



# 2 Peter Chapter 3

## The Coming “*Day of the Lord*”

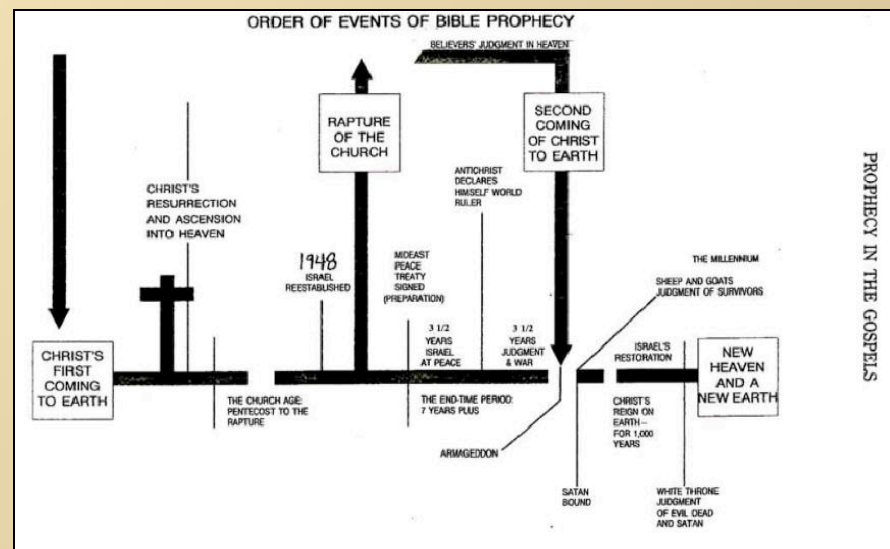


Photo from 3dcartstores.com

Second Peter chapter three is in 4 paragraphs:

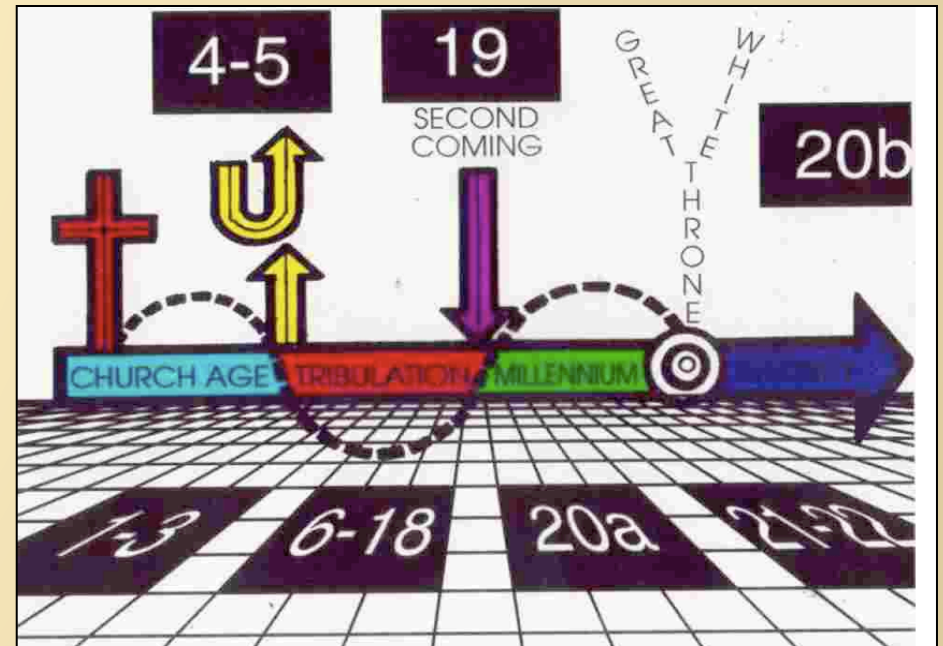
- A. A Reminder about *the day of the Lord* – 3:1-2
- B. The Timing of *the day of the Lord* – 3:3-9
- C. The Beginning and End of *the day of the Lord* – 3:10-13
- D. Being Ready for *the day of the Lord* – 3:14-18

