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Every human being who has lived on the face of the earth has been appointed two unavoidable destinies. First, it is appointed that **everyone must physically die**. Second, it is appointed that after death, **everyone will be judged according to how he or she has lived on this earth**. Since the revelation of the gospel through the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and coronation of the incarnate Son of God, God has designated that His Son will be the final judge before whom we all must stand. In this dispensation of history, therefore, it is imperative that every person on earth be made aware of the judgment to come. One's knowledge of and response to the gospel will determine which

destiny to which one must look forward. Because every person on earth is facing the destinies of death and judgment, it is imperative that all people who live at any one time in history must be made aware of the redeeming gospel that was revealed through the incarnate Son of God. Every person on earth should be given the opportunity to be motivated to live in obedience to the gospel of God. In other words, everyone who knows this gospel—this is you if you are a disciple—must announce this good news to the world.

≈ Prognostications ≈

We live in a world of wild speculations in the minds of some who are obsessed with the “signs of the times.” Some are so obsessed that they search through every source of religious literature for some particle of truth made by some self-proclaimed sage by which they can predict the end of the world. It seems that there is no dearth of prognosticators who are willing to come forth with some prediction of the end of the world on a particular date.

Throughout the years, all sorts of prognosticators have come and gone. Nevertheless, we are often so naive because of our lack of knowledge of the word of God that we impetuously continue our search for another prophetic utterance of some supposed date when the world as it is coming to its final demise.

God created us to be religious beings. Therefore, we cannot help but harbor some speculations in our religious thinking concerning what will be. However, because we have this seemingly unquenchable thirst to speculate concerning the future, we must be cautioned. We must be cautioned that if we give up a knowledge of our Creator and His revelation to us through His Son, we will end up with some very twisted speculations concerning the end of time.

History has proved that there is no end to the ingenious religious inventions of misguided people in reference to that which is yet to come. As a result, we live with a host of confused proclamations today that

are broadcast abroad and bound on the consciences of sincere people. All the diversity that exists among end-of-time religionists have confused people. Some religionists have become so obsessed with their speculations concerning a supposed rapture that such has become their “gospel” message that they proclaim to the lost.

There are also those who seek to terrorize their innocent audiences through repeated proclamations of certain doom. When it comes to the confusion surrounding the subject of the end of the world, we cannot use enough superlatives to describe the religious excitement that is promoted by some end-of-time prognosticators. We must confess that our minds overflow with too many Hollywood productions of “end-of-the-world” themes. As a result, we sometimes look for “messiahs” who would deliver us from an age of human annihilation.

In the western world there has been the resurrection in the last century of a vast assortment of mystic religions. The New Age Movement, and a host of other similar humanistically-oriented religious movements have become popular among those who are searching for something beyond this world. In a secular-oriented world that enslaves our minds to all that is of this world, mystics have simply concluded that enough is enough. There must be something that is greater than this world.

Some of these speculators with mystical inclinations have included the Bible as only one source in their library of religious sources. Since the Bible speaks of things to come, then they search around in the pages of the Scriptures for some indication of the end of times. They search for something that might have been taught in the past concerning our present and future destiny. Unfortunately, too many too often look to their own imaginations or adventurous speculations in order to read into the Bible their own imaginations.

Everyone has some speculation concerning the future. For this reason, we all function in the field of **eschatology**, that is, a study of last things. We

wonder about our future and the end of the world. These are serious considerations that pass through the minds of almost everyone, even the materialist who sometimes takes a brief moment to contemplate and wonder about what is next. It is simply natural to consider the future and what will become of all that which we now experience. As Christians, we conclude that there will be “global warming” that will result with the end of all things. But the “global warming” that is coming will surpass “warming.” It will be the heat of fire.

≈ Key Contexts ≈

In this study it has been our purpose to select key texts of Scripture to study in their historical context. We have done this in order to discover God’s revelation concerning “in time,” as well as “end of time” judgments. Everything that God brings to an end in time is an illustration, or certainty, that He will do something similar at the end of time.

In studying judgment subjects in the Bible, we have discovered that several things influenced the writers and readers in the historical setting in which God brought things to a conclusion. Understanding these historical settings has helped us to understand better the inspired letters of the New Testament that were written to the first readers who experienced social chaos in history in their time when God brought dispensations to a close. The following circumstances that greatly influenced both the writing and the fulfillment of prophecy helps us better understand that finalities are yet to come:

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

The Jewish persecution of Christians continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This persecution not only influenced the evangelization of the first century world, but it also influenced the content of the letters that were written to the early disciples during the heart of the persecution

We must not underestimate the influence of this

persecution that was unleashed on the early disciples as they went from city to city preaching the gospel of the messiahship of the Son of God. The persecution of the early disciples is illustrated by what Paul said of his own life before he responded to the gospel: *“I persecuted this Way [the church] to the death, binding and delivering both men and women into prisons”* (At 22:4). In Paul’s case, he, the persecutor, went from persecuting to being the persecuted.

Embedded in the thinking of the early persecuted Christians was the hope that God would always deliver the church as a whole, though some individual saints would succumb to death as a result of the persecution. Nevertheless, God gave the church as a whole encouragement to endure through hard times of persecution. For example, John encouraged the saints of the church of Smyrna who were bearing the persecution of the state of Rome:

Do not fear those things that you will suffer. Behold, the devil will cast some of you into prison so that you may be tested. And you will have tribulations ten days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life (Rv 2:10).

IMMINENT END OF NATIONAL ISRAEL

The imminent end of national Israel in the lifetimes of the early disciples was prophesied by Jesus and fulfilled in the first century. As the early evangelists went forth, the imminent end of national Israel was on their minds and in their message. It was the fullness of time and all prophecies in reference to the purpose for which God established a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai were coming to fulfillment. After His resurrection, and immediately before His ascension and coronation, Jesus reminded His disciples the following:

*These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things must be fulfilled** that were written in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, **concerning Me*** (Lk 24:44).

One of these prophecies concerning Jesus was His coronation and reign from the right hand of God as King of kings and Lord of lords. On the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, Peter proclaimed that this prophecy was fulfilled, for Jesus was reigning as King on David's throne at the time Peter and the apostles spoke on that day (See At 2:25-33). The fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Jesus' kingdom reign meant the end of the kings of national Israel on earth. It thus meant the end of national Israel. The apostles took this same message into all the world of the Jews to whom they went to proclaim the gospel. They prepared their fellow Jews for the finality of national Israel. Though they did not know the time of the end, they knew and preached that it was coming.

The early evangelists also took the message of Jesus that was recorded in **Matthew 24** (See Volume 61 in the *IBI Library*). Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24 was an encouragement to those who suffered from the persecution of the Jews. The persecuted saints knew that God would eventually bring down judgment on national Israel because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and subsequently, their crucifixion of Him.

The end of Israel would also be a sign to the Jews that God had fulfilled His purpose for calling the nation into a special new covenant relationship. The purpose for Israel was to preserve a segment of society through which the incarnate Son of God could be introduced into the world. But once the Son came, and completed the atoning sacrifice, then there was no more the need for a special nation of people as Israel. **The social vehicle through whom the Savior was introduced into the world passed away.**

The Jews only recourse when God completed His purpose through nature Israel, therefore, was to turn to Jesus as the Messiah and Savior. There was no salvation in Jewish nationalism. They had to accept Jesus as the incarnate Son of God who came into the world to establish a new covenant with everyone who

would obey the gospel, whether Jew or Gentile (See Hb 10:5-10).

