



Dear Phil

LET'S LIVE READY!

Phil, there's so much discussion about when the world is going to end. What makes it so much more real now than back thousands of years ago?

This is a good question. Let me say first that the New Testament emphasizes that Christ's return is imminent in several ways. It says we are in the "last days" (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2). We are in the "last hour" according to John (1 John 2:18), and Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7). But you might say, "Isn't this 'last hour' getting pretty long?"

Peter gives the most implicit answer to your question in his second epistle (2 Pet. 3:3-10). He says that mockers will arise who will say that people have been saying for years that Jesus will come, but that He hasn't come yet. Therefore, all this talk about Jesus' coming and the world ending is a bunch of nonsense. But Peter says that anyone who says that is deliberately ignoring the fact that God destroyed the world by a flood, just like He promised He would, even though the people did not believe it.

Peter gives us the reason

Christ hasn't returned and the world hadn't been destroyed in verses 8-9: "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (NASB). God is patiently withholding His wrath so that men and women may still be saved! Isn't God good?! But don't be fooled into thinking that God's patience will last forever. 1 Peter 3:10 tells us that there is coming a day in which the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire. Since that is true, we should be very careful to live holy lives (3:11).

Yes, the "last hour" has been

longer than we would have expected and might still be longer that we do expect. At the same time, the last hour could end tomorrow with Jesus coming for His bride. Let's live ready! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*Sincerely,
PHILIP*

P.S. The reason people talk about Christ's coming being "sooner" or "closer" than it ever has been is simple: nearly 2,000 years have passed since Christ ascended to heaven. That makes His coming nearly 2,000 years closer than it was back then! ■

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➔(p3) must seek the grace of gratitude and cultivate the grace of gratitude until we are "abounding with thanksgiving." This is not an easy task. None will ever overflow with thanksgiving until they see that gratitude is an inner disposition towards life that must be worked at. Life has its mix of good and bad—of the difficult and the delightful; but it's up to us as to how we respond to that mix. Some people in examining a bush unhappily see only the thorns, but others rejoice in the fragrance of its roses. The lens through which we view life is so important. Jacob saw his days as "few and evil." He described the loss of Joseph and the famine that reunited them with these words, "All these things be against me." However Joseph looked at life through the lens of gratitude and described the same time period with a different set of words completely. Joseph said, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." We see exactly what we discipline ourselves to see in life,

and looking through the lens of thanksgiving will ripen us.

If it often said among Christians that our reward is in the world to come. However, gratitude is a rewarding grace. It has its own reward for us right now.

Gratitude exalts God. Very few things honor and glorify God more than the sweet fragrance of a thankful soul. It expels gloom and ushers in sweet peace and blessed hope. More than once the child of God has used thanksgiving to drive back the clouds of sorrow and gloom. Gratitude encourages graciousness. It gives us the politeness of soul and graciousness of spirit that can't be purchased for any amount of money.

Let's declare war on whimpering and complaining! Let's put away from us forever the grumbling and fault-finding that is such a blight on the church today! Reach into the closet of God's grace and adorn yourself with the garment of gratitude! It will make a difference! ■