

THE ONE THING NOT TO FORGET: WHY CHRIST HAS NOT YET RETURNED

2 PETER 03:08–10

Introduction

Jesus Christ is coming back to earth. This is the declaration of Scripture time and again.

Mat 26:64 “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Luke 21:27 “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Acts 1:11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Heb 9:28 So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Mat 16:27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”

Mat 25:31-32 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

1 Cor 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

2 Tim 4:1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

Jude 1:14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Every generation of believers has proclaimed that Jesus Christ is *coming soon*. Even believers today proclaim that He is returning and that His return is just over the horizon. But it has been two thousand years since these promises were made. Does this mean then that the teaching of His return is false, that Jesus Christ is not going to return to earth? Have Christians been wrong in declaring that Jesus Christ was to return soon? How can

thousands of years be said to be soon? There are those who ask questions like this and there are even those who use these questions to mock the return of Christ. The mockers of the second coming of Christ were the discussion of the former passage (see notes, 2 Pet. 3:1-7). But what are the answers to these questions? Why has Christ not yet returned? This is the one thing we must not be ignorant about: *why Christ has not yet returned to earth.*

- I. The Lord does not measure time the same as man (v. 8).
- II. The Lord is not slow in sending Christ back to earth, but patient (v. 9).
- III. The Day of the Lord is coming (v. 10).

I. 2 Peter 03:08 Time; Return of Jesus Christ

Why has Christ not yet returned to earth? First, because God does not measure time the same as man. There are two differences between the time of God and the time of man.

1. There is the *span of time*. To God, a thousand years are *like a day*. God is eternal. Think of thousands of years heaped upon thousands of years. Multiply ten thousand years times ten thousand and then multiply that by thousands of years again and keep on multiplying, never quitting. That is eternity. What then is one thousand years? Time is relative; it has no span to God. But this is not so to man. Man measures time by days and years, and he walks minute by minute throughout the day, all 365 days of the year. Therefore, time stretches on and on to him. But to God, who is eternal, it takes one thousand years to make a day. Therefore, to ask why Jesus Christ has not yet returned after two thousand years is ridiculous. To God it has only been about two days since Christ died and arose. Two thousand years may seem like a long time to man, but not to God. To God two days is only a drop in a bucket.

The point is this: believers must not be discouraged because Christ has not yet returned. God may want a lot more to take place on earth before He sends Christ back to earth. Our task is not to question when He is returning, but to watch and be ready in case He returns before we depart this life and go to Him.

2. There is the *intensity of time*. Note that one day with God is *like a thousand years*. Picture one day on the earth and consider...
 - all the trials and temptations
 - all the suffering and pain
 - all the accidents and diseases
 - all the sin and evil
 - all the cursing and blasphemy against God
 - all the selfishness and hoarding while millions are in desperate need
 - all the people dying and being sent to hell

God feels every ounce of all the events. He loves us; therefore He feels it all. He suffers along with us, and the intensity of His feeling is absolute. God is absolute and perfect; therefore He feels in an absolute and perfect sense. He suffers with us

with such intensity that we could never even imagine the experience. This is what is meant by the statement “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years.” The feelings of one day are so intense that it feels like a thousand years. Whereas we bear only the sufferings of our own personal experience, God bears the sufferings of all the experiences of *all people*. Therefore, to God the experience during just one day of an evil earth is like a thousand years to Him.

This point is significant: it is a warning to man. God will not bear evil forever. He will not suffer the rejection and rebellion of men too long. He will speak the Word and send Christ back to judge the world. Scripture definitely teaches that we are living in the last days.

2 Tim 3:1-5 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

Heb 1:2 *But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

1 Pet 1:18-20 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

2 Pet 3:3 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

1 John 2:18 *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.*

Jude 1:17-18 *But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.”*

II. 2 Peter 03:09 God’s Patience; Long-suffering

Why has Christ not yet returned to earth? Because God loves man; He does not want any person to perish, not a single person. God is not slack in fulfilling His promise nor is He powerless to return and judge the earth. He has not returned for one reason and one reason only. He wants more and more people to come to repentance. Note two significant points.

1. God is patient (makrothumei). The word means...

- that God is patient with us.
- that God bears and suffers a long time with us.
- that God perseveres and is constant in suffering with us.
- that God is steadfast and enduring in being patient with us.

Very simply, God is slow to give in and to judge and condemn us. God loves and cares for us despite our sin and rebellion, cursing and rejection. This is the very reason He sent Christ to save us. He loves and cares for us; therefore, He is suffering a long time with us.

Acts 17:30-31 “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

Rom 2:4 *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?*

Rom 3:25 *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.*

Rom 10:21 *But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”*

2. God wants no person to perish. To perish is a terrible thing. It means to be utterly lost and destroyed. It means to lose eternal life and to be cut off from life forever and ever. It means to be spiritually destitute, completely empty of all good. It means to suffer the judgment, condemnation and punishment of separation from God forever and ever. It means to perish; to be in a state of suffering forever and ever apart from God.

