

DELAYED PUNISHMENT DOES NOT MEAN A DEFECTIVE PROMISE!

I want to start off this morning by asking you **two** questions. Before I ask—and you possibly answer—the **first** question, I want to assure you that the **second** question will not be: “**How do you know** the answer to the **first** question?” Let me say that again before I give you the **first** question. Got it?

Now, I’m going to read a statement to you. Question #1 is “**What** is this statement **called**?”

Here goes: “You have the right to remain silent. Anything **you say** can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you. Do you understand the rights I have just read to you? With these rights in mind, do you wish to speak to me?”

What is the statement I just read you called? **The Miranda Rights**—but more accurately—The **Miranda Warning**. Now **you know why** I promised not to ask you this as a follow-up: “**How did you** know that?”

Here **is** the second question: “How **long** has the Miranda Warning been used in the United States?” Since June 13, 1966—just over 58 years ago! I don’t think I’m going out on a limb to suggest that “using what someone says against them” has been happening for much longer than 58 years, though!

How long has it been happening? I would make the argument that it started **in the garden of Eden**—and that Adam **used what God said** against God Himself! What makes me say that? Listen as I read **Genesis 2:22-23** “And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

How did **Adam know** that God created Eve out of Adam? Someone had to tell him—and God is the only One who could have!

How did **Adam use this against** God? Because when God asked Adam, “Hast thou eaten of the tree,” Adam replied in **Genesis 3:12** “...The woman **whom thou gavest to be with me**, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Adam in essence is saying, “If you wouldn’t have given her to me, I wouldn’t have disobeyed you!”

Some of you might be thinking, ‘I don’t know, Pastor, if that really qualifies for Adam using **what God said against Him!**’ Maybe that’s not the most convincing example, but let’s turn to II Peter 3 and look at one that is more obvious. For the sake of context, I’m going to read verses 1-9.

In vs 3-4, we see scoffers scoffing by throwing God’s Word back at Peter and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?” People said it in Peter’s day—roughly one thousand, nine hundred and fifty eight years ago—and people have been saying it ever since! What they don’t realize, though, is that **God has a plan** for this current earth—judgment by fire—that is going to happen whether they believe it or not! What they **also don’t realize** is that God has a **different perspective** on time than we do—and that He has a **purpose in delaying** judgment!

What is **the purpose** of God’s delay? The end of vs 9 says that He is not “willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” So not only do scoffers **use God’s Word against Him**—they use His goodness...and kindness...and longsuffering...and desire for their repentance against Him, too!

Someday, though, the whole world will see that “Delayed Punishment Does Not Mean a Defective Promise!”

For those visiting this morning, please know that I’ve already preached on verses 1-6 so I’ll be focusing on verses 7-9 today. I do want to bring up some things that we looked at a couple of weeks ago, though.

--**Vs 5** refers to “the heavens and the earth,” but in **vs 6** Peter switches gears and talks about **the world** instead. Is Peter using “the heavens and the earth” **interchangeably** with “the world”?

Not at all! In fact, God is being **very exact in the words** that are used! **Here’s why** I say that.

The heavens were not destroyed by the flood—and neither was **the earth!** The earth most certainly got an “extreme makeover,” but it wasn’t totally destroyed! “World,” on the other hand, comes from the Greek word “kos-mos” and has several meanings—one of which is “the inhabitants of the world.”

And the “inhabitants of the world” were the ones destroyed in the flood! Now vs 7.

Here we see... **1. God's plan for the present heaven and earth (vs 7)**

A. The plan is destruction

--Mid of vs 7 "reserved unto fire"

--Vs 10 "the heavens **shall** pass away;" end of the verse "the earth also and the works that are therein **shall** be burned up."

--Vs 11 "Seeing then that all these things **shall** be dissolved" **What things?** The things referred to in vs 10—the heavens, the elements, and the earth!

--Mid of vs 12 "...wherein the heavens **being on fire shall** be dissolved..."

I'll be elaborating on these other verses in the near future, but for now we need to see that the present heaven and earth—the **ground** that we are standing on and **the sky** that we look into and up to—has a **reservation for ruin**—and a **date with destruction!**

And it is brought on **by God**—not by man through global warming!

But why? **Why** is God going to destroy the current—the present—heavens and earth?

Two reasons: B. The purpose for destruction is judgment—and replacement

1) First let's consider the **judgment** aspect. We see that in the mid of vs 7: "reserved unto—[for]—fire against—[until]—the **day of judgment** and perdition of ungodly men."

So God's plan for the destruction of the current heaven and earth is going to happen in conjunction with the **day of judgment**. **What is** the day of judgment? Peter doesn't give us a lot of details. For example, when God sent the flood, it drowned those who were **physically living** on the earth.

Does the **day of judgment**—by fire—mean people will be **physically burned up**? I don't think that's the kind of judgment Peter is referring to—and here's why.

