

2 PETER

EVERY EFFORT

2 PETER: EVERY EFFORT TO KNOW HIS RETURN

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2 Peter 3:1-13

Welcome to the Doxa Church podcast. 2 Peter is a letter of passionate pleading from the apostle Peter to multiple churches, reminding them that God's power and grace transforms believers to live righteously, even in the face of increasingly hostile and opposing culture. God sustains us until Jesus returns to restore all things. And until then we make every effort to follow Christ. Join us in this six week series as we walk through the book of 2 Peter. For more information about Doxa or to join us for a Sunday gathering, go to doxa-church.com.

Hey, good morning, church family. My name is Ken Flower. If I don't know, I would love to meet you. I'm a part of the team here. I get to serve as one of the elders here at our church, and we are going to be jumping back in to 2 Peter this week, going to be in chapter three of 2 Peter. So if you have your Bible or a phone, tablet, whatever you're reading scripture on, go ahead and turn to 2 Peter chapter three. And as you do that, I want to ask this question, did anyone for the first movie that you saw, if you can even remember that, I know some of us couldn't remember that, say Jurassic Park? Anyone? Yes. Thank you, Alex. All right. Awesome. I got a couple in here. All right. So this was not the first movie I saw. Mine was the Land Before Time, but yes, thank you, someone else. But Jurassic Park growing up was one of my favorite movies. And I remember going to the theater, my family in Virginia, we'd go to these afternoon matinees at the dollar theater in town, right. Go to the dollar store first and buy a bunch of candy and stuff it in our jackets, and then go to the dollar theater. And we went to go see Jurassic Park. And I remember being amazed by this movie and obviously there's the adventure and there's these crazy dinosaurs and the CGI behind it all that was just incredible at the time. But honestly, what amazed me as a, I think like sixth grader, was how realistic it seemed, right? The whole explanation of how you can get DNA from these prehistoric mosquitoes caught in amber, and then use it and create, basically recreate these dinosaurs on

this island. To me as like sixth grade Ken seemed really probable and realistic. And in my head, I'm imagining, you know what? There's probably like islands somewhere on this planet where dinosaurs actually are roaming the earth. It felt so real to me. And I remember the lights, the movie then ended and the lights kind of came on a little bit. It was still really dark and we get up and we're walking down the sticky movie theater aisle, right, and then heading down the corridor towards the exit doors and it's still dark, still dim. And then I remember, and if you've gone to a matinee, especially in an old school theater, right? There's no glass doors. It's just these big metal doors and you get to the end of the hallway and they open up and you walk out into the bright afternoon sunlight and it's like you cannot see a thing, right? Cause your eyes are adjusting to the brightness. And I remember in that moment realizing as my eyes were struck by the afternoon sun, that that was an amazing story, but it's not real right. I was woken up as I, then my eyes adjusted and I saw the trees around me and I saw the cars in the parking lot and the blue sky above me and realized that very quickly, amazing movie, but not reality. Now, Paul, I'm sorry, Peter, is writing this letter today and he says at the beginning of his letter, we just read it in verse one and two, he says, he's writing to stir up their minds by way of reminder. And literally this is the second time he's used this phrase that he's saying he wants to stir up their minds. Literally the word stir up here means he wants to wake them out of a sleep. You see, he's writing this letter to a church that has fallen asleep. It's a church that just like me and my trip to the movies have been lulled to sleep into believing in alternate reality. And he's wanting to turn on the light to shine bright light on them and help them wake up and see what's real. And for us this morning, I want to, I guess, challenge us with this idea that it's possible most of us have fallen asleep, church. That we're asleep. That we've been lulled to sleep and we've forgotten what's real. And so my hope this morning as we look at Peter's words is that we wake up. Like walking out of a dark theater into the bright afternoon sun that we wake up and see the glorious reality that we're invited into today. So let's pray as we jump into this together.

Father, I pray that you would open our eyes this morning. You would wake us up to reality. That you would open our hearts and our minds and help us see clearly this morning. I pray that you would work through your word this morning. That you would speak through me and help us see, Father. We ask this in your son's name. Amen.