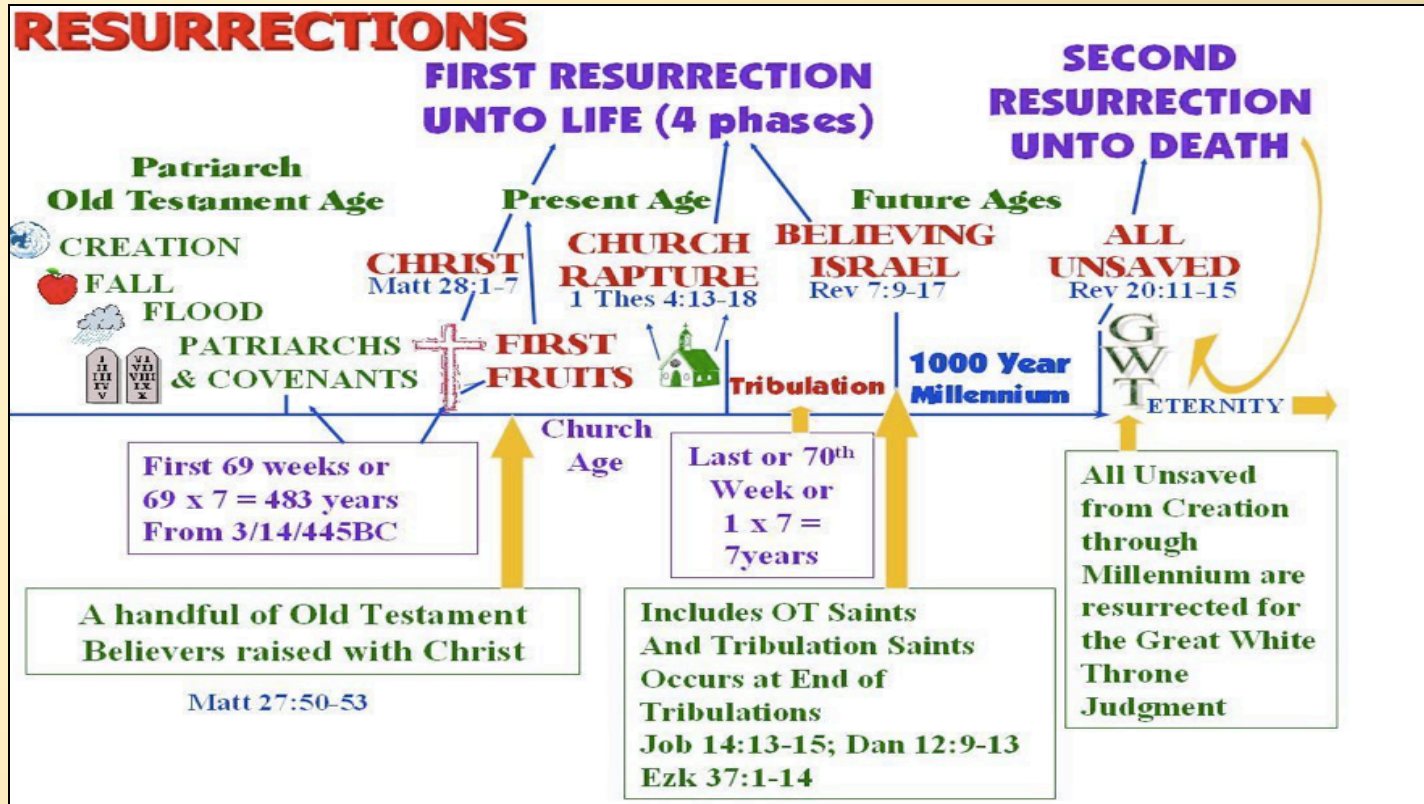
Many commentators say this chapter is about the Second Coming of Christ. Actually, there is very little about the Second Coming of Christ here. The chapter is about *the day of the Lord*, that future time when God will judge the world. [I have included several end-times charts from different groups to show that those who take the Bible literally all have about the same time line with the same sequence of events.]



*The day of the Lord* begins with the upcoming Tribulation period (or the Rapture before the Tribulation) and includes:

- The Tribulation
- The Second Coming of Christ
- The judgments after the Second Coming
- The millennial reign of Christ on earth
- The final rebellion against Christ at the end of the Millennium
- The destruction of the earth
- The Great White Throne Judgment for all unbelievers
- The eternal state in the Lake of Fire for unbelievers or the New Jerusalem for believers

