

GOD AND TIME

II PETER 3:7-8

NEED: TO REALIZE THE PRIORITY THAT GOD GIVES TO THE SALVATION OF THE LOST.

PROPOSITION: GOD NEVER WORKS UNDER THE CONSTRAINT OF TIME, BUT RATHER UNDER THE CONSTRAINT OF HIS SAVING PURPOSE.

OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD SINNERS TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS.

INTRODUCTION:

How many times have you consulted your watch since we began our worship time together? I must confess that I have taken a glance at mine several times in the last forty minutes. I probably worry more about time in the first part of our worship than you. You are more likely to begin to consult your watch now—wondering if the pastor can even tell time. He can, but it may be that he doesn't notice it so much when he begins to preach.

I heard about a pastor who preached a little long one Sunday morning. After a while an older gentleman stood up and started moving toward the door.

The pastor called out to him, "Jim, where are you going? I am not through

yet.” He replied, “Pastor, I am going to get an haircut.” The pastor asked, “Why didn’t you get the haircut before you came to church?” Jim answered, “I did not need one before I came to church!”

God has a completely different relationship to time from us. The scoffers that wonder about why the Lord Jesus has not returned, when it has been almost two thousand years since He made the promise, project on to God their human relationship to time. This is always the tendency of sinful human beings—we tend to judge God as another human like ourselves. When we do this, we usually overstate our position and understate the position of God. God is always greater than our thoughts of Him.

God is both the Creator and the Lord of time. Peter utilizes a statement from the Psalmist to demonstrate the Lordship of God over time. David declared, “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” (Psalm 90:4) To understand this is to understand why there seems to have been a delay in the return of Christ Jesus to the earth.

I. THE LORD IS NOT UNDER THE CONSTRAINT OF TIME.

As humans we are always time conscious. We cannot escape it. Our lives are divided into years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and seconds. In a tight basketball contest, even a fraction of a second can become an important matter. Many an athletic contest has been determined by the clock—it ran out before the goal could be made, or the winning shot was made just as the clock ran out. Heaven is void of all timepieces—there is no time consciousness in the realm of the eternal. They need no calendars, watches, or any other instrument to measure time.

1. Time is something God created for man.

When you consult the inspired account of creation, there was no time before the first of the creative days. Time began in the beginning. On the very first day of creation God created light and divided the light from the darkness. He called the light day and the darkness night. From that point onward time was present and measurable. When man and woman were placed on the earth, time was already in place. They were aware of days, weeks, and months, and years from the beginning of their existence. God placed us in a time-dominated existence, but He Himself was not subject to His creation.

Since God created time, we are assured in Scripture that He can bring it to a conclusion and will when it pleases Him. When God has finished His purposes that relate to earthly man, time will be no more. God will abolish it in the consummation of all things. He is sovereign over creation and can do with it as He pleases.

Peter gives us one of the great statements in all of Scripture concerning God and time.

2. God is not limited by time.

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years as one day.” Evidently Peter felt that there might be a tendency for us as humans to not understand this.

By the statement “one days is with the Lord as a thousand years”, we are to understand that God does not require a certain amount of time to accomplish a certain task. If He wills to do it, He can accomplish more in one day than man could accomplish in a thousand years, or even a million years. Most human tasks require a certain amount of time. We know that it takes so long for man to build a house. Granted modern technology has greatly reduced

the amount of time that it takes, but it still takes so much time. When my father and my grandfather built the house in which my parents now live, it took them months. I was about twelve years old at the time. The process required going to the woods, cutting down the trees from which the lumber could be sawed; hauling the trees to the saw mill where they were sawed into lumber; in the case of the wood used in the flooring, we were required to use a certain amount of time just to dry it out; and then the house had to be built out of the lumber. Other than the roofing, nails, windows, electrical supplies, and doors, we actually brought the rest of it through a slow process of preparation. We even made by hand the concrete blocks that served as a foundation for the house. When I say “we”, I mean that I did have a part in that slow process as a boy. But it took time.

God is under no such constraints. When God did His greatest task—redeeming the world from sin—He did it in one day. In one dark afternoon on a Roman Cross the Lord of time redeemed lost humanity by the sacrifice of His Son. So when you speak of God delaying something, you must not judge Him by human standards.

