

## Christ's Second Coming and the End of the World (2 Peter 3)

- I. This study is a short refutation of the preterist.
- A. Preterist: Theol. One who holds that the prophecies of the Apocalypse have been already (wholly or in great part) fulfilled.
- B. The preterist holds that the prophecies of the second coming of Christ, the resurrection and the final judgment were fulfilled in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
1. “Does any one expect Tacitus, or Suetonius, or Josephus, or any other historian, to relate that 'the Son or man was seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; that He summoned the nations to His tribunal, and rewarded every man according to his works'? There is a region into which witnesses and reporters may not enter; flesh and blood may not gaze upon the mysteries of the spiritual and immaterial.” (*The Parousia* by J. Stuart Russell, p. 112)
  2. “It may be said that we have no evidence of such facts having occurred as are here described, --the Lord descending with a shout, the sounding of the trumpet, the raising of the sleeping dead, the rapture of the living saints. True; but is it certain that these are facts cognisable by the senses? is their place in the region of the material and the visible?” (Ibid., p. 168)
  3. Compare these quotations with these Scriptures (emphasis added):
    - a. **MAT 24:30** “And then shall **appear** the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and **then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn**, and they shall **see** the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”
    - b. **ACT 1:11** “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall **so come in like manner as ye have seen him go** into heaven.”
    - c. **HEB 9:28** “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that **look** for him shall he **appear the second time** without sin unto salvation.”
      - (1) Appear: To come forth into view, as from a place or state of concealment, or from a distance; to become visible.
      - (2) Just as His first appearing (**HEB 9:26**) was visible before all, so will be His second appearing.
      - (3) If His second “appearing” is invisible to men, then of necessity His first “appearing” must have been invisible to men or the logic of the language of **HEB 9:28** fails.
    - d. **REV 1:7** “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall **see** him, and they also which pierced him: and **all kindreds of the earth shall wail** because of him. Even so, Amen.”
    - e. **JOB 19:25-27** “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: (26) And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet **in my flesh shall I see God**: (27) Whom **I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold**, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”
      - (1) Job expected that sometime after his body corrupted he would see God his Redeemer with his own fleshly eyes.
      - (2) This argues for bodily resurrection and material sight of God.
      - (3) Job understood these things to transpire at the termination of the heavens (**JOB 14:12-15**), the very thing **2PE 3** is describing.

4. "It is not improbable that traditional and materialistic conceptions of the resurrection, --opening graves and emerging bodies, may bias the imagination on this subject, and make us overlook the fact that our material organs can apprehend only material objects." (Ibid., pp. 210-211)
  - a. The disciples were able to see the glorified body of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. **2PE 1:16-19**.
  - b. The disciples were able to see Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration even though his body had perished many years earlier. **MAR 9:4-5**.
  - c. Angels, which are spirit (**HEB 1:13-14**), can become visible. **2KI 6:17**.
- C. As touching the Olivet Discourse, the preterist argues for a physical, visible destruction of Jerusalem but a spiritual, invisible coming of Christ and a figurative end of the world.
- D. The preterist will argue that Revelation was written before 70 A.D. and that all of its prophecies were then fulfilled.
  1. Most of the books of the Bible were likely written before 70 A.D.
  2. If being written before 70 A.D. means all of Revelation is fulfilled, then so are all prophecies in all the other books.
- E. The preterist clings to the words of **REV 1:1**, "...to shew unto his servants things which must SHORTLY come to pass..." and to those of **REV 22:10**, "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is AT HAND."
  1. The coming to pass *shortly* of things in Revelation does NOT demand that they all must have come to pass *soon* after John wrote them.
  2. Shortly: In a short time; not long after the present or the point reached in a narration; soon. In early use also: With little delay, speedily, quickly.
  3. Quickly: In a living or lively manner; with animation or vigour; also, with strong feeling, sensitively.
  4. Speedily: In a speedy manner; with speed or celerity, quickly.
  5. Though Christ has tarried now for nearly two thousand years, when He does come He will not tarry. **HEB 10:37; HAB 2:3**.
  6. God bears LONG with His elect. Yet when He does avenge them, He will do so SPEEDILY, i.e., in a *speedymanner*. **LUK 18:1-8**.
    - a. The *manner* of Christ's second coming will be speedy and quick.
    - b. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..." (**1CO 15:51-52**).
    - c. "As the lightning..." (**MAT 24:27**).
    - d. Christ will come so quickly as to preclude any warning or premonition. **LUK 21:35; 1TH 5:1-3**.
  7. When the end-time events of Revelation begin to transpire, they will do so shortly.
  8. The foregoing explanation of "shortly" must be the proper understanding since **REV 20:11-15** gives a vivid description of the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of the wicked (Satan included), which matches that given by Christ and the apostles. Such did NOT occur in 70 A.D.
  9. Revelation covers events that occurred before it was written, that were occurring as it was being written, and that would yet occur. **REV 1:19**.
    - a. at hand: Within easy reach; near; close by (Sometimes preceded by "close, hard, near, nigh, ready").
    - b. We are living in the last time and the ends of the world are come upon us. **1JO 2:18; 1CO 10:11**.
    - c. Revelation covers this age from the first coming of Christ to His second coming.
    - d. Therefore, the time of the events of Revelation are indeed "at hand" since

