

A Study of Second Peter

Where is God in an Uncertain World (2 Peter 3:8-13)

“The God of the Scriptures is so big, wise, and powerful that he can grant truly meaningful and real choices to angels and humans alike, in a way that allows them to act freely, within their finite limits, without inhibiting his sovereign plan in any way and indeed using their meaningful choices, even their disobedience, in a significant way to fulfill his sovereign plan. . . . choice is a bittersweet gift. Those in Heaven will always be grateful they had it and will have it always, with no fear of sin or condemnation; those in Hell will always regret that they didn’t exercise it differently.”

~ Randy Alcorn, Hand in Hand, 149

I. Introduction

Why hasn't the Lord intervened? Where is God in the midst of all the junk that I am facing? If God is so powerful and loving, why doesn't He do something? Peter must address these questions in light of the delay of eternal judgment—a judgment that the false teachers deny. Peter will argue that God's perception of time varies from humanity, that God is fully aware of and acting within the confines of time, and that God will see a completion of time. Consequently, believers are called to walk in obedience to Him.

II. God and Time (3:8-13)

A. God's Perspective of Time (vv. 8-9)

v. 8 - Unlike the false teachers who blatantly disregard (3:3) and deliberately suppress (3:5) the truth, the reader is to pay attention to biblical teaching.

“one day is like a thousand years” - Peter quotes from Psalm 90—a psalm which speaks of God's impending judgment and contrasts the brevity of human life with God's eternal nature.

“The lives of human beings are short and frail, but God does not weaken or frail with the passage of time” (Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 379).

v. 9 - The questioned “promised return” in verse 4 is laid to rest by Peter in this verse. As noted by numerous commentators, divine delay, whether in judgment or for the purpose of salvation, appears with regularity in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature (see Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 326). Observe the following texts:

Deuteronomy 7:10 -

Isaiah 46:13 -

In addition, God's patience towards the sinner is a common theme in biblical literature. Note these passages:

Joel 2:12-13 -

1 Timothy 2:4 -

Note particular events in the Old Testament when God held back His hand of judgment in order that the ungodly might repent:

v. 10 - The “Day of the Lord” is seen throughout Scripture as a time in which God outpours His wrath upon the unrighteous, and He vindicates the righteous (see Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1).

The analogy of a “thief,” depicting the coming of the eschaton, is seen in Jesus’ teaching (Matt 24:43-44) and in Paul’s instruction (1 Thess 5:2; also, see Rev 3:3).

“horrific noise” - This term can refer to the crackle of a fire or even thunder—both sounds associated with the judgment of God (see Isa 29:6; Jer 33:3; Joel 3:16).

Since “elements” are “placed in contrast with ‘the heavens,’ they should therefore be understood as the totality of the material of the world” (Green, 330).

“laid bare” - The term suggests a judicial inquiry through which the Lord will ascertain all deeds of humanity and judge accordingly (see John 18:38; 19:4). As noted by one early Church Father, “But you know that the day of judgment is already coming as a blazing furnace, and some of the heavens will dissolve, and the whole earth will be like lead melting in a fire, and then the works of men, the secret and the public will appear” (2 *Clement* 16:3).

B. God’s Call to Seize the Time (vv. 11-13)

v. 11 - A recognition that a future judgment will occur motivates us to live holy lives. In fact, Peter stresses that such conduct is not optional. As noted in 1:3, a life of godliness needs to be actively pursued.

v. 12 - Unlike the false teachers who undermine and seek to eliminate the notion of a future judgment, believers are to wait expectantly for this future hope. The term “hope for” speaks of a firm expectation or a sure confidence.

How exactly are believers to “hasten” the coming of the Day of the Lord?

Peter reiterates the reality of what awaits this present creation (vv. 7, 10; also, see Isa 63:19-64:1).

Note that “the command to live holy lives in the middle of v. 11 is framed on each side by the assertion that the present world will be destroyed by fire” (Schreiner, 391).

v. 13 - The promise of a new heavens and a new earth resounds throughout Scripture. Isaiah 65:17 states: “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not

be remembered or come to mind.” This present system, with its plethora of injustices, pain, suffering, and sin, will be eradicated (e.g., Isa 60:21). This future abode is home for righteousness of God (1:1) and for those who have been transformed (1:3-4).

One biblical scholar writes, “A promise is a word that reaches into the future, creating a bond of obligation on the part of the one who gives it and of expectation on the part of the one who receives it . . . that our mighty Creator should have bound himself to use his power fulfilling promises to us—‘very great and precious promises,’ as 2 Peter 1:4 puts it—is one of the wonders of biblical religion” (J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 229).

III. The Intersect

- A. Unlike the unbeliever who asks where is God, believers have the opportunity to enter into the presence of the divine King via worship.

Psalm 95:1-5 -

- B. Eschatology, or the study of end times, is not speculation. Rather, it is motivation—motivation to live lives that please God. The stakes are real, and they are high!

Matthew 6:10 -

- C. The Lord’s desire that all should come to repentance should encourage us to be salt and light in this world.

Matthew 5:13-14 -

“History, says the Bible, first and foremost is definitely under the control of God. It is not the out-working of blind forces and unseen powers that have no rhyme nor reason.” ~ D. M. Lloyd-Jones

For further thought . . .

Based upon our study this morning, I invite you to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:

Frequently throughout Scripture, the study of end times or eschatology leads to a discussion of ethics. Look up these following verses and see how we should be living in light of Christ's imminent return.

2 Corinthians 11:2 -

James 1:27 -

1 John 2:15-17 -

Matthew 25:31-40 -