

The Word of God is an exciting book and we are on a lifelong adventure of discovery.

In this series we are looking at Isaiah 6 as it is found in the Gospels and Acts. Is.6 is a judgmental prophecy against the children of Israel. Originally, Isaiah 6 was announced against the southern Kingdom of Judah but when the original sentence was given, the judgment did not fall immediately. Many years passed before Judah was carried away captive and the land became desolate.

We find the same mercy of God on the nation of Israel in the Gospels and Acts periods. Even though Isaiah 6 is pronounced against them, Israel was not cast aside as a nation at that time but God continued to hold out His hands towards them right through the Acts as Romans 10:21 shows. Eventually Israel was put to one side for a time at Acts 28 but we are looking at the events during the Acts before this casting aside.

Yes it is a fact, Israel rejected and crucified their Messiah but they did that in ignorance and were promptly forgiven at the request of the dying Messiah, Lk.23:34. Peter and Paul present Messiah to Israel resurrected to sit on David's throne and the Lord's return is in view. Compare Acts 2 & 3 with 13:16-41.

Acts is an extended opportunity for Israel to accept their Messiah. Acts is the end of the ages, not the beginning of anything. Our calling today did not begin in Acts or progress out of the Acts. It was revealed after Acts 28:25.

During Acts, the Lord's return to set up the kingdom originating in Heaven on the earth was the hope held. In Acts 3 Peter said that should Israel repent and turn to the Lord, He would be sent back to them;
[Act 3:19](#) repent and convert that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.
[Act 3:20](#) And He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was proclaimed to you,

The believers sold their possessions in Acts 2 & 4 because they expected the Lord to come. After the Lord's arrival Jubilee took place when liberty was proclaimed and the land redistributed (see Lev.25). There are many references in the Acts period writings which show that the faithful expected the Lord to return in their lifetimes, the reader should re-examine, Acts 17:31 (about to judge), Roms.13:11-12, 16:20, 1Cor.1:4-8, 7:29, 10:11 (ends of the age), 15:51, 16:22 (the Lord comes), 1Thess.4:15 (we who are alive and remain), Heb.9:26, 10:35-37, James 5:7-8, 1Pet.4:7, 1Jn.2:18 & Rev.1:1.

Later in the Acts period there was some concern that the Lord was delaying His coming. Peter anticipated the scoffers who would start mocking the truth of the Lord's imminent return by saying this:

[2Pe 3:3](#) First, knowing this, that there will come in the last days scoffers walking according to their own lusts
[2Pe 3:4](#) 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 creation.

These mockers would say, "Things will continue as they are" but Peter's response is to pre-warn them that in the past the Lord moved and flooded the world. He also reminds them that the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire and new heavens and earth are in view. Peter says, not all things will continue as they are. Then Peter brings in the issue that eventually turns his thoughts to Paul;

[2Pe 3:8](#) But, beloved, let not this one thing be hidden from you, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.
[2Pe 3:9](#) The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
[2Pe 3:10](#) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, (compare 1Thess.5:1-4).

Peter is not saying the Lord's coming is thousands of years away, he said the Lord was not slow concerning His promise but longsuffering to provide further opportunity not willing that any should perish but come to repentance. This longsuffering was limited in time because he adds BUT The Day will come.

Before we draw any conclusions about verse 9 when it says "is longsuffering toward us", we need to repeat our claims above about the time Peter wrote. We need to remember Peter's commission, Apostleship and readership. Right division is not an option.

Many Christians today read verse 9 and imagine that Peter is referring to the world at large, and indeed apply the verse as if it has some relevance to the Lord's 2000 year "delay". There is no delay in the Lord's coming today as there was back in the Acts period. At the end of Acts the Lord's long-suffering and coming was postponed and is nowhere in sight this year 2008. It will remain off the events calendar until God resumes His purposes for and through Israel and we see

the conditions clearly spelt out in 2Thess.2:1-4.

Peter wrote in the Acts period when the Lord's coming was expected in their lifetimes. Peter is not writing to the world at large in this present dispensation of the grace of God.

Peter's Acts period commission is found in Acts 1:8 and his Apostleship was TO the Jews; the circumcision, as found in Matt.5, Jn.21:15-17 and here:

Gal 2:8 He working in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision (Israel).....

Peter refers to the Lord as the "Chief Shepherd" (1Pet.5:4), a relationship term belonging to Israel. Look at the opening of Peter's first letter;

1Pe 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect sojourners of **the Dispersion** of Pontus, of Galatia,

Peter is not writing to the world at large today for Gentiles are not the dispersion. With Peter's ministry and readership established let us go back to this verse and add some words for our understanding;

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward **us** (Israelites), not purposing that **any** (of us Israelites) should perish, but that **all** (Israelites) should come to repentance.

The context of 2Pet. 3 is clear, it is about the Lord's delayed coming during the Acts period. The Lord's coming had not been postponed for thousands of years when Peter wrote his letters. Israel still stood as a nation and the present dispensation and the Church which is His Body had not been revealed to Paul. Isaiah 6 was upon Israel but just like the past, God was not willing that any Israelite should perish. God waited for them to turn to Him.

The longsuffering Peter wrote about must be understood in the time it was written, it was an extended opportunity for Israel during the Acts period. His coming was still expected at that time;

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come

2Pe 3:11 Then, all these things being *about to be dissolved*, what sort ought you to be

2Pe 3:12 looking for and rushing (wait with eager desire) the coming of the Day of God

Peter, returning to the Lord's longsuffering as a matter of salvation (for the Jews he is writing to), refers his readers to Paul's letters as follows;

2Pe 3:14 Therefore, beloved, looking for these things (the new heavens and the new earth), be diligent, spotless, and without blemish, to be found by Him in peace.

2Pe 3:15 And think of the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation (as our beloved brother Paul **also has written to you** according to the wisdom given to him

2Pe 3:16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable pervert, as also they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction).

Peter speaks of Paul's letters and said Paul wrote to the dispersed Israelites about the delayed coming of the Lord as a matter of longsuffering for the Jews. Which letter could that be? Is it in existence or did it fall out of inspirational inclusion in the Word of God? I believe it is very clear to us which letter Peter has in mind.

What letter of Paul deals with the Jews intransigence and provides the divine explanation regarding Israel's faithlessness but the faithfulness of God towards them? I suggest it is the book of Romans. Paul had never been to Rome so the assembly there would consist mostly of the dispersion and the main theme of Romans is God's patient dealing with contradicting Israel during the Acts period. Romans explains the longsuffering of the Lord towards Israel.

Let us return to those two questions of Paul regarding Israel in chapter 3 of Romans:

Rom 3:1 Then what is the superiority of the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision?

Rom 3:2 Much, by every way!

Rom 3:3 For what? If some did not believe, will not their unbelief nullify the faith of God?

Rom 3:4 Let it not be!

Paul says plainly, just because Israel are unfaithful; not believing; not turning to the Lord; this does not mean that God's faithfulness; purpose for them, has been thwarted, cancelled, altered or postponed. Praise God for grace.

When Paul wrote Romans, Israel had advantages dispensationally; it was Jew first in the Acts period. Romans then can't be about Ephesians dispensational truth. To make sure we understand the question and answer in verses 3-4 we post it with words added to make the sense clear;

Rom 3:3-4a For what if some (of ISRAEL) were unfaithful [or, refused to believe]? Their (ISRAEL's) unfaithfulness [or, unbelief] will not make the faithfulness of God useless, will it? Absolutely not! (ALT)

These two questions in Romans 3 are the basis of Paul's exposition regarding Israel in chapters 9-11 which we shall re-examine next lesson.