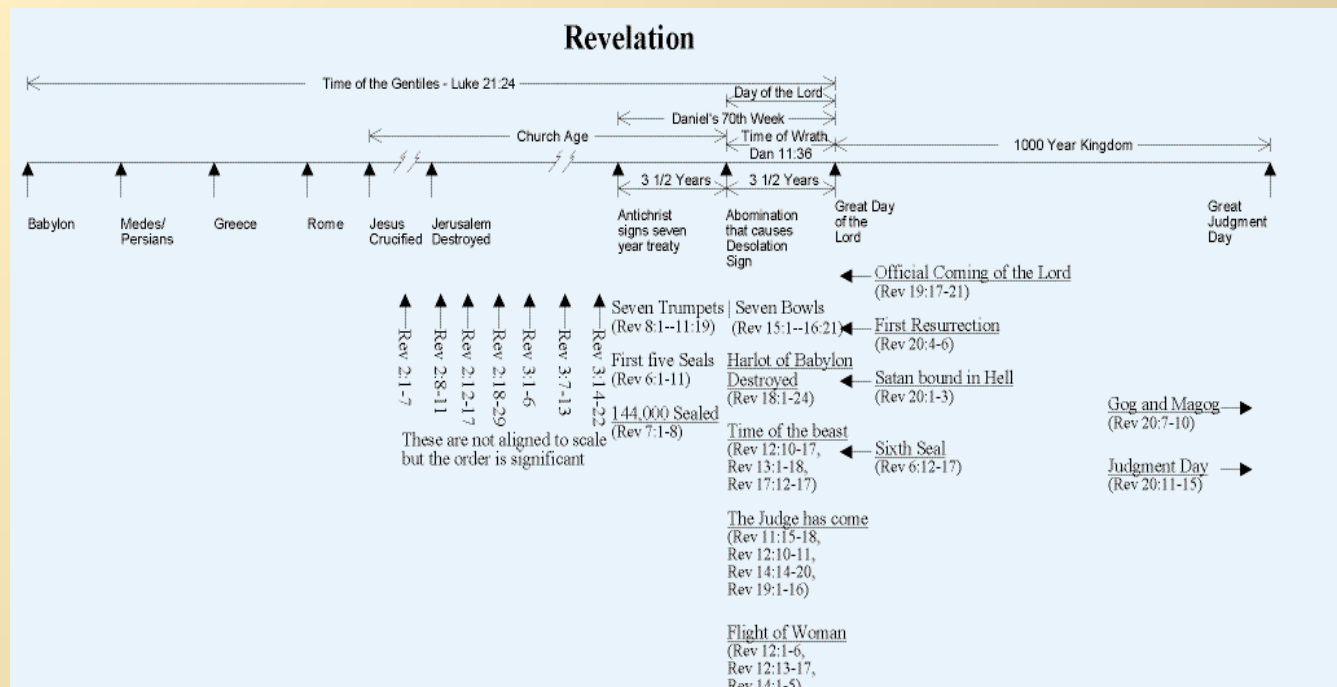




All that takes a little over a thousand years. Most of it is the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth. The thousand years is preceded by a 7-year Tribulation, the Second Coming, and the judgments after the Second Coming (which will take a while) and the restructuring of the world for the Millennium (will also take some time), and then there's the final world war at the end of the Millennium. But in general terms, we can say that *the day of the Lord* is the final thousand (plus) years of the history of the earth.

Peter discusses three aspects of *the day of the Lord*:

1. The unexpected beginning of the day of the Lord, which is the beginning of the Tribulation.
2. The Second Coming of Christ (actually, he only discusses the Second Coming to counter the false teachers' claims that it will never happen).
3. The final destruction of the earth before the people enter into either the New Jerusalem or the Lake of Fire.



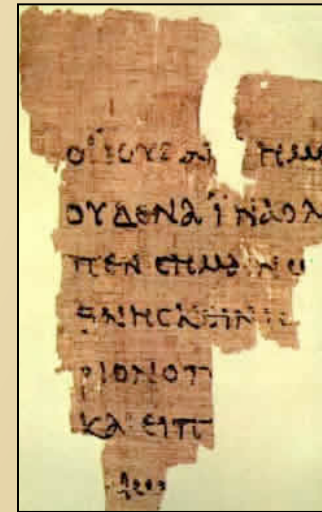


## A. A Reminder about *the day of the Lord* – 3:1-2

**2 Peter 3:1** *This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.*

In spite of this introductory comment, we are not sure to whom Peter was writing. Clearly, he had written to them before, but that does not necessarily mean 1 Peter was the letter he's referring to. He calls his readers ἀγαπητοί, *beloved* (plural) four times in this chapter (verses 1, 8, 14, 17). That could mean those scattered across northern Turkey (1 Peter 1:1) or the whole Church. The introduction to this letter (*To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours*) would favor a general letter. If this is the case, it would mean Peter wrote another letter we do not have.

