**The Longsuffering of Our Lord and The Delay of His Second Coming**

* Paul wrote about the continued absence of the Lord Jesus Christ
* Peter wrote about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge and reign on the earth.

At Pentecost, Peter declared that the last days of prophecy were upon them. He quotes the prophet Joel:

(Acts 2:14-21 KJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye*that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:*{15}*For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but*the third hour of the day.*{16}*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;*{17}*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*{18}*And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:*{19}*And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:*{20}*The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:*{21}*And it shall come to pass, *that*whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

But as we read the book of Acts, the sun had not  turned into darkness or the moon into blood. These events were to happen before that great and notable day of the Lord (the Tribulation), which is a time of judgement. It is at this time that Jesus Christ will purge the nation of Israel.

(Acts 2:30 KJV) Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

The ultimate goal of prophecy is Christ reigning on the throne of David forever. When Peter stood up on that day of Pentecost and declared, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days..." He was saying was the last days of the prophetic program had arrived! Prepare for the day of the Lord, the day of wrath.

But that wrath has not yet come; there has been a delay in Christ's returning to judge and reign. What caused this delay?

Instead of Christ returning to earth to execute His judgment, He came down unexpectedly and saved Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 9)

(1 Timothy 1:15-16 KJV) This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. {16} Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul says that he was "chief" of sinners. Some would then say that Paul was the "worst" of sinners, but that is not what *chief* means. Chief means first or of most importance. Paul is saying that he was the first sinner to be saved in the dispensation of grace. The dispensation of grace is the longsuffering of God.

Cornelius Stam wrote in "The Pastoral Epistles": "Paul, it should be noted, was not a repentant sinner at the time of his conversion. Rather he was 'yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.' His salvation, then, was an exhibition of the "exceeding abundant" abundant grace of God."

Paul's writings explain why Christ delayed in His Second Coming in which He was to set up His kingdom on earth, that He might show forth all longsuffering.

Think  how Peter had expected the return of Christ to set up the kingdom on earth during the time of Pentecost. He saw the outpouring of the Holy Spirit but the wonders in heaven and signs in the earth have not yet happened. Up until that time, prophecy was on a time schedule according to the prophet Daniel. But all of a sudden things were not going according to the prophetic timetable; there has been a delay in Christ returning to set up His kingdom. The prophetic program is interrupted by what God wants to accomplish through the message revealed to Paul.

Notice what Peter wrote after Paul had been ministering for some time:

(2 Peter 3:1-10 KJV) This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: {2} That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: {3} Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, {4} And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. {5} For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: {6} Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: {7} But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. {8} But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. {9} The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. {10} But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Peter told those who had been scattered abroad (Acts 8:1) to remember what was spoken by the prophets. He wrote that the Lord is not slack about His promise as some men count slackness. He wrote that some are willingly ignorant about the promise of His coming and that judgment will yet come.

Peter refers to the longsuffering of our Lord (dispensation of grace) when he wrote:

(2 Peter 3:15-16 KJV) And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; {16} As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Peter wrote of the Lord's longsuffering and called it **SALVATION** and he learned it from Paul. Peter learned from Paul the reason for the delay in the Second Coming of Christ.

Rather than returning to earth in judgment, the Lord Jesus Christ saved Paul and gave to him the dispensation of grace. (Ephesians 3:1-2) We all understand that God gave to Moses the dispensation of the law but it is hard for many to appreciate the dispensation of grace was given to Paul.

Just as Peter finally came to understand the delay, we, too, need to understand the reason for the delay of Christ coming to set up His kingdom on earth.