

**Spring 2011 Newsletter**  
**Detroit Bible Students Ecclesia**  
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*"Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come and I will fill this house with glory saith the LORD of hosts." Haggai 2:6,7*



## ***The End of the World- Is It To Be Feared?***

Will the world end in May 2011? Will the saints be taken to heaven and the earth burned up as many believe? These are burning questions for many people since a well-known radio preacher began predicting the end of the world in the near future. Many believe him. There are also many who are scoffers, but many others don't know what to believe. Most Christian sects have supported the same scenario but without putting a date on it, and scientists talk of a time when the sun will explode and incinerate the earth. Will the time come when the earth will be no more? What does the Bible say? Is there any support from the Scriptures for the idea that the earth is to be destroyed along with all life on it?

Advocates of this viewpoint go to the passage in 2 Peter 3 for their scriptural support. There we read, (2 Peter 3:7,10,12) "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ... Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

On the surface these scriptures do seem to support the idea that the earth is destined to be destroyed by

fire once God has taken his faithful to heaven. However, a closer look reveals that each of these verses include heaven in the predicted destruction. So what is meant by Peter?

One of the clues to unlock Peter's meaning in this passage is given in verse 6. Here reference is made to one of the earliest accounts in Genesis. "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Clearly, the earth did not perish in the flood of Noah's day. What did perish was the society in which God saw that "... every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually." (Gen 6:5) God told Noah, who had found favor in his sight, "... behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die." (verse 17) Thus that old "world," the evil society, was destroyed, while the earth remained and a new "world" began with Noah and his family after they left the ark.

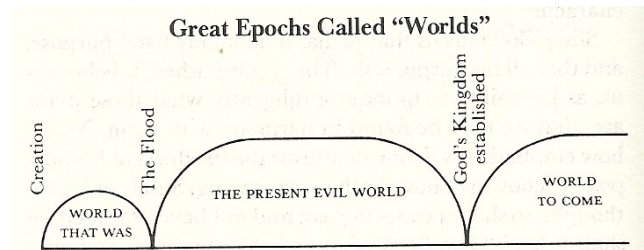
Peter continues by bringing his readers to the present time—"the heavens and the earth, which are now..." (2 Peter 2:7) which he tells us are "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Taking our clue from the world before the flood, we can easily see that Peter is not predicting the destruction of the planet, but the destruction of the social order found upon it at the time of the Lord's second presence. But does the testimony of the rest of the Bible confirm this point?

The Prophet Isaiah tells us, "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) Ecclesiastes 1:4 says, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever." The Psalmist wrote, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. ...Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever." (Psalm 104:1,5) Our Lord taught his disciples, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt 5:5) This would be a poor heritage if the earth were to be burned up.

The Prophet Zephaniah (Zephaniah 3:8,9) tells us that the earth is to be "devoured with the fire of God's jealousy" and after society is purged of all wickedness, the people will have a "pure language"[unconfused religion] given them so "they may all call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one consent." Clearly, the earth and its people must remain in order to receive this instruction in righteousness.

In applying Peter's account to a literal burning up of the earth, the fact that the heavens are included in the destruction is generally overlooked. One might ask, what is wrong with heaven? And, if the saints are to be taken to heaven, will they also be burned up?

The Bible divides man's history into three great epochs(time periods) or worlds, each with its own heaven and earth. In the passage under consideration, Peter refers to the first of these as "the world that then was." He also speaks of "the heavens and earth which are now." The Apostle Paul refers to the time since the flood as "this present evil world." (Galatians 1:4)



The third great epoch or world the Apostle Peter calls a "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13) Paul calls this same time "the world to come," (Hebrews 2:5) Revelation 21:1-4 tells us that in this new heaven and new earth there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain for these things will have passed away.

This "present evil world" is under the domination of Satan who is called "the god of this world." He is also styled in scripture, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2) Satan was able to offer our Lord Jesus the possession of all the

kingdoms of earth, because they are his own creation. (Matthew 4:8,9)

Satan is the author of all the evils and sufferings in the world today, but he is also abetted by the selfishness of fallen man which helps to expand Satan's influence. Because Satan has, "blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," (2 Corinthians 4:4) the world is filled with conflicting creeds and philosophies. When Jesus was slandered and opposed by the Scribes and Pharisees of his day, he told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:44)

Think of the false ideas of God's character which have bred hatred and led to the persecution of God's people by those who claimed to be God's people. The Bible calls Satan the "father of lies" (John 8:44) because his original lie, "Thou shalt not surely die," has given birth to all the evils in the religious heavens. This present heaven under Satan's domination is the one that is to be destroyed and Revelation 20 tells us that Satan himself will be destroyed as well so that he will no longer be able to deceive the nations.

That the earth and heavens are symbols of human society and the religions that influence it is the only reasonable way to understand these scriptures. That the fire which destroys them is also symbolic is plainly shown by the Zephaniah texts. That the people are not destroyed by it is clearly shown in the fact that the scriptures tell of blessings that will come to them after the fire has done its job.

Fire has long been used to remove contagion. Because of its destructive nature, fire is used to picture the complete purging and removal of sin and evil from the earth. Malachi 3:1-3 speaks of the Lord

as the "messenger of the covenant" which "is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD and offering in righteousness." All metals are purified by the use of fire which burns away the impurities and leaves the pure metal behind. In Revelation 3:18, the church of Laodicea is counseled to "buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich." Fire is used throughout the scriptures as a cleansing element.

Then will come the "new heavens and new earth." The Lord urged his disciples to look for this new time when he taught them to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) There really is a time coming when God's will will be done in the earth—a time when all sin and unrighteousness will be removed and the people will be healed of all their diseases.

This coming Kingdom is the whole theme of the Bible. It was the focus of Jesus' ministry. Matthew 9:35 tells us that "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." The "new heavens" will be under the control of Christ who "must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:25,26) He will be accompanied by his Church, his Bride, who will live and reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4) The "new earth" will be composed of the "ransomed of the Lord" (Isaiah 36:10) who will be offered the water of life to drink so they may live forever upon the earth which will have been purged of all sin and corruption. For a full investigation of what the scriptures teach about Christ's kingdom send for the free booklet *Christ's Thousand Year Kingdom* available from DawnBible.com

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