The best argument in favor of this being written to the same people as 1 Peter is the fact that he calls it *the second letter*, indicating that he may only have written two letters. Those arguing for this being a second general letter would say the first letter was written with the help of Silas, whereas this is the second letter Peter wrote by himself. There seems to be no clear way to answer this question.



Greek manuscript piece from [www.abu.nb.ca/courses/NTintro/indexNTintro/indexNTintr.htm](http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/NTintro/indexNTintro/indexNTintr.htm)

Two times Peter says this letter is a reminder (1:13; 3:1). That could even mean that Peter originally wrote this chapter as a separate letter, and then decided to add it to the first two chapters of this letter.

At any rate, Peter was intent upon *stirring up your sincere mind*. The word εἰλικρινῆ, for *sincere*, means *judged by sunlight*. So Peter wants to stir up their sense of pure judgment (quite the opposite of those preaching a mentality of tolerance today).

**2 Peter 3:2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.**

What's significant here is that Peter is equating the writings of the Old Testament (prophets) with the New Testament (apostles). Also, notice that the New Testament is considered a *commandment*. *The Commandment of the Lord* here is compared to *the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets*. So Peter is referring to what we call the New Testament.

# THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

Peter said this was his second letter to these readers. He also equated the verbal inspiration of the writings of the apostles with those of the Old Testament prophets.

However many letters Peter wrote, it is clear that the apostles wrote more letters than we have. We know, for example, Paul wrote two letters to the Corinthians we do not have because he refers to them in the letters we do have. After the apostles died, John being the last to die in the mid-90s AD, the Church continued to write letters. Those written in the 100s and 200s are usually called the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Many believed these writings were inspired by God and others were not sure. During this time, the Church began:

- To build buildings
- To develop a liturgy
- To appoint one bishop over each local church
- To form councils of bishops
- To develop a hierarchy of bishops and cosmopolitan bishops which led to cardinals, patriarchs, and popes



The manuscripts of 1 Peter 1:1-25 and 2 Peter 2:1-25 are from [www.bibleausstellung.de](http://www.bibleausstellung.de)



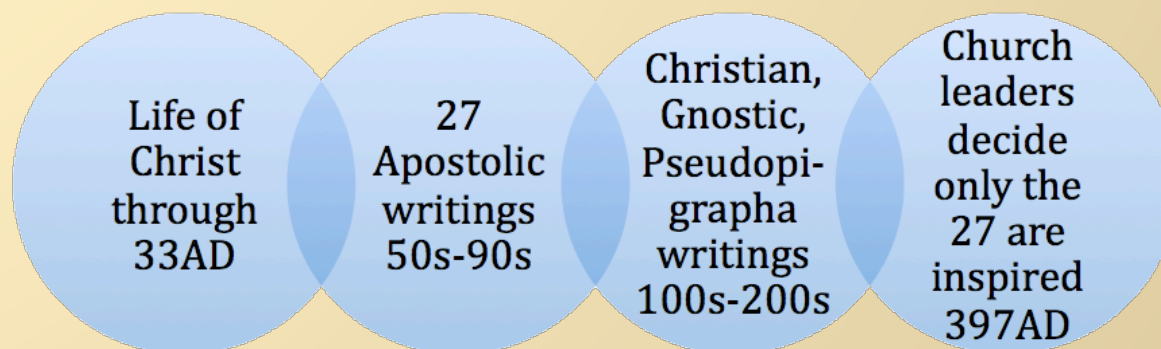
Also, during these post-apostolic years, Gnostics and other cults (something like our Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses) wrote false gospels trying to fit Jesus into current Greek religious thinking. Also there were "gospels" and epistles written under false names (called Pseudepigrapha). So we have works like "The Gospel of Barnabas," "The Gospel of Philip," and "The Gospel of Thomas," written during those years, but not written by Barnabas, Philip, or Thomas.

In the 300s, the church leadership began to assess what had been written. As a result, Athanasius in 367 and the church council of 397 decided only the 27 books and letters written through the writing of the Apostle John in the 90s were verbally inspired by God.

Liberals, like most university religion professors and imaginary novels like Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, tell us that the New Testament is made up of books the church leaders chose while ignoring other books which told things about Jesus they didn't want the people to know.

