

© Rev. Steve Schamber 2017

Scripture taken from the Evangelical Heritage Version, except where otherwise indicated. See www.wartburgproject.org for more information

2 Peter 3:8-14

⁸But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: For the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to do what he promised, as some consider slowness. Instead, he is patient for your sakes, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it will be burned up. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what kind of people ought you to be, living in holiness and godliness, ¹²as you look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God? That day will cause the heavens to be set on fire and destroyed, and the elements to melt as they burn with great heat. ¹³But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight.

Look Forward to the Day of God

I.

Are you an impatient person? I'm sure some of us are more patient than others, but on the average, people living in our day and age are far less patient than those who came before us. It goes beyond fast food. We have minute rice and instant oatmeal. We're not just content with fast *computers* anymore, we want faster and more powerful processors in our phones, with quicker internet speeds, as well. No digging endlessly through the stacks at some old-fashioned library for us; we want to be able to speak to Google on our phones and have answers almost instantaneously. Is it any wonder that people today are so impatient with the concept of Christ's Second Advent that they totally dismiss the idea?

Even in the much slower paced world of Peter's day, some were impatient with God's patience. They had heard the stories of Peter and the other Apostles. Jesus had gone up into heaven and the angel had assured the disciples that he would come again, the same way they saw him ascending into the clouds. "Well... we're waiting...! When is this all-important return going to be, anyway?" they wondered. Maybe Jesus was *never* coming back. Had they been wrong in believing?

Your concept of time is somewhat age-dependant, isn't it? For those who are older, a number of decades are in the review mirror of life. Looking back at the events of all those decades it can seem as though time has just flown by. For a child anticipating Christmas, however, time seems to stand still.

"Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: For the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to do what he promised, as some consider slowness" (2 Peter 3:8-9, EHV). Peter had to remind them that God's idea of time is not *our* idea of time. He *created* time, he is not *bound* by time. In other words, time is meaningless to our God. He *will* keep *all* his promises, whether his timing seems to be slow or fast.

When it seems God is slow in keeping his promises, or slow to bring about Jesus' return,

it becomes easy to cling to the wrong things or focus on the wrong things. Sure, in a vague, esoteric sort of way we declare that we long for Jesus' return, but there's no need to be in *too* big a hurry, Lord, there are things I still want to see and do first. *After* I've enjoyed what I want to out of this world and this life, *then* you're free to return at any time.

II.

God's patience, however, has nothing to do with letting you enjoy this world and this life. "Instead, he is patient for your sakes, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, EHV).

Today's Gospel spoke about John the Baptist. His demeanor and his dress and his diet and his choice of location were all harsh. His message sounded a little harsh, too. To rich and poor alike, to the powerful and to the humble, his message was the same. He preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4, EHV). John's message of repentance called the people to repent before it was too late for them. To prepare their hearts for the coming King, they needed to recognize that their own actions were not enough to make them people of God; they *needed* what God himself would do.

God's patience in delaying the return of Jesus is for the same reason as John's preaching. There are still people who would be lost if he comes too soon. Jesus died for *those people*, too. God will demonstrate his patience for their sakes.

Eventually, however, God's choice of time will be right. "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10, EHV).

I have seen some beautiful places on this planet. I'm sure you have, too. One of the wonderful blessings about all our computing devices is that we can look at the beauty of God's creation from all over the world without ever taking a step. It's more awe-inspiring in person, but many of those places are accessible to very few people because of their remoteness, yet the beauty can be shared with us all.

"The earth and what was done on it will be burned up," says Peter. "What was done on it." Sin has infected our planet. Sin was added to God's perfect creation, and the majesty of his creation was marred as a result. The Apostle Paul calls that last great day—Judgment Day—the day when "God will judge people's secrets" (Romans 2:16, EHV). No one will be able to hide their misdeeds any longer on that day. The event will be truly stunning.

III.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Luke 21:33, EHV). Though the world and all that was done on it will be burned up, what *Jesus* has done and said will never change or disappear. His work for us was not just for time, but for eternity. This is why we look forward to Jesus' return with great eagerness.

Not everyone does, of course. "First, know this: In the last days scoffers will come with their mocking, following their own lusts. ⁴ They will say, 'Where is this promised coming of his? For from the time that our fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have from the beginning of the creation'" 2 Pe 3:3-4, EHV). Many people look at the natural world and conclude that things have been going on since time began by some cosmic force eons ago. It will continue unabated for some time to come—unless, of course, mankind itself is responsible for the destruction of the world by our profligate exploitation of the world's resources.

"But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13, EHV). You know the history of God's saving activity. You know that God sent his Son

into the world as a little baby to live a righteous and holy life so that he could serve as the perfect substitute for us. He became the sacrifice to pay the debt of our unrighteousness and imperfection. This is why we look forward with great eagerness and anticipation.

“What kind of people ought you to be, living in holiness and godliness, ¹²as you look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God?” (2 Peter 3:11-12, EHV). Since we know what the Lord Jesus has done for us, we want to live lives of holiness and godliness—spending time with what is truly important—God and his Word which brings us the message of his plan of salvation for us. As we take in the spiritual nourishment he has provided us, we let our lights shine so that others can see the importance of this Light of Life by the way we live our lives.

“Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight” (2 Peter 3:14, EHV). We make every effort to live as Children of God, living in the joys of the Christchild at Christmas and his death and resurrection years later—the same One who will come to take us home. This doesn’t mean we live without sin, but we know that for Jesus’ sake our Heavenly Father sees everything we do out of love for the Lord Jesus as good and right and holy, even though we don’t do it perfectly.

IV.

Someday we will see with our own eyes what God has promised. “According to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13, EHV). Whether God utterly wipes out the current world and its universe and creates a brand new one out of nothing, or takes his original creation and remodels it, the result will be the same—*God* will dwell with his people in the new heaven and the new earth. That means no sorrow or pain. No sin will be there to mar things in any way. The new heavens and the new earth is the place in which righteousness dwells. Those things that seem so beautiful in our world today will pale in comparison to beauty unspoiled by sin.

“As you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight” (2 Peter 3:14, EHV). And we *are* at peace. When the angels announced “Peace on earth” at Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, they weren’t talking about peace between people, or peace that is subjective. They were talking about peace between you and God. *That* peace can only be found in the Christchild. *Jesus* is the one who *brought* you the peace he permits you to live in. We live in peace because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Live in peace as you look forward to the day of God. Amen.