

2Peter 3:10b-12 The Heavens and the Earth will be Destroyed

2 Peter 3:10b-12 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. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² 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!

Last week we introduced the doctrine of God's judgment of the world in the destruction of the world with fire, and the time frame in which it happens. It happens on the last day which is described in a variety of ways: God's Great Judgment, the Last Trumpet, Great white throne *judgment* and also the day of the Lord as Peter points out.

2 Peter 3:10 ¹⁰ 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.

Of course, the day of the Lord has been proclaimed for thousands of years by God's prophets, not the least of whom was Isaiah.

Isaiah 13:6-11 ⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷ Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. ⁸ They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. ¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. ¹¹ Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

You might recognize this portion of Scripture as the words that the apostle John delivered regarding the coming judgment of Jesus Christ to this world.

Revelation 6:10-17 ¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.* ¹² I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. ¹⁴ The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

By the way, when John gives us the depiction of what he sees in heaven, as the Lamb breaks the six seals, we know that the Lamb is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Isaiah tell us that this is the same event leading up to what he calls the day of the Lord.

This day of the Lord is the judgment of God on the world, the same judgment that Luke records for us in the book of Acts as he references Jesus Christ as that judge.

Acts 10:40-42 ⁴⁰ "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. ⁴² "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

Notice again who is doing the judging. The One appointed by God who was raised up on the third day. In other words, it is Jesus Christ Himself doing the judging of all men on that final day. The reason this is important to understand is because this shows clearly that the One judging is obviously, God Himself, as Isaiah points out.

The word *Lord* in Isaiah, in reference to the Day of the Lord, is Yahveh in Hebrew, or Jehovah, which is a direct reference to the Creator, God. Since Jehovah is the one referenced as the judge on the last day, and since it is clear that Jesus Christ is the One doing the judging on the last day, according to Luke, it affirms that Jesus Christ is none other than Jehovah, our Almighty God and Creator.

And so, this Day of the Lord, according to Peter in our text speaks of this same day when Jesus Christ returns to judge the living and the dead. And as we have seen in the previous studies a lot is happening on this particular day, including the rapture/resurrection of God's people, the judging of the unbelievers, and the casting of those, including Satan and his angels, into the Lake of Fire.

But something else happens on the last day that is very important for believers to understand and that is that on this same day God, Christ Himself, will destroy the present heavens and earth with intense heat.

I suppose the question is, why? Why does God destroy the earth, and why with intense heat? And does this mean the ultimate annihilation of the earth?

Three questions here. Let's deal with the first. Why does God destroy the earth? You'll remember that the earth was created by God in six literal days, according to Genesis 1. And as Genesis reveals, God created this earth, and the universe for that matter, for the express reason to place man on this earth to have dominion, or to rule this earth for man's good and God's glory.

All of this was, of course, prior to man's rebellion, at which point sin and the effects of God's curse upon sinful man took place where the seed of the serpent, Satan, and the seed of the woman, ultimately Christ, would war to the final day which is depicted in the passages I've already cited.

But what is noteworthy is that man was not the only recipient of the curse. All of creation was effected to where the earth and the universe actually took on a different component, that of deteriorating along with man, who would eventually return as dust back to the earth through physical death.

The earth, along with man and all living creatures, would be cursed in such a way that it would not produce for man what it was originally designed to produce. And God made this clear as He pronounced His original judgment upon man.

Genesis 3:17-19 ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

The ground itself became cursed as part of man's judgment from God. And this was acknowledged many years later by the father of Noah who made this observation as it was revealed to him by God.

Genesis 5:28-29 ²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. ²⁹ Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands *arising* from the ground which the LORD has cursed."

Lamech saw in his son, Noah, a redeemer from the curse that God inflicted upon the ground, and by extension to man. Lamech understood that for man to live in a world free from the curse of the ground that God's chosen instrument must come into the world to accomplish this. Lamech, along with all men in those days, understood the curse of the ground, but Lamech, by faith, longed for rest from the curse, which is why he names his son, Noah, which means, Rest.

Of course, we know that the seed of the woman is what Lamech is referencing as it was originally promised by God to Adam, and Lamech is simply carrying on that hope of the future seed reestablishing paradise on this earth as the curse would necessarily be lifted by God.