**That is a flat out lie**

There were only 27 Christian writings in existence from the time of Christ until the death of the Apostle John in the 90s, and the church leadership chose all of them. They made their cutoff not theologically but chronologically. There were some discussions about some of those. Hebrews was questioned by some because we don't know who wrote it. Second and Third John were questioned because they were so short and personal. But in the end, it was clear that all 27 books were being used in a mighty way by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, while the others (some very good, some false, teaching) were not. Believers were risking their lives to bring copies of these 27 books to one another. Nobody was doing that for, say, "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," even though it is a morally and theologically excellent Christian work. So they concluded that God stopped verbally inspiring inerrant literature with the apostles. All the writings the liberals claim the early Church fathers ignored were written after the death of the Apostle John.



Since then, we have discovered thousands of copies of these 27 New Testament books, but we have never found any other Christian writing of the first century. There are only 27 first-century Christian writings in existence, and they are all in the New Testament. Which means the testimony of the first-century Christians is clear and consistent.

## B. The Timing of the Day of the Lord – 3:3-9

**2 Peter 3:3** *Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts*

Peter returns to his warnings about false teachers. But there are two things different from the warnings of chapter 2:

1. Here he projects his warnings to the last days. So this part of the message is not about what Peter's immediate audience will encounter (although they could apply it just like we can apply the things written to them).
2. The false teaching is different from chapter 2 in that these are people mocking the idea of Christ's return after a long time has passed.

What's the same is that they will be *following after their own lusts*.

**2 Peter 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”**

This is really quite an amazing prediction. Peter is saying that *the day of the Lord* is so far off into the future (from his day) that mockers will claim there is no such thing as a Second Coming of Christ.

- First, because it’s been too long since Christ promised it, and
- Second, because nothing changes. Everything *continues just as it was from the beginning of creation*.

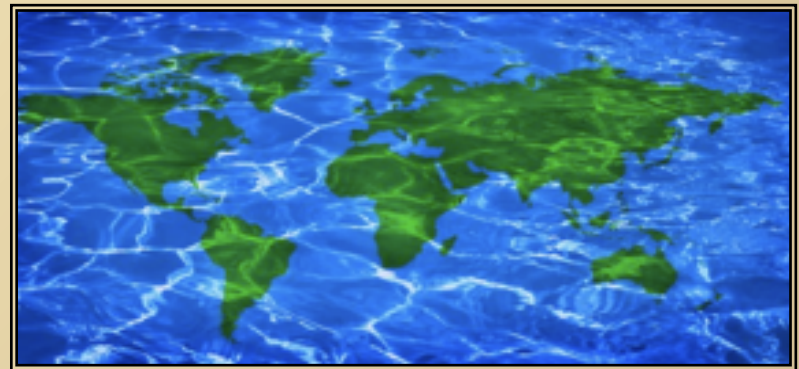
Peter is using the word *creation* as a synonym for the beginning. He is not suggesting the mockers will be creationists. I’m sure Peter couldn’t imagine anybody so stupid as to not believe in creation. Nonetheless, he seems to be using the word metaphorically.

**2 Peter 3:5-7** *For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment.*

Peter's answer to their claim, that there is no physical evidence that *the day of the Lord* will come at all, is that God's judgment comes suddenly, not gradually. He fulfills His Word as He says He will, not as a slow gradual evolution of changes. What escapes the notice of the mockers is:

- *By the word of God the heavens existed long ago, SUDDENLY*
- *And the earth was formed out of water, SUDDENLY*
- *And (once again at Noah's Flood, the earth was re-formed) by water SUDDENLY*
- *Through which the world at that time was destroyed, SUDDENLY*
- *Being flooded with water SUDDENLY*

*But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment, which will come SUDDENLY.*



Earth covered with water picture from ecolifeconsulting.com.



**2 Peter 3:8-9** *But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

The point Peter is making with this metaphor is that the mockers he just mentioned do not take into account the infinity of God. He is, no doubt, thinking about the Psalm of Moses:

*For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night (Psalm 90:4).*

Peter is not giving us a new mathematical formula by which God calculates time but a metaphor which illustrates the infinity and hence eternity of God.

God is:

**Infinite** (Psalm 139), meaning He has no limitations (infinity is freedom from limitations).

**Eternal**, which means He has no time limitations (eternity is freedom from time).

**Immanent**, involved in time, but also

**Transcendent**, apart from time.

At the end of the paragraph, Peter makes the point that God is not slow, He's patient. The reason for the (now) two thousand-plus year delay in His coming is so that all those He is calling to Himself will be saved. It's because God is *not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*.

