

THE END OF THE WORLD

by Irvin Himmel

Among many religionists there is an expectation that Christ will come again and reign on earth. Some believe that the eternal abode of the righteous will be on the same globe which we now inhabit, following a remodeling, renovating, and purifying. Many are anxiously awaiting a utopian world of tomorrow — a perfected terrestrial dwelling. All I know about the future is what is plainly revealed in the Bible. I invite you to consider a passage that describes what is in store for the material world when Jesus makes his second appearance: 2 Peter 3:10.

1) THE DAY OF THE LORD.

The expression “day of the Lord” may be found in various passages, and it does not always refer to the same event. The Old Testament prophets spoke of a time of Jehovah’s pouring out divine wrath as the “day of the Lord” (Is. 2:12; Jer. 46:10; Joel 2:1; 2:31; Mal. 4:5). The reference might be to an invasion from a foreign power, a time of captivity, or any execution of judgment.

When Peter writes, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,” he is looking ahead to the time of Christ’s coming. This statement is included in Peter’s reply to the

scoffers who say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (v. 4). He shows that the same divine power that made the earth a suitable dwelling place for man (v. 5) and that brought the flood (v. 6), keeps the heavens and earth in store, “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (v. 7). Then he shows that God does not consider time in the same way that men think of it, so time does not cancel the divine promise (vv. 8-9). Christ will come suddenly and abruptly. As men in Noah’s time were not expecting the flood, “so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Warning that He would come unexpectedly, Jesus said, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” He compared His coming to the unexpected approach of a thief, again warning, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mt. 24:36-44). Peter advances the same thought in our text, saying the day of the Lord will come “as a thief in the night.”

2) THE HEAVENS SHALL PASS AWAY. In that great and notable day, “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise.” The Bible speaks of “heavens”

in different senses: (1) the celestial realm where God dwells, Christ reigns, angels live, and the righteous shall inherit eternal life (1 Ki. 8:27; Mt. 6:9; Ps. 2:4; 103:19; Heb. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:1); (2) what we call outer space, the region where the sun, moon, and stars are located (Ps. 8:3; 19:1); (3) the firmament or atmosphere just above the earth (Gen. 1:6-8). Peter’s statement obviously does not apply to the eternal heavens but only to the heavens that may be considered as part of the material world. The Greek word translated “pass away” (*parerchomai*) means to “disappear, vanish, perish” (Analytical Greek Lexicon). Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” This presents a contrast between what is destined to disappear and what is destined to remain (Mt. 24:35). When Jesus comes in that final day, the heavens which belong to the temporal universe will vanish.

3) THE ELEMENTS SHALL MELT. In addition to the passing away of the heavens with thunderous roar, “the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” By “elements” is meant the primary materials out of which something is composed

or formed. Thayer defines stoicheia (“elements”) as “any-first thing, from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise 1. the letters of the alphabet as the elements of speech ... 2. the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe . . .” (Greek-English Lexicon). All of this means that the basic ingredients that are the constituent parts of the temporal universe shall melt.

The word for “melt” in verse 10 is a form of *luo*, translated “dissolved” in verses 11 and 12. The word for “melt” in verse 12 is from *tekomia*. The first word means “to loose,” or “to break up, demolish, destroy,” or “to dissolve something coherent into parts, to destroy” (Thayer). The second word means “to become liquid, to melt; to perish or be destroyed by melting” (Thayer). So Peter is saying the elements are going to be broken up, demolished, or destroyed by melting.

4) THE EARTH AND WORKS SHALL BE BURNED UP.

“Burned up” translates a form of *katakaio*, meaning “consume

by fire” (Thayer). This is the word used in Acts 19:19 where it is reported that the people of Ephesus brought their books of magic and “burned” them. The books were not purged or renewed by fire; they were consumed. (Two or three ancient manuscripts use a word in 2 Pet. 3:10 meaning “discovered” or “laid bare,” instead of “burned up.” Thayer says this reading is “strange but improbable” (p. 261). “Burned up” is well supported by ancient manuscripts and fits the text better.)

Note what is going to be burned up: the earth and the works that are therein. This includes all the works of nature — the towering peaks, rolling hills, winding streams, extended plains, forests, mighty oceans, peaceful valleys, underground mineral deposits, springs and lakes, rocks and caves. It includes all the works of man — expensive homes, sprawling cities, lovely parks, fertile farms, beautiful gardens, enormous skyscrapers, dams and highways, art and books, machines and merchandise, stocks and bonds, money and jewels, weapons and tools. The

earth and all the works that are in the earth shall be consumed. The passing away of the heavens that are a part of the material universe, the melting of the elements, and the burning of the earth will take place on that great day. This will be the end of the temporal world. The termination of the physical order of things is inevitable. Peter promised a new dwelling place for the righteous, described as “new heavens and new earth” (v. 13). This new home is not the old remodeled and made over. The righteous will dwell in spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:44), not flesh and blood bodies, in that new habitation. John says, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” The temporal world is for the physical man; the new habitation will be for the glorified man (Rev. 21:1).

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EACH ONE BRING ONE.
EACH ONE TEACH ONE.
EACH ONE WIN ONE.**

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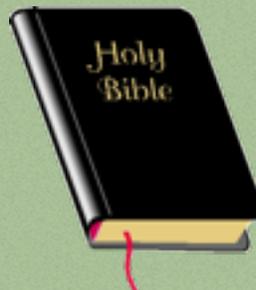
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