Well, how would the curse be lifted by God? We know that the curse is lifted from man through the seed of the woman as the Son of God was born of a virgin, who then also became the son of man, through whom the curse would be judicially dealt with once and for all. Thus the law given to Moses would be the precursor to a new promise of hope found in the One who would fulfill the law perfectly for us and redeem us from its curse.

Galatians 3:13-14 ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE "-- ¹⁴ in order that in

Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

But having our curse taken out of the way necessarily means we are no longer under the penalty of that curse which is death and condemnation, which is precisely what Paul tells the Romans.

Romans 8:1 ^{NAU} Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

But the curse, as we've already seen, was also placed upon this physical universe, including our planet earth. But when John describes the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation 21 he then makes this statement about this new earth in chapter 22.

Revelation 22:1-4 ^{NAU} Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ ***There will no longer be any curse***; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

But for the new heavens and the new earth to come onto the scene something must first happen to the old earth and the old heavens, which is precisely what John tells us.

Revelation 21:1 ^{NAU} 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.

Notice that John describes the old earth and the old heavens as the first heaven and the first earth. The word for first in the Greek is *protos* and it simply means first or chief. But it carries the idea of being the standard by which the second or new earth will be measured.

It's the same concept we have when the Greek word *protos* is carried over into the English in the word prototype.

The Random House College Dictionary defines prototype as: the original or model on which something is based or formed.

We use the term today for things like automobiles, boats or homes. And so, each year we see the new model cars coming out and they are based upon a prototype that was drawn up by engineers who

dreamed up what they thought would be new and innovative that was better than the old model.

But in each case, whether it's a prototype for a car, a boat or the newest smart phone, the prototype is always constructed to be a new something of the same type. In other words, the prototype for the newest car is still a car. The prototype for the home of the future, as we used to see back in the 1950's and 60's, was always a prototype for a new type of house.

And the prototype for a new earth is still an earth; a new earth, not a non-earth.

But unlike prototypes that may be the same type but are not made of the same old car, the new earth is in fact made from the old earth as it is transformed from a cursed earth into an earth devoid of the curse as John points out in Rev. 22:3

And so, we're not dealing with the old earth being totally annihilated and then God calling into existence a different earth taking its place. Rather, the Scriptures tell us that this same earth we call home will have the curse lifted from it through the same redemptive work of Christ that took our curse, and it will be demonstrated dramatically on the last day when the Lord destroys the curse by destroying the earth with intense heat.

In fact, Peter wants to make his case so absolute that in the span of five verses in this short third chapter of his second letter, he addresses this three different times.

2 Peter 3:7 ⁷ But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:10 ¹⁰ 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.

2 Peter 3:12 ¹² 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!

It's clear that God is going to judge this world with fire in the event Peter describes as the "day of judgment", "the day of the Lord" and "the day of God," respectively in the verses we just quoted.

But, of course, this raises the question, why would this not mean total annihilation? For the same reason that Peter points out as he compares this future destruction of the world with the first destruction of the world, which pointed to God's judgment of sin and ultimate restoration through cleansing by comparing this future event with the flood.

2 Peter 3:5-7 by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶ through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. ⁷ But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Both judgments centered around ungodliness as God destroyed both man and earth. Again, notice verse 6 of 2Peter 3, "through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water."

This particular word for destroyed in verse 6 is the Greek word *apollumi* and it gives the sense of utter destruction. And of course if you were alive at that time and experienced the full wrath of God upon the earth as the waters from the deep and above were violently released and destroyed the face of the earth, along with all living land creatures, you would concur, as did Noah, who was there.

But even with this total destruction no one would ever conclude that the earth was totally annihilated or ceased to exist needing the creation of a brand new earth.

No, God's watery destruction of the earth was complete for the purpose at hand. To judge men's rebellion and cleanse the earth in such a dramatic way so as to show God's full wrath against sin as He redeemed His chosen, Noah and his family.

In the same way, when the Lord returns on the last day in judgment He will utterly destroy the earth of sinful men as He uses fire, not water, to accomplish His will. This is why the Lord reminded Noah that He will only use water one time for that type of judgment, a prototype of judgments, if you will.

