

WHY DOES GOD WAIT ?

When is fall coming? The weather doesn't always abide by the calendar. 2Peter 3 talks about a similar situation, as first-century people were wondering if Christ was ever going to return. Peter points out in verse 9, *"the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* That's because verses 7-13 talk about not only the coming of Christ, but of the final judgment.

1- God is Gracious. It's been almost a generation since Christ's life, ministry, and resurrection. False teachers are sowing doubt and unbelief, as they prefer to lord their own authority and indulge in lustful passions. Peter's readers questioned the Lord's return and coming judgment. But God is not a slacker, not a promise-forgetter, but gracious, patient, long-suffering. Isaiah 30:15, *"thus says the LORD God, in repentance you shall be saved, but you were unwilling. Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, to show mercy to you, for the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him."* And Habakkuk 2:3, *"for still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end. If it seems slow, wait for it"* is echoed in Hebrews 10:37 *"for yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay."*

Perhaps some today are like the disciples in Luke 9:51-55. When the Samaritan village didn't receive the gospel, James and John (the "sons of thunder") said, *"Lord do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"* But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Some today want evil to get worse because they say that will trigger the return of Christ, and the final judgment. But Peter indicates something else, something marvelous, happens before the end.

2- God is Savior. Peter says God is patient so that all will come to repentance. Theologians describe repentance as a complete change of heart and mind and will regarding one's attitude toward God and in light of their own actions. The Bible shows how true regeneration and conversion to Christ is always accompanied by repentance and faith, as two sides of one coin. God is gracious and patient because He is Savior. He is also just and sovereign. His will shall be done. Verse 9 refers to God's will, *"the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* In New Testament Greek, the word translated wishing carries the meaning of planning. It is translated *willing* in the King James, *wanting* in the New International and *wishing* in the New American Standard and English Standard versions. Which is it?

3- God is Sovereign. Perhaps you recall from our previous study of the attributes of God that there are three kinds of God's will. There is God's will of sovereign decree, His counsel. This is how God willed the world into existence. Isaiah 46:9-10, *"I am God and there is no other, I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish My purpose."* What God decrees must surely come to pass, by His plan.

There is also God's will of precept, His command. Exodus 20:1-3, *"you shall have no other gods before Me."* Mark 1:15, *"Jesus came proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel."* Acts 17:30-31, *"God commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness, by a man He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance by raising Him from the dead."*

There is also God's will of disposition, His character and desire. Exodus 33:11, *"say to them, as I live, declares the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from His way and live; turn back, turn from evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"* God's character is gracious and just, and His just decree is judgment for those who reject His grace. 1Timothy 2:4, *"God our Savior desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all."*

4- God is Patient. The Bible does not teach universalism, so *"all"* above refers not to every person who ever lived, but to all kinds of people, not Jews only but also Gentiles, slave, free, men, women. It is the same as the *"all people"* in 1Timothy 2:1 that we are to pray for. So that all will come to salvation. All people are equal at the foot of the cross, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only way that anyone can be saved. Back to 2Peter 3:9, God has not decreed that *no one* should be saved nor that *everyone* should be saved. But God has commanded all to repent and believe. And He desires that all would be saved. Therefore, He is patient and gracious, giving ample opportunity for repentance! ☐