

From Darkness to Dawn

3) The Day is Coming Soon



2 Peter 3:1-14 • 2022-09-25 • 2 Peter Series "From Darkness to Dawn"

In the year 1220 the archbishop in North Yorkshire, England decided to begin construction of a house of worship which would end up as one of the largest of its kind in all of northern Europe. This new building would be dedicated to the Minster of Saint Peter and began initial construction around 1220. Finally, after thirty years of work some of the initial buildings were completed. But that was only the start. Building would continue for decades and decades. At one point the central tower collapsed and had to be rebuilt. At some other points parts were destroyed or neglected. But the building project carried on. It continued throughout the 13th century. There was a fire and more work had to be redone. But the building carried on throughout the 14th century. You can imagine that people might have been wondering by the middle of the 15th century if it would ever be completed. It wasn't until 1472 that York Minster was finally dedicated and declared complete. I'm sure those who laid the initial stones knew it would take some time to build the cathedral. But I don't know if they had 250 years in mind.

If anyone thinks that is a long time to complete a project, they should look at God's time table. It may seem like he is slow in carrying out his plans. Because of his apparent delay many people will question or even mock the plans of God revealed in Scripture. But God's timing is not like our timing. He has told us that a new day is coming soon. And though thousands of years have passed, the day he promised will be coming soon. As Peter closes his 2nd letter to the scattered believers in ancient Asia Minor, he urges us to keep God's timing in mind. As we go from darkness to dawn, we must remember: the day is coming soon.

Peter wanted to write his letters to awaken his readers. He doesn't mean to indicate that they had spiritually fallen asleep. Peter already has noted that they are "firmly established in the truth" (2 Pt 1) and here he says they have "sincere minds." But he wants to stir up their minds so that they remain alert and ready. They are in the darkness of a world that distorts and denies the Word of God. They need to stay alert and spiritually awake.

How does our God keep us spiritually alert? Peter points to the powerful Word of God: "*Remember the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the command of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.*" The only way we can stay spiritually alert and awake is by remembering the Word of God. We have everything we need to make it through the long dark night of these end times with the light of God's Word. It is our "*light shining in a dark place.*" (2 Pt 1).

Some, however, will look at the flickering light of God's Word and try to snuff it out. This will come with their mockery, and they will question God's timing. They will look at the darkness of sin which dominates this world and question if the Day of the Lord long foretold in Scripture will ever really come. "*In the last days scoffers will come with their mocking, following their own lusts. They will say, 'Where is this promised coming of his?'*" Unlike the prophets and apostles who are carried along by the Holy Spirit to share the truth of God's Word, these mockers will be following their own sinful desires. They will be guided by the darkness of their hearts and the darkness of a world cursed by sin and lost. And they will look at the Christian's claim that Christ is going to return and judge this world and mock it.

Peter warned against this mockery only a few decades after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. The Christians living shortly after Peter's death would face ridicule for their belief in the return of Christ. How much more don't you think that someone living nearly 2000 years later will be mocked for believing in Christ's return?

These mockers will claim nothing has changed since the beginning. "*Ever since our fathers died everything continues as it has since the beginning of creation.*" Ironically, they will acknowledge there must be a powerful creator. But they will insist that he isn't really interested or involved in this world. And by referring to "our fathers" they even assert they share an identity with the Christian's they mock. They just don't believe that God is going to intervene in history. Their basic charge, "I don't see God taking any action. I haven't seen him intervene in this world. Our ancestors didn't see him intervene in their lives. Why would anyone expect him to take any action today?" And like so many of the false teachers before them they will tempt Christians to join them in thinking God doesn't care about this world or his promises. "Clearly God doesn't care if we follow our own hearts and do what we do with our own desires."

Does this sound familiar? Are there any groups that claim to have a connection to Christians but also affirm that God doesn't come to judge this world? There are Christians who teach that God used evolution to create this world. They assert by this that God is only distantly involved. They claim that this universe has gone on for billions of years. They teach that the sun has existed for 5 billion years and everything will go on for at least another 5 billion. They assert that our existence doesn't matter because we are just a short blip on the clock of history. These false teachers mock the idea that this world will soon end. Some might teach that humans will cause an end. There is the so-called "doomsday clock" which is metaphorically now set at 100 seconds until midnight. This group claims that we are in imminent danger. But is God involved? No. They don't believe that a holy God will ever intervene. Then there are the

scientists who assert that the world will go on until a major volcano erupts or a meteor hits. They assert that the likelihood of any of these happening in our lifetime is so improbable that we need not worry. But the idea that God would come to judge? That is completely off the radar. And they mock those who say otherwise.

But the day is coming soon! Peter says that these mockers *deliberately forget* something important. God has intervened in history before. They forget that by the Word of God everything came into existence and God formed this world out of water and through water. With that same water God spoke and destroyed the ancient world with the great flood. Nearly all Christian evolutionists deliberately forget and deny the great flood. Why? The flood involves supernatural intervention in history and divine judgment against sin! They don't want to acknowledge that God's powerful word can come and bring judgement to the world.

But Peter reminds us that by that same Word of God this world will face its end. The heavens and earth are being stored up and reserved for judgment. It is as if there is a reservation in the courtroom of God. No one knows the date, but the date is set for all this world to appear in his court. There is a doomsday clock. But it won't ever be in our hands to avert it. It is entirely in God's hands. And when his Word once again intervenes it will bring judgment with fire. The earth and everything in it will be laid bare and burned up in the fire of God's holy judgment over sin! York Minster, your house, everything in this world will be destroyed in the burning heat of God's judgment.

So, Peter reminds us that God's not finished with his plans yet. It may take longer than some might anticipate, but that doesn't mean God is hesitating or failing to keep his Word. Peter reminds us that God's timing is not like our timing. *"With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day."* This statement is a paradox. Left to stand on its own it doesn't make any sense to us. But the point is that God's perception of time isn't anything like ours. If he takes a thousand years longer than we anticipated, that doesn't mean it took God longer than he anticipated. He just has a whole different timing from what we expect.

In fact, God is not slow to keep his promise as some understand slowness. We don't always understand why things are timed the way they are. I was helping someone with their computer a few days ago and a window popped up saying "Just a moment." After what felt like far too long a moment the person I was helping said, "My moments are not usually that long!" I don't know what the computer was thinking, but it was a long wait. God isn't like that. He isn't processing information. But we don't understand what he is working on while we wait for him to act. Also earlier this week my three-year-old wanted to make use of a desk I was sitting at. I told her, "just a minute." It was a figure of speech that meant "soon." But she can't even tell you what a literal minute is. So, after five seconds I was taking too long. That's how we respond to God when he says, "soon." We can't comprehend why he might be taking so long.

But Peter reveals to us an amazing understanding. He tells us why it seems to us like God is delaying on keeping his promise. He isn't hesitating. He isn't failing. His timing is based on his great love for this world. *"He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* That is an amazing truth that comforts us while we wait for God to fulfill his promises and come again. He is patient with us. Why hasn't God come to judge this world and bring the new creation? He cares about you. Notice Peter first applies it to his readers. "God is patient with you." We should marvel at his amazing patience in our lives! For our sakes he is patient and longsuffering. Even though we deserve to be struck dead in his judgment, we have his patient forgiveness and grace.

But God is patient with more than you. He is patient *"not wanting anyone to perish but all to come to repentance."* God is patient with the false teachers. God is patient with your family member who is living as if God will never come to judge their sin. God is patient with your neighbor who is racist, a drunk, or even an abusive drug addict. He is patient with all this world. He is even patient with those who mock him. In an amazing display of grace God ironically is mocked for his delay because he delays for the sake of those who are mocking him. He wants them to come to repentance and not perish in judgment. He will burn this world with fire and send all his enemies to the everlasting fire of hell. But he does not desire it. He wants all to be saved.

That is why when they mocked the Son of God he did not retaliate. They saw him as an ordinary man and mocked "Nazareth, can anything good come from there?" He patiently showed them until they repented and believed. When the people saw him hanging on the cross, they mocked, "He saved others, now he cannot even save himself." But he patiently endured their mocking because he was still saving others. He was paying the price for their sins and for yours. In his great merciful love God is patient and desires every sinner to repent and find forgiveness in Christ.

And Peter affirms that we who know his great forgiveness can now look forward to his coming. His timing might seem long, but it is perfect. We know that the day is coming soon. And as sure as Jesus rose from his grave and lives forever, he will return on the last day. The coming that he promised will be accompanied by the new creation he promised. There will be no more darkness. There will only be the home "where righteousness dwells." God will live with us, and we will walk in the light of Christ our morning star. Our hearts will be made new, and our bodies will rise to enjoy the light of his grace.

We are going from darkness to dawn. Be at peace. God wills you to live forever with him. The day is coming soon.