Genesis 9:11-13 ¹¹ "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me

and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; ¹³ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

Notice that last verse. “I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.” Though the rainbow is a covenant sign for Noah and his family and all humanity it is also a covenant sign from God to the earth. The Hebrew word here is *erets* and simply means the land, the physical stuff that makes up the earth.

And the implication here is that God has made a promise to the land that it will not be destroyed again through water, but it will be destroyed a last time through fire. And this what Peter addresses in our text. It is not an annihilation of the earth, but a judgment of the earth so as to remove the curse once and for all for the resurrected people of God to dwell on as He dwells among us forever in the New Jerusalem.

This is the exact same result we see in the book of Revelation concerning the aftermath of the fiery judgment when out of its ashes arises the new heavens and new earth since the curse is not limited to just this earth, but the entire created universe.

Revelation 21:1 ^{NAU} 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.

Here, John is describing the same event that Peter is addressing, but John uses the term passed away.

It’s interesting that the New English Translation does not use this phrase as do almost all reliable English translations. Instead, it alludes to a total annihilation.

^{NET} **Revelation 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had ceased to exist, and the sea existed no more.

But the Greek word for “passed away” is *aperchomai* and it simply means to go away or to depart. The present earth and heavens are reserved for a fiery judgment on the last day, but they will not cease to exist. They will simply be set free from the curse of sin and the death that is attached to that sin.

This is precisely what Paul was referring to when addressing the resurrection and how the resurrection will not only affect mankind but the entire creation of God.

Romans 8:18-23 ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Notice what Paul does here. He compares the resurrection of all believers, who hope in the future glory with their God, Creator and Savior, with the same hope that the entire creation groans for. In this way he isn't suggesting that the earth and the created order of things like stars and planets are living breathing entities, but he uses anthropomorphic type language to give life to the notion that even the entire creation is subjected to the curse that was placed upon man.

It's almost as if Paul is saying that as much as man wants this curse to be lifted from the earth, the earth itself and the entire creation of God longs for a return to its original paradise state. In doing this Paul clearly equates the resurrection of men with the resurrection, or maybe a better term, complete restoration of the physical universe.

This is what Paul means when he says, ¹⁹ "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."

Romans 8:19

The phrase, "the revealing of the sons of God" is another way of describing the resurrection of believers to glory. And this is put in the context of believer's, including Paul, suffering in this present world as he concludes that there is nothing in this present world that compares to the glory that is to be revealed.

This glory is what he calls, "*our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body, in verse 23.

Well, if Paul is speaking of our physical resurrection bodies being tied to the event that includes the restoration of a creation that groans with us for release of the curse, then it only stands to reason that just like the same body that goes down into the grave is the same body that comes up at the resurrection, therefore, the same earth and the same moon and the same sun, and yes, the same entire universe that groans with us to be released, will be the same earth we walk on today, along with the same creation that is restored with us on that last day.

Simply because Isaiah, and Peter and John all describe a new earth being created by God on the last day, it does not preclude that it is not the same earth any more than our new resurrected bodies are not the same bodies that are buried in the ground.

1 Corinthians 15:41-43 ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

The new earth must, of necessity, be the same earth that now eagerly awaits the revealing of the sons of God as they are resurrected on that last day in which the heavens and the earth will be destroyed with great heat to be revealed as the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

In light of all of this Peter then asks the question:

2 Peter 3:11-12 ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² 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!

This final judgment of God, described here in verse 12, as the “day of God,” is a day that is coming, No one can hold it back. And this day of God will finally make all things right.

But when Peter goes to all the trouble of emphasizing God’s judgment being manifest in the total destruction of all things on the last day, which of course includes the judgment of all men, then it is something to which we must pay attention.

And this is why he says, in light of all this judgment from God on the last day, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?

Why this question in light of God's judgment? Because it is a judgment that we as believers in Christ Jesus escape, even though it's a judgment all men deserve, including us.

When you consider the wrath of God from which we've been delivered, in Christ, it should humble us and cause us to thank our God and Savior with lives of love and obedience.

