

The Return of Christ 2 Peter 3:1-18

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In this chapter today, Peter instills an urgency for gospel movement motivation. 30 years earlier Peter had pulled Jesus aside on the Mount of Olives and asked him some question.

There on the Mount of Olives soon before his death Jesus said, in Matthew 24:14, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*

Jesus and Peter both told their disciples that we’re living in times of urgency. The Gospel is to go to all the nations and then the end shall come.

A national Christian leader started a house church movement among an unreached people group.

He previously wasn’t interested in working in unreached areas, but now he was seeing one of the largest tribal groups in the world being turned upside down with the Gospel.

When asked about this miracle and what had happened to redirect his life to reaching the unreached who had never heard of Christ.

He said that it was 2 Peter 3:9, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

He said this came about while he was attending a conference challenging Christians to go to the unreached people groups and start a movement of multiplying disciples and increasing house churches.

Not really interested and having heard enough in the morning sessions, he went back to his room after lunch to sleep through the afternoon sessions, but something was disturbing him.

It was this verse that he now believed told him the purpose of the Lord delaying His return. It was for the spread of the Gospel.

It was time to reach the unreached. It was time for action. So, instead of sleeping he went back to the sessions to learn everything he could about spreading the Good News to the unreached.

Here, in chapter 3, Peter reminds the scattered believers of what Jesus and the prophets had been saying.

2 Peter 3:1-2, "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles."

These scattered Christians needed to immerse themselves in the Word of God. They needed to recall the prophets and the words of the Jesus.

There were enemies out there ready to persecute them and as chapter 2 explained, there false prophets in the church who were trying to make money and they didn't care if they shipwrecked the believers in the process or not.

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Now he's telling them not to get sidetracked by the scoffers. Stay on task. The gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth.

2 Peter 3:3-4, "Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil

desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

A French proverb says, *"Laziness is often mistaken for patience."* Perhaps the opposite is also true; patience is often mistaken for laziness.

Remember, this letter was written within 30 years of the resurrection and because Jesus hadn't returned, the people were thinking that God wasn't going to do anything.

Can you imagine what people think today? It's been over 2000 years since the resurrection?

Peter tells us that in the last days, in which we have been living since the resurrection of Jesus, that people would say that God isn't going to do anything.

Even today, many Christians don't expect Jesus to return anytime soon. We tend to think that if something doesn't happen now, it'll never happen.

The sad thing is that people who mock God are the very people who don't want Jesus to return, because they're not ready for Him to return.

This is why Peter tells these Christians not to be surprised that people are scoffing about the return of Christ. It's been a long time, and because they haven't seen Him return, they ridicule.

Peter then instructs them that those who question God have forgotten that things have not always continued on their natural course.

He points to a historical event, the flood, to show that God does what He says. Peter says that these people have conveniently forgotten this fact. They willingly ignored this fact to promote their false teachings.

2 Peter 3:5-7, *“But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”*

These scoffers had forgotten what God had done in the past. Facts like, God created the heavens and earth.

They forgot that God orchestrated the flood at His right time. Doubters ridiculed Noah for building the ark. But in God’s time the flood came and destroyed them all except Noah and his family. The scoffers forgot that, too.

These scoffers were asking, *“Why hasn’t Jesus returned as He promised?”* They had forgotten how God had created the earth. They had forgotten about the flood in the time of Noah.

They had totally forgotten the power of God. They had forgotten the timing of the Lord and how He measures time. God doesn’t operate on our timetable!

2 Peter 3:8, *“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”*

Peter wanted to point out to the critics that just because it hasn’t happened yet doesn’t mean it won’t happen. God isn’t on the same time clock that we are.

Peter based verse 8 on Psalm 90:4 which says, *“A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.”*

God lives in eternity and isn't limited by the same time-space concepts that we are. But just because God's on a different time frame doesn't mean that He's indifferent about the return of His Son.

We should not look at the time that has gone by as an indication that God is slow about the promises that He makes, but that it's just not time yet.

