

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL COME, LORD JESUS THE GOD WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW *While We Wait*

It is easy to be impatient and anxious while waiting. We quickly get impatient while waiting in checkout lines or traffic jams but that impatience does nothing except maybe cause our blood pressure to rise.

Regarding bigger life issues, we often like to quote *Isaiah 40:31 (ESV)*³¹ *but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.* The big question is how willing are we to wait on God? The truth is that oftentimes problems in lives arise because we forged ahead on our own and did not wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord will give us strength for the journey.

We know from experience that in ‘waiting situations’ it is good to have something to keep us occupied. Jesus made His promise to return and take us with Him clear in **John 14:3 (ESV)**³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* The first disciples were impatient to know when Jesus would set up His kingdom. Jesus did not tell them **when** but He told them **what** to do while waiting. **Acts 1:8 (ESV)**⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Their command to be witnesses while waiting for the Lord’s return is still our command today.

About 30 years after the ascension of Christ, fire broke out in Rome and destroyed much of the city. Mostly likely it was the Emperor Nero who was responsible for starting the fire. However, he blamed Christians and ordered that they be hunted down and punished. Peter was caught up during this wave of persecution and thrown into prison. It was from prison that he wrote his second letter to the churches of Asia Minor. It would be his last. Peter would move home to glory from his prison cell.

Remember the prophets’ words and the apostles’ commands.

Read 2 Peter 3:1-7 (ESV)¹ *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.⁴ They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.⁷*

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Peter called his readers to remember. Peter certainly knew about remembering. Think back to the night of Jesus' arrest while Peter hung out in Caiaphas' courtyard. He denied knowing Jesus seeming to forget the words of Jesus spoken a few hours before. **Luke 22: 61 (ESV)**⁶¹ *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."* In that moment, Peter's remembering caused him to be stirred to repentance. Peter wanted his readers to think back to Old Testament times and remember the prophets' words. Remembering God's Word is one way to handle anxiety. Peter had said in his first letter: **1 Peter 5:6-7 (ESV)**⁶ *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,*⁷ *casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

Our study of Jude's letter revealed that the last times or last days is a common phrase referring to the time between Jesus' first and second comings. Today, we like the folks 30 years after the resurrection live in the last days.

God's children take hope in His promise to return; however, as long this life remains, there will be those who deny Christ's promise – scoffers! False teachers were causing the followers of Jesus to be anxious over His promised return. They were expecting Him any day and it had been 30 years already! Satan's doubt crept in with one of those 'what if' questions What if Jesus wasn't returning? It is not surprising that 2,000 years later, similar scoffers abound encouraging us to forget our faith and live like there is no tomorrow. According to the Jewish calendar, there were nearly 4,000 years between Adam and the coming of Jesus the first time. The prophets had looked forward to that coming as though looking across mountain peaks of time that separated His first and second comings and saw His comings as one event.

Peter reminded his readers that the universe had a definite beginning and the beginning was with God. Peter reminds us that a flood brought the first ending of the world as man knew it. Geologist Dr. Andrew Snelling suggests that the original continent was broken up and the pieces separated by thousands of miles. Mention of a flood destroying the entire earth is found in many other cultures that do not even adhere to the biblical worldview.

Peter understood that the next destruction of the earth would be *stored up for fire*. Modern atomic science reveals that the elements that make up the world are stored with power. I do not claim to understand atomic energy. However, there are those who do and this world today has become one press of a button away from atomic destruction. Peter seems to indicate that man will not destroy the world by his sinful abuse of atomic energy. It is most likely God who will 'push the button' at the right time and burn up the old creation and all the works of sinful man with it; then He will usher in the new heavens and earth and reign in glory.

Recognize the Lord's timetable differs from ours.

Read 2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV) ⁸ *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* ⁹ *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

Moses, the man who longed for the Spirit of God to be available to all people understood how God reckons time. He wrote in **Psalm 90:4 (ESV)** ⁴ *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.* Even if we could live one thousand years, on God's timetable it would only be a little blip compared to eternity.

Since a thousand years are as one day to the Lord, we cannot accuse Him of delayed fulfillment of His promises. Finite minds cannot fully comprehend eternity but our Creator can. He is not limited by time, nor does He measure it according to man's time clock. God is never in a hurry, but He is always on time!

We may question why Christ has not returned for His children yet and yes scoffers will scoff. We must remember **Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to Him.** While we wait for Christ to return, we must live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ in the air at any moment, perhaps even today; yet plan your course of service as though He may not return in your lifetime.

Embrace a life of holy and godly anticipation for Jesus' return.

Read 2 Peter 3:10-13 (ESV) ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.* ¹¹ *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,* ¹² *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!* ¹³ *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

Notice in verse 10 that Peter speaks of *the day of the Lord*. The Old Testament prophet said in **Joel 2:31 (ESV)** ³¹ *The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.* Whatever the timing it is going to be a terrible day.

The Day of God mentioned in verse 12 is unending; it includes all the ages to come when sin will be forever banished from the universe, and righteousness will be everywhere. Ironside says, "Righteousness suffers during the present age. Those who live in obedience to the Word of God often are persecuted by those who seek to maintain the present order of things. In the millennium righteousness will reign: the authority of the Lord Jesus will be everywhere established, and evil will be held down. But in the eternal state righteousness will dwell, for all evil will have been banished to the lake of fire."

We are currently living in the Day of Grace made possible by Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, His resurrection, and His ascension: **Titus 2:11 (ESV)**¹¹ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, Salvation has always been by the grace of God, received by faith. In Old Testament times, God required His people to follow the Law of Moses and offer sacrifices for their sin—sacrifices that pointed forward to the gracious provision of the Lamb of God. **John 1:17 (ESV)***¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. I repeat – we are currently living in the Day of Grace and during this time we should love His appearing.*

2 Timothy 4:8 (ESV)⁸ *Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.* William MacDonald writing in the Berean Call says, “For many years I thought that this expression referred to those believers who had kindly, sentimental feelings about the coming of the Lord.” I agree with MacDonald since my personal interpretation was that it would be a sure thing for me to get a crown of righteousness. What Christian wouldn't love the appearing of the Lord? But, MacDonald takes loving His appearing to a much deeper level. He suggests that to love His appearing means to live daily in the light of His coming, to behave as if He were coming today. Wiersbe explains, “The crown of righteousness is God's reward for a faithful and righteous life; and our incentive for faithfulness and holiness is the promise of the Lord's appearing. Because Paul loved His appearing and looked for it, he lived righteously and served faithfully.”

An event occurs specifically for God's children. It is the Judgment Seat of Christ. Don't make the mistake of thinking that being saved by grace is a license to sin. **2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)**¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.* The Judgment Seat of Christ does not determine salvation; that was determined by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. The primary focus at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the rewards believers receive based on how faithfully we served Him while we waited. Gaining a crown of righteousness is going to more involved that just hoping for Christ's return to get us out of our troubles in the here and now.

Christ is returning for His children. He promised it and we can count on it! I personally believe in the any moment return of Christ before the day of the Lord begins. Others believe that Christ will return for His children midway through the seven-year tribulation and others believe Christ's return will come at the end of the great tribulation. **WHATEVER YOU BELIEVE CONCERNING THE TIMING, BELIEVE THIS: CHRIST IS RETURNING!!**

There is a glorious day coming for those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus. There is a terrible day coming for those who have not put their faith in Jesus. While you wait for that glorious day, do whatever you can to help prepare others to live eternally in the place where righteousness dwells. And, if you don't know how to escape the great and terrible day of the Lord. This is the formula: **Romans 10:9 (ESV)**⁹ *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*