because he's waiting for something that dad is giving his son a chance to change his mind and to bring the purse back so he waits God is waiting for us to repent and we have to ask ourselves are we living in unrepentant sin?

[17:20] have we been enticed into a double life where we're in the church and yet we're we're living in sin Peter emphasizes sexual sin in this letter but it could be anything when we're comfortable in our sin when we're we're okay with we're living our old way of life instead of fighting against it are we living in sin today?

repent God is patient with us he's holding back the judgment so we will reach repentance so we've seen God delays so that you will repent but Peter says make no mistake the day of the Lord is coming have a look at verse 10 but the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with the war and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed the day of judgment will come like a thief what does Peter mean?

well if you're a professional thief do you call the people who you're going to burgle in advance and send the point you're with them I'm going to come and rob your house on Thursday at 10pm if that's okay of course not it's not like being a plumber where they know what day and what time to expect you they come at a time that's unpredictable the point is to not get caught and Peter's saying the day of judgment will be unpredictable you can't predict when it's coming it will come like a thief without notice unpredictable but inevitable it's coming you just don't know when what will happen on the day of judgment we read just now in verse 10 that the heavens will be dissolved and the earth will be exposed what does that mean Peter has told us that the heavens and the earth are being stored up for fire on the judgment day there will be fire and this fire will have a different effect on the heavens than it has on the earth it will burn away everything above us in order to expose everything around us sometimes we think that the earth is going to be completely annihilated and a totally new one will be created but the bible seems to teach a radical renewing and recreating of the same earth that already exists it will be radically new but it's still the same earth

Peter says here the effect the fire will have on the earth is to expose not to destroy it's a bit like what happened with the flood the flood was like a decreation of the earth a reversal of God's creation order and yet he didn't flush the earth down the sink he didn't destroy it he renewed it and that's a picture of what the final judgment will be like when the fire comes it will expose the earth but not destroy it so what will it expose verse 10 says the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed the works done on the earth everything we've ever done will be exposed it will be exposed whether we have stuck with Jesus whether we went back to our old sinful ways whether we gave in to the seduction of the false teachers that's why he calls us to repent and that's why he's taking so long because he wants everyone to reach repentance he wants you to reach repentance so repent before judgment day

God is gracious he's not out to get you instead he's engaged himself to save all who are his people repent and believe in the gospel and you will be saved we've been asking this question if Jesus is really coming to church why is it taking so long and it's not because God has left our world to just keep on going as it always has God has judged before and he will again but he delays so we will repent the way we live now is based on what we think the future holds and Peter wants us to know judgment is coming the works that are done on the earth will be exposed and now is the time to repent let's pray Thank you.