Because many Bible students have historically failed to understand the prophesied purpose and end of national Israel in the fulfillment of all prophecies concerning the incarnation of the Son of God, they have failed to do justice to the historical events that surround the fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption in Jesus Christ.

Because of this, some Bible students would do well to be cautious about referring to those books that do not emphasize the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel was a major historical event in the history of the world, and particularly in the lives of the Jews.

Those were times in which God intended to terminate forever the nation of Israel through the establishment of a new covenant of grace. Since most of the early Christians were Jews, we would expect that the New Testament would contain many references, both directly and indirectly, that refer to the finalization of Israel. These are the contexts that need further study, especially in these times when the religious world seems to be burdened with a host of prognosticators with their end-of-times prophecies.

STATE PERSECUTION

State persecution by the Roman government would rise in the first century from the personal obsessions of Nero, Caesar of Rome. By the end of the first century, this persecution would become dominant through other Caesars of the Roman Empire.

State persecution in the latter part of the first century would be a major force of evil against the preaching of the gospel throughout the Roman controlled world. In particular, the book of Revelation was written to give comfort to Christians who suffered from state persecution that began the latter part of the first century, but extended into the second, and finally ended with the Edict of Toleration in A.D. 311.

God would eventually bring judgment upon the Roman state for her persecution of the flock of God. The early Christians, therefore, were given comfort in the fact that state persecution would not continue against the church throughout the centuries to come.

« 2 PETER »

The first letter Peter wrote was addressed to Jewish Christians of *“the Dispersion [of Jews] in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia”* (1 Pt 1:1). There were many Jewish residents who lived in these five Roman provinces. Many of them were very faithful to Jewish nationalism. They were loyal to the Jewish cause to establish an independent state of Israel in Palestine that was free from Roman domination.

In the middle of the rising tension between Rome and Jewish nationalism, Peter wrote to those Jewish Christians in those areas who might be considering the call of the recruiting agents of Jewish nationalism who compelled all Jews to be faithful to their Jewish heritage. From the letter, however, there were those faithful Jewish brethren who refused to be recruited. The believing Jews consequently suffered from the mocking of the nationalistic recruiters.

Peter wrote his first letter between A.D. 63 and 65. Roman soldiers were marching through their area on their way to put down the Jewish insurrection in Palestine. He wrote the second letter between A.D. 65 and 67, just before Rome decided to terminate the Jewish nationalists efforts to establish an independent state in Palestine. In both letters he wrote to *“stir up your pure minds by way of reminder”* (2 Pt 3:1).

In view of the fact that he was writing to Jews at the time when the Matthew 24 prophecy of Jesus was drawing near unto fulfillment, **we would certainly be just to assume that Peter dwelt on this fulfillment, since the consummation of national Israel was near.** The fact that Peter wrote to Jewish Christians near the end of national Israel compels us to

consider the context of 2 Peter 3 in view of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24. Peter wanted to stir the Jewish Christians' minds to remember the things they had already been told concerning the end of Israel. This would certainly include the imminent coming of judgment in time that would occur in five or six years after the letter of 2 Peter was written.

We would assume that the metaphorical language of this chapter refers primarily to the destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70. Peter was writing to encourage both Jewish Christians and their unbelieving Jewish relatives and friends not to make their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover / Pentecost feast. The believing Jews could assume that they were in the last days of Israel, and thus conclude that the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24 was near. Though the believing Jews could warn their Jewish unbelieving families, we assume that their warnings were met with a great deal of mocking and scoffing.

Since Peter was one of the four disciples to whom Jesus personally delivered the prophecy of Matthew 24 (See Mk 13:3), we would assume that he recognized the signs of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem. He, as well as all New Testament prophets, proclaimed the message of Matthew 24 throughout the Roman Empire. Friends and families of those who did not heed the warnings would be those Jews of the Empire who would join the resistance and make their way to Palestine. When they were slaughtered in the national calamity of A.D. 70, their friends and families back home would mourn their death (See Mt 24:30).

As Jesus did in the prophecy of Matthew 24, in his first letter Peter alerted his readers of an impending end of "all things." Peter wrote, "***The end of all things is at hand***" (1 Pt 4:7). When Peter made this statement, **it is certain that he had in mind the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of these things** (See Mt 24:1,2). James also wrote to Jewish Christians during this time, but in general "***to the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad***" (Js 1:1). James' warning was

the same as Peter's: *“Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord [in judgment] is at hand”* (Js 5:8). James was warning those Jews who were scattered abroad to simply stay abroad. They must not give in to the intimidation of those Zionist Jews who wanted to go to Palestine and help in delivering national Israel from the Romans.

Both James and Peter were forewarning Jewish Christians that there was an imminent judgment of God in the air. The end of national Israel was in sight. Since the letters of the two writers were specifically written to the Jews who were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, we could also assume that they were writing to warn Jewish Christians to stay away from Palestine. The writers would also urge the Christian Jews concerning their unbelieving friends. They were not to give in to the appeals of the nationalistic Jews.

The Holy Spirit was not deceiving these inspired writers. They were not, therefore, deceiving the Jewish Christians to whom they wrote. **They did not deceive their readers into believing that the “coming” and the “end” that were at hand referred to the final coming of Jesus and the end of the world.** In view of the dates the two letters were written, and the historical destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, it is difficult not to apply their warnings to the imminent termination of national Israel. The destruction was only three to five years away from the time of their writing. The sound of Roman armies was already in the air. “Rumors of wars” had already begun. The end of national Israel was “at hand.”

Interpreters who do not fully appreciate the historical setting of the epistles of Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude often miss the theme of these books. It would not be reasonable to believe that these Jewish writers who wrote to Jewish audiences three to five years before the Jewish calamity of A.D. 70, would ignore the fulfillment of Jesus' Matthew 24 prophecy. The fulfillment was near, and thus the Holy Spirit's purpose was to prepare the Jewish recipients for God's demonstration in time that He was finished

with national Israel. He finished His special Sinai covenant with the nation at the cross when the new covenant was implemented at the cross. He finished the animal blood sacrifices when His Son poured out His own blood on the cross. Now it was time to finish Israel's physical heritage through the genocide of A.D. 70. Only when the old was finished would the true and new Israel of God shine forth in the kingdom of the Son.

It is not reasonable to believe that Peter, who personally sat at the feet of Jesus during the Matthew 24 discourse, bypassed the imminent fulfillment of Jesus' profound prophecy in order to focus on something that would occur over two thousand years later. It is not reasonable to believe that James, Jude or Peter, who directed their letters primarily to Jewish readers, ignored the most traumatic national calamity that would happen in the history of Israel.

