

Be Encouraged
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2 Peter 3:8-18

“Are we there yet?” Summertime makes us recall all those family road trips when we were kids. How did your family prepare? Seat belts or no? What did you bring to keep you occupied? Did you play games or sing songs? Did your parents think it was great to travel through the night? What’s the famous lines did your parents yell if sibling fighting broke out? [Illustrations: “I’ll fly away” “That idiot’s driving the wrong way!” “Why stop and ask directions? I know where I’m going!”]

Picture this: Mom and Dad get the kids buckled in. *“Here we go to Disney World!”* Then they hand out printed itineraries to each kid, all under ten years old. *“Now kids let me explain every road, every turn, every stop so you will know exactly how we will get to the “Magic Kingdom.”* Or, if they are flying, they march up to the flight deck and the pilot explains every maneuver of the flight to all these little kids as they pin on their wings. Ridiculous, right? What do Mom and Dad really say to those kids under ten?

This morning’s text is about Christ’s Second Coming. Sometimes His followers are a little like those kids in the backseat on a road trip. The questions began right before He left the first time.

Acts 1:6–8 (NLT) — **6** So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” [“Are we there yet?”] **7** He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

David Jeremiah writes, *“Christ’s return is emphasized in at least 17 Old Testament books and 23 of the 27 New Testament books. The New Testament mentions his return frequently—about once every 30 verses—and Jesus himself referred to it 21 times.”*ⁱⁱ

Many people like to argue about the details and the signs of His coming. Some will even “break fellowship” with other followers of Christ who don’t agree with their theories. Here is what is undisputed according to scripture:

- Jesus’ second coming is a future event.
- It will be a personal, physical, and visible return. [Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:30]
- It is a central theme in both Old and New Testaments.
- The event is tied to final judgment and the culmination of God’s redemptive plan.

The point: Jesus is coming back to earth again. He said it and I believe it. We haven’t been given timing or specifics, but we have been given instructions on what to do while we wait: be watchful, be holy, be active in good works, be steadfast in faith and be

encouraged, be hopeful, and live with expectancy. We're not "there yet" but we should make good use of the time until He comes. The old Greyhound bus slogan used to say, "*Sit back and leave the driving to us.*" If we will do and be what He has instructed while we wait, we can sit back and leave the details to God as we enjoy the journey until Christ comes back. Let's go verse by verse and unpack today's text.

2 Peter 3:8–18 (NLT) — **8** But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. **9** The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

- What does Peter mean when he says, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (v. 8)? How does this perspective affect our understanding of God's timing?
- "The Lord isn't being slow." This answers the "scoffers" in verse 4 who were saying, "*I guess the Lord has forgotten to come back, huh?*" God is never late, or early, He is always on time (remember the three days after Lazarus died?)
- Why does verse nine say the Lord is delaying His return?
- Chuck Swindoll writes, "*To make this personal...apply this to others you know who do not yet know Christ. Put their names in verse 9...'God is patient toward _____, not wishing for _____ to perish but for _____ to come to repentance.'*"ⁱⁱ
- Praise God for his patience! It should motivate us to share Christ. Here is why:

10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. **11** Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, **12** looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. **13** But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

- Are we anticipating the "new heaven and new earth" or distracted by this one?
- I'm not suggesting we sell our stuff and sit on a hill looking upward; just that we must not be absent-minded about His promised return.
- Humanly speaking, do you long for His second coming or do you hope He waits a little longer? What might make you feel one way or the other?
- Verse 12: How can we "hurry along" Christ's second coming? (See Mt. 24:14)
- Also in verse 12: Think of man's great accomplishments being burned up! When we stand before Christ, anything physical we have built will just be ashes. That doesn't mean we shouldn't do our best for Him in this world, we just need to be more focused on what will survive in the "new heaven and earth."
- Down in verse 15 Peter repeats this important point: **15** And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.
- That speaks to what we can DO while we wait. Here is how we should BE:

14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.

- While we are waiting, be “peaceful, pure, and blameless in God’s sight.”
- Did your Mom ever say, “*I’m going to the store and when I come back your room had better be clean?*” Did you get busy or try to figure out how long she would be gone? [GWTW]
- None of us are sinless so how can we be blameless? Why are the last three words of that verse important?
- I know I CAN be blameless because scripture says so:
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NLT) — 23** Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.
 - **1 Peter 1:15–16 (NLT) — 15** But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. **16** For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”
- That proves being blameless is possible but HOW can it happen?
 - **2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT) — 21** For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. [Clothed in HIS righteousness]
 - **Philippians 2:15 (NLT) — 15** so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. [Doing my best despite my imperfection]
 - **1 John 1:9 (NLT) — 9** But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. [Confession removes my wicked behavior and restores me as blameless]
- Verse 16 speaks of ignorant people who twist scripture about Christ’s return. Remember last week’s study? How can we guard against false teachers?
- Peter summarizes how to avoid false teaching in verses 17 & 18:

17 You already know these things, dear friends. So be on guard; then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. **18** Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.

- We grow in the knowledge of Jesus by studying His word. What do you think it means to “grow in grace?” (v. 18) How can we pursue this growth practically?
- Wiersbe, “*It is possible, unfortunately, to grow in knowledge (have Bible truth in our heads) and never grow in grace (show Bible truth in our lives). Peter wants us to have balanced lives: we should learn and live the Word.*”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Other passages also tell us how to live while we wait for Christ’s return:
 - Remain spiritually vigilant and alert, watching for deception and false teachings (Matthew 24:4; Mark 13:5, 33)
 - Be diligent and faithful in daily work and responsibilities, avoiding idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:6) Stay active in doing good, serving others, and not growing weary in well-doing (2 Thessalonians 3:13)

- Keep yourselves in the love of God and maintain hope and anticipation for Christ's return (Jude 21; 1 Corinthians 1:7)
- Wake up from spiritual sleep, cast off deeds of darkness, live honorably clothing yourself with Christ (Rom. 13:11–14).
- Long for your eternal, heavenly dwelling, live by faith not sight, aim to please the Lord, and remember all will appear before Christ's judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:1–11).
- Imitate godly examples, avoid living for earthly desires, remember your citizenship is in heaven, and eagerly await Christ who will transform your body to be like His (Phil. 3:17–21)
- Live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives, look forward to Christ's appearing, and be zealous for good works (Titus 2:11–15).
- Remain in Christ with confidence, purify yourself as He is pure, and remember that when He appears, you will be like Him; let this hope motivate holy living (1 John 2:28–3:3).
- Other thoughts on this passage? What has jumped out at you from the text?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- *"Are we there yet?"* Even adults get impatient. [Looking at "Your flight.]
- Jesus is coming back to earth again. He said it and I believe it.
- We haven't been given timing or specifics, but we have been given instructions on what to do while we wait: be watchful, be holy, be active in good works, be steadfast in faith and be encouraged, be hopeful, live with expectancy.
- We can do those things as we grow not only in knowledge but in grace.
- We're not "there yet" but we should make good use of the time.
- If we will do those things while we wait, like the old Greyhound slogan, we can sit back and leave the details to God while we enjoy the journey until Christ comes.

ⁱ <https://www.davidjeremiah.org/age-of-signs/5-facts-about-the-second-coming-of-christ?devdate=2020-05-24#:~:text=23%20of%2027%20New%20Testament%20books%20explicitly%20referred%20to%20the%20second%20coming%20of%20Christ%20to%20this%20earth.>

ⁱⁱ Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter – Chuck Swindoll - Zondervan

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament (p. 764). Victor Books.