

Excerpts from Life-Study of 2 Peter, Message 11
THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT (3)

Bible Verses:

- 2 Pet. 3:3** Knowing this first, that in the last of days mockers will come with mocking, going on according to their own lusts.
- 4** And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from the beginning of creation.
- 8** But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.
- 9** The Lord does not delay regarding the promise, as some count delay, but is long-suffering toward you, not intending that any perish but that all advance to repentance.

In this message we come to chapter three of 2 Peter. In 3:1-9 we see God's judgment on the heretical mockers. In this Epistle we have not only false teachers but also mockers. These mockers may be the false

teachers themselves or those who are influenced by the teachings of the false ones. Both the false teachers and the heretical mockers will be judged by God. Let us now consider 3:1-9 verse by verse.

Verse 3 says, “Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come with mocking, going on according to their own lusts.” The “last days” denotes the closing period of the present age (2 Tim. 3:1; Jude 18). In verse 3 Peter tells us that in the last days mockers will come. These mockers may be the false teachers in 2:1. Their mocking is part of the apostasy and is according to their lusts.

According to verse 4, these mockers say, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” But the mockers said, with a mocking tone, “Where is the promise of His coming?” It is possible that they used the pronoun “His” in a contemptuous manner. The mockers said that everything has continued unchanged from the beginning of creation.

In verses 5 and 6 Peter fights back: “For this is hidden from them by their own willfulness, that by the

word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth, subsisting out of water and through water, through which the world then, being flooded by the water, perished.” Here Peter points out that the mockers willingly ignore the record in the Old Testament concerning God’s judgment by the flood. That flood was a serious judgment. Nevertheless, the mockers willingly ignored the record in the Bible about it. Literally, the Greek words rendered “this is hidden from them by their own willfulness” mean “this escapes them by their own willfulness”; that is, they are willfully ignorant of this. Hence, it escapes their notice. The heretical mockers ignore willfully and deny purposely the word of God spoken by the prophets in the Scriptures. Therefore, Peter reminds the believers to remember the holy words spoken by both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles (vv. 1-2).

In verse 8 Peter says, “But do not let this one thing be hidden from you, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Verse 9 says, “The Lord does not delay regarding the promise, as some count delay, but is long-suffering toward you, not intending any to perish, but all to come to repentance.”

In verse 9 Peter says that the Lord is long-suffering toward us. The Lord’s heart is set not on the time of the fulfillment of His promise, but on His people, whom He possesses peculiarly as a treasure (1 Pet. 2:9 ; Titus 2:14), so that none of us, His precious redeemed ones, would be punished by His governmental judgment, but have a prolonged season to repent so that we may be spared from His punishment.

The words “to perish” in verse 9 mean to be destroyed. Since “you” in this verse refers to the believers in Christ, “to perish” refers not to the eternal perdition of the unbelievers, but to the punishment of God’s governmental discipline of the believers (1 Pet. 4:17-18; cf. 1 Thes. 5:3, 8). Likewise, the word “all” refers to the believers.

We need to realize that the Lord’s heart is not set on the time of the fulfillment of His promise, but is set on His people. If necessary, the Lord can wait for another day, another period of a thousand years, to

fulfill His promise. Today many Christians are saying that the Lord Jesus will come back soon. However, the Lord's coming may not be as soon as people think. In Revelation 22 the Lord said, "I come quickly." Nevertheless, nearly two thousand years have passed since the Lord spoke that word. To Him, this is only two days, for with the Lord a thousand years are as one day.

When the Lord Jesus comes back, He will not only judge the negative things, but will also receive His bride. This means that He will come both as the Judge and as the Bridegroom. Hence, in order for the Lord to come as the Bridegroom, the bride must be prepared for Him. Is the bride ready for the Bridegroom's coming? Is it possible for the Lord to come today as the Bridegroom? Because the bride is not yet ready, we may say that it is possible that the Lord's coming will not be as soon as some figure. The bride can be prepared only through growth in life, and this takes time. Higher forms of life require more time to develop than lower forms do. The higher a certain life is, the longer it will take to grow. Because the bride must be prepared for the Bridegroom and because this

preparation is through the growth in life, a growth that requires time, it is not likely that the Lord Jesus will come back right now.

My point here is that we should not be bothered or surprised by any delay concerning the Lord's coming. Do not blame the Lord and say, "Lord, You said in Revelation 22 that You were coming quickly. Why, then, has it been so long?" Instead of blaming the Lord for delaying His coming, we should be diligent to prepare ourselves to meet Him. We should also minister life to others so that they may grow and be prepared. This is the only way to hasten the Lord's coming back.

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction

[CW:] No doubt, we have all heard it said that “one day to the Lord is like a thousand years.” Actually, this is a rough quotation from 2 Peter chapter 3, a chapter that speaks both of the Lord’s second coming, and the righteous and just judgment that will occur at the time of His coming. Of course, to us, it seems as if the Lord has delayed His coming already for 2000 years. But to Him, it’s just a couple of days. Actually, Peter tells us that this delay is not motivated by the Lord’s indifference or because He is arbitrary about the timing. But rather, because He is long-suffering towards us. That means He is mercifully granting us more time—more time to be matured and to be prepared for His coming—so that none would unnecessarily perish. Bob Danker’s joined us today in this lovely and sobering portion of the Word. Bob, I cherish these verses but at the same time, we have to be sobered just to hear it, don’t we?

[BD:] That’s right, Chris. We need to be sobered and we need to really be enlightened by this portion of the Word. There’s a lot of light here. On the one hand, God has a very positive purpose in His economy. He wants to gain a people who have His life, who have His nature. They’re born of Him, they partake of His divine nature, they are separated from the people of the world, and they live a holy life and a godly life on this Earth. And their living is so that they can grow in the divine life and be perfected in the divine nature so that they can be prepared for the Lord’s coming. That’s on the positive side. But on the negative side, in Peter’s books we see the matter of God’s judgment which is related to His government. And this judgment, Peter says, begins from the house of God, that is, from God’s household. And then it extends to the whole world, especially to all the ungodly people on this Earth. So, we see these two things are going on together: God’s people are being perfected by Him as they cooperate with Him on the positive side, and on the negative side, a day is coming, and God will judge the world. While God’s people are being perfected, they too are under some kind of governmental dealing. They suffer certain things for a very positive purpose. So, this is quite something here in Peter’s two epistles.

[CW:] Interesting how at the end of his second epistle, in this final chapter of his writing, he connects all of this to the Lord’s coming. It’s not judgment just in a, you know, a way depicting this righteous and sort of wrathful side of God’s being, which no doubt is there, but it’s connected, it’s tied to His coming, and really, His gaining what He is after. So, He’s a purposeful God, and that’s really reinforced by Peter’s writings, isn’t it?

[BD:] Yes. Really, it’s focused on the positive purpose of God with also the matter of God’s government emphasized. And both of these things are very, very important.

[CW:] A lot of speculation, Bob, in Christian circles, I would say, in the religious circles, really, about the timing of the Lord’s coming. Maybe idle speculations—people wondering, “Well, does it have to do with how many are saved or what is the political and geopolitical things that have to be set up just right before the Lord could come

back?” And actually, we’ll get a very enlightening kind of perspective on this question in the program today, won’t we?

[BD:] We certainly would.

[CW:] Let’s look at a couple more of these verses. We’re in 2 Peter chapter 3. Verse 3 says, *“Knowing this first, that in the last of days, mockers will come with mocking, going on according to their own lusts.”* In verse 4, it points out that they are mocking concerning the Lord’s coming, *“And saying, where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from the beginning of creation”*—kind of a mocking attitude on the part of these ones who were troubling Peter and the churches at that time. And then, verse 5 says, *“For this escapes them by their own choosing, that by the Word of God, the heavens were of old and the earth was compacted out of water and through water”*—a reference to the earlier judgment that befell the earth and the ones living on it at that time in the time of Noah. And it goes on then to talk about the coming judgment, in which the judgment this time is by fire. So, really, here, he is directly pointing this matter of judgment to these mocking ones, isn’t he?