- those events occur within this last time during which John was writing.
- e. “The time is at hand” does not demand that everything that John wrote would happen soon after he penned it.

- II. **Vs.1-2** set forth to whom Peter was writing and the purpose for his writing.
- A. **2PE** was addressed to the same people as were addressed in **1PE**.
- B. Peter's instruction in these epistles accords with the instructions of the prophets and the other apostles.
- C. Therefore, the teaching of this third chapter will be found elsewhere in the Bible.
- III. There will be those in the last days who will ridicule the teachings of the apostles and prophets of a literal end of the physical earth and universe. **vs.3-4**.
- A. These scoffers hold to the philosophy of uniformitarianism.
- B. Uniformitarianism asserts that present, existing physical processes are sufficient to account for all past changes and the present state of the astronomic, geologic, and biologic universe.
1. This denies the possibility of an alteration of those processes by God.
  2. **GEN 8:22** affirms the principle of uniformity in the PRESENT processes.
  3. Science is a branch of study which is concerned either with a connected body of DEMONSTRATED truths or with OBSERVED facts.
  4. Hence, science can only deal with present processes.
  5. It is therefore not science to interject present processes into the distant and unobserved (by modern man) past. Rather, it is philosophy.
- C. Since uniformitarianism is the prevailing philosophy of our time, we may be in the last days of which Peter wrote.
- D. The phrase “the beginning of the creation” (**v.4**) points to the creation of the physical universe.
- E. Therefore, the world under consideration in this passage is the created, physical world.
- IV. Uniformitarians are willingly ignorant of the Genesis account of the flood which teaches that the world has already been destroyed once. **vs.5-6**.
- A. The flood proves that God has directly interrupted the normal physical processes of the universe and caused significant changes for a time.
- B. The flood gives abundant evidence to the intervention of a sovereign God into the affairs of men and the processes of nature.
- C. The flood is a prelude to the final judgment.
- D. Man's difficulty with the flood is owing to his aversion to the idea of God executing judgment upon man for his sin.
- E. Man's difficulties with the flood are, therefore, religious rather than scientific.
- F. The world that perished in the flood was the created, physical world!
- V. The present world is placed in contrast with the world that then was and which perished. **v.7**.
- A. Just as the entire world was destroyed by the flood, so the entire world will be destroyed by fire.
- B. This chapter is NOT describing a local destruction of Jerusalem, as preterists contend, anymore than it is describing a local flood.
- C. This verse states the law of conservation: no energy is being created or destroyed.
- D. Against: - Of time. Drawing towards, near the beginning of, close to; esp. with some idea of preparation: In view of; in anticipation of, in preparation for, in time for.
- E. The day of judgment and the perdition of ungodly men is the day that God has set for the