Notice **what Jesus said** about the day of judgment in **Mt 11:24** "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the **day of judgment**, than for thee."

The city of Sodom—and people who lived in it—were **already** judged! We know that from Genesis 19—and we know it from II Peter 2:6 where it says the cities were turned into ashes. So if the day of judgment involves Sodom—and Sodom was already **physically** judged—then the day of judgment Jesus is referring to is a judgment **after death!** In other words, it is a judgment regarding **our souls**—the immaterial part of us that lives on somewhere after we die!

The apostle John—in the book of Revelation—gives us more insight into both the day of judgment and the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. Please turn to Revelation 20, beginning with verse 11.

--Vs 11. God is seated on the throne—and heaven and earth flee away. I believe this is what **Jesus** referred to when He said in **Mt 24:35** "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." I also believe it is what **Peter** referred to when he talked about the earth being burned...and dissolved...and melted.

--Vs 12. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God..." Let's stop right there.

How can **dead people** stand before God? One of two ways: 1) Either it is just **their soul** standing before God; or 2) Their body is resurrected—and united with their soul—and that is what stands before God.

Please follow along as I read the rest of vs 12. It sounds like—if you weren't familiar with the rest of the chapter—that **everyone** is brought back to life, put in a line, then—one-by-one—find out if their name is written in the book of life.

--Now look at vs 15. So...if their name is **in the book** of life they get to go to heaven. But if it is **not there**, they are cast into the lake of fire.

So...what is happening here? Are born-again, blood-bought, Christ-possessing believers in the same line with those who are unforgiven, unsaved, and Christ-rejectors? No; that is not what is being described here!

Only the **unsaved**...only the **unforgiven**...only those who have **never received Jesus** as their personal Lord and Savior appear before God and are judged at this Great White Throne judgment.

What do I base that on? Look at vs 6. Simply put, God's children—those who are born-again and **have** Christ—take part in the **first** resurrection and reign (rule) with Christ for a thousand years.

--Does **everyone** reign with Christ? No; only those who have a part in the **first** resurrection.

--What happens to those who are **not saved** and are not part of the first resurrection?

Vs 5: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

--What happens to them at the end of the thousand years?

They stand before God at the Great White Throne judgment!

To recap, **believers** are resurrected and reign with Christ for 1000 years here on earth and **do not go to** the GWT judgment. **Unbelievers** are **not resurrected**...and **do not reign** with Christ for 1000 years...and are resurrected at the end of the 1000 years **to be judged** at the Great White Throne.

This, I believe, is the **day of judgment** Peter is referring to back in II Peter 3:7. Notice Revelation 21:1. Here we see that **after** this day of judgment, there is a new heaven and a new earth.

Please turn back to II Peter 3, verse 7. Notice again what it says in the end of the verse: "reserved for fire until the day of judgment" and **what?** "Perdition of ungodly men." "Perdition" here means **eternal doom**—which we just saw described for us in Revelation 20.

What is God's plan for the current heavens and earth? They are reserved for destruction!

Why is God going to destroy it? Reason #1 is because of God's judgment.

Reason #2 is simply this: Because it is **being replaced!** We saw that in Revelation 21:1—and we see it here in II Peter 3:13. Since a new heaven and earth are coming, the old one—that was marred by the curse—needs to go away!

2. God's perspective on time is quite different from ours (vs 8)

We see that in vs 8. Is Peter saying that every time you see the word "day" in the Bible, that God is referring to a thousand years? Not at all—although some people use it that way! Their argument goes something like this: 'If a day—in Genesis 1 where it talks about the creation of the earth—could mean one **thousand** years, why couldn't it mean one **million** years?'

To which I reply: "If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense!" Here's what I mean.

In Genesis 1, the phrase "and the evening and the morning were" the first day...and second day...and third day...and so on. Does it make sense to say: "and the evening and the morning were the first thousand—or first million—years?" I certainly don't think so—and my guess is that neither do you!

Peter is probably making a reference to what Moses wrote in **Psalms 90:4** "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

Is Moses saying a thousand years **equals** one day? No, he's not! He is simply making a comparison and stating that God's view of time is very different from ours. And Peter is making the same comparison!

Thomas Schreiner put it like this: "What seems agonizingly long to us is a whisker of time to Him" (The New American Commentary, Volume 27, pg 380). Steven Cole made what I thought was a helpful analogy by pointing out the difference between an **adult's** understanding of time compared to that of **a child**.

Many of us have taken some kind of road trip when our children were young. What is one of the first questions a child will ask? "When are we going to get there, right?" Your initial answer was probably something like: "We will be there in an hour and a half!"

