



Lesson 1: Are We There Yet?

Dear friends,

Greetings from Wesley Theological Seminary. This is the first in a series of weekly letters to members of the *In God's Time* study groups.

I am excited about this course and hope that it proves worthwhile for you. I have been aware for many years of the church's need for solid adult Christian education materials. *In God's Time* is one tangible response to that need. I realize that no book is going to be equally interesting and useful to all readers, but I hope that each of you will find it helpful and stimulating in some way.

As you might already recognize, the book itself is something of an experiment. Hundreds of volumes about the Bible line the walls of my office, none of which reads quite like *In God's Time*. The autobiographical portions of the book are rather unusual, as are its numerous asides and analogies. *Serious* books on the subject of theology aren't supposed to contain such things, at least so one publisher told me. When I finished writing the book I was very unsure how it would be received. Thankfully, the picture is now a lot clearer. For all its imperfections, there does seem to be a place for this sort of work in the church.

This week, most of you will be studying Chapter One, "Are We There Yet?" (The title is the question my two children ask endlessly on long car trips.) The main point I wanted to get across is that eschatology (belief about God's ultimate victory over evil) is vitally important to Christian theology and so ought not to be neglected or rejected, despite all of the problems and excesses associated with it. As the great theologian Jürgen Moltmann wrote,

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore, also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. (*Theology of Hope*, p. 16)

I want to thank you for participating in the *In God's Time* course. It is humbling—and more than a little scary—to know that groups will be talking about what I have written. I sincerely hope that you will enjoy and benefit from the book.

Grace & peace,

Craig