

END-TIMES TIMETABLE ?

Back in your grandfather's day, people worked hard every day to get their work done during the day, and it could take them many days to do what we can do today in just one day. Tonguetwister? Notice how many times "day" was used, and its different meanings. In the same way, context in the Bible helps us know the meaning of "day" as in 2Peter 3:7-12. *"by that 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. 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 makes his case against scoffers and false teachers who deny Christ's coming again.

1- God's Word can be trusted! History affirms it. Creation is evidence, as is Noah's flood. So, judgment will come. 2Peter 2:10 notes the issue is authority. God and His written Word are our authority - inerrant, infallible, and totally trustworthy. In Acts 13 the apostle Paul quotes Habbakuk 1:5 as God predicts the coming destruction of Jerusalem, *"look you scoffers, be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you would not believe, even if one tells it to you."* He echoes Isaiah 29:14, ~700 years before Christ, and ~150 years before the historical events came to pass. Paul applies these words ultimately to the Messiah and His miraculous atonement for sins and resurrection, in the context of the unbelieving Jewish nation. And he is commanded to take the good news about Jesus to the Gentiles, to bring God's amazing grace to the ends of the earth. That word 'end' is the same word *eschaton* that 2Peter 3 uses for the last days, the period between Christ's first and second comings.

We are beneficiaries of gracious fulfillment of God's prophecies, as we await the very last day, the completion of God's plan when judgment will surely come. That's the Day of the Lord, as the ungodly have a reservation for the day of reckoning. MG Johnston notes, "God's 'delay' of Christ's return raised questions in the minds of genuine believers, and prompted ridicule from opponents of the gospel." But we should not be unbelieving, nor scoffers, nor led astray by scoffers. Wait on the Lord!

2- God runs His own timetable! He is not accountable to your measure of time. Just as you are to judge your experiences by the Bible and not God's Word by your experiences, so you are to submit to what God reveals in His written Word. And that's how you judge scoffers or teachers as true or false. Verse 8 says *"one day is as a thousand years"* but that's not an algorithm to apply to every instance of the word day. Peter quotes Psalm 90:4, *"from everlasting to everlasting You are God, for one thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past or as a watch in the night."* Peter uses this figure of speech to remind his readers that God our Creator acts in our time but exists outside our time, so any length of our time can be as a blink of an eye to God. And "day" in the Bible has several meanings.

In regular usage, "day" can mean a period of light, a 24-hour solar day, a general time or age, a point in time, or one year, determined by grammar and context. Hebrew scholars know "day" in Genesis 1 refers to 24-hour solar days because of the numbers and qualifiers. Why did God take so long to create? It's the basis for a week, Exodus 20:11 *"in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."* There's no astronomical or physics reason for a 7-day week, other than God's divine design. Also, remember that Peter wrote his letter ~2,000 years ago. So if you wonder about God's time, realize how Scripture can be confusing to a casual reader who merely thinks literally, rather than in the real more complex way we actually use words, including as in the Bible. That's part of why eschatology is perhaps the most controversial aspect of theology. So if you think someone's chart has it all figured out, think again!

3- God's purpose will be done! MG Johnston notes, "God's timetable and ours are not the same, not merely in the grand scheme of history but also in the little scheme of things in our personal lives. What patience and trust the Old Testament saints were called to exercise in the vast sweep of time between God's initial promise of a Savior and its fulfillment with the incarnation of Christ. This helps US exercise patience and trust in our present circumstances." Perhaps you are impatient today for officials to root out the corruption in government, institutions, and corporations at the highest levels worldwide. We see glimmers in Q and the news, but the process is complex, so we wait for light to overcome darkness and righteousness to return to our world. We trust white hats to do right things in right ways.

Even so 2Peter 3:9 says, *"the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you."* God's over-arching purpose in history is to redeem His people through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to make atonement for sin, call them to repentance and faith, and conform them to Christ. God, the architect of time and space, is the architect of salvation. He is not in a hurry, but gracious, patient, as He works in time and history - for His own perfect purposes! ☐