- destruction of the world by fire and the world is being reserved in anticipation of that day.
- F. In this chapter Peter connects the end of the world and the judgment with the coming of the Lord. **v.4.**
- G. Recall that Peter parallels the teaching of this epistle with the teaching of the other apostles. **v.2.**
1. The apostle John also connected the destruction of the present world with the day of judgment. **REV 20:11-15.**
  2. Paul connected the second appearing of Jesus Christ with the judgment. **2TI 4:1.**
- VI. We are not to conclude from the delay of Christ's second coming and the end of the world that God is slack concerning His promise. **vs.8-9.**
- A. One day with the Lord is as a thousand years.
  - B. With the Lord it has been only been about days since Christ first came.
  - C. Therefore, God is not slack as some men count slackness because a long time with men is short with God.
  - D. Those who repent will not perish under temporal judgment, neither will they perish in the eternal judgment. **ACT 17:30-31.**
- VII. Peter affirms that the day of the Lord WILL come and he describes the destruction of the heavens and the earth in that day. **vs.10-12.**
- A. Exactly as Christ also taught, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. **MAT 24:35-44.**
1. The passing away of heaven and earth is “that day” (**MAT 24:35-36**).
  2. Christ, as Peter, connects “that day” with His second coming.
  3. The coming of “that day” as a thief in the night refers to the fact that the time of the coming is unknown. A thief does not advise beforehand of the time of his coming.
  4. In the Olivet Discourse, Christ was answering three questions asked by the disciples after He told them that the temple would be destroyed:
    - a. “When shall these things be?” (**MAT 24:3**).
    - b. “What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (**MAR 13:4**).
    - c. What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (**MAT 24:3**).
  5. Like the preterist, the disciples appear to have thought that all these things would occur in conjunction.
  6. The parable of the fig tree teaches that by means of signs, the disciples could know the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. **MAT 24:32-35.**
    - a. There would be the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, which was the encompassing of Jerusalem with armies. **MAT 24:15 c/w LUK 21:20.**
    - b. There would be great distress in the land and wrath upon *this* people. **LUK 21:23.**
    - c. There would be false Christs and false prophets showing great signs and wonders. **MAT 24:24.**
    - d. By means of the budding of the fig tree we know that summer is nigh.
    - e. So, too, by means of “all these things” the disciples could know that the destruction of Jerusalem was near.
    - f. All things pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem that Christ had foretold would come to pass in *that generation*.

**MAT 23:34-36; 24:34; MAR 13:2-4, 23.**

- g. This answered the disciples' questions as to when these things would be and what the sign of them would be.
  - 7. Observe the contrasting conjunction, "but" in **MAT 24:36**.
    - a. The subject matter of the following verses contrasts with "all these things" in **vs. 33-34**.
    - b. "That day" in **v. 36** is the day of the passing away of the heavens and the earth mentioned in **v. 35**.
    - c. "That day" contrasts "those days" in **MAT 24:19, 22, 29**.
  - 8. Between the tribulation of "those days" and the second coming the times of the Gentiles would be fulfilled. **LUK 21:25**.
  - 9. Immediately after that tribulation "of those days" the sun and moon would be darkened, the stars would fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven would be shaken. **MAT 24:29**.
    - a. **LUK 21:25-26** connects this with an upheaval among the nations. c/w **COL 2:15**.
    - b. This language was used regarding the fall of Babylon. **ISA 13:1, 9-13, 17-19**.
    - c. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the pagan world empire system, which was based on astrology, began unravelling and was overthrown.
  - 10. Unlike the destruction of Jerusalem, there would be no warning sign or premonition of Christ's coming and of the end of the world. He Himself would be the "sign." **MAT 24:30 c/w LUK 21:27**.
  - B. The destruction of the world will extend to its most basic components.
    - 1. Element: One of the simple substances of which all material bodies are compounded.
    - 2. An atom is the smallest part of an element that can exist alone or in combination.
    - 3. When the atoms of the universe are broken down this will cause an atomic explosion of unimaginable magnitude.
    - 4. No wonder it says, "...the heavens shall pass away with a GREAT NOISE..." (**v.10**)!
  - C. We are hastening unto the coming of the day of God. In relation to eternity, the end cannot be far away.
  - D. The dissolution of the present heavens and earth should urge us to holiness and godliness. **LUK 21:34-36**.
  - E. Remember that the prophets and the apostles spoke of these things as well. **v.2**.
    - 1. The psalmist spoke of the passing away of the heavens and the earth and Paul quoted him. **PSA 102:25-26; HEB 1:10-12**.
    - 2. Isaiah prophesied of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth. **ISA 51:6**.
- VIII. According to God's promise we look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. **v. 13**.
- A. God promised the fathers a better country. **HEB 11:13-16**.
  - B. The present created, physical world will be replaced by a new one just like it except without corruption!
  - C. Recall that the prophets and other apostles spoke of this.
    - 1. The new heavens and the new earth are mentioned in **ISA 65:17; 66:22**.
    - 2. **REV 21-22** describe the new heavens and the new earth.
  - D. Preterists will say that the new heavens and the new earth are the New Testament church and its ordinances.