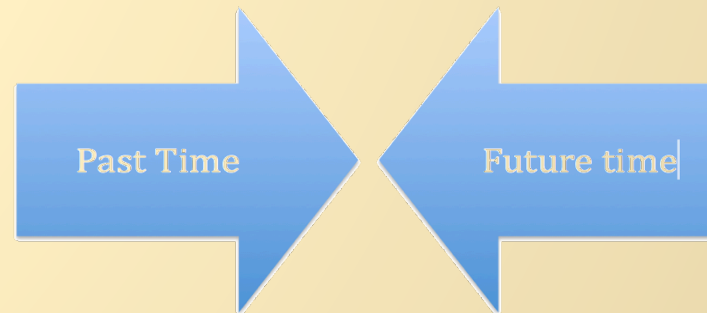
By the way, that also tells us that there is a difference between the will of God and the plan of God. God does not wish for any to perish, yet many will perish. We cannot completely understand that, but we can illustrate it in our own lives. We all plan to do things we do not wish to do, and we all wish for things we do not plan to do. We do what we plan to do not because we wish it but because we believe it is the best possible plan. God, too.

# THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

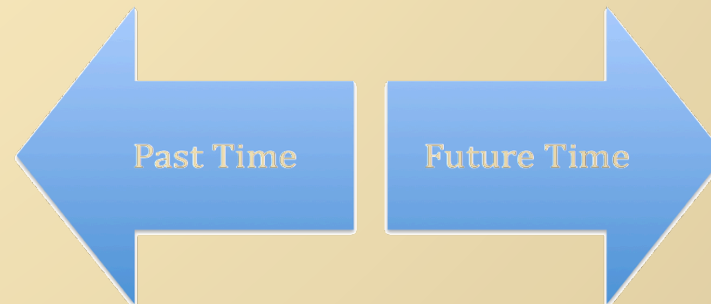
Peter (and Moses) are often quoted saying *with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day*. There are several things we should keep in mind about this statement.

First, this does not mean there are no actual time measurements in heaven, as some have claimed. There is still time in heaven (for example, *When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour – Revelation 8:1*). The difference is, in heaven we don't run out of it.

- From an earthly perspective, time describes the duration of things in a linear context which begins and ends.



- From an eternal perspective time describes the duration of things in an infinite context which does not begin or end.



It is also true, as mentioned above, that the **day** of the Lord is that time of judgment which lasts about a thousand years. So the *day of the Lord* is actually (approximately, literally) a thousand years, and a thousand years is also (approximately, literally) the time of *the day of the Lord*. But there is no way of knowing if that is what Peter (or the Spirit of God who revealed it to Peter) had in mind.

We must also keep in mind that this *thousand years* metaphor does not mean every time we see the number or phrase *a thousand years*, it's a metaphor. Many have mistakenly applied this metaphor to the descriptive statements of Revelation 20, claiming Christ will not literally reign for 1000 years. Others apply it to the days of creation, suggesting the 7 days are also metaphors for thousands of years. But Genesis is a history book, and Revelation is describing what will happen in certain actual time periods. To call these things metaphors makes the error of transporting one kind of literature, in one context, into a different kind of literature, in a different context.



## C. The Beginning and End of *day of the Lord* – 3:10-13

**2 Peter 3:10-12** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!*

The destruction Peter describes here is not the Second Coming of Christ. Many commentators assume it is because the illustration phrase *like a thief* is used by Jesus about His Second Coming (Matthew 24:42-44). But once again, they make the mistake of taking the meaning in one context and transporting it to another. Here Peter is saying that *the day of the Lord* will be the judgment of God upon the earth. It begins suddenly, that is, it comes unexpectedly *like a thief*, at the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period (Daniel 9:27). All of a sudden, the wrath of God begins to pour out on the earth (Revelation 6). Actually, the *thief* illustration is used elsewhere for the beginning of the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3; 16:15).

Then Peter talks about the conclusion of *the day of the Lord* with the destruction of this earth and the heavens (apparently the cosmic system and atmosphere) surrounding this earth. So at the end of the Millennial Kingdom:

- *The heavens will pass away with a roar*
- *The elements will be destroyed with intense heat*
- *The earth and its works will be burned up*
- *All these things are to be destroyed*
- *The heavens will be destroyed by burning*
- *The elements will melt with intense heat!*



Hot lava picture from [ecanadanow.com](http://ecanadanow.com)

So Peter describes the beginning and the end of *the day of the Lord*. And the reason he tells us about all that is to motivate us toward *holy conduct and godliness*. That godliness will come about when we are *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord*.