The point is this: God does not want us perishing; He does not want us cut off and separated from Him. God wants us to spend eternity with Him not apart from Him.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Eph 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.*

1 John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

3. God wants everyone to come to repentance (see *Repentance*, 2 Pet. 3:9).

2 PETER 03:09 REPENTANCE

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 03:09

To repent means to change; to turn; to change one's mind; to turn one's life. It is a turning away from sin and turning to God. It is a change of mind, a forsaking of sin. It is putting sin out of one's thoughts and behaviour. It is resolving never to think or do a thing again. (Cp. Mt. 3:2; Lk. 13:2-3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 26:20.) The change is turning away from lying, stealing, cheating, immorality, cursing, drunkenness and the other so-called glaring *sins of the flesh (the sinful nature)*. But the change is also turning away from the silent sins of the spirit such as self-centredness, selfishness, envy, bitterness, pride, greed, anger, evil thoughts, hopelessness, laziness, jealousy and lust.

1. Repentance involves two turns. There is a negative turn away from sin and a positive turn toward God. It is a turning to God away from sin, whether sins of thought or action. (See *Repentance*, Lk. 3:3. Cp. 1 Th. 1:9; Acts 14:15.)
2. Repentance is more than sorrow. Sorrow may or may not be involved in repentance. A person may repent simply because he wills and acts to change; or a person may repent because he senses an agonizing sorrow within. But the sense or feeling of sorrow is not repentance. Repentance is both the change of mind and the actual turning of one's life away from sin and toward God. (See *Repentance*, 2 Cor. 7:10.)

Mat 3:2 And saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. □

III. 2 Peter 03:10 Day of the Lord; Return of Jesus Christ

Why has Christ not yet returned to earth? The glorious fact is that He will return. The Day of the Lord is coming. He is going to bring about the glorious day of redemption, giving all believers the wonderful privilege of living with Him forever and ever.

1. The day of the Lord will come like a thief. Note a significant fact: a man never knows when a thief is going to hit his house. No thief tells a man ahead of time that he is going to strike his house. If a man knew, he would watch and prepare. This is just the point: the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that He is coming back to earth. He has forewarned us, but He has not told us when. Why?

=> Not knowing when Jesus is returning keeps us focused upon Him and His return. It keeps us looking and longing for Him. It keeps us watching, and it stirs us to live pure and holy lives.

=> Not knowing when Jesus is returning serves as a warning to unbelievers. It warns them that they must repent now, today, for He could return today and catch them unprepared.

The day of the Lord is coming, but it is coming like a thief. His return is going to be totally unexpected by most people. The believer must...

- not be careless: get tired of waiting up, get sleepy, be caught off guard, begin to disbelieve. (All of this can happen to a house owner waiting on a burglar.)
- watch: sit up, stay awake, listen, look, take notice of all noises and sights (signs). (The burglar always comes in an unexpected hour.)

Mat 24:27 “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

Mark 13:35 “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back — whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.”

Mat 24:36 “No one knows about that day or hour; not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Mat 24:44 “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Mat 25:10-13 “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”(cp. v. 6-9)

Rev 16:15 “Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

1 Th 5:2 For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Rev 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

2. The heavens and universe will pass away: all “the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it.” Based upon what we know about the universe today — the basic elements such as the atom — nothing really needs to be said about how the universe is going to be destroyed. It is rather a matter of belief in God, that God is God, the Supreme Intelligence and Force of the universe. If a person believes in God, then he knows that God can destroy the universe. How? By doing what He did when He created the world and when He destroyed the earth the first time (cp. v. 5-6), that is, by simply speaking the Word, by simply commanding a universal atomic explosion to take place.

Man himself has enough intelligence to burst the atom and to cause a chain reaction that would be so devastating that it would destroy the earth and melt the elements of the earth with fervent heat. Man himself can cause an atomic explosion so severe that every element of the earth would melt with fervent heat. Why then doubt God?

All God has to do is speak the Word and all the atoms throughout the universe will burn up in a chain reaction. There would be an atomic explosion that would destroy the whole universe.

The point is this: “the day of the Lord *will come*.” There is no question about it.

=> Just as God spoke the Word and created the world...

=> just as God spoke the Word and destroyed the earth in Noah’s day...

=> so God is going to speak the Word and the day of the Lord will come.

“The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (v. 10).

Now note: Why is God going to destroy both heaven and earth? There is one glorious reason and verse thirteen tells us: so that He can create a new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells. God wants a perfect world in which there will be nothing but righteousness. Note: verse ten says that the earth and “everything in it will be laid bare.” By “everything” is meant all the works of man’s hands:

=> buildings => services => offices

=> evil works => businesses => religion

=> murder => governments => wars

Everything that man has ever done, all of his corruptible works, will be burned up and destroyed by the fire of God’s judgment. The whole universe will be destroyed

by fire; a fiery explosion will take place and the fire will be so hot that every element will melt from the fervent heat. But note: it is all so that God's eternal purpose for the universe can be fulfilled. God is going to create a new heavens and earth in which only righteousness will exist. The righteous, those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness, will be the citizens of the new heavens and earth. The new heavens and earth will be the home where God's people will live and serve Him for all of eternity.

Thought 1. What man must do is watch and prepare. He must repent, turn to God, and turn away from his sin and the coming destruction. Scripture is clear, and it is stated as clearly as it can be.

Mat 5:18 *"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."*

Mat 24:35 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*

1 Th 5:1-3 *Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

2 Pet 3:10-13 *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 in it will be laid bare. 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, the home of righteousness.*

Jude 1:6 *And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*

Rev 6:17 *For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Isa 65:17 *"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

Isa 66:22 *“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the Lord, “so will your name and descendants endure.”*

Psa 102:25-27 *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.*

Isa 34:4 *All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.*

Isa 51:6 *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail. ■*