- E. But those to whom Peter wrote were already in the New Testament church and subject to its ordinances. **1PE 2:5; 3:21; 5:1-3.**
  - F. The new heavens and the new earth were something for which they were yet looking.
- IX. Those who look for such things will take care as to their behavior. **v. 14 c/w MAT 24:42-51.**
- X. Paul taught these same things in his epistles. **vs. 15-16.**
- A. He taught that the day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night. **1TH 5:1-3.**
  - B. He taught that the things that are seen are temporal. **2CO 4:18.**
  - C. He taught the dissolution of the heavens and the earth. **HEB 1:10-12.**
  - D. He taught that there is a world to come. **EPH 1:21; HEB 2:5.**
  - E. Peter was writing to Jews (**GAL 2:9**). Paul also wrote of these things to Jews in Hebrews. **HEB 10:25; 13:14.**
  - F. Paul did NOT speak of the destruction of Jerusalem in all of his epistles but he did speak of the second coming of Christ in all his epistles.
- XI. Consider some problems that arise by equating the fall of Jerusalem with the resurrection and the Second Coming.
- A. Did all the tribes of the earth mourn at the destruction of Jerusalem? **MAT 24:30.**
  - B. See **LUK 17:26-30.**
    - 1. In the day of Christ's return, life will be going on as usual, even to the point of saying "peace and safety" (**1TH 5:1-3**). Could this properly describe the horrors of the Jewish war?
    - 2. In Noah's and Lot's days, the wicked were destroyed the SAME day that the just were saved.
      - a. During the Jewish war, the just were delivered 3-1/2 years BEFORE the wicked were destroyed (66 A.D; 70 A.D.).
      - b. At Christ's return, the just and the wicked will be living and working side by side. **LUK 17:34-36.**
    - 3. In 70 A.D. God used the instrument of the Roman army to destroy the ungodly.
      - a. But on the day of the Lord, God HIMSELF will execute judgment. **1TH 4:16; 2TH 1:7-10.**
      - b. This agrees with the situations in Noah's and Lot's days: the judgment was by the very hand of God Himself. **2PE 3:13-14.**
    - 4. The destruction of the wicked in Noah's and Lot's days was utter and complete: none of the targeted wicked survived.
      - a. "Even THUS shall it be in the day when the Son of man is REVEALED. **LUK 17:30.**
      - b. But in 70 A.D. there were survivors of the wicked Jews who were "led away captive into all nations" (**LUK 21:24**).
  - C. The time of the destruction of Jerusalem was knowable by preceding signs but the time of the day of the Lord to destroy the heavens and earth has no such signs.
    - 1. It comes without warning, as a "thief in the night" (**1TH 5:2**).
    - 2. The time of that day is known by none but God so continual watchfulness is required. **MAR 13:31-37.**
    - 3. That day will come as a snare upon all. **LUK 21:35.**
- XII. The denial of the visible coming of Jesus Christ, the destruction of the physical universe and the ushering in of a literal new heavens and earth is the error of the wicked. **vs. 17-18.**