Now here's the nightmare that this church is in, right? They've fallen asleep. So they're in a dream, but it's not really a dream, it's a nightmare. And in this nightmare, the reality that they're believing is that Jesus is not going to return. Jesus isn't returning. Peter in verses three and four warns of these false teachers. He calls them scoffers who are going to come into the church and they're going to question the reality of Jesus's return and read with me in verses three and four. He says,

"Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 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.'" And he calls them scoffers and basically saying that they are seeking to justify the pursuit of their own sinful desires by saying that Jesus isn't going to return. Later on in verse five, he says they deliberately overlook this fact. Literally it's saying they willingly let the obvious stay hidden. It's like they're choosing to live in ignorance in a surface level ignorance. Choosing to live in this dream world where Jesus isn't going to return so that they can justify pursuing their

own sinful desires because they believe, they're basically saying, if Jesus isn't coming back, we can do whatever we want because this life is all there is. We might as well pursue life and do whatever makes us happy because he's not coming back to judge. And so they are going to come into the church and they're going to bring this alternate reality. And the church is going to be tempted to fall asleep, Peter says. Now imagine how easy it would be if you're, I mean, just put yourself in the sea of these first century Christians, that they, it would be so easy for them to fall asleep and to believe these false teachers, right? It's been 30 plus years since Jesus ascended into heaven. And he had told them, remember, he had said, I'm going to come back. I'm going to return. I'm going to prepare a place for you. And he had even told some of his disciples that some of you will not see death until you see the son of man coming with this kingdom. And so they believe that his coming is going to happen any time. And they are expectant waiting for him to return. And yet it's 30 plus years and their oppressors gain more power. And they increasingly are marginalized and persecuted. And they are just wondering, what on earth? Like Jesus, are you actually coming back? Things are just getting worse. Are you actually going to return? Maybe these false teachers are right. Maybe he's not coming back. And maybe we too should just try to get the most out of this life while we still have a life to live.

I'm guessing that in our church today, we probably don't have false teachers here that are saying Jesus isn't going to return. If that's you like, let's talk, come talk to me. But I'm guessing that's probably not what's happening here in our church. But we do live in a world that tells us that someone coming from heaven to earth is the stuff of myth. That the idea of a king coming from heaven to earth to recreate a new heaven and a new earth and rule, that sounds like a Marvel movie. That our post-modern secular worlds questions constantly, and sometimes even scoffs at the idea of the supernatural, of the transcendent, of anything beyond this material world that we see. In our Western world than believing that there's a king who's ascended to a place called heaven who will one day enter back into physical world to rescue and rule over all. That just sounds crazy. So here's the nightmare that we are in, it maybe different than the first century church, but the nightmare that it's so tempting for us to fall asleep into is what Charles Taylor, this Canadian philosopher called the immanent frame, the immanent frame. And he describes it, this is the normative way in our post-modern secular world that people view our world. The immanent frame says this. It says that this material world is all there is that there's nothing transcendent, nothing eternal or spiritual. That reality is what we can see, hear, taste, touch, and feel. There's nothing beyond what is here in front of us. This is all there is. And most of us today, probably in this room say, well, we don't buy that. We believe in a spiritual reality. We believe in transcendence. We believe there's a God who is going to come and rule over all. But even though we may say we believe these things, functionally, we often live as if this is a myth as if this world really is all there is. And it's really, really easy then for us, as we swim in the waters of our post-modern secular world, it's easy for us to then believe that this really is all there is. That there's nothing beyond this material world. That this whole idea of Jesus coming to earth really is crazy. It's so easy to fall asleep into believing that.

How does this often play out? And I think this shows up for us that even though we don't really believe this, we functionally live like this is true in a lot of different ways. I just want to highlight a couple for us this morning. One way that shows up is that we often view time as limited. That time is limited. So we must live while we can. And so here's where this shows up. We, we think I