**2 Peter 3:13 *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.***

The eternal state of the saints of all ages is the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven (the heavenly realm of God) and sits on a new earth surrounded by new heavens (apparently, a new cosmic system and atmosphere). Peter tells us that this is not new information. It was a promise of God. Isaiah wrote:

*Isaiah 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.”*

*Isaiah 66:22 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth, Which I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “So your offspring and your name will endure.”*



New Jerusalem picture from [www.khouseafrica.com](http://www.khouseafrica.com)

From Isaiah, we learn several things about the eternal state:

- It will be created by God. It is not an evolution from this present earth.
- It will be new, not a Kingdom of God on this present earth, as is the case with the Millennial Kingdom.
- Former things (apparently, the sufferings of this earth) *will not be remembered or come to mind*. Since *remembered* is described with the words *come to mind*, it probably does not mean our thoughts are erased but that we have the capacity to not bring them to mind.
- This new heaven and new earth will endure.
- This will be the final fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant where *your offspring and your name will endure*.

In the Apocalypse, the Apostle John gives us an elaborate description of the eternal city the New Jerusalem which sits on a new earth. He begins his description with this observation:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea (Revelation 21:1).*

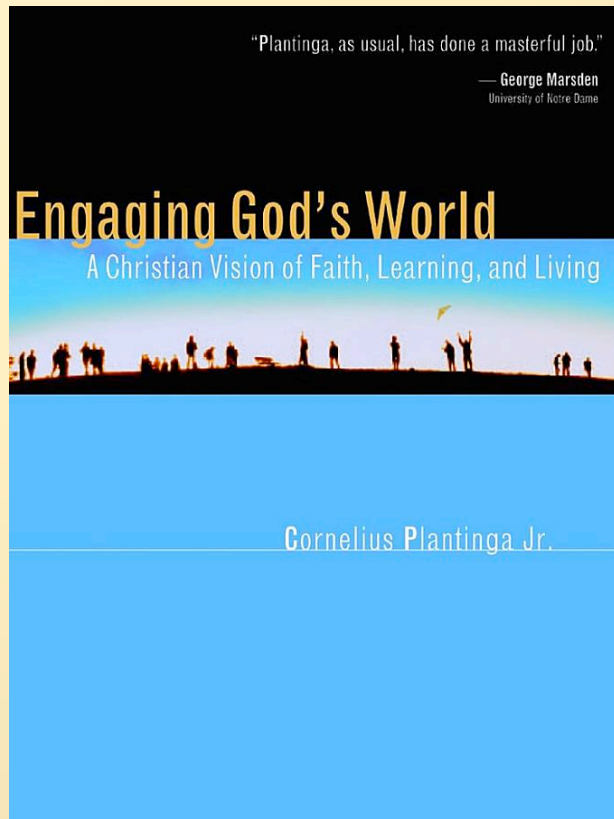
The next thing Peter says is that the new earth will be a place *in which righteousness dwells*. This is also confirmed by John when he writes:

*... and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27).*



# THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

False teachers of the kind Peter warns us about are here today.

