



# + YOU

Winter 2024-25  
Looking Forward to Christmas

**Sermon Title:** Christmas Gives to Us the Gift of an Expected Return

**To be used with session 6:** Looking Forward with Expectation

**Scripture:** 2 Peter 3:3-18

**Connection with Bible Study:** This sermon complements the Bible study “Looking Forward with Expectation” by wrestling with the seemingly long-delay to Jesus’s second coming. Using chapter three of Peter’s second epistle, Peter’s arguments for the certainty of the promised return of Jesus Christ are examined. The impact of that return must be seen in the lives of those who follow Christ.

## Introduction

As we come to the close of what we know as the Christmas season, let me remind you of the promise of this time of year. The season begins each year with great anticipation of the joy of the season. Children are filled with wonder at the promise of this time of year. Each Sunday we are reminded of the long-expected Messiah who was to come. We see the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises as they played out in the first-century world of Palestine. It is a wonderful season of promise and expectancy.

In Acts 1:9-11, the followers of Jesus also received a word of promise and expectancy. “After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.’”

After the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the eleven disciples and the other followers were left with an exciting expectation: Jesus would return and would establish His everlasting Kingdom. But when? When was that going to happen?

### 1. Some are going to doubt Jesus’s return (2 Pet. 3:1-4).

In line with human nature, the passing of time has a way of dampening expectation. That’s true today, and it was true in the first-century world. After several decades of first-century church history passed—the good news had been spread throughout the Roman world, churches had been established, and lives had been changed—there was no sign of Christ’s return. When would He return? That must have been on the minds of many.

With that question also came doubt as to the reality of the promise. By the time Peter sat down to write his two letters sometime between A.D. 62 and 65, not only were there puzzled questions on the minds of the believers, but there were also those who were cynical mockers of the promise. These mockers had a closed world view that could not grasp God breaking into the world order in the coming again of Jesus. In their minds, history had never changed since the beginning of time. It certainly wouldn't change now simply because of some vague promise made decades earlier.

According to Peter, these mockers denied the second coming for one simple reason: their lives were filled with immorality, and they didn't want to think of the day of judgment that would come with the return of Jesus Christ. That same thought is prevalent in today's world as well. People deny God's existence and Christ's divinity because they don't want to be answerable for their sinfulness.

## **2. God's presence and patience must not be overlooked (2 Pet. 3:5-10).**

Our world has many people just like those mockers in Peter's day: they have a closed worldview. Their worldview has no room for God and His activity in this world. They reason that God (if He exists) cannot break into this world system with something extraordinary. Therefore, there will be no second coming of Christ.

In response, Peter spoke of the error of this logic: God had been present throughout history. First, don't overlook the fact that God broke into this world order by creating it from nothing in the first place. Second, He demonstrated His power and judgment by destroying the world order through the flood in Noah's day. Third, don't forget the first coming of Jesus. In the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God demonstrated His absolute sovereignty to work in this world any way He chooses. Not only that, but Peter reminded his readers that one day God will break in again to bring the fires of judgment on this world.

Any time we think about the delay of the end times—the second coming and final judgment—keep in mind that God operates outside of time. His timetable is not our timetable. One day with God is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. It's as if Jesus ascended to the throne in heaven just this morning, and He'll be back this afternoon! God's ways and God's timetable are not our ways or our timetable.

## **3. Living in expectation of Christ's return (2 Pet. 3:11-18).**

The coming again of Jesus Christ gives to believers an amazing hope. How should you and I live out that hope in these days as we await Christ's return? As believers we look expectantly for that return, but when it comes it will come at an unexpected time. The hope that we have of Jesus's return should result in our lives being extraordinarily reflective of Jesus Christ to those around us. Our lives ought to shine through in holy living in our outward behavior and godliness in the core of our inward being. We must reflect to everyone that we belong to Jesus Christ. God Himself must become our everything and that must be seen in all we do.

Peter challenged us to adopt an eternal perspective. We are not to live for the moment, grasping all that this momentary life has to offer. No, we have an eternal hope that far outweighs anything this world has to offer. That kind of hope, that kind of perspective ought to be seen in everything we do.

### **Conclusion**

The first coming of Jesus Christ to this earth is rooted in history and reality. We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus came to this earth. With that same certainty, we can know that Jesus will return again. There is no need for doubt, there is no room for uncertainty. The disciples heard the promise: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven." You and I can count on it, and you and I can live with that hope each and every day of our lives. With Christians from every era we cry out, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!"

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