

[2 Peter 3:10-13](#)

(10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (11) Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

New King James Version

Even though this comes on the heels of explaining God's [longsuffering](#), nevertheless, the end *will* still come, and it will catch [the world](#) by surprise. [1 John 2:17](#) likewise tells us, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of [God](#) abides forever.”

The original heavens and earth came to an end due to God's judgment on the rebellious angels. The re-created world ended in the Flood because of His judgment on the wickedness of mankind. Soon, our world will be burned up in God's judgment, replaced by new heavens and a new earth ([Revelation 21:1-8](#)), in which righteousness dwells. That is remarkable in itself—when has the world ever been described as being where righteousness dwells?

This will be a brand new thing. Because our minds are still affected by this world, even the called of God may have a hard time imagining a righteous reality. Simply put, we have become desensitized to unrighteousness. Even

though we are—hopefully—not directly participating in it, our minds have still adjusted to what we observe around us; to some degree, we have all adapted to the deviant perspectives of our culture.

As a result, we, too, might scoff at times—not at the promise of Christ's return, but at the ideals of righteousness. We know that we must allow God to make Christ's righteousness our own, yet when we see someone working toward this, our carnality may scoff instead of appreciating a place where some of His righteousness dwells. Christ's righteousness in others may seem unrealistic to us, just like His return seems unrealistic to unbelievers.

Peter gives a powerful description of the violence and dissolution that lies just ahead, adding tremendous gravity to his eventual question. All that we recognize of this world will be burned up. The ungodly will perish. The things that we see on a daily basis will dissolve—the cultures, the cities, the systems that man has developed. With this fiery end in mind, Peter asks, “What manner of persons ought we be in holy conduct and godliness?”

This world is passing away, and everything that is part of this world is of limited duration and meaning. What matters are those things that relate to [holiness](#), godliness, and the next world. All the rest will disappear.

When [Christ](#) returns, our response to God throughout our lives will matter. Our house, car, and other physical accoutrements will not. The quality of our relationships with others will matter. Our popularity will not. Our character will matter. The trivia and fickleness of the culture will not. The reflection of God in our lives and our example of His eternal life will matter, but the glitz and glamour of this world are just so much smoke waiting to dissipate. Through God's Spirit, we have been given the discernment to evaluate what will matter when Christ returns and what is simply vanity and grasping for the wind.

As Christ suffers long with us, is our whole heart focused on the repenting that we still need to do? Or are we among those walking according to our own lusts? Are we putting far off the day of doom, as Amos says ([Amos 6:3](#)), because much of this world does not seem too bad to us? Or are we earnestly longing for Christ's return, fervently praying, “Your Kingdom come”?

— David C. Grabbe

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