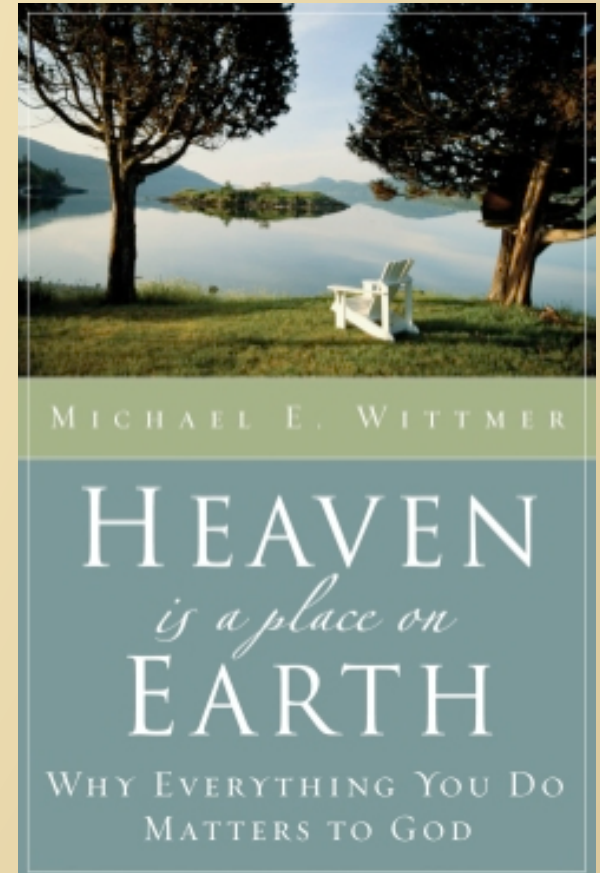


Cornelius Plantinga, the president of Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids Michigan, USA, wrote a book called “Engaging God’s World” where he declares that this present earth will be fixed up to be the new heaven and new earth. He writes:

“Fripp Island, S.C., will be a part of heaven. So will the Lake District in England, the Schwarzwald of southwest Germany, and the Great Barrier Reef off the eastern coast of Australia. Banff will be included, and the islands of Indonesia. Kenya’s game preserves will still draw visitors, and so will the mountains of northeast Korea” (p. 137). According to the Scripture, the person who wants the restoration of the earth wants the kingdom of God whether she knows it or not” (p. 141).

Michael E. Wittmer, an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary wrote a book called “Heaven Is A Place On Earth.” He says:

“This world is not my home, I’m just a-passin’ through’ and ‘I’ll fly away’ are more Gnostic than Christian ... nowhere does Scripture hold out heaven as our ultimate goal ... In short, we earthlings were made to live here – on this planet. This is where we belong. We’re already home” (p. 74).



The one thing both the Apostle Peter and the Apostle John make clear is that the new heavens and the new earth are a replacement for the first heavens and earth. John writes: *the first heaven and the first earth passed away* (Revelation 21:1). This confirms the revelation to Peter, *the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat* (2 Peter 3:12)! But these present day seminary leaders say the new earth is just this present earth rejuvenated, cleaned up, made into an eternal state. This is clearly false teaching and contrary to the revelation given to Isaiah, the Apostle Peter, and the Apostle John. Peter actually says *the earth **and its works** will be burned up*.

## **D. Being Ready for the day of the Lord – 3:14-18**

**2 Peter 3:14-16** *Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

The most significant thing about this paragraph is Peter's reference to Paul. But first, we should not overlook the exhortation *be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless*. The text actually reads: ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὕρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ, literally, in the order of the Greek words: *without spot and without blame in Him to be found in peace*.

In his first epistle, Peter described Christ's death with these words:

*... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*  
(1 Peter 1:19).

The words for *unblemished and spotless* are the same as in 2 Peter 3:14. They are also the requirement for sacrifices under the Mosaic Law. The point is to make the life of Christ our standard, and as a result of that spotlessness and blamelessness, we will *be found in peace*.

Now to the unique contribution of this paragraph, Peter's comments about Paul's writings. Peter here says five things about Paul's epistles:

1. Paul wrote *according to the wisdom given him [by the revelation of God] ... in all his letters*.
2. Paul was *speaking in them of these things*, that is, Paul has the same eschatology as Peter.
3. Paul's epistles are sometimes *hard to understand*.
4. *The untaught and unstable distort Paul's epistles*.
5. Paul's epistles are to be equated with *the rest of the Scriptures*.

**2 Peter 3:17-18** *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

Here Peter gives us the reason for studying eschatology (end-time biblical prophecy). It's not to predict the future. The reason for eschatology is to *be on your guard*. Peter gives this in a series of cause and effect statements.

*Knowing this beforehand*, is important:

So that you will *be on your guard*

So that you are not *carried away by the error of unprincipled men*

So that you will not *fall from your own steadfastness*

So that you will *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*

Peter closes with a simple benediction, declaring not only the glory of Christ but emphasizing that glory *both now and to the day of eternity*.

*Amen.*



# THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

According to Peter, studying biblical eschatology (*knowing this beforehand*) has several values:

1. It makes you more alert concerning the times you live in.
2. It makes you more discerning of false teaching.
3. It helps lead you to an assurance of your salvation.
4. It helps you continue in your spiritual growth.

I would like to add a few more from a more general reference:

5. It teaches you to have a literal view of the Bible because all prophecy is fulfilled literally.
6. It helps you recognize different ages (dispensations) in the outworking of God's purpose.
7. It points to the seriousness of sin, the need for righteousness, and the certainty of judgment.