With the above thoughts in mind, there is little room for dogmatism in interpreting 2 Peter 3 with reference to the end of time. We are not without valid historical proof that the primary focus of Peter in 2 Peter 3 was on the end of Israel. We must, therefore, first consider this text in the historical context of the first recipients of the letter. There are certainly end-of-time illustrations in the metaphors that Peter used. But we must keep in mind that the recipients of this letter were in the midst of great social turmoil. Nationalistic Jews throughout the Roman empire were causing no little disturbance among the Jews, as well as the Roman government. Rome simply came to the decision that enough was enough.

Verse 1

The Second Letter

*This is now, beloved, the second letter I write to you in which I stir up your pure minds **by way of reminder***

Peter stated one specific reason for writing. **It was**

to remind his Jewish brethren of things they had already been taught. We would assume, therefore, that the content of this chapter had already been taught to Jewish Christians before it was written in this inspired letter. This leads us to believe that the early apostles and prophets did teach the subject of Matthew 24 when they went throughout the Roman Empire with the gospel messiahship of Jesus.

The subject of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24 had direct relevance to the lives of every Jewish Christian. Therefore, we would correctly conclude that what Jesus had said was the subject of many midnight discussions among Jewish Christians.

In the first letter Peter had already mentioned the impending end of all things (See 1 Pt 4:7). He now goes into graphic detail. We conclude, therefore, that this subject was not new to the readers. They had already been taught the content of Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24. The earliest gospel record, Mark, had already been circulated among Christians with the record of Jesus' prophecy (See Mk 13). It is even probable that Luke's record had also been circulated among the churches (See Lk 21). Therefore, we can assume that the early Christians had already been taught the material of Matthew 24 concerning the end of national Israel. It was now time for Peter to say some final words on the matter at a time when the rumors of war were circulating throughout the Roman Empire. Since the time of the end was near, Peter wanted to reassure his Jewish brethren that **it was always in the plan of God to bring Israel to a close after He had sent His Son into the world.**

Verse 2

Remember The Warnings

*... so that you may be **mindful of the words that were spoken before** by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through us your apostles.*

The church was built upon the inspired foundation of the message of the gospel that was preached by the apostles and prophets (See Ep 2:20). It was so founded upon the apostles and New Testament prophets because God, through them it was, *“revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”* the mystery of the gospel (Ep 3:5). The church was not built on the messengers who delivered the message of the gospel, but upon the gospel itself. *“For no other foundation can man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Co 3:11).

It could be argued that Peter here refers to the Old Testament prophets. However, in chapter one he gives credit to the Old Testament prophets for writing concerning the mystery of the gospel, but the gospel was revealed through Jesus, His apostles and prophets.

... of this salvation they [Old Testament prophets] have inquired and searched diligently ... searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating ... to them it [the gospel] was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us” (1 Pt 1:10-13).

The full revelation of the mystery came only through the New Testament apostles and prophets. It came to the Old Testament prophets through inspired prophecy, which prophecy they did not fully understand. For this reason, it is best to affirm that Peter in the context of 2 Peter 3:2 was referring to the inspired New Testament speakers and writers, not the Old Testament prophets who only prophesied of the mystery that would come after their lifetime (See Ep 3:3-5).

One point is clear regarding the prophecies concerning the end of national Israel. **Both the Old and New Testament prophets proclaimed the end.** Both Isaiah (See Is 10:20-23) and Daniel (See Dn 9:24-27) spoke of the end of Israel after God had accomplished His purpose for calling the people unto a national covenant relationship. In those “end of the days of Israel,” the New Testament prophets

(evangelists) went forth calling Israel by faith to come out of national Israel, for the end was near.

Verse 3

Scoffers In The Last Days

Knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days, walking after their own lusts ...

Peter took his readers through a chronology of both biblical teaching and historical events. His readers must remember that it was previously spoken that **scoffers** would come in the **last days**. Therefore, the presence of the “scoffers” was a specific signal **that his readers were in the last days**.

Those who ridiculed the declaration that Jesus was the Messiah refused to believe the message of the early Christians. In addition to being scoffed at because of their preaching of the gospel, the early disciples were also scoffed because **they believed Jesus’ prophesied that there would be an end of national Israel**. The unbelieving nationalistic Jews vehemently rejected the Christians’ belief that the **“end of all things is at hand”** (1 Pt 4:7). They mocked Christians for believing that the end of all things in reference to national Israel were about to happen.

Paul’s second letter to Timothy around A.D. 67 contains a similar warning. **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come”** (2 Tm 3:1; see also 1 Tm 4:1-3; 2 Tm 4:3-5). The existence of the scoffers and mockers was evidence that the disciples were in the perilous times of the last days of national Israel at the time these letters were written to the church.

It would be superfluous to assume that reference here is to the end of time. Scoffers and mockers of Christians have always been present since the first century. However, in the historical context of the early Christians, the Holy Spirit meant for Christians to conclude that they were living in the last days of

national Israel **because scoffers and mockers ridiculed them for teaching the specific message that Israel would come to an end.** Even today there are those who scoff and mock at those who teach that it is not in the eternal plan of God to establish again a nationalistic state of Israel in the land of Palestine.

Therefore, we see no reason to skip over two thousand years of history in order to apply the preceding warnings, and the information that follows in this chapter, to the end of the world. This is especially true in view of the fact that the “scoffers” and “perilous times” were present and occurring in the immediate environment of both Paul and Peter. They lived in the last days of national Israel. Its consummation was at hand.

We must keep in mind that the term “last days” does not refer to long periods of time. The term itself defines the meaning. Reference is to the **last** days of a dispensation of time, not to the time of the dispensation itself. In this sense, therefore, Peter was not discussing the “Christian age” as the last days. If he had, then these “last days” would now have lasted more than two thousand years. In the context of the first century Christians, He was discussing the finality of a dispensation, the Jewish dispensation.

The scoffers would **walk according to their own lusts.** Paul revealed that they would be *“lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers”* (2 Tm 3:2-5). Jude said they would be *“walking after their own ungodly lusts”* (Jd 18).

Paul, Jude, Peter and James all recorded the nature of those who would ignore the last days of Israel and scoff at those who would proclaim the imminent judgment of God. Such is the nature of unbelieving people who refuse to have the knowledge of God in their minds. They are not simply indifferent to the views of the Christian, they are antagonistic to them.

Such is also the nature of the religious materialist. He has economically padded his or her environment with a religion that justifies the consumption of things upon one’s own lust (See Js 4:3). Those who are

so involved in the world refuse to accept the fact that their material security will eventually be consumed in a fire that will terminate their world.

Verse 4

Mockers Of The Coming

... and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

These scoffers would ridicule the message of Jewish Christians who believed Jesus' pronouncements against Jerusalem and the temple. The fact that they mocked the teaching of the coming in judgment upon Israel is evidence that Christians had been proclaiming to others their belief of Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24.

In the few years before the time Peter wrote, Jewish radicalism (Zionism) was rife throughout the Roman Empire. We can only imagine how much mockery and ridicule faithful Jewish Christians encountered as they related to unbelieving Jewish audiences that national Israel was coming to an end. This message was totally contrary to the efforts of the nationalistic Jews who were recruiting in order to fight for the establishment of an independent state that was free from Roman oppression.

In reflecting on the days before the flood of Noah's day, Jesus had foretold the nature of those who would reject the impending judgment: *"For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark"* (Mt 24:38). These scoffers about whom Peter wrote had forgotten past judgments of God **in time** as the flood of Noah's day, Sodom and Gomorrah, and even Jerusalem itself in the days of the Babylonian conquest of 586 B.C. As God had in the past brought forth judgment in time, He was about to do the same with national Israel.

Things **had not** continued as they were since the days of creation. God had come in judgment in time upon Israel at different times throughout their history,

especially through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. All such judgments were to remind the Israelites of a future coming in judgment, which judgment was coming in only a few years after Peter wrote these words. Nevertheless, those who rejected the prophecy of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel would not take heed to the coming judgment that God would bring upon Israel. *“They willfully forget”* that the earth that existed before the days of Noah *“was destroyed, being overflowed with water”* (2 Pt 3:4,5).

As they went forth throughout the Roman Empire, the disciples proclaimed the coming (“presence”) of the Lord in judgment on Israel. The unbelieving Jews never believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and thus they scoffed at Christians for saying that He would be manifested through His coming in judgment on national Israel. These scoffers were mocking the proclamation of the disciples concerning God’s judgment on Israel that was proclaimed by Jesus whom they believed was a false messiah.

Jesus, however, had made a **promise**: *“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man”* (Mt 24:27). For the persecuted Christians who believed Jesus’ promise, the fulfillment of the promise would be their worldwide vindication throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus would be vindicated as King of kings and Lord of lords (See 1 Tm 6:15). Jesus was reigning as King of kings on David’s throne in heaven. He would never come to this world in order to exercise the power of reign over an earthly kingdom.

In a secondary sense, deliverance from the confines of the material world, and the persecution by the wicked at the **end of time**, will also be a fulfillment of one of Jesus’ promises (See Jn 14:3; 1 Th 4:13-17). In general, therefore, we look forward to a time of deliverance from the harshness that the world delivers to the Christian’s spirit (See 2 Pt 3:12,13). We look forward to a time when this world passes away. We look for the new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness (See 2 Pt 3:13).

Verses 5,6

Example Of The Flood

*For this they willfully forget, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, through which the world that then existed was **destroyed**, being overflowed with water.*

These scoffers of the Christian's hopes willfully forget that God once destroyed humanity from off the face of the earth by a global flood (See Gn 6-8). Only Noah and his faithful family were taken up by the ark and spared. In referring to the prophet Enoch, Jude also referred to these "*mockers in the last times [before the flood] who would walk according to their own lusts*" (Jd 18; see 2 Tm 3:1-5). In its original context, Enoch's declaration was made in expectation of the flood of Noah's day. While preparing the ark, Noah preached a message of worldwide destruction, which message was mocked by those of his generation. The same mockery of those who proclaimed the end of Israel prevailed throughout the Roman Empire at the time Peter wrote. The presence of the mockers in the society of both Peter and Enoch's immediate readers indicated that both men lived in the **last times** of their respective generations.

In the years previous to the flood of Noah's day, Enoch preached about ungodly characters in Noah's generation who mocked Noah because of what he preached. Therefore, in the flood God came ...

... to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jd 14,15).

This is where we would have no problem in keeping Enoch's declaration, and Peter's quotation of Enoch through Jude, in the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of national Israel. Jude's quotation of Enoch's prophecy is significant. Enoch spoke of the judgment of mockers in Noah's day. The

judgment that came upon Noah's generation was destruction by flood waters. Jude used this "coming in judgment" in Noah's day to illustrate the coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in his own day. When judgment came, it would also come upon those who mocked the Jewish Christians.

We would be in the historical context of 2 Peter 3 to use **in-time** judgments of God in the past as the flood and Jerusalem's destruction to give warnings of the final coming in judgment at the end of time. By the time Peter concluded this chapter, he used metaphorical language in order to reveal judgment events. His immediate readers were going to experience an **in-time** illustration of the final judgment at the **end of time**.

Peter emphasized the fact that God can cause catastrophic judgment. The world that existed before the flood was destroyed by the flood. This passage teaches that more than the destruction of humanity by the flood occurred at the time of the flood.

Peter used the Greek word **kataklustheis** that means "to overthrow with water." The earth before the flood was "**standing out of water and in the water**" (See Gn 1:7-10). It was first formed a watery mass (See Gn 1:1-3). God then separated the water from the land in order to produce dry land. There were the "waters" or canopy of firmament above and the watery mist that came up from the earth to water vegetation (See Gn 2:6).

However, God overthrew the world that existed before the flood with the water that came down from the firmament and the waters that up from the ground. **The physical world that we now experience is far different from the physical appearance of the surface of the earth that existed before the flood.** The flood radically changed the surface of the earth. This present earth is also destined for another radical change in the future. We cannot know at this time what will be in the new heavens and earth. But we do know that there will be a radical change in order to produce a dwelling place for us throughout eternity.

Peter's point is clear. Noah's flood was not a local washout that resulted from a local rainstorm. It was global (See Gn 7:11,19). The God who created the world can cause such catastrophic judgments. And since He can, then He can certainly terminate local elements of persecution and world empires of Peter's present time and ours. He can even terminate the physical world that He created out of nothing. Peter wants to encourage the faithful that the God they serve is not a limited god who has been created after the image of man. He is the God who can exist apart from the mind of man. Therefore, we must recall the words of the psalmist:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling (Ps 46:1-3).

Verse 7

Preserved For Fire

But the heavens and the earth that are now, are reserved by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

The world that existed before Noah perished by water. Peter now compares that world with the one that now is, which is **stored up** for destruction by **fire**. For this reason, we cannot help but think that the Holy Spirit wants us and his readers to look beyond the historical context of the coming consummation of national Israel. **At least we must assume that there are end-of-time references in the New Testament that are metaphorical illustrations of that which is to come.** However, we must keep in mind that the intensity of Jewish nationalism was so strong before the destruction of A.D. 70 that **the end of Israel was as the end of the world for the Jews.** The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple were metaphorical of the end of time for all Jews. Since Abraham 2,000 years

before, and Mt. Sinai in 1450 B.C., a heritage and nation came to an end in A.D. 70.

When Rome terminated the hopes of the Jewish nationalists, it was as if the Jews' world came crashing down. Since most of us are not Jews, and especially Jews who lived in that era, it is quite difficult for us to understand fully what was going through the minds of the disheartened Jews after A.D. 70. Decades of Jewish nationalism were crushed when Jerusalem and the temple were levelled by the Romans. Hope of an independent state of Israel was totally smashed as hundreds of thousands of nationalistic Jews were slaughtered in Rome's termination of Jewish nationalism.

In like manner, Noah's world **physically** perished with all its inhabitants. If we look into the future, we must conclude that this present world will also **physically** perish. However, we caution ourselves not to make too close a comparison between any in-time termination with that which will come. Nevertheless, we must understand that the earth's surface as Noah knew it before the flood, perished. It was overthrown by water. Also, the population of the world that existed before the flood perished from off the face of the earth. In other words, the earth was refaced and repopulated. The wicked were annihilated from the earth. All this reminds us of what happened when hundreds of thousands of Jews perished in A.D. 70. It may be that Peter here still has in mind the imminent destruction and genocide that would happen in only a few years after he wrote these words.

We must keep in mind that God looks at history as we would view a photograph. He can see history in an instant. Thus in His revelation to us, He views all history on earth from beginning to end. This is especially true in Old Testament prophecy, as well as, New Testament prophecy of the things that are to come. God sees the time the prophecy is made simultaneously with the time when the prophecy is fulfilled.

God sees the making of the prophecy and the

fulfillment at the same time. In this way, therefore, He sees in-time judgments as illustrations of the final judgment. He seeks to inform us of end-of-time finalities by often mixing in-time judgments with end-of-time judgments. Such was the case in Matthew 24 and 25. This is probably the case in this context.

A different “heavens and earth” existed after the flood than before the flood of Noah’s day. However, this present heavens and earth as we now experience them are **reserved** for “destruction” by **fire** in the last day of God’s final judgment of **perdition**, or destruction (See 2 Pt 3:10-12). Disobedient angels have been reserved for the destruction of the last day (See 2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6). Peter reassured his readers that God knows how *“to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment”* (2 Pt 2:9). Therefore, everything is now in reservation or preservation for the judgment of the last day.

The ungodly of Peter’s readers were being “reserved” for destruction in the fall of Jerusalem. However, Peter would certainly have in mind all the ungodly, whether living or dead, who are presently reserved for judgment for the destruction of the last day (See 2 Th 1:7-9). The significance is that God judges in time, as well as at the end of time.

Verse 8 **Insignificance Of Time**

But, beloved, do not be ignorant of this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

If we were to create a god after our own imagination, then we would be tempted to put time restrictions on this god. Every religion on the face of the earth has a concept of an eternal god or spirit. Everyone simply assumes that there need be no proof that the true and living God is without end in His existence. Eternality is the definition of the existence of God.

Therefore, Christians must not **forget** that God is timeless. He is not bound to determine the

occurrence of events by time. Peter's illustration of the timelessness of God brings to mind Psalm 90:4: *"For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past."* When God makes a promise, we are confined to wait as time passes until the fulfillment of that promise. However, from the viewpoint of an eternal God, when the promise is made **it is as if it is already fulfilled**. There is no "waiting" with God, for God is not confined to time.

Peter's point here is that because we are limited to consider time between promise and fulfillment, we must not lead ourselves to believe that God either thinks or behaves as we do. What God has promised, He will do. What we might consider to be slowness on the part of God to fulfill His promise does not confine God to feel the same as we do concerning time.

Peter's point in his statement in reference to God is to encourage the discouraged. Regardless of the mockery and scoffing, they must be patient. God is about to deliver the faithful from their persecutors. James said the same thing in reference to the finality of the Jewish mockery that would be taken away with the consummation of national Israel. *"Be patient, brethren, until the coming [presence] of the Lord"* (Js 5:7). James continued, *"Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near"* (Js 5:8). The presence (coming) of the Lord meant that judgment was upon the generation of Peter and James.

Verse 9

Timeless Patience Of God

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. But He is longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Though this principle is relevant throughout history, in the historical context in which it was originally written we must interpret the statement in reference to the unbelieving Jews. From Pentecost to the national consummation of Israel in A.D. 70, **God gave the unbelieving Jews forty years to accept His Son.**

He was extremely patient with those, who upon first contact with the message of the gospel, did not accept His Son as the Messiah.

Paul expressed this same concern over the salvation of his fellow Jews. *“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen [Jews] according to the flesh”* (Rm 9:3). If Paul felt this way about his fellow Jews, then we can only imagine how God felt because He had preserved the heritage of faith since the days of Abraham for almost two thousand years. So until the fullness of the Gentile’s opportunity was completed, God was patient with the Jews (See Rm 11:11,12). Therefore, in the preceding statement, God is assuming that those who were persecuted by their fellow Jews should also be patient. The judgment of the mockers was near. Relief was coming. **The persecuted must be patient until God unleashed judgment upon the persecutors.**

God is not **slow** (“slack”, KJV) to bring about His promise. He does not desire that people **perish**. In this historical context, perish is a reference to the genocide that was coming in A.D. 70. The Greek word here for “perish” is *apollumi*. This word means “to loose away,” or “to destroy.” God does not want people to be banished to destruction in the great judgment that will come upon all those who do not obey the gospel, either in time in reference to Israel, or at the end of time in reference to ourselves (See 2 Th 1:7-9).

God desires that people **repent**. He desires that each person responds to the gospel of His Son’s atoning sacrifice (See Ez 18:32; Jn 3:17; At 17:30; 1 Tm 2:4; Hb 2:9). Because God is so patient, we can conclude that we do not serve a mean or vindictive God. We do not serve a God who seeks to eternally destroy people from His presence. We serve a patient God who is timeless in His desire that people turn to Him through obedience to the gospel.

Verse 10

The Day Of The Lord

*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. The earth also and the works that are therein will be burned up.*

The “day of the Lord” is a common Old Testament reference to **the time of God’s judgment in time**. In Old Testament contexts, reference was to judgments **in time** on the enemies of Israel (See Is 2:12; 17:6-9; 19:18:23,24; Ez 30:1-4), and also Israel herself (See Jr 4:13; Am 5:18-20). It is a day of judgment on the rebellious in order to deliver the righteous (See Jr 46:10; Ez 30:3; Jl 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; MI 4:1,2).

Since the figure of the “day of the Lord” comes from in-time judgments in the Old Testament, then in writing to the Jews, Peter assumed that his readers would correctly interpret what he was saying. **The “day of the Lord” would be an event of judgment that would occur in time**, not something that would happen at the end of time.

Since the context of 2 Peter 3 is to God’s judgment on unbelieving Jews, then the “day of the Lord” would be the same as “that day” about which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:36. **It would be a great day of calamity for national Israel**. In the Old Testament, the term “day” referred to God’s judgment upon nations (See Is 13:6-9; 28:5; Ez 30:3; Jl 1:15,21). In the historical context in which Peter wrote, reference was to the day of judgment upon national Israel.

Those to whom Peter wrote were Jews who knew their Old Testament history. They knew, therefore, that when Peter brought up the subject of the “day of the Lord” that there was national calamity coming. The termination of national Israel in A.D. 70 was another “day” of God’s judgments on Israel for her rejection of His word (See Is 2,3; Hs 4:3; Am 3:2; MI 3:1-5; Ep 3:12).

In reference to the times before the captivities, Hosea’s prophecy to Israel then was happening again.

Their judgment was justified, not simply because the Jew's had rejected the word of God, but because they had rejected His Word who was incarnate in the flesh of humanity in our world (See Jn 1:14). So Hosea's prophecy was appropriate for the times:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge [of My Son], I will also reject you so that you will be no [nation of] priest to Me. Seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children (Hs 4:6).

Not only was Israel brought to a close because of their rejection of the Son of God, they were rejected because they became socially dysfunctional. The prophecy of Malachi, the last prophet of Israel, is significant. In Malachi 3:5, one of the reasons why the “day of the Lord” would come upon Israel would be to bring judgment on those *“who exploit wage earners, the widow and the fatherless.”* It was not a coincidence that James, in writing specifically to the rich Sadducean elite of Israel, that he would also mention these social sins of the time that led up to the “day of the Lord.” James explained that at least *“undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to take care of orphans and widows”* (Js 1:27). The social dysfunction of the rich preceding A.D. 70 revealed that they had lost the heart of God.

In reference to business practices, James also identified another group upon whom judgment was coming in their “day of the Lord.” These greedy businessmen were guilty of exploiting their laborers. *“Behold, the wages of the laborers who have mowed down your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out against you”* (Js 5:4).

The very sins that were prophesied to be the reason for God coming in judgment upon Israel were being committed in the middle 60s as the Roman army was making its way to Palestine to squash the insurrection movement.

Israel's day of judgment would come as a **thief** to those who had no concern for the fulfillment of God's

promises of judgment (See 1 Th 5:1-3). It would come as a thief to those who allowed the possessions of this world to possess them. Jesus said that disobedient Jews would be *“eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”* just as those who were destroyed by the flood of Noah’s day (See Mt 24:38).

To unbelievers, God’s judgments always come as a thief in the night. Unbelievers are not expecting His judgment simply because they have no respect for the word of God. They carry on with life as usual. When God’s judgment does come, then to them it is as a thief coming in the night to take away that which they covet.

God’s judgment on the unbelieving materialist, as in this passage and others affirm, is also as a thief. The materialist’s mind is on things of this world. He is possessed by possessions, and controlled by the carnal. However, when the end comes, both in Jerusalem’s destruction and the world’s destruction, that which the materialist so coveted will be taken from him. As a thief takes away material possessions, so the Lord in judgment takes away that which diverts the attention of those who are not looking for His coming.

The last thing the materialist wants is for a thief to come and take away his possessions. The last theology he wants to believe is a teaching that the things for which he has given so much time and attention will ultimately be destroyed.

To the believer, however, the Lord’s coming in judgment is not as a thief. **Believers are expecting His coming.** They are *“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God”* (2 Pt 3:12). Both Jesus and Peter’s exhortation are parallel. They are saying that believers must not get caught up in the material things of life, and thus, forget that God has made a promise, both to deliver the righteous from the world, as well as, to deliver them from the worries of possessions. The righteous, therefore, must set their *“minds on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Cl 3:2). This helps us to understand better the tremendous

thought behind warnings as John's in 1 John 2:15: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.”*

If we understand that the immediate context of 2 Peter 3 refers to the imminent consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70, then we would view this **in-time** judgment to in some way be a metaphorical illustration of the final coming in judgment at the **end of time**. We can use the destruction of Jerusalem metaphorically to illustrate that which is coming at the end of time, understanding that there is no in-time judgment that would literally and accurately portray what will happen when Jesus comes again. The final coming of the Lord and destruction will be unique. It will be different than any coming of the Lord or destruction by the Lord in history.

We commonly use these “coming” and “destruction” passages in the Bible to refer to the **end-of-time** destruction of this present world when Jesus comes again. However, whether reference in this specific context is directly to Jerusalem's destruction or the earth's destruction, we must recognize that metaphorical figures are being used by Peter.

There are no words in the human language that would adequately define that which has never happened in human experience. Since the final coming and termination of this present heavens and earth has not yet occurred in human history, then we suppose that **Peter has no words in his dictionary to adequately explain things concerning an end-of-time event.** We would, therefore, caution ourselves in placing literal meanings on the words that here used by the Holy Spirit to explain something for which **there are no earthly experiences.** Nothing that has happened in history will fully illustrate that which is coming and will be different from all historical happenings.

Though the words in this context refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, they could be used in a **metaphorical** sense in reference to that which will

come. The elements of Jerusalem did not melt. The physical stones of the city did not burn out of existence. **We must remember that in a metaphor that is used in prophecy, God wants us to look beyond the metaphor to something that is greater, and often spiritual.** In this case, the destruction at the end of time will be greater and more horrifying than either the flood of Noah's day or the destruction of national Israel.

It is possible that as Jesus progressed from in-time judgment to end-of-time judgment in Matthew 24 and 25. Likewise, Peter moved from talking about a specific **in-time judgment** on Israel to a general **end-of-time judgment** on all things. Assuming that this is true, then notice carefully some of the following words and phrases the Spirit used to explain the day of the Lord:

1. Pass Away

The traditional interpretation of what Peter here stated is usually in reference to the final coming and consummation of all things at the end of time. However, if we assume that Peter remembered what Jesus said on these matters, **then the context would initially apply to the consummation of national Israel.**

As Jesus in the discourse of Matthew 24, Peter used apocalyptic symbols here to reveal the consummation of national Israel that was coming within five or six years after he wrote these words. As a good Jewish writer, his apocalyptic metaphors were taken from the Old Testament where God used the fall of terrestrial bodies to symbolize the end of kingdoms **in time** (See Is 13:6-18; 24:23; 34:4; Jr 4:23,24; Ez 32:7,8; Dn 8:10; Jl 2:30-32). In particular in the historical context of Isaiah and Jeremiah, both prophets had in mind the imminent captivities that were coming upon the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. Their dwelling in the land was terminated in the captivities. God shook them to the point that they were shaken out of the land of promise.

After the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the prophet Haggai took the thinking of the remnant of Israel that had returned from captivity to about five centuries into the future. He looked into the future of Israel and stated the words of the Lord,

Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, and sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations (Hg 2:6,7).

Not only Israel would be shaken again in the future, but many other nations. Reference was to God's proxy of the Roman Empire that conquered nations throughout the Middle East, as well as nations in Europe and Africa. Those nations were shaken as they were brought under the dominance of the Roman Empire. However, the Empire itself would eventually be shaken. John, in Revelation, revealed the shaking of the Roman Empire.

While writing in the middle 60s, the Hebrew writer reminded his Jewish readers that God was going to fulfill the prophecy of Haggai.

He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things that cannot be shaken [the gospel] may remain. (Hb 12:26,27).

In the historical context in which Peter wrote in order to encourage his fellow Jews throughout the Roman Empire, he did not want them to think that the consummation of national Israel was something unexpected. They needed to read their Old Testaments and understand that what was about to happen was always in the plan of God. Isaiah, Daniel and Haggai had revealed centuries before that there would be another shaking of nations that would consummate their existence as a nation. In reference to Israel, their national "shaking" was to happen in only a few years after Peter wrote.

Nevertheless, and in reference to the end of time,

there will be another shaking. The present heavens and earth as we now know them will pass away. We do not know what is next after the final coming of Jesus, but we do know that all the heavens, moon and stars of earthly governments will be shaken in order that they pass away. In the “shaking” that is to come, **something that is suitable for the dwelling of the bride of Christ will then come into existence** (See Rv 21:1,2).

2. Great Noise

Consider this statement in reference to the end of the world. Noise occurs with the presence of atmosphere. Atmosphere is something of this world. At the end, there will be noise of a sudden explosion or implosion. Certainly, Peter’s meaning is that as great noises both startle and make aware, **the termination of that which now is will not be a hidden or secret event.** The words Peter used to alert his readers were certainly meant to encourage the believers, but at the same time, terrify the unbelievers.

3. Elements Melt And Burn Up

We can continue to use the destruction of Jerusalem as a metaphor of the end of time. However, we would do so with great caution. Peter’s reference is to those things that now exist. What is perceived through the senses by the physical eyes of man and experienced in daily life will be “melted.” At least “melted” is a metaphor to change. That which already exists is transformed (melted) into something different.

But if we use a literal understanding of the metaphor “burned up,” then we will have some problems. In our dictionary, “melted” does not mean annihilation. Likewise, “burned up” does not mean annihilation. “Burned up” simply means that what is physical has changed to another state of existence. “Melted” symbolizes that something remains, but is transformed (changed) into something different.

4. Fervent Heat

No known fire is able to destroy the elements of this present material world. Intense heat, according to the second law of thermodynamics, can destroy the usefulness of matter. A match can be “burned up,” but there still remains the charcoal. The heat of the match has escaped into space where it cannot be recovered. The charcoal cannot be burned again. In a sense, therefore, it has “burned up,” but something still exists. Therefore, that which initially existed (the match) has only been transformed into something different.

So what is the “fervent heat” about which Peter illustrated the end-of-time destruction? It is easy to understand what he would be saying if reference is to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The nationalism of the Jews was “burned up.” The Jews did not go out of existence. Only their aspirations to establish an independent state of Israel within Palestine was “burned up.”

We must suppose that the words Peter used were metaphorical, as they are used in the historical context of national Israel. We could apply them to the end of the world if we would take his statements out of their historical context. In this case, the metaphor illustrates what is greater than the metaphor itself. Therefore, the “fervent heat” would be greater than the definition of the words themselves as we understand them. **Peter was simply trying to explain to his readers that God has a method of destruction that will get the job done.** We must not worry ourselves about the details.

5. Burned Up

As literal fire consumes the usefulness of that which exists, then we assume that in the future from the time Peter wrote **the aspirations of a national Israel were burned in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.** That which was “burned up” was the physical temple and the aspirations of nationalistic Jews. That which will be “burned up” in our future will be the physical world and the ungodly (See 2 Th 1:6-9).

Peter identified the earth as that which will eventually be consumed. That which will consume will be “fire,” whatever is meant by this metaphor. At least in our understanding, “fire” has a very powerful consuming affect on that which exists. **We would assume that this metaphor represents something greater than the literal fire we experience.** The meaning is certainly that things will be changed or its usefulness terminated. Regardless of our lack of understanding of the meaning of the metaphor, we all can agree that fire consumes, and thus both in the destruction of Jerusalem and the earth at the end of time, something will be consumed.

We use earthly efforts and social maneuvers to generate works that manifest our accomplishments. However, Peter says these **works** will also be terminated. All those precious accomplishments over which we have boasted with pride will be consumed in the great fire to come. All the time we spent on such great works will profit nothing toward that which will exist in eternity. Peter wanted his immediate readers to understand that all the efforts that the Jewish leadership placed on preserving their own religion (Judaism) and nationalistic pride would be consumed in the fires that would burn Jerusalem and the temple to the ground. The burning of the capital (Jerusalem) symbolized the consumption of the state of Israel. The burning of the temple symbolized God’s consumption of the Jews’ religion.

We can conclude that at least some of Peter’s real message here is to the religious materialist who put so much time and concern in the material things and accomplishments of his or her religion. This was the judgment that James identified among the rich Sadducean Jews prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. After all, it was the religious materialists in the context who were scoffing at Christians with the words, “Where is the promise of His coming?”

We can easily connect Peter’s message to the same group of materialistic Sadducean Jews about

whom James wrote in the following words:

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for **your miseries that are coming upon you!** Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter (Js 5:1-3,5).*

Verse 11

Holy Conduct And Godliness

Since all these things will be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness

Whether Peter in this statement is discussing the destruction of Jerusalem or the final coming, or both, the point is the same. Since that on which we place so much emphasis and time is going to be done away, then how should believers conduct their lives? On what should they focus in life (See CI 3:1,2)? Peter mentions two important points for those who recognize the termination of what presently exists:

1. Holy Conduct

“Holy” is from the word that means “to separate.” In living the gospel, the believers’ conduct should be as one separated or detached from what will be terminated. In other words, Christians must not become attached to the material world that in verse 10 will have its end in the consuming fire. Their minds must be on things above, things that will permeate the consummation of all earthly things (See CI 3:2).

2. Godliness

In maintaining a “detached spirit” from the material things of this world, the Christian must seek after God’s ways. He must conduct his or her life as God would direct. Gospel living assumes that one live after the spirit of the One who gave up heaven in order to come into this world. The incarnational sacrifice of

the Son of God should motivate incarnational living on our part. We must live the sacrificial life as the Son of God gave up heaven in order to give to us life (See Ph 2:5-9).

Peter's lesson is clear. **The more we understand the temporary existence of this world, the more we will focus our attention on that which will last beyond the final consummation of all things.**

The same lesson would apply to those Jewish Christians who were still trusting in the security of national Israel. Since Peter's words are directed to them, then they must trust only in that which will permeate the ashes of Jerusalem and the temple. What will last beyond A.D. 70 would be Jesus and His gospel.

There were possibly too many Jewish Christians in Peter's audience who still gave some allegiance to the hope that national Israel would someday be restored to independent glory in the promise land. Nevertheless, God, in just a few years from Peter's writing, **would erase from the earth the physical objects of their pride and the spirit of their nationalistic religiosity.** The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would help Jewish Christians to take the focus of their minds off their past and turn it to the future with the Son of God as their guiding light.

The reader might be interested in the pictorial inscriptions on the Arch of Titus in Rome. All the instruments and utensil of the temple are pictured being carried back to Rome when Titus made his triumphal entry into the city after the A.D. 70 war. Nothing was left in Jerusalem. All those things in which nationalistic Jews took pride in reference to Judaism were either destroyed or carried away by the Roman army.

Verse 12

Looking For God's Judgment

... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, will be dissolved and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Since that which exists will be “burned up,” then Peter asks a question that he knows his sincere readers will answer correctly. Christians are **looking for** the day of the Lord because it will be a day of deliverance from the confines of this present world and the persecution in this environment. Therefore, we are *“eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Co 1:7).

Paul compared the agony of suffering in this present environment with the glory of that which is to come: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with that glory which will be revealed to us”* (Rm 8:18). In other words, the glory that will be rewarded to the Christian will far outweigh the most intense suffering we might incur in this life.

Paul wrote, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Co 4:17). Paul’s argument is that our affliction is only momentary in comparison to the eternity of the glory to come. Therefore, *“we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen”* (2 Co 4:18).

This is precisely Peter’s point in 2 Peter 3:12. We look forward to the passing of the things that are seen in order to enter the glory of that which is presently not seen. In the immediate context of his statement, the recipients of his letter needed to look beyond A.D. 70, though they had no idea of what was about to transpire. But after the calamity, the Holy Spirit knew that they would understand. When in times of persecution, therefore, Christians must look beyond the immediate present. Because we know that our suffering is confined to this world, we can do as James stated: *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials”* (Js 1:2).

