

PEOPLE GET READY**2 Peter 3****(Read 2 Peter 3)**

INTRO: When Emily was little, as soon as we knew a trip was in the offing, she was off to pack. It may have been months away, but she had to be ready. Indeed it's good to be ready. To have an extensive trip coming up, it's best not to begin to pack when it's time to get to the airport. You might just miss the flight. In fact, you'll probably miss the flight.

Are you ready?

Here our final talk in our Little Letters, BIG MESSAGE series, Peter points out that we need to be ready for the time when Christ will return. It's a theme that is covered time after time in the Bible. It is what Christians look forward to. If Christ doesn't get here first, we'll go to meet him when we pass on. Expressions like "*If the Lord tarries . . .*" shows that Christians are waiting expectantly for Christ to return. Songs have addressed it for centuries. Songs like *One Day* and *It May Be At Morn* talk about it. The slaves pined for Christ's return when they sang songs that looked forward to a better day.

But as time goes on, I think we've begun to let our guard down. It seems like people aren't as ready. Peter says here that some even scoff and say "*Ha! Are you dumb Christians still waiting around for Jesus to return? You're nuts! Why don't you just give it up, he's not coming back!*" Peter is reminding us that we must not fall into that trap. He reminds us that God knows what he's doing and he's being patient and kind. Our job is to be ready.

Are you ready? Are others you know ready? Let's look at this a bit. First . . .

Remember the promise

- We have it on good authority, Christ is coming back and we need to constantly remind ourselves of it. Jesus didn't say exactly when, but he says in Acts 1 that the Kingdom will be restored at a time that only the Father knows. (Acts 1:6-7).
- Not only that, Paul addresses it in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. James talks about it in James 5, and the writer of Hebrews looks at it in Hebrews 10. There was no shortage of times that the apostles mentioned it. And since Peter is equating their writings to scripture, he is saying, if the Bible says it, that settles it.
- Jesus is coming back! It might have been 2000 years since the promise was made, but Jesus is coming back. We'll see in a bit what some of the reasons are why it's been a longer wait than anyone expected. Nevertheless, we need regular reminders of it. Here's your reminder. Don't forget. Jesus is coming back! Be ready!
- And rest assured that you must . . .

Ignore the scoffers

- They WILL come, and with great regularity. Peter was already dealing with it at the end of the first century, and it continues to be a source of mockery from people who want to make light of us.
- It seems what worries Peter the most is that people could actually deny what Christ said he would do. In fact, in his mind, it actually constitutes a heresy. The scoffers seem to think that just because it's been a long time, Christ won't be showing up at. It could be, and most certainly is at least part of the reason, that, truthfully, they don't want it to be true. I know that's the case today. If you don't want it to be true, you deny it. It happens in this and many of the other ways people choose to turn their back on the truth of the Bible.
- Peter promises that God has destroyed the earth before by flood and he can do it again, this time with fire. This is the God who called very Creation into being by just saying the word. This same God is who scoffers are mocking and it puts them into a terrifying position. It's not only better, but it's a no-brainer, we need to be ready!
- Fortunately for humanity . . .

God knows what he's doing and what he's doing is mercy

- The problem with far too many people is they think they know what God is thinking or not thinking. This is the height of arrogance. They also think that God is limited by time, when he is eternal. Peter tells us *With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* 2 Peter 3:8. Rather than taking this

literally, what Peter is saying is that God is outside of time. Which means, God's time is not our time because he is timeless. But, since time is what we know, he is giving us more time.

- Because the longer God waits, the more mercy he is showing. The longer God waits, the more opportunity we have. God does not *want anyone to perish* 2 Peter 3:9. He wants his children to be ready – all of them. Our job is to make sure as many as possible are ready when they meet him.
- Because the truth is . . .

Christ's return will be dreadful

- For those who are not ready. The description of the end of time on this earth as Peter describes is terrifying. He said back in verse 7 that the earth would be destroyed by fire and in verse 10 he describes a horrifying conflagration. It's true that with every horrific event down through the centuries, Christ Followers have felt sure that the return of Christ was imminent, but with the dreadfulness of World War 1 and 2, and the introduction of nuclear weapons, it's no wonder many thought the time had come.
- But obviously Christ has not returned, and the awful reality is that it will be worse than anything humanity has seen before – for those who are not ready.
- So BE READY! Make sure you do all you can to ensure those know you are ready too. Ask yourself this...

How will he find us?

- You know already – he wants to find us *holy and godly* 2 Peter 3:11. Peter used repetition to hammer the truth into thick headed people. We're no different, we need the truth hammered home to us too. There are so many temptations in this world, we need to remain strong and set apart for God.
- Peter then says that God should find us expectantly waiting for him, we should have our eyes to the sky with anticipation. Look how this eagerness helps even more to be found holy and godly as Peter writes, . . . *since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.* 2 Peter 3:14. When you anticipate a loved one's arrival you get ready. (When Kathy was arriving at Heathrow after I had not seen her for 5½ weeks)
- He should find us faithful. Horatio Spafford lost all his children in a shipwreck and in his devastation wrote the powerful hymn, *IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL*. His final stanzas look forward to a reunion in heaven – he prayed for the Lord to “haste the day.” Listen,

*But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!
And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

That's joyful anticipation in the midst of tragedy.

- And most likely we won't witness the destruction. Peter tells we will be too busy for that. Listen to Peterson's rendition *The galaxies will burn up and the elements melt down that day—but we'll hardly notice. We'll be looking the other way, ready for the promised new heavens and the promised new earth, all landscaped with righteousness.* 2 Peter 3:13 (The Message)
- So pray, and preach, and repent and be ready! But, be careful . . .

Beware how scripture is used and abused

- Peter shares how Paul's writings, which were already seen as scripture, had been twisted and misused. Paul had even been concerned with this in the way his teaching on grace had been used as an excuse for all kinds of license. Peter shows that that same can happen with what he is saying.
- We have witnessed this all through holy history. Many preachers have come preaching that Christ would return and, of course, he didn't, because scripture says, in fact Jesus himself said that no one but the Father would know. People who attempt to set the time of Christ's return are setting themselves up to be false prophets.

- Our job is to take the scripture as they are and present the Good News to a lost generation. That is what we are to do. Peter tells us, in so many words to . . .

Conclusion: Keep calm and be ready. The warnings are obvious: The person with a firm foundation in the Word of God is prepared. Remember the promise – Jesus is coming back for us, so keep your eyes to the sky, and bring as many people with you as possible. Keep growing as you are ready to be going. People get ready! Amen.