3. God is not affected by time.

“And a thousand years as one day”. We have to be concerned about time because we obviously receive a limited amount of it. The passing of time takes its toll upon us. As I grow older, I am so conscious of this. I have stood by the bedside of my father this week. The Lord willing, he will celebrate his eighty-ninth birthday in just about a month. I can remember when I thought my Dad was the strongest man on the earth. I thought he could do anything. When I was a little tyke, he would teach all day in a one room country school, walk to school and back, work in the evening cutting trees down and into stove wood size so they would burn in the stove that heated the house. Everything around that mountain home was done the hard way. We had no electricity, no running water, and no natural gas. Those were late depression years in which life was tough. But my Dad attacked the tasks with strength and discipline day after day.

This week I stood by his bedside and saw him so weak that he could not get out of bed by himself, in fact he was so weak that he was almost helpless; so weak that he could not stand-alone. Time has caught up with him. Time will catch up with me. If I intend to get some things done, I need to get with it. Time is running out on me.

God never has this problem. He has all of the time that He needs to do whatever He wants to do. He does not lose anything with the passing of time. He is the Lord of time, not the victim of time.

In a technical sense God is above time. The past, present and the future are equally present with Him. Time is something that God uses for the good of man—not something that controls Him.

II. THE LORD IS UNDER THE CONSTRAINT OF HIS DESIRE TO SAVE.

If God is not under the time constraints that we know, what does constrain Him? Why has He seemingly been slow in keeping His promise to return to the earth? Peter answers this question for us in a statement that gives us wonderful insight into the ways of the Lord.

1. The Lord is longsuffering in dealing with sinners.

It appears to mortal man that God is “slow” in keeping His promises. It has been two thousand years since Jesus promised so clearly that He would come again. As the centuries have gone by, the unbelieving world has

become even more skeptical about His return. It no longer provokes them to fear when they hear the promise declared. Instead, they mock.

Actually the delay in His coming is a sign of just how longsuffering he is toward sinners. While His promised return will involve the venting of His wrath upon ungodly men, He is able to bear long with sinners. There is plenty of evidence of this in Scripture. After he decided destruction must come upon the ancient world, He still waited while Noah preached for one hundred and twenty years. While there has been reason for Him to rain fire and destruction upon the ungodly of earth, He continues to bear with sinners, to wait, to suffer with their offensive ways.

Being the Lord of time that He is, He knows that the ungodly will always be there. He can wait for just the right moment to express His judgment upon sin. The fact that God has not judged you in your sin is no sign that He is indifferent to your ways. It probably means that He is just bearing long with you. The fact that God has not sent fiery judgment upon our own country is not a sign of indifference toward sin, rather it indicates that He is longsuffering with sinners.

2. The Lord has the salvation of sinners as His first priority.

“Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”.

“Willing” points to the desire of the Lord, to His inner purpose. This is the stronger of the two words that are translated “will” in the New Testament. It indicates that a deliberate choice has been made, a deliberate purpose has been decided. Obviously Holy God has a choice with sinners. He would be just if He decided to pour out His wrath on them at once. He can return to consummate His purpose of judgment upon the earth. Instead He purposes to wait a little longer to give the sinners more time to repent. His return will mean the “perishing” of the ungodly. His purpose to save overrides His purpose to destroy.

This saving purpose in the heart of God sent His Son to earth in the first place. His saving purpose sent His Son ultimately to the Cross-of shame and death. This saving purpose now causes what seems to be a delay in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. O how much God wants you to be saved.

The saving purpose of God has caused the apparent delay. God holds up His plans to destroy the earth with fire so that you will have time to repent. How

long will He delay? Only He knows. At least He has delayed until this good day so that you would have one more opportunity. Are you ready to repent? God waits for your repentance so that He can save you from the wrath to come. This is your special moment of opportunity. Take advantage of it today.

O what joy would be in heaven today if you were to repent! You will never understand the Lord or His ways unless you understand how deeply He wants to see you saved. He holds up all of His plans a while to see if you will change your mind. Set heaven to singing today by giving your life to our great and wonderful Lord.