

## Prayer

We love to worship You, O Lord, We worship you by ourselves as we seek to walk the path of faith; we worship you in our homes, inspired by your love; and we worship you with others both when we gather for worship and when we do together the work of the Kingdom. All praise and glory be to You, Lord God; we worship You! AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: The food we eat

Ask the Lord for a revival of the centuries old practice of blessing food and giving thanks, by means of 'saying grace'. We give thanks to God for all our food because it is His provision, and we bless our food to offer it to back to Him; for whether it is vegetable or animal food, it has died to give us life, and is therefore a parable of Jesus' love for us (as celebrated in 'communion').

## Meditation (5001)

Memory; that precious gift, which, cultivated by the love of God  
Can work within the soul for healing, love and restoration.

Give it time and space, and let it minister the beautiful hope  
Of all within your past that brought you peace and love and happiness.

Give it time and space, and let it search you for the truth  
Of how your life was touched by sin, and you were wonderfully delivered.

Give it time and space, and let it tell again the story  
Of how you walked away from self to faith in Jesus' love; your testimony.

Give it time and space, and let it call to mind your knowledge  
Of His Word, the written record of God's love from start to glorious end.

Give it time and space, and it will serve you all your life  
Until the time when all your life is held in memory, and glorified by God.

Memory, that precious gift. Give it all to God, and never let the enemy near;  
Let Jesus rule the way you know yourself and all your past, and all your destiny.

## Bible Study - 2 Peter 3:8-13

<sup>8</sup> But do not ignore this one thing, friends, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to carry out His promise, as some might think of 'slowness', but He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but wanting all to come to a place of repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; then the heavens will vanish with a loud roar, the elements will be consumed by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be laid bare. <sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what sort of people should you be? You should live in holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and speeding up the coming of the day of God, when the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements consumed with fire! <sup>13</sup> However, in keeping with His promise, we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, inhabited by righteousness.

### Bible Study

These astonishing words towards the end of Peter's second letter follow directly from everything written previously. In the first chapter, Peter wrote in great depth about the mature path of Christian life, giving all to whom he wrote a firm understanding of the true Faith. In the second chapter he riled against false teachers who found their way into the church and diverted its spiritual energies away from the Gospel of truth and salvation in Christ alone. In the third chapter, we now read Peter's strong response to the false teaching against which he had fought so hard, and which questioned whether the Lord was ever going to come again in glory (3:3,4).

He was incensed at this suggestion, calling such people 'scoffers', but his reaction was not just emotive, for He knew that if God's people were led into believing that the 'coming' was delayed, then this would create the spiritual vacuum in which false teaching thrived. The same is true today.

As Peter so wisely pointed out, the issue is not what we think about time, or when we think God will or won't come again; our perception of time is simply inadequate, which is what Peter means by the famous phrase 'with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.' This is not a mathematical equation! It is a comparison of our puny grasp of time, and God's mastery of it. The fact is that God has promised that Jesus will come again, and we do not know when it will happen. This part of Peter's teaching follows on directly from the words of Jesus; 'if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake ... therefore be ready, for the Son of Man is coming' (Matt 24:42,43). All that Peter offers us is the understanding that if God appears to be waiting, it is demonstrably an act of love on His part which allows people time to repent and turn to Him (2:9). That is interesting, and to this day it gives us a reason to engage in urgent mission, but it is not the main thrust of Peter's writing.

Exactly as in the teaching of Jesus (see, for example, Matt 24), God's own prophecy to us of the end of all things and the return of Jesus (2:10,11) should evoke a response of faith from us. Peter puts it simply; 'what sort of people should you be? You should live in holiness and godliness ...' (2:11), but we should not mistake simplicity with insignificance. When Peter says we should live in holiness and godliness, these words summarise the extensive description of mature Christian faith he gave in the first chapter of his letter. If you read verse 3 to 11 of chapter one again, you will see this very clearly. In other words, the imminent return of Jesus should motivate us to the highest standards of Christian life, for we know our Lord and Judge is very close to us. And if we think this is supposed to be 'scare tactics' by God, then our understanding of all this has wandered far away, because for those who love the Lord, His presence and imminent return is a joy, an enabling force, and a powerful motive for godly living; 'we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, inhabited by righteousness!' Wonderful!

In my own life I have met many Christians who are deeply afraid of the Lord's coming. What has led to this? Our destiny, our joy in His presence, and our high motive for the deeds of the Gospel, have all been compromised not because of popular beliefs, but by false teaching about God, His Son, and salvation, from within the church and from our pulpits. Peter exposed it in His day; who will expose it today?

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Does this passage of 2 Peter tell you anything about the return of Jesus and the 'day of the Lord' you did not previously know?
2. The phrase 'one day is like a thousand years ...' has been used to say that the world was made in thousands of years, not just 7 days. Is this a right use of this text?
3. What do you feel about the Lord's imminent return? Discuss your reactions within your group.

## Discipleship

It is important that you consider for yourself the third of the questions above, quite apart from any group discussions. The reality of the coming of Jesus certainly forces us to address many feelings we have about our faith that can otherwise remain hidden, and which we need to face. It is the Lord's desire that we should be delighted to see him, of course, so if you have other feelings, it is important that you talk to the Lord about this in prayer.

## Prayer

You have shown us glimpses of our future, Lord Jesus, and promised that we will have a place in Your Kingdom. Give us the grace to live by the light of this promise, with holiness and godliness all our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN