

# A Growth That Endures...



A VERSE BY  
VERSE  
EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE OF  
2ND PETER

## The Window 2 Peter 3:8-13 (744)

“In C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy all found themselves in the mythical land of Narnia during the cruel reign of the White Witch. That period was cold and sad; it was always winter, but never Christmas. The inhabitants of Narnia were very oppressed and often fearful, but one thing kept them going. It was the hope that the great lion, Aslan (who was the rightful king), would one day return.

Mr. Beaver told the children this old poem:

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight.  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,  
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death.  
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.

The people to whom Peter addressed this letter must have often wondered how much longer they would have to put up with so many trials and temptations. It was to encourage them that Peter wrote to them about the day of the Lord, which

will bring hope and a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (3:13)" (Michael Bentley, *1 & 2 Peter*, p. 238).

This illustration from Narnia is a timely introduction to the big idea of this message from **2 Peter 3:8-13**. The promises of the return of Christ and the renewal of creation stabilize God's people and spur us on in the way of holiness. The promises of the **return** of Christ and the **renewal** of creation **stabilize** God's people and **spur** us on in the way of holiness.

**2 Peter 3:8-13** *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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

False teachers had been troubling the churches to which 1 and 2 Peter were written. These men had cast doubt upon the Word of God. The skeptics had called the promises of God into question. For example, they asked in **verse 4**, "Where is the promise of His coming?" The implication is, of course, that God is slow or even slack in the fulfillment of His promises; that God has a problem with punctuality; that He is given to loitering. We know this from Peter's

response in **verse 9: the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness.** The skeptics had implied that there are impediments that God is having difficulty overcoming; that God in His very character is sluggish and lazy; that God has promised or committed to more than He can deliver. They are attempting to persuade the members of the church that God, not having acted within the time limits they think reasonable, is negligent, unconcerned and unreliable. He deserves their criticism and ought to act immediately in order to restore His good reputation in their eyes. Have you ever thought that God's timing relative to the events in your life was just "off"?

In **verse 8** Peter turns his attention to the saints - those precious believers to whom he is writing; those whom he affectionately addresses as *beloved*. He says, **but do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved.** Peter's concern is that the idea that God and His Word are unreliable might gain traction among the believers. His concern is that doubt, like some contagious disease, will infect the saints. And Peter's is not a groundless concern. Indeed, we as Christians are not immune to fears and doubts are we? The Thessalonian church, for example, had been unsettled by questions concerning the return of Christ (**I Thess. 4:13-18; II Thess. 2:1-2**).

To stabilize, to settle, to comfort them Peter reminds them of two things. Both have to do with the attributes or perfections of God. The first is the perfection of the eternity of God. In the second half of **verse 8** he reminds them **that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** This clause, taken from **Psalm 90:4**, does not represent a chronological calculation. Many have understood this to be some sort of mathematical formula and have attempted to date all sorts of events accordingly. We are time-bound creatures.

Time to us is relative to our own lifespans. We live 70, 80, or 90 years and to consider much beyond that is a real stretch for us. But God is not limited by our perceptions of time. He exists outside of time. “[Peter] underlines the fact that in the purposes of God, a delay of even a millennium is, from his standpoint, like no more than the passage of a single day. Therefore [beloved, we] should not be disturbed, if nothing seems to be happening in fulfillment of divine promises” (Hillyer, p. 216). “[God] surveys the whole of history and sets the times of events in accordance with his age-long purposes” (Bauckham, p. 310). Remember what we learned in **3:5-7**? God can and will do exactly what He says.

To stabilize, to settle, to comfort them Peter reminds them of a second perfection of God - His patience. Look at the second clause in **verse 9: [God] is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But God is patient toward you.** Again there is something about the person, the character of God that they need to understand; the recognition of which will promote their own endurance, peace, and joy. This is the perfection of God’s patience or His longsuffering (**Rom. 2:4; Ex. 34:6; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 3:20; II Pet. 3:15**). God is not idling away time like some child. God has revealed Himself as a long-suffering God who is slow to anger; not immediately snuffing our lives out on account of our sin but mercifully wooing us and drawing us to Himself that we might repent and be saved.

God is working during this window of grace. He is not idle. He is calling out His elect until such time as all elect souls are secure. All whom the Father has given to the Son (**John 17:2, 6, 11, 20, 24**) have not been gathered in; the full number of the people of God has not been made up; all of the victories of grace have not yet been won; there are still men and women from every tribe, tongue,

people, and nation (**Rev. 5:9**) who have yet to become loyal, grateful subjects of King Jesus.

It would not do to skip over **verse 9** without speaking to it in relation to the doctrine of salvation, particularly with respect to the extent or design of the atonement. Verse 9 is one of a family of proof texts used to support a couple of universalist views of the atonement. For one, there are those who argue that God designed the sacrificial sufferings and death of Christ to save all men [without exception] and therefore all [without exception] will be saved. We may refer to this as unrestricted universalism.

Second, there are also those who argue that God designed the atonement to save all men [without exception] but somehow all are not saved. This view has been referred to as inconsistent universalism. Many of you may know this view by the name Arminianism after Jacob Arminius who championed the view back in the late 1500s. This is the view that we encounter quite often. It is called inconsistent due to the discrepancy between the design of the atonement and its accomplishment. In this view God makes salvation possible but man, by his choice, makes it actual.

Putting it another way “God genuinely and fully wills that all people [every man, woman, and child without exception] come to repentance and faith. The reason that all people do not is because God gives people not only the freedom but the ability to decide either for or against Him” (Moo, p. 188). In this view every man is actually able to repent and believe without the prior and gracious regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (see **John 5:21; 6:37, 44**).

I want to supply another view that we believe to be more consistent with the overall teaching of Scripture, more in keeping with the actual context of the passage, and more satisfying and comforting to the redeemed soul. To whom is Peter speaking in this passage? Look back at **3:1**: *This is now, beloved*. Look at **3:8**: *But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved*. **3:14**: *Therefore, beloved*. **3:17**: *You therefore, beloved*. He is clearly speaking to believers, to the recipients of this letter, to the covenant community of faith. So in **verse 9** when Peter writes, *the Lord is patient toward you*, who is he talking about? Of course, Christians. Those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ and who are numbered or identified with His people. The folks at the bulls eye of this verse are those professing Christians who have been influenced to one degree or another by the error-filled teaching and are in jeopardy of embracing twisted and fatal theology. Look at **3:17**, *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness*. Now lets read the verse with all of this in view. *But is patient toward you, not wishing for any [of you] to perish but for all [of you] to come to repentance*.

Now Peter changes gears. He speaks to the grand event that will take place when this period, this age, this window of grace has come to an end. **Verse 10**. **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up**. *The day of the Lord* is also known as *the day of judgment (2:9, 3:7)*, *the day of God (3:12)*, and *the day of visitation (I Pet. 2:12)*. All refer to that climatic event when Christ shall return to judge the living and the dead, to vindicate His name, to reveal His glory, to destroy His enemies, and to establish His eternal kingdom. Peter assures us that this moment in time *will*

*come like a thief.* In other words it will arrive suddenly and unexpectedly, but, precisely according to God's timetable.

Not only will this be a day of the return of Christ but the occasion of the renewal of all creation. In that day **the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.** In view here is an actual cosmic conflagration; a large disastrous fire; a fire that consumes. Indeed, in view is the incineration of the world as we know it. The heavens – the realm of planets, stars, and galaxies – will be consumed and to our ears it will sound like the whistling, cracking sounds of dry cedar logs ablaze in the fireplace. The elements – those invisible particles of which matter itself consists – will disintegrate. The earth – with its buildings, institutions, and systems – will go up in smoke. All will pass away. All will be gone. Sinners – all who rejected God's gracious provision for their deliverance - will be devastated. **Isaiah 13:7** says, *all hands will be limp; every man's heart will melt.* Men will wilt before the wrath of God.

But we are not to be among those who are paralyzed by fear of such events. Indeed, Peter does not intend to scare or stagger us. Remember his purpose is to stabilize us. The prospect of such a momentous event ought to motivate us to new heights of obedience and delight. **The promises of the return of Christ and the renewal of creation stabilize God's people and spur us on in the way of holiness.**

Now, the Holy Spirit makes it plain that these future realities ought to impact us at the level of our outward actions and our inward attitudes. We are to be holy in our behavior and reverent in all our attitudes. "The transitory nature of the material universe ought to make a difference in one's system of values and one's priorities" (*NASB Study Bible*, p. 1826). Peter puts it like this in **verse 11. Since**

**all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.** Peter is not so much asking a question as stating a fact. You ought to be this way – holy and godly. The question he’s answering is this: How are we to live during this window of grace ... How are we to prepare for such a cataclysm? God calls us to “ordinary, standard Christian living” (L/G, p. 148). He calls us to plain old diligence and growth in grace. Look at **1:5**, *applying all diligence*; **1:10**, *be all the more diligent*; **1:15**, *I will also be diligent*; and **3:14**, *be diligent to be found by Him*.

There are two things that characterize Christians who live in the light of the return of Jesus Christ and the renewal of creation. One is anticipation. The other is activity. **Verse 12. looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.** Christians may anticipate all of this with great delight. Look at **verses 13 and 14** – *we are looking for new heavens and a new earth ... since you look for these things be diligent*. How do we hasten the day of the Lord? We *hasten the day* as we fulfill God’s purposes for the window of grace itself. We do so as we pray, *Thy kingdom come* (**Matt. 6:10**), as we proclaim the gospel to sinners (**Acts 1:8**), and as we ourselves repent of our sin and obey the gospel.

Peter repeats some of the language from **verse 10** - **on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!** There were ancient Stoics who believed the world is caught in an endless mechanical cycle of life and death, destruction and rebirth. There are modern scientists who believe all that began in the Big Bang will come to an end in the Big Crunch in which all matter collapses back into itself. But the Bible teaches that time and space will both come to an end by the personal intervention of God the Creator and Savior.

**Verse 13. But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.** For us, the return of Christ does not mark a dreaded end as it does for those who have rejected Him. Rather it marks the beginning of that new and eternal existence promised us in the Word of God (**Is. 65:17, 66:22**). Beloved, God has promised to renew the creation in such a way that it will be a suitable, eternal environment for His glorified people. Who would not look forward to such an existence?

You see the destruction described in **verses 10 and 12** is not the elimination of creation but its glorious renewal. According to **Romans 8:22** creation itself *groans* for this very renewal. Peter does not describe the visible features or the appearance of this new creation. The only thing he tells us is “that it will be a world in which God’s will will be done” (Bauckham, p. 326); a world in which righteousness will be at home (**Is. 32:16**). This will not be a world in which righteousness is merely present or even predominant. Rather it will be one into which *only* righteousness shall enter. Neither sin nor its devastating effects will plague God’s glorified people. Indeed, what existed before will not even be remembered (**Is. 65:17**).

Righteousness will reside there because the King of Righteousness will reign and rule there. Jesus, the One who is our righteousness, will occupy the throne. The One in whose righteousness we are clothed and by whose righteousness we are covered will occupy the throne. The One whose righteousness has been charged to our account; the One who met the Father’s requirement for righteousness; the One whose righteousness endures forever (**2 Cor. 9:9**); the One whose person and ways are both perfectly righteous (**Rev. 15:3; 16:5**) will occupy the throne of the place.

**The promises of the return of Christ and the renewal of creation stabilize God's people and spur us on in the way of holiness.** O, my friend, would you be a member of the company of those who shall inherit such things? Would you be one who has every reason to look forward to the climatic events outlined by the Apostle in this letter? Such a blessed destiny is reserved only for those who are in Christ; only for those who have had their sins forgiven and who are now covered by the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. I invite you this morning to, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One who promised, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life"* (**John 5:24**).

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**Big Idea:** The promises of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of creation \_\_\_\_\_ God's people and \_\_\_\_\_ us on in the way of holiness.

**Verse 9: the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness.**

**Verse 8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved.**

To stabilize, to settle, to comfort them Peter reminds them of two things:

The first is the perfection of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

**Verse 8 that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (see Psalm 90:4).**

To stabilize, to settle, to comfort them Peter reminds them of a second perfection of God - His \_\_\_\_\_.

**Verse 9: [God] is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**

God has revealed Himself as a long-suffering God who is slow to anger; not immediately snuffing our lives out on account of our sin but mercifully wooing us and drawing us to Himself that we might repent and be saved.

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The folks at the bulls eye of verse 9 are those professing Christians who have been influenced to one degree or another by the error-filled teaching and are in jeopardy of embracing twisted and fatal theology (see **3:17**).

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**Verse 11. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.**

How are we to live during this window of grace? God calls us to plain old \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in grace (see **1:5, 10, 15, and 3:14**).

There are two things that characterize Christians who live in the light of the return of Jesus Christ and the renewal of creation. One is \_\_\_\_\_. The other is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Verse 12. looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.**

We *hasten the day* as we fulfill God's purposes for the window of grace itself. We do so as we \_\_\_\_\_ *Thy kingdom come* (**Matt. 6:10**), as we \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel to sinners (**Acts 1:8**), and as we ourselves \_\_\_\_\_ of our sin and obey the gospel.

**on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!** The Bible teaches that time and space will both come to an end by the personal \_\_\_\_\_ of God the Creator and Savior.

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Beloved, God has promised to renew the creation in such a way that it will be a suitable, fit, eternal, glorious environment for His glorified people. Who would not look forward to such an existence?

You see, the destruction described in **verses 10 and 12** is not the \_\_\_\_\_ of creation but its glorious \_\_\_\_\_ (see **Rom. 8:22**).

Righteousness will \_\_\_\_\_ there because the King of Righteousness will reign and \_\_\_\_\_ there.