

## The Day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3: The End of What World?

### Introduction:

- 1) **1 Jn. 4:1** We are engaged in a study of realized eschatology (popularly known as the A.D. 70 doctrine; also full preterists and Transmillennial™), and while I have known something of this doctrine for more than 30 years when I began to examine it more closely a couple of years ago I was amazed by its twists and turns.
- 2) To briefly review.
  - a) The doctrine began among churches of Christ with *The Spirit of Prophecy* by Max King in 1971.
  - b) The fundamental idea is that the destruction of Jerusalem and judgment on Israel in A.D. 70 was not just prophesied in Mt. 24 (which few would dispute), but was the climactic prophecy of the Bible and was the great and final judgment day foretold in Scripture.
    1. Don't be misled by someone pointing out a passage that prophesies of the destruction of Jerusalem, for that is not in dispute. But that there are some prophecies doesn't mean that all refer to the same event.
    2. And this is far more than someone arguing that the Revelation was completely fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.
  - c) Not only was it a day of judgment on the house of Israel, but it was the only Second Coming of Christ spoken of in Scripture and the time of the resurrection.
    1. "Scripture indicates that the time of Jesus' Coming, the Resurrection, and the Judgment was confined to the first century." Wayne Petty, p. 462, *Essays*
    2. "There is no time period between the fall of Judaism and the second coming of Christ. They are essentially the same event – at any rate they are inexorably linked." Max King, *Prophecy*, pp. 137, 138
    3. "Prophecy found its complete fulfillment in the second coming of Christ, and now may be regarded as closed and consummated." Max King, *Prophecy*, p. 137
- 3) Sometimes when people first hear of this they are amazed, but then say, "Well, they may be wrong about these things, but in the end will it really matter? Does it have any practical implications?" I want to begin with that tonight.

### I. WHY THIS MATTERS.

1. Please understand that this is not a dispute about the meaning of a few obscure passages or even what happens after we die.

2. RE changes so much of the NT.
  - a. **Mt. 25:31-46; Jn. 5:28f; Acts 17:30f; 1 Cor. 15; Col. 3:4; 1 Th. 4:13—5:11; 2 Th. 1:8; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:27f; 2 Pet. 3:10;** et al.
3. It alters our hope and tends to eliminate fear.
  - a. Some (most?) seem to believe in a place of reward for our spirits, but hear Tim King.
    - 1) “It sees the thrust of the Bible’s speaking about how heaven comes to earth, not primarily about how one gets to heaven.” *The Transmillennial<sup>TM</sup> View*, Timothy R. King; January 15, 2002
  - b. Virtually all REs I have seen have dismissed the idea of a place of eternal torment for the wicked.  
**Cf. Mk. 9:47f.**
4. Some (two men I’ve known personally) have accepted instrumental music.
5. Some are either questioning or outright rejecting the essential nature of baptism and the continued observance of the Lord’s Supper.
  - a. How can they not?

## II. REVIEW OF FIRST LESSON AND THE CONSISTENT ARGUMENT.

1. Their contention is that most of us don’t take words in a consistent fashion and they claim they do by making very reference to the coming of Christ, judgment, Day of the Lord, etc. mean the same thing.
2. Noted last night that words mean different things in different contexts and showed that this was the case with the coming of Christ.
  - a. Used of physical presence, figuratively in the Holy Spirit and the judgment on Jerusalem, judgment on churches, fellowship with the churches, and a return to judge the world.
3. These pseudo-Greek scholars insist that *mellō* requires a short duration of time and we saw that this was not the case.
  - a. We made a special study of Acts 17 and showed that it had nothing to do with the destruction of Jerusalem, but was a warning to a Gentile audience that a day of judgment was coming.
4. Later we will look at 1 Cor. 15 and see that REs themselves are not consistent in that chapter.
5. The remainder of this lesson will look at 2 Peter 3, a critical passage to this doctrine.