The Lord wasn't slow when Malachi predicted the forerunner of the Messiah would come and then there was 400 years of silence until John the Baptist came and, in the fullness of time the Messiah was born in Bethlehem.

We're to live ready for the return of the Lord. We don't know when, but we do know He came the first time in the “fullness of time” and his second coming will be in God's perfect time.

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2 Peter 3:9, The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God wants us all to have time to repent. Repentance is something that we must do if we're going to go to heaven.

Repentance literally means, “to change ones mind.” In the context of the New Testament it means that we must change our mind concerning our way of living and then submit ourselves to God and His way of life.

Before we were saved, our current way of life wasn't pleasing to God because we had left Jesus out of our lives. To repent means that we're going to leave our old ways and adopt God's ways.

Once Jesus returns or when we die, it'll be too late for us to change. It's game over at that point, there are no second chances.

God's love for us motivates Him to be patient with us. We need this time to repent because the Day of the Lord is coming.

2 Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare."

At this moment in time, are you ready to stand before God at the final judgment?

Peter tells us that all we know will be destroyed when Jesus returns. We must be ready for that day by giving Him our life and then living for Him.

Jesus isn't our insurance policy, He's our life, if we belong to Him. After 2000 years it's easy for us to think that the day of His return will not happen in our lifetime, but we don't know.

It's been said that there are two things in life you can count on. Death and taxes. We could refuse to pay or cheat on our taxes, but we'll not cheat death. We need to be ready.

Don't be caught off guard. Live your life in ready preparation for Christ's return. We should be motivated to live a holy life pleasing to God. A life motivated to obey the great commission.

Therefore, since we're going to lose this home, we need to prepare for the next home.

2 Peter 3:11-13, *“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”*

The return of Christ gives us a hope. We’re looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. We’re looking forward to no more pain, no more tears. We’re looking forward to spending eternity in the presence of God.

Our new home requires that we’re holy in conduct. That we conduct ourselves in a godly manner. Our belief should translate into a changed life.

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2 Peter 3:14-16, *“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”*

We’re to live pleasing to the Lord as we wait for His return. What if this were the day of Christ’s return?

God’s patience allows us to work on being found spotless and blameless. When we’re immersed in Jesus, God declares us righteous, pure, spotless and blameless.

Our life should be about trying to reflect to the world what God has done for us. Because, when the patience of God runs out and the end comes, we need to be found in Christ living for Him.

2 Peter 3:15-16, *“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”*

Peter tells us that we’re to regard the patience of the Lord as Salvation. Why? If God wasn’t patient with us, He would’ve wiped us out whenever we committed our first sin.

Instead of thinking that God is indifferent, we should look at His patience as an opportunity to win more people to His kingdom while there’s still time.

If I could guarantee you that Jesus was going to return on 20 April, would there be some people that you’d go try and share the gospel with between now and then?

Do you have some loved ones or friends that you’d like see in heaven? I want you to think about these people for a moment. You need to share the gospel with them with a sense of urgency.

Are there some things in your life that you want to get right before 20 April? Get them in order now because God’s patient, but we don’t know when that will end. Use the time you have wisely.

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Conclusion

The fields are white for the harvest. The Lord’s delaying His return so that we’ll have time to share the Good News. Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Are you actively witnessing to those who need the Good News?

The Bible is the story of the fall of man and then the redemption of man. Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

Romans 10:14, *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”*

When the gospel reaches the ends of the earth, to the satisfaction of the Lord, He will come again, but it will be in His perfect timing.

Patience is a hard thing to come by in our instant society, but our God is patient. He hasn't sent Jesus back yet because He doesn't want any to be left out of the kingdom of God.

I hope that you'll praise God for His patience, I know I'm thankful for it. God's patient with us because He loves us.

He sent Jesus to die in our place so that our sins could be washed away. God wants nothing more than to see us in heaven.

You can make that happen today by giving your life to Jesus. You can reward God's patience.