

You're in the Story of God's Plan to Rescue Lost Sinners

Message 1 of 5 in the series "You're in the Story"

A. Peter reminds us that the story of God's plan to rescue lost sinners from judgment isn't over yet.

"This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, 'What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.'" 2 Peter 3:1-4 (NLT)

1. Jesus promised to come again and take us home to heaven.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."

John 14:1-3 (NLT)

2. Jesus said no one knows the day of His return.

"However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows." Matthew 24:36 (NLT)

3. Because Jesus has been gone a long time, we should expect people to scoff at our faith.

"They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed."

2 Peter 3: 5-7 (NLT)

B. Peter reminds us that we need to be thinking correctly about the timing of Jesus' return.

1. We must never forget that God's perspective on time is completely different from ours.

"But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day." 2 Peter 3:8 (NLT)

2. We must never forget that Jesus has been slow to return in order to give more people time to be saved.

"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent... remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved." 2 Peter 3:9,15a (NLT)

3. We must never forget that Jesus will come suddenly and unexpectedly.

"But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment." 2 Peter 3:10 (NLT)

"When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes... So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected." Matthew 24:37-39, 42-44 (NLT)

C. Peter reminds us that our understanding of Jesus' imminent return should impact how we live.

1. We should live holy lives.

"Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live... while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight." 2 Peter 3:11,14 (NLT)

"...Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people." Philippians 2:15 (NLT)

2. We should do all we can to hurry along the day of his return.

“...looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along...” 2 Peter 3:12a (NLT)

“...the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14 (NLT)

“...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.” 1 Peter 3:15-16 (NLT)

3. We should grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:17-18a (NIV)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. When was the last time you had a discussion with someone about Jesus' second coming? What brought up the topic? How does it make you feel?
2. Read John 14:1-3. What did Jesus mean when He said He was going to prepare a place for His disciples? What does this mean to you? Why is He taking so long? (2 Peter 3:8-9)
3. Read 2 Peter 3:1-7 & 2 Timothy 2:23-36. Have you seen Christians and/or the Bible mocked on social media recently? How should we respond to this?
4. Read 2 Peter 3:17-18 & 2 Timothy 2:15. Do you know the Bible well enough to survive questions/challenges from people teaching strange things about Christ's return? How can you improve?
5. In Matthew 24:14 Jesus said, “...the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” How can we hurry this along?
6. Spend a few minutes as a group praying for people you know who are far from God. Thank God that they are still alive and have time to repent.
7. Discuss the following quotations:

“Say what you want to say when you have the feeling and the chance. My deepest regrets are the things I did not do, the opportunities missed, and the things unsaid.” Jim Keller

“Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.” The Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:15

“Bible teaching about the Second Coming of Christ was thought of as ‘doomsday’ preaching. But not anymore. It is the only ray of hope that shines as an ever-brightening beam in a darkening world.” Billy Graham