## II. 2 PETER 3. (Read the chapter).

### A. The Arguments Made.

1. “The purpose of Peter’s words in this chapter was to warn faithful people of his time concerning the approaching physical judgment so they could escape it.” Samuel Dawson, *Essays*, p. 97

2. OT prophets frequently spoke of an upheaval of earth and sky to refer to the judgment against a political nation (**Isa. 13:1, 10, 13, 17**). In 2 Pet. 3 it is the judgment against Israel.
3. The idea of a new heavens and new earth was used by the prophet Isaiah to speak of a new age (e.g. **Isa. 65:17-19**), so 2 Peter 3 is only describing the glorious Messianic era that Isaiah spoke of.
4. The elements of **3:10** have to be the same as those of **Gal. 4:9**.
4. 2 Pet. 3 depicts the “new order of things after the destruction of Jerusalem, the victorious church having weathered *Jewish persecution*, victorious Christians withstanding potential *eradication by Jews*.” Dawson, *Essays*, p. 95 (Emphasis mine—jrg)

### B. Context of 2 Peter.

1. Nothing particularly Jewish about 2 Pet., and the reference to Paul’s epistles (**3:15f**) written only a few years earlier to predominantly Gentile churches, would argue against a Palestinian destination.
2. Scholars date the book between A.D. 64 and 68 (Dawson says late 60s) and this is significant.
3. At the time of the writing Peter expected to be gone soon, but wanted his readers to remember these things after he was gone. **1:12-15**
  - a. The language seems a little strange if talking about events that would be fulfilled within 2 or 3 years (taking Dawson’s late date).
  - b. Not that the contents of ch. 3 are the only things Peter wanted them to remember after his decease, but it is a major part of the book.
4. In **3:3f** the apostle speaks of scoffers in the last days wondering about the promise of the coming. Is this the destruction of Jerusalem?
  - a. Go back to first point and note that nothing indicates this was written to Palestinian Jews.
  - b. Second, Rome’s war against the Jews began in A.D. 66, so it is difficult to imagine anyone who was looking for Jesus to “come” and destroy Jerusalem to say that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.
5. As to the claim that the church faced potential eradication by Jews, by A.D. 70 the church was spread far and wide and the Roman powers were to be feared more than the Jews in the A.D. 60s.
  - a. A.D. 70 was a divine judgment on Jerusalem (**Mt. 23, 24**), but it didn’t end the persecution by Jews in places where they were able.

### C. The Judgment of 2 Peter 3.

1. No dispute about **2 Pet. 3** being a passage warning about judgment, but what judgment?
  - a. It is false to contend that no worldwide judgment is depicted in Scripture. **Acts 17:30f**

2. Have already noted that this letter was to be a reminder after Peter's death and **3:3f, 8** seem to indicate a more distant future than 2 to 4 years, or even the 40 years since **Mt. 24**.
3. Nothing at all Jewish in slant about the book to make one think "destruction of Jerusalem."
4. The example he cited from history was a worldwide judgment. **3:5f**
5. While "the heavens and the earth" can stand for an order of things as in **Isa. 65**, the only order that fits 2 Peter is the one comparable to that of Noah, i.e. the entire globe.
  - a. Look up all the verses that mention heaven(s) and earth and you will find that most refer to this entire globe.
6. The salvation of this chapter (**3:9, 15**) is spiritual, not escape from a physical judgment. **1:2-4, 8-11; 3:17f**

#### **D. Brief Exposition of 2 Pet. 3**

1. In the years to come there will be doubters who will say Jesus is not coming back.
2. Don't be misled, the same God who judged the world in the days of Noah has reserved for this earth a day of judgment by fire in which the ungodly will be destroyed.
3. Why has it not happened yet? Time is of no significance to an eternal God.
4. But our God waits upon our repentance. He doesn't want men to be lost.
5. But it is certain that it will happen.
6. The world as we know and see it will be destroyed and that should motivate us to live holy, godly lives so that we are part, not of destruction, but of the new order where righteousness dwells.
  - a. Cf. the things written to a Gentile audience on Crete. **Titus 2:11-14**
7. We want to be on guard and not taken in by the deceivers and instead we want to grow.

#### **Conclusion:**

- 1) Besides the simple fact that RE is wrong on almost every point, it robs passages like 2 Pet. 3 of their motivational power.
- 2) We need to realize that a judgment still awaits these heavens and the earth and we don't want to be unprepared like most were in the days of Noah.
- 3) Why not make the Lord's delay your salvation? **3:9, 15**