

What is the Reason for the Delay?

1. If God is omnipotent, omniscient, and completely sovereign, how can He talk about “delay”? (See Matthew 25:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 10:6) What reasons does the Bible give for the apparent delay? (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; Revelation 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Peter 3:9-12)
2. What is the major reason for the delay in Christ’s second coming? Is it that God’s fixed time has not yet arrived, and the universe is waiting for Him? Is it that God is waiting for a certain level of wickedness when man’s “cup of iniquity” (See EGW comments below) will be full, when the human race will have passed even God’s level of tolerance? Is it that God is waiting for His people to “be sealed” so Satan’s final efforts to deceive will not mislead them? **Is God waiting for us or are we waiting for Him?**
3. If God is waiting for us, will there ever come a time when “we” will be ready? What specifically do you think God is waiting for? Do we have any control over whether Christ’s coming is hastened or delayed? (2 Peter 3:12)
4. What should be our attitude toward commemorating “the great disappointment” of 1844? Should we celebrate, or weep? Are we still a “great disappointment” to God? Are we still guilty of “unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion” or “unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife” that Ellen White identifies as the reason for the delay? Or have we now accepted the three angels’ messages, proclaiming them to the world?

Discussion Proposals:

Christians who have looked forward to the second coming of Christ so prominently predicted in the New Testament have wondered why God has waited so long to come again. Paul and the other New Testament writers seemed to think that it would happen even before they died. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) So what is God still waiting for? Jesus answered the accusations of Satan, won His case, and secured the eternal freedom of the universe almost two thousand years ago. Surely He is anxious to get finished with this rebellion! He certainly looks forward to giving His reward to His “saints”!

But the Bible also suggests that those who live to see Jesus come will have suffered through some very difficult times. Certainly Satan is not going to give up without a fight. Revelation 13:1-8 seems to suggest that almost the whole world will follow after the “Dragon”. But Satan will not be able to deceive God’s faithful because they have been prepared for what is coming.

How many times has God started over with different groups to try to prepare them for this moment? Even one-third of the angels in heaven were deceived by Satan. (Revelation 12:4) But the “saints” who live at the end will “no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied

to us and made the lie sound like the truth.” (Ephesians 4:14, *NLT*) We must become mature Christians “who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right.” (Hebrews 5:14, *NLT*) Could we come to the place where we are prepared to say “even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel that is different from the one we preached to you, may he be condemned to hell!”? (Galatians 1:8,9, *GNB*) God is waiting for a group who are this mature. While we are still eager and willing to learn, like a little child, we must also be fully convinced of the truth about God as Job was who refused under the most terrible testing to be disloyal to the God he knew.

It is people like this whom God is waiting for. If He were to allow Satan to exercise his full deceptive powers on the “church” as it now is, far too many would be led astray. So God continues to instruct His angels to hold back the “winds of strife” (Revelation 7:1-3) until the “saints” are ready to be “sealed”. They must be so convinced of the truth and unshakably committed to God that nothing will be able to persuade them to change their picture of God. Then God will be able to turn to the universe and proudly ask them to watch as Satan does his worst and God’s true people remain loyal to the truth that they have come to love.

Could human beings ever become like this? Think of all the people down through the centuries who have believed that they were God’s true people while misrepresenting Him terribly! Remember especially those who nailed Him to the cross and then hastened to their places to keep the Sabbath holy in commemoration of the One whom they had just crucified! Who are we more like? The Pharisees or Jesus? Is our understanding of Father, Son and Holy Spirit more like His or theirs? Do we on a day-by-day basis choose to do what is right in the eyes of God because it is right? Or do we still need high walls of protection to keep us from straying from the truth? The Bible says that we need to be working to hasten His coming. (2 Peter 3:8-12) Instead, are we the reason for the delay? Surely God won’t wait any longer than He has to!

Scriptural passages:

Matthew 25:5: “Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep.” (NASB)

2 Thessalonians 2:1-10: “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to be with him: I beg you, my brothers and sisters, ²not to be so easily confused in your thinking or upset by the claim that the Day of the Lord has come... ³Do not let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until the final Rebellion takes place and the Wicked One appears, who is destined for hell. He will oppose every so-called god or object of worship and will put himself above them all. He will even go in and sit down in God’s Temple and claim to be God...

⁶Yet there is something that keeps this from happening now, and you know what it is. At the proper time, then, the Wicked One will appear. ⁷The Mysterious Wickedness is already at work, but what is going to happen will not happen until the one who holds it back is taken out of the way. Then the Wicked One will be revealed, but when the Lord Jesus comes, he will kill him with the breath from his mouth and destroy him with his dazzling presence. The Wicked One will come with the power of Satan and perform all kinds of false miracles and wonders, ¹⁰and use every kind of wicked

deceit on those who will perish. They will perish because they did not welcome and love the truth so as to be saved.” (GNB)

Revelation 7:1-3: “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds so that no wind should blow on the earth or the sea or against any tree. ²And I saw another angel coming up from the east with the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels to whom God had given the power to damage the earth and the sea. ³The angel said, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees, until we mark the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.” (GNB)

1 Corinthians 10:13: “Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.” (GNB)

2 Peter 3:9-12: “⁸But do not forget one thing, my dear friends! There is no difference in the Lord’s sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same. ⁹The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.

¹⁰But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish. ¹¹Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, ¹²as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon—the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat.” (GNB)

Other Bible References:

Revelation 9:4; 13:16-18; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 20:3,4; Ezekiel 9; Ephesians 4:30; 1:13

Ellen White:

“Time will last a little longer until the inhabitants of the earth have filled up the cup of their iniquity, and then the wrath of God, which has so long slumbered, will awake, and this land of light will drink the cup of His unmingled wrath.”-- *1 Testimonies* 363 (1863); *Last Day Events* 41.1

“The long night of gloom is trying, but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God’s unwillingness to have His people perish, has been the reason of so long delay.” *2 Testimonies* 194; *Evangelism* 694 (1868)

“The cup of iniquity is nearly filled, and the retributive justice of God is about to descend upon the guilty.”-- *4 Testimonies* 489 (1880). {LDE 41.2}

“But has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional...”

“Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third

angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward.” Ms. 4, 1883 (*Evangelism* 695)

“The wickedness of the inhabitants of the world has almost filled up the measure of their iniquity. This earth has almost reached the place where God will permit the destroyer to work his will upon it.”— *7Testimonies* 141 (1902). {LDE 41.3}

“The light that was to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world...

“The law of Ten Commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness and obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages.” *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 234,235 (comments about 1888)

“Just as soon as the people of God are **sealed** in their foreheads --**it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved**--just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.” (MS 173, 1902). *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* Vol. 4, p. 1161; LDE 219; *Maranatha* 200; *The Faith I Live By* 287; *1MR* 249,250; *10MR* 252

“The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us through fear to right action? This ought not to be.” (*Review and Herald*, Aug. 2, 1881)

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons* 69, 1900; *Counsels to Teachers* 324.3; LDE 39.2,3; *Lift Him Up* 274.6,7; *Maranatha* 112.5; *PH*145 6.3; *Sons and Daughters of God* 32.7)

Ellen White: *Evangelism* 694-697; *Last Day Events* 32-42; *Maranatha* 136

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