

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Day of the Lord

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 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. (2 Peter 3:8–10, KJV 1900)

Peter refers to the promised but long-awaited event as "the day of the Lord." We borrow this term in referring to special days for people. You might say to your best friend on her wedding day, "This is your day! I hope you enjoy every minute of it." On that day of all days the Lord's glory shall shine, and He shall realize the fulfillment of every objective that He purposed from before the foundation of the world. For those who live at the time, it will be a day unexpected, like a burglar who breaks into your home in the middle of the night. Thoughtless and unwise Bible students often ignore Scripture's "Thief in the night" analogy regarding the Second Coming and wrest the Scripture to fabricate one scheme after another to claim that they have discovered the Bible's timeline. Supposedly they know precisely when that day shall dawn. Be patient. The error of their wrested interpretation shall clearly manifest itself when the sun rises on the day *after* their predicted date. Both Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:2 and context) and Peter in this lesson use the "thief in the night" analogy to refer to the time when the Lord shall return. While Scripture nudges us that 1) the scoffers are wrong, and 2) the Day of the Lord's return, though certain, is not known by us, Scripture also is certain about specific events that shall occur on that day.

...in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. Whatever the plural "heavens" means, it shall come to a sudden and complete end on that day, accompanied by "a great noise." Take note that God shall bring this day. It shall not be a cataclysmic day brought about by human madmen who set off a monstrous bomb of some kind. Every event of this day shall be God's doing, not the work of a madman. Scripture clearly affirms this truth.

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the

same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebrews 2:10-12; quoted from Psalm 102:25-27)

The known laws of nature affirm what this passage revealed long centuries before man discovered these laws. This world is slowly wearing out and winding down. If you watch the news carefully, every few years around January 1, you will read a small news article telling about scientists correcting the international clock with a "Leap second." The rate at which the earth spins is slowing down, yes, gradually and ever so slowly, but it is measurably slowing down. The material world definitely is not stable and remaining the same as the scoffers in 2 Peter 3 falsely claimed. Think not only of this tiny planet, but of the whole expanse of the universe. According to this passage, the time shall surely come when it all wears out, and God folds it up and puts it away, similar to filling a trash bag full of old worn out clothes and giving them to Goodwill or some other charity. "...and they shall be changed." Whatever happens to the "Raw material" of this universe at that time we cannot tell fully. Shall God annihilate it? If He chooses to do so, He certainly has the right to do so. He made it all, so He may do as He wishes with it at that day. Shall He "Change" it, stripping away all the evidences of sin and recasting it as a perfect complement for His people and His glory for eternity? I'm content to wait and enjoy the glorious surprise of that day.

The greater truth of this passage appears in the words that follow, "*...but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*" God created this amazing universe, and the whole work in no way altered who He is. He shall end it, and ending it shall in no way change who He is. He is ever and always God, timeless and eternal, full of love for His beloved children, a love that endures through the canopy of time and survives the final meltdown of this world. We anchor our faith on the God who transcends all things material, not on anything in or of this world. When I was a young man, a unique and acclaimed singer sang a beautiful hymn that underscores this truth, "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand." For

purposes of our present study, rest assured that God, not man, shall decide when this natural universe has worn out and is ready to be folded up and put away. And He, not a madman, shall bring the events of the day to His intended end. Peter gives us all that we could fathom of that day.

...and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

In short order after the heavens pass away with a great noise, the elements that form the building blocks of all matter shall "...melt with fervent heat." God's His protected family shall escape this fire.

...the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. When we study Scripture, we need to pay attention to every word. Don't miss even one word. Did you notice that Peter in this statement takes us into a whole added dimension. So far he has covered the heavens and the elements of matter. In this point, Peter expands the scope of God's work in bringing this worn out garment of the material universe to its intended end. Not only shall God's fire burn up matter, but it shall also consume "*the works that are therein.*" Whatever man has done or may be doing when that Day arrives shall be burned up. Whatever endures beyond that event shall be God's, not man's doing.

In teaching on final things, Jesus focused on His judgment of humanity.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28-29)

I observe in this verse that the resurrection of humanity, the event that Jesus here describes, is not a multiple event that occurs in stages over a thousand years, seven years, or three and a half years. The whole of humanity, righteous and wicked, shall be raised in one epochal "hour." Jesus did not describe a secret resurrection of the most elite of the righteous. He described a single event that shall occur in one "hour" in which all who have died shall be resurrected realize their righteous end, some "the resurrection of life," and some "the resurrection of damnation."

I further observe from Jesus' own words, that only one class of all humanity shall face judgment in that day. One class shall experience "the resurrection of life." They shall arise and go immediately into eternity with God. Their sins already faced God's judgment in Jesus, and He satisfied God's righteous demands for their penalty. Jesus already paid the penalty for their sins, so they cannot be righteously penalized again. Such an action would commit "Double jeopardy." The hymn writer of the beautiful hymn "Rock of Ages," Augustus Toplady, wrote about this point quite clearly and truthfully.

It Pleas'd the Lord to Bruise Him

August Toplady

From whence this fear and unbelief?
Did not the Father put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous judge of men,
Condemn me for that debt of sin,
Which Lord was charg'd on thee?

Complete atonement thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whate'er thy people ow'd:
Nor can his wrath on me take place,
If shelter'd in thy righteousness,
And ransomed by thy blood.

If thou hast my discharge procur'd,
And in the sinner's room endur'd,
The whole of wrath divine:
Payment he cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

If thou for me hast purchas'd faith
By thy obedience unto death,
He must the grace bestow:
Would Israel's God a price receive,
And not the purchas'd blessing give?
His justice answers, No!

Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest,
Have bought thy liberty:
Trust to his efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus dy'd for thee.

You, dear child of grace, have no reason to ponder that day with fear or dread. You shall arise in the spotless righteousness of your Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