[BD:] He certainly is.

[CW:] And we see the opportunity for that even in the age in which we live, mockers are still among us, Bob. Why don’t we join Witness Lee, and then we’ll come back to talk some more.

Part 1

[CW:] Bob, early on, you made mention the fact that this judgment, this governmental dealing of God has a portion both for the believers and the unbelievers. Here, we’re really focused on the unbelievers. We’ll come back to the judgment related more to us as the believers a little later in the program. But let’s talk about this. There’s a lot of feeling here, isn’t there, when Peter is addressing these ones who are mocking even the Lord’s second coming?

[BD:] Yes, Chris. These mockers are really saying, “Well, you know, the Lord has delayed for such a long time, where is His coming? Even though the Old Testament prophets prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord, Where is the Lord’s coming.” So they’re mocking, “Certainly this will not happen!” You know, and then they say something... “Basically, the world’s been going on in the same way since the very beginning of creation.” But Peter points out that they ignore one very important thing—that at a certain point in the history of the world, God came in with the flood at the time of Noah, and He judged the ungodly generation. They willingly or willfully ignore that this happened in the previous ages. Now they’re saying God won’t judge the world, even though the Word of God in the Old Testament says that the Lord will come with judgment. There will be a day of judgment. The day of Jehovah will come. The prophets were very definite about this. So, Peter fights back. He says, “Well, the Word of God stands. The Word of God will be fulfilled. You, mockers, have better be careful, because when God says something, it happens. And when God’s Word says something, when the prophets prophesy, you can be sure their prophecy will be fulfilled. You should not ignore God’s Word on the one hand, and on the other hand, you should not ignore the fact that at a certain time, God came in to judge the world. Now, He has reserved another time, where He will exercise His judgment, not with water as in the days of Noah, but with fire.”

[CW:] Interesting, at the time of Noah, as Peter makes reference here indirectly to that time, there were many mockers in that age as well, and certainly, Noah’s behavior brought about a lot of mocking. Yet in a sense, Peter is a kind of a herald here, telling us that we all need to be modern day Noah’s, shouldn’t we? I mean, and I think that’s more now by what we’re about to get into in the rest of this chapter, related to God’s judgment and what He’s really looking for to signal the appropriate time of His coming.

[BD:] That's a very good point, Chris. You know, while Noah's building the ark, God could not send the flood until he was finished. So in a sense, the coming of the flood was not determined by God, as much as it was, by Noah. He worked on that ark, I think, a hundred and twenty years. It took him a very long time to build it, and not until he was finished with it could God send the flood waters. Well, as we have pointed out and we'll see even more, God is waiting, even today, for the carrying out of something very positive for the salvation of His chosen and redeemed people. Then He will send the coming judgment which was prophesied by the prophets.

[CW:] That's an excellent point. Let's go ahead and come to those verses now, the one that we opened the program with, it's verse 8 in chapter 3 of 2 Peter, *"But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years, like one day. The Lord does not delay regarding the promise, as some count delay, but is long-suffering toward you, not intending that any perish, but that all advance to repentance."* Here's Witness Lee once more.

Part 2

[CW:] Tremendous view here, tremendous revelation concerning this matter of the Lord's so-called delay or tarrying. The Lord's heart is not set on the time of the fulfillment of His promise. We just heard him speak those words. This is really a completely different way to perceive the timing of the Lord's coming, isn't it?

[BD:] It certainly is, Chris. With God—of course, God is eternal—to Him a thousand years is just like one day, 24 hours. But we are small creatures of time. And to us, 24 hours is 24 hours, and a thousand years is almost like eternity. So, the mockers here are counting time. Look at how much delay there has been, and the Lord still hasn't come. But with the Lord, there has been nearly no delay, because to Him, a thousand years is like one day. So, God, from His perspective, is not focusing on the timing of the Lord's coming as we do. But God is focusing on His people whom He has chosen, He has redeemed, He's regenerated with the incorruptible seed of life, whom He's feeding with the guileless milk of the word. He's focused on His people so that they might grow in His divine life and be prepared, and that they may have a time to repent of their former manner of life, and live in a holy and godly way. God wants His people to grow and develop in His life so that they could be ready for His coming, and so that they will escape the governmental judgment of God that is related to the Lord's coming. Now this does not mean that they will perish. Eternally, they will never perish. But nevertheless, there's a possibility that God's own people may suffer some kind of consequences, if they continue to live in an ungodly way and ignore the fact that they are God's chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people.

[CW:] So, God's patience is with us, in a sense, now. There is a time when that patience comes to an end, and He will move into the next stage of His eternal economy. And ready or not, that time will come upon us. But now, we are seeing a kind of an extended period, where it's being motivated by His heart's desire for His people. This brings us back to this thought that you've mentioned a moment ago talking about Noah, and that is that the timing of the judgment there was more determined by the progress that Noah was making, rather than on any sort of predetermined calendar or timetable that God was operating under. That means that we, as His people, really are directly inputting, aren't we, in a sense, by our living, as to the timing of His coming judgment.

[BD:] That is an excellent point, Chris. We always think that God has fixed a day, and we'd like to find out: what is that day, "When is the Lord coming, when is the day of His coming?" But actually God's heart is not on the timing. As you've said, His heart is loving and long-suffering toward us. And His coming is determined by the way we live as Christians, and the way we grow as His children, and the way we develop in His divine life and nature. This is the crucial thing in God's heart.

[CW:] Let's go back to Witness Lee, Bob. I just want to remind our listeners and ourselves of this last little phrase in verse 9, *"Not intending that any perish but that all advance to repentance."*

Part 3

[CW:] Bob, in Revelation, you have this phrase, *"Behold, the bride has made herself ready."* When the bride is ready, there will be a wedding, but not before that, will there?

[BD:] That's right. The wedding depends on the preparation of the bride. And so it is with the Lord and with His chosen and redeemed people. Actually, we may think that God is able to manufacture a bride, to say, "Bride!" and a bride comes into being in an instant of time.

[CW:] "Let there be light." "Let there be a bride."

[BD:] "Let there be a bride," and there will be a bride. But, actually, in God's economy, it doesn't work that way, even according to Peter's epistles, God has regenerated us with an incorruptible seed of life. And that life which He has imparted into us must grow slowly until it reaches maturity. The growth in life, we all know, the higher the life, the longer it takes to grow. The human life cannot grow to maturity in less than 20 years or more. So the divine life needs our whole human life to grow to maturity. And God is counting on this growth to produce this bride. There is not another way to produce the bride of Christ but by the growth in the divine life in the believers. For this, we need to repent. That means we need to turn from our old way of life, and begin to live a holy life. As Peter mentions repeatedly in his two epistles, a life that even expects the coming of the Lord, that looks forward to the coming of the Lord, that doesn't ignore the Lord's coming, and even hastens, as we will see in the next verses in this Epistle. Peter said, we should live a life that hastens the coming of the Lord. That implies that we can hasten the Lord's coming by the way we live and by the way we grow in life.

[CW:] Glad you brought that verse up, and it's verse 12. As you've said it's really in the portion that we'll get into in the next program. *"Expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved and the elements burning with intense heat are to be melted away."* So there, we clearly have the matter of judgment, God's government, apparent. But we also have the other side, that we need to be those who are, as you've said, expecting and hastening. That means our conduct, our openness, our advancing to repentance has an effect, doesn't it, on the actual timing of the Lord's coming?

[BD:] Absolutely, Chris, everyday we need to repent. Under the Lord's enlightenment, we realize we're still living in our old man. We're still living in a worldly way. We need to turn, we need to turn to the Lord and begin to live a holy and separated life, and take care of this wonderful seed of life that's been sowed into us so that we may grow up unto maturity. This will hasten the coming of the Lord.