need to experience as much as possible in this lifetime. We always look to the next thing, the next weekend, the next event, the next trip, the next hobby, the next purchase, the next stage of life. And we struggle to actually be present in the moment. And then when we get to the end of our life, and this is so sad, but when we get to the end of our life, there's nothing to look forward to next. And then we realize that we've missed out because we were always looking ahead. Maybe it's something as simple as we feel this need to travel and explore. I love travel. That's a good thing, but we feel this compulsion to travel and see as much of the world as we possibly can in this lifetime. And maybe we have a bucket list of all that we hope to do and accomplish as if this life is all there is. Maybe for some of us, it's the way of the ancient Epicureans who said, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. And it's all about pursuing pleasure and the things that make us happy while we still have life. And God is for us being happy, right? He created us as people, as beings who desire pleasure, and experience pleasure. And he created the gifts that give us pleasure. But so often we believe functionally that this life is all there is. That's what we make life all about. Now here's the problem with that. If this material world is all there is, if that's true, if the immanent frame is real, then we won't actually be able to enjoy the good things of this world because we'll put so much weight, so much weight on good things like sex and food and adventure, gifts from God, but we'll put so much weight on them that they'll never live up to our hopes, and we'll always be wanting more. But if we are eternal people, if this world is not all there is, and we were created to experience this world for eternity, then it takes the weight off and you can actually relax and enjoy the God, the gifts that God has given us now.

Here's another way this shows up. Some of us, we always feel like we're losing time. And maybe you feel anxious about that. Maybe you look back on your life and you see just missed opportunities and you have a lot of regrets and you see people that you love getting older and you're just feeling like time is flying by. How many parents in the room have heard it said to them, when you first had kids, it's gonna fly by, right? And you just kind of nodded and laughed. But then like, as your kids get older, you realize how true that statement is. This one hits home for me in a lot of ways. I'm turning 40 next year. Our daughter just started the end of middle school. So she starts high school next year. And I'm looking at my life and realizing my first, the first half of my life is nearing the end. If God gives me kind of a full lifespan and what, like I, there's a lot of regret I feel. A lot of missed opportunity. What have I actually done? As I watched my daughter get older and realize we only have four, maybe five years before we send her off into adulthood, there's, there is a feeling of weight and anxiety of so little time that we have left. Maybe some of you feel that. You feel like you're losing time as if this life is all there is.

One more way that I think this shows up in us, this idea that this world is all there is, the immanent frame, is how we view things like work and our politics. Now we were designed and Charles Taylor says this, that we were designed to desire transcendence, it's part of being made in God's image. And so if there is no transcendent reality beyond this material world, what happens then is we look to things on this earth to give us transcendence. And work and politics for many of us have become that. For politics, we, if there is no king who's going to make this world right then we begin to think that it's up to us or to a political vision or a political party to make this world the way we want it to be. And so we look to a party or a political vision to either conserve this world or to progress this world. Either way, we put our

hope in an earthly king because there is no transcendent one. And for many of us then politics, and this is definitely true I think of our culture today, has become the new religion and we give wholehearted loyalty to a party or a vision and we demonize anyone who thinks differently. Now the last two years have poked a lot of holes in all of these realities. Political parties on all sides have failed to deliver on our hopes. Two years have gone by and we may look back and feel like they were two wasted years, two years where time flew by, we couldn't travel. We couldn't do all the things we used to love to do. And maybe we feel like it was full of missed opportunities. And in the end, we'd been left with this haunting feeling that there's got to be more to this life. Now, if you're with us this morning, and I realize that some of us here may, if we're honest, have a hard time accepting the idea of a transcendent reality. I mean, if you're honest and I hope, I hope you would be, the idea of a king that would come from heaven into this physical world to recreate this world and then rule over it, it does sound crazy to you. And I get it. I get it. If I'm honest and I want to be honest this morning, there's moments where I wonder if to believe what I believe, maybe am I crazy? Is it crazy to stake my whole life on this? Do you ever feel that way? So if that's you this morning, I get it. That's okay. But I want to ask you, does the world the way you see it, this immanent frame that this world is all there is. Does it really explain the desires you have for beauty, for love, for justice, for goodness? What if this myth is actually the reality? What if we are eternal beings made to live forever? What if we knew that we had an eternity to explore this world and we had no barriers, like COVID? What if we knew that we had an eternity to enjoy life as it was meant to be lived? What if we knew that one day a good king would come and bring peace to this world forever? What if the idea that this world is all there is, what if that is actually the myth? And we woke up to see reality that we were made for eternity. What if we've been living in a dark room our whole lives, and we've never actually seen the real world and all of its color and beauty and glory? This is why Peter is writing to this church. And I think what God wants us to hear this morning is that he's turning, he's writing to turn the lights on and he's inviting us to wake up to reality, church.