And obviously, this is the point Peter has been making as he continues to remind us of the world's distractions that tend to keep our eyes off of our God, be they the pleasures of the world, the trials of the world, the persecution that may ensue as we serve our Lord and Savior, and the overall curse of the world that beats us down on a daily basis, just in the growing old process, where we lose our strength, stamina, and health in many cases.

Living in the present world has many challenges, especially for believers who desire to walk with Christ faithfully in the power of the Spirit. But what Peter has been doing is helping us put life into perspective as we look past this world and unto the kingdom of God that our Lord has promised will come to pass as He is most assuredly coming back.

And on that final day He will finally fulfill all that He promised. And it is in this context that Peter wants us to consider our walk with Christ today.

2 Peter 3:11 what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

When Paul was writing to Timothy he gave him the same exhortation as he encouraged Timothy to consider his life from, not only his present situation, but also from the perspective of his future life with Christ.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 ⁷ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

Godliness, for the sake of godliness, no more guarantees eternal life than does using the law to accomplish justification. But Paul's point is that the life God gave us in Christ, as He regenerated our dead spirits unto eternal life, has a life all its own. It is a life whose heart beats for God with a heart of flesh that was placed there as He replaced our hearts of stone with a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

This is what Paul was talking about to Timothy and it is what Peter is addressing in our text. They are not suggesting that living godly lives earns us anything, but it honors the One who gave us this life as we choose to flee from the things of the world and embrace and walk in the truth of who God is and what He's given us in His son.

To walk in the Spirit is godliness since it is only the Spirit who enables us to walk after the things of God which is laid out in the word of God that the Spirit has given us. And Peter has already touched on this earlier in this letter.

1 Peter 2:1-3 ^{NAU} Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

This is what growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ produces; godliness. We don't have to invent it, we don't have to somehow conger it up because it is a natural, or should I say, a supernatural outworking of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we utilize the means for this growth which is the word of God and prayer that we should long for as newborn babes long for the milk that nourishes them.

To think that godliness and holiness will simply fall on us without actively following after our Great shepherd is to misunderstand our walk with Christ.

There are no short cuts to faithfully representing our Savior in this world which is what the process of sanctification is all about. And even Jesus reminds us of this when He prayed to our Father prior to His crucifixion and resurrection.

John 17:14-18 ¹⁴ "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. ¹⁶ "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

We are in this world to be sent out by our Lord and Savior into the world with the express purpose of representing our Creator God before the world. And Jesus makes it clear that this is accomplished as we are sanctified by the truth which is the word of God.

If you think that you can grow in the grace of God without the knowledge of God then you've missed a very important aspect of what we are to be nourished on, so as to grow in Christ. To neglect the reading and the studying of the word of God only produces one thing in the life of a believer; anemic children who are weak and susceptible to the very thing Peter is warning against in this letter; false teachers who want you to follow after them instead of Christ.

Don't think for a moment that it doesn't make any difference how we pursue a life of godliness and holiness. We have to make choices every day. And we have to battle the flesh, or that old nature which has a tendency to rear its ugly heads in our lives. But, in Christ, we have the Spirit who enables us to choose and walk after the Lord with lives that honor him. And Paul reminds believers of this when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:22-24 ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been ***created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.***

“Created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Truth and righteousness go hand in hand and so does our ability to put off the old as we put on the new day by day. Long for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

And one of the things that Peter continues to drive home in this process of godliness and holiness is that having the proper

perspective in life will enable us to walk effectively for Christ as we look to the promise of the coming day of the Lord.

2 Peter 3:12 ¹² 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!

Here it is again; the reminder that Jesus Christ is coming back in the same way in which He left; bodily, in glory. But He's coming back to wrap up His plan of redemption and judgment and bring His people into His presence to dwell with Him forevermore in the Kingdom which He has been preparing for us since He left.

That final day will usher in our hope of redemption and the future reign with Christ that He has promised to all of His people. In light of this, Peter reminds us, what sort of people ought you to be in the meantime? I will leave you with the promised hope and this is where we'll pick up next week.

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

I want to expand on what the new heavens and new earth actually are and how this fits into the plan of God to purchase for us a kingdom and an inheritance that was accomplished through His Son. In the mean time let's take a peak into what this kingdom will entail as we end with this.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} 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. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."