And that ends it, right? The child(ren) patiently **wait 90 minutes** before asking again! No; that is **not how it goes!** They ask—after 10 minutes or less, depending on the age of the child—"Are we there yet?" Maybe you try to break it down into minutes for them...or give them a comparison that they can somewhat relate to...or go straight to the time-tested, often-used answer: "We'll get there when we get there!"

The point: Just as a **child's understanding** of time is limited compared to the understanding of an adult; **an adult's understanding** of time from God's perspective is also limited—but much more so! So—from God's perspective—it's as if only two days have passed since Jesus returned to heaven! But in real time, it has been roughly 2000 years since Jesus ascended to heaven—with the promise that He would return. But He hasn't yet! Why hasn't Christ returned yet? **3. God's purpose for Christ's delay (vs 9)** God through Peter gives us **two inter-related reasons** for the delay in Christ's return.

A. Delay due to long suffering—not lack of ability or lack of concern

Vs 9 – “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is **long-suffering** to us-ward...” “Slack” means “slow; sluggish.” The Lord is **not slow** in fulfilling His promise to return because He is **slow-moving** or “running out of gas;” nor is He slow because He **doesn't see** what is going on or **doesn't care** about what is going on. God very much **sees**...and very much **knows**...and very much **cares** about what is happening here on earth. Jesus is coming back—and when He does, He will come as the Judge!

Jude 1:14b-15 “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, ¹⁵**To execute judgment upon all**, and to convince all that are **ungodly** among them of all their **ungodly** deeds which they have **ungodly** committed, and of all their hard speeches which **ungodly** sinners have spoken against Him.”

There's a whole lot of **ungodliness** referred to in this verse—and a whole lot of ungodliness happening now in our world! And yet...God waits! Why? Because He is long-suffering!

B. Delay due to longing for the unsaved to come to repentance

There is a **purpose** behind God being long-suffering—and it is not just **for the sake** of being long-suffering! I'm not trying to **be facetious**, but I do want to get the point across. God is not long-suffering so we “ooh” and “awh” over **how patient** He is! God is not looking for us to **commend Him** for how well He keeps His emotions in check and for how long He can put up with us!

The **purpose** behind God's long-suffering is seen in the second half of verse 9: He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Notice these two truths:

1) God does not want people to perish! What does **perish** mean? According to John 3:16, “perish” is the opposite of having eternal life. Say it with me if you know it: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him **should not perish**, but have everlasting life.”

To perish, then, means to have **everlasting death**. It means to have **eternal doom**. It means to be judged at the Great White Throne judgment...and to be found guilty...and to be cast into the lake of fire as stated in Revelation 20! And let's not forget, these are God's Words—not mine!

2) Repentance is required in order not to perish! We see that in this verse too, don't we? God is not willing that any should perish, and the way to not perish is to **come to repentance**. What does it mean to “come to repentance?” “Repentance” comes from the Greek word “metano-eh'-o” and is a word we talked about during our Wednesday evening Bible study this past week.

It is a combination of two Greek words and literally means “to think differently after” or “change one's direction.” But there is also **a sorrow** over having sinned against God. It is **not just** changing our direction and mind—and it is **not just** feeling sorry about our sin. It is both!

But...feeling bad about your sin—and trying to change direction in your life by “turning over a new leaf”—doesn't get you to heaven! We need to change our mind about **who** Jesus is...and **what** He did...and what we **need to do** in response to what He did! Notice what Jesus says about Himself in **John 8:23-24** “And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.”

--**Who** is Jesus? God in the flesh that left heaven and came to earth!

--**What** did Jesus **do**? Die on a cross for our sins.

I Peter 2:24 “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree...”

Revelation 1:5 “...Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,”

--**What do we need to do** in response to what Jesus did for us?

What does it say in John 8:24? “If ye believe not that I am He...” So we need to believe **on** Jesus. Stated another way, we need to put our faith and trust in Him! John 1:12 says we need to **receive** Him.

John 5:40 says we need to **come** to Him.

In **John 6:37**, Jesus promises that “...him that cometh to me I will in no wise [way] cast out.”

Romans 10:13 says “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

I John 5:12 says we need to **possess** Him. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

What about you? Has there been a time in your life when you put your faith and trust in Jesus and received Him for yourself? If not, you need to do that—and I would urge you to do that today!

So, what is it that God wants **you to do today**? Here are a few things I believe God wants us to do:

1. God’s desire is for you to be saved. He does not want you to perish. He wants you to repent and turn to Him in simple faith. Have you done that?

--Mark it down—you are going to meet Jesus some day: either through death or when He returns!

2. For those of us that are a child of God, are you living a God-pleasing life? Delay in Jesus’ return does not mean it won’t happen! Some of God’s children will be ashamed when they meet Him. Will you?

3. Are you burdened for the lost? God’s delay is for us to share the good news that He is not willing for people to perish. People need to repent—and we need to tell them of their need to do so!