What happens when the lights turn on? When the lights turn on in verses five to seven in verse 10, and then again, in verse 13, we're not going to read through these, but these verses Peter uses a lot of what might to our ears and this like modern world sound very strange. He uses this apocalyptic literature. He talks about the heavens and earth being stored up for fire. He says the heavens will pass away with a roar. He says the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved. The heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. And then he says, we're waiting for a new heaven and a new earth. Now this apocalyptic literature he's using would have been, actually been really familiar to his first century audience. They would have heard this kind of language before. It's the language of the prophets. And this apocalyptic literature, literally apocalypse in the, in the Greek means the unveiling or the revealing. It's like a curtain has been pulled away. That's what the apocalypse really is. That the curtains pulled away. The light is turned on. And we actually see reality for the first time. And here's Peter's point throughout this passage, as he uses this apocalyptic language to talk about the day when the king will recreate the heavens and the earth. His point is this, our transcendent God has broken into this immanent world many times, right? He talks about creation. Then he talks about the flood. And then there's one final time, what the prophets call the Day of the Lord, used throughout the Old Testament, when God will break into this world and the light will turn on. The curtains will be pulled back and we will see reality. Now here's what we see when the lights get turned

on. The apostle John, one of the other apostles, has a vision and it's recorded in Revelation chapter 21 of the culmination of this day. It's a little bit of a long passage, but I want to read through this together and just let scripture tell us what we will see when the lights turn on. So read with me, it'll be on the screen. Revelation 21:1-5. John says this,

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' And he who was seated on the throne," this is Jesus, the king, said, "'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down for these words are trustworthy and true.'"

The day when heaven meets earth, the unveiling, when the curtains pull back, when the lights turn on is the day that we've all been waiting for. It's the day when there's, all that is broken will be made whole. When there's no more pain or sadness, when death will be no more and we will be reunited, like a bride meeting her groom with our creator, the one who fulfills the deepest longings of our heart, the one who loves us perfectly. It will also be, John says, a day of judgment. A day when all who refuse to submit their lives to the only king or receive what John calls, the second death, and the king and his perfect justice will bring a swift and short judgment on all who still refuse to bow before him. On this day, friends, the lights will be turned on. There will be no separation between heaven and earth. The transcendent will invade the immanent and we won't see any difference between the spiritual and the material. We will only see reality. It's like, it's like, imagine you've been living in a dark room your entire life, and you've never had the light turned on. You've never had a window open. You didn't even know there was a window. And because you've only ever been in that room, you think that you can see clearly. You've never seen anything differently. But then someone comes in through a door you didn't know existed, and they turn on lights you didn't know were there and they open windows you didn't even know were there. And all of a sudden the light invades and you can barely see, but as your eyes adjust, you see a room that has been transformed. You see colors you've never seen. You see details you've never noticed. You see an outside world that you had no idea existed. You see clearly for the first time. On this day, on this day of the Lord, the idea of the immanent frame, right? The idea that this material world is all that there is, that will seem laughable to us. What seems so real now will feel like a myth on that day. We'll see that this current world, that this current material world was only a dim shadow of the reality of the substance that we will one day get to be a part of in the new heaven and the new earth. Friends, this is not a dream. This is reality. And today we're invited to wake up from our sleep, to awaken from a nightmare to a more glorious and beautiful reality than we could ever imagine. So Peter gives us this invitation to wake up. In verses eight and nine, he says, "Don't overlook this one fact, beloved that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." In other words, God, doesn't view time the same way that we view time. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness," the Lord is not dragging his feet. Jesus isn't dragging his feet. Instead, he is, Peter says, "patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Why then has Jesus been slow, so slow to return? It's because of his grace and his patience. It's because he desires for more people to repent, to turn back to the one who gives life, to stop seeking life apart from him before it's too late. So this morning here's an invitation for some of us that have never turned to him. We're still being invited to repentance this morning, to turn back to the one who gives life and to do that while there's still time, because God, there will be a day when God will no longer be patient. Church, I know many of us, I include myself in this, we've been lulled to sleep into this nightmare, believing functionally that this world is all there is. But the reality is, that's not true. That we are, we are eternal beings, eternal people created for an eternal kingdom, a physical heaven and earth that we will be with Jesus and forever. And if this is true then, it changes how we actually live today. If the light turns on, and if we live as people that are awake and not asleep, then it changes how we live right now. Now how do we live in light of this? I just want to give you one idea before we close this morning.

To live life awake means to live as a faithful and fruitful presence. To live as a faithful and fruitful presence. In verses 11 and 12, Peter is asking the same question. He's saying, if this is reality, if this is true, if Jesus actually is going to come back to this earth and rule over all once and for all, then how do we live right now? And he says, in verse 11,

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God."

So we live now awake in light of this reality. Now I want us to, I want to be clear here. This isn't about us pursuing holiness so that we can somehow be worthy enough so that when Jesus comes back, he'll receive us. That's not what Peter is saying here. He's not calling us to like, try to be good enough or holy enough so that Jesus comes back and will actually let us come into his kingdom. That's not what Peter is saying. Peter is calling us to live in light of who we already are in Christ. He's calling us to live in light of the rescue that we've received to live as the rescued ones, as the chosen ones, as the ones who have been made sons and daughters today, the ones that have inherited an eternal kingdom through the work of Jesus Christ and him alone. To live in light of that reality right now. To live as people who have been invited into eternity today. So what does that look like? Faithful and fruitful presence. First of all, presence, this means we're not hiding or escaping. We don't go put our head in the sand and wait until Jesus returns and hope we can survive. We stay present in our world. We live awake in a world that's asleep, awake to a greater reality, a more glorious reality, a more beautiful reality so that our, our neighbors and our friends and our coworkers, they can see something and taste something much better than what this world has to offer. So we stay present and it's not just presence, it's faithful and fruitful presence. Peter says we live lives of holiness and godliness, faithful to the way of Jesus, right? Holiness and godliness that our lives look like Christ and fruitful, bearing fruit in all that we do so that the world sees our lives. And like Peter says in his first letter that they demand an answer for the hope that's in us.

Now what does this look like practically? Let me just really quick, and I'll close with this, give a few ideas. Let me just say this, this isn't complicated, church. This is really, really simple.

Really, really simple. I'm not saying it's easy. It requires the spirit of God working in us. But these are simple things that we can commit to if we're going to live life awake. Gather every Sunday with the church to be shaped by the liturgy in the word. Realize it's so easy for us to fall asleep and the world is always lulling us to sleep to believing that this world is all there is, and we need to come together weekly to be reminded of reality, to taste reality. Read the Bible and

pray with your kids, if you have kids. They're swimming in the same waters as you. Commit to a Christian community. You've been adopted into the King's family, church. That's your family. So commit to Christian community. Give generously. One day you will inherit the earth, Jesus says, so we can give generously now. Practice Sabbath and rest because you have an eternity in front of you so we can stop now. We can cease, we can rest, let your life be shaped by the way of Jesus. Church, I hope this morning that as we hear Peter, that we hear from God, a call to wake up. To wake up to the reality that this world is not all there is. That we are eternal people that have been given a gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ alone, and that we will inherit an eternal kingdom where we will rule with Jesus forever. That that is reality. He's inviting us to enjoy that and to live in light of that today. Amen. All right, let me pray for us. Father, thank you for your good promise to us that Jesus will return. That he will come to reign, to create a new heaven and a new earth, and that he has invited us to participate in that. Lord, help us to see that that's reality, more real than anything we can see and touch and feel in front of us today. Lord, for those that have not yet come to you to repent, Lord, help them to see that you still long for them to turn to you. That Jesus has delayed his return. He is waiting to come back, longing for them to turn to you before it's too late. Help them turn to you this morning, Father. Thank you for this amazing promise, this amazing reality that we get to be a part of Lord. Help this to just be so alive and real and vivid to us, Father. We ask this in your son's name. Amen.