Christians who are spiritually detached from what will pass away will be anxiously **hastening** the coming of the glory that is eternal. That which is eternal will arrive only when that which is temporary is dissolved. Therefore, the Christian seeks the termination of

this world in order to encounter and partake of the heavenly. For this reason, both Paul and John looked for the coming of the Lord (See 1 Co 16:22; Rv 22:20).

Verse 13

New Heavens And A New Earth

But we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The **promise** refers to a new social environment of dwelling. In the Old Testament era, Isaiah looked forward to a *“new heavens and a new earth”* (Is 65:17; 66:22). The fulfillment of this prophecy was realized in the establishment of a spiritual kingdom reign of Jesus that is within the hearts of people (See Lk 17:20,21). Those within the universal kingdom reign of Jesus who submit to King Jesus in obedience to the gospel, become His body, the church. When the will of the Father is done on earth in the hearts of the obedient as it is done in heaven, then kingdom reign is established on earth in the hearts of people (See Mt 6:10; Lk 17:20,21). Those who submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus have their names enrolled in heaven (See Ph 4:3). Paul wrote, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ph 3:20). The new heavens and earth for those who are living the gospel is presently in the body of Christ. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. But Peter possibly refers to another new heavens and earth that is yet to come.

As opposed to the kingdom relationship that Israel had with the Father, Christians now enjoy a “new heavens and earth” with Jesus as He reigns in our hearts. The church is a spiritual dwelling, a spiritual environment on earth where the kingdom reign of Jesus is seen in the hearts of men by their gospel living (See Rm 5:17). This was the thought that Jesus tried to communicate to Pilate when he said, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (Jn 18:36).

In other words, there is no such thing as nationalism in reference to the kingdom of Jesus. The church is the body of obedient subjects of the universal kingdom of Jesus. And contrary to the behavior of the nationalistic Jews among whom his readers lived, the obedient subjects of Jesus must never consider the thought of taking up swords to defend the church (See Jn 18:36; Rm 13:4).

Peter, however, is directing our minds to another dwelling. It is an environment *“in which righteousness dwells.”* Isaiah contrasted the national kingdom relationship of Israel with the Father to the present spiritual kingdom relationship that Christians now have with Jesus through His body. Peter then moves our thinking into the future. He seems to be using the same figure (new heavens and new earth) to compare the present kingdom relationship that Christians now have with Jesus to another new kingdom relationship that is yet to come.

The physical earth is not under consideration in reference to the new heavens and new earth that are to come. As Isaiah did not bring into consideration the physical world when he revealed the new heavens and new earth in the church, so Peter is not considering the physical world when comparing the present “new heavens and new earth” (the church) of Isaiah’s prophecy with the future new heavens and new earth in eternal glory. Peter was simply directing us to a new environment as opposed to this one of persecution, ridicule, mockery and scoffing by unbelievers. The one to come will be a dwelling place of righteousness.

We must keep in mind that in the bodily resurrected Christian we will not be “floating spirits” in an environment of space. In the context, Peter was possibly emphasizing the “location” wherein dwells the “righteous saints.” This interpretation would be affirmed by viewing the new heavens and new earth in contrast to the present heaven and earth that are being “kept in store” by the word of God (See 2 Pt 3:7). Could it be that as the world and heavens

were changed by the global flood of Noah's day, so this present natural environment of the world will be "restructured" by "fire" that will destroy this world as we know it?

As *"the world that then existed perished"* (2 Pt 3:6), so this present world that exists will likewise perish. The world certainly did not disintegrate after the flood. It was only drastically changed. Peter seems to suggest the same in reference to the present environment in which we now live. However, we must keep in mind that the flood of Noah's day is the best illustration of the destruction of this present world that the Holy Spirit could use to help us metaphorically understand that which is to come. Simply because the world was not completely destroyed in the flood does not necessarily mean that it will not be at the end of time.

However, the heavens and the earth were radically changed by the flood of Noah's day. The heavens that were a universal covering (firmament) before the flood were brought down to earth in a forty-day rain (See Gn 7:4). The face of the earth itself was drastically changed by the hydraulic forces of the waters that went to and fro upon the face of the earth.

When the flood was over, Noah and his family indeed stepped out of the ark into a new heavens and new earth. Imagine being able to see the moon and stars for the first time because they had previously been obscured by the firmament of waters above the earth. Imagine experiencing rain for the first time and seeing a rainbow. Before the flood, rain was not needed because a mist came up from the earth in order to water all vegetation (See Gn 2:6). But it was all new and different for Noah and his family after the flood. In like manner, it will be all new and different after the consummation of all that we now experience in this world.

Regardless of what will transpire in the future, we look forward to a new heavens and earth wherein only the righteous will exist. Therefore, we are *"looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God"* (2

Pt 3:12). What this new environment will be for the righteous, we do not know. We simply believe that our resurrected and changed bodies will dwell in an environment that is suitable for a body that has put on incorruption and immortality. These are things about which we wonder. They are things for which we also hope.

Verses 14-18 **“These Things”**

*Therefore, beloved, **seeing that you look for these things**, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. And regard the longsuffering of our Lord as salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given to him has written to you, as also in all his letters, **speaking in them of these things**, in which are some things **hard to understand**, which those who are untaught and unstable distort to their own destruction, as they do also the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, **seeing you know these things before**, beware lest you also, **being led away with the error of the wicked**, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*

Peter's reference to “these things” certainly refers to the events about which he had just written. In the historical context of his readers who were faced with constant mockery and scoffing, we assume that “these things” are the same things about which Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Jesus when Jesus had just revealed that not one stone would be left on another in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (See Mt 24:2; Mk 13:3). They were concerned about that which was going to happen in their lifetime (See Mk 9:1). Jesus admonished those early disciples not to be deceived, but to look for those things about which He spoke in reference to the end of Israel.

We would not do justice to this context if we were to use “these things” as a reference to the “signs of the time” for which we must be looking in order to anticipate the coming of the Lord at the end of time.

We must stay in the historical context of the early Jewish Christians who were about to experience the termination of their Jewish nationhood. They were about to suffer a tremendous attack against their religion through the destruction of the temple.

On the other hand, Christians today are in the business of populating the new heavens and new earth through the preaching of the gospel. The more God delays the destruction of this present heavens and earth the more opportunity we have to enroll citizens in the world to come.

Because the future events have no parallel in either the present or past, there are those who will *“twist the Scriptures”* about these matters (See 2 Pt 3:16). They do so because they are **untaught** and **unstable** in the word of God. The result of their twisting will be their own demise. In the immediate historical context in which Peter wrote, Peter here referred to those mockers and scoffers in the lives of the Jewish Christians who were saying, *“Where is the promise of His coming?”* (2 Pt 3:4). Since this was the case, then surely their destruction would be in the mass genocide that would take place in the wars of Rome against Jewish nationalism. Jesus warned of the same in Matthew 24.

But there are also those today who are twisting the Scriptures concerning future events. No few false proclaimers of the end of time have arisen throughout history. Their erroneous prognostications have led to thousands being deceived into believing all sorts of false teachings and supposed signs concerning the end of time. Jesus would remind such people with the warning that He gave to the disciples in Matthew 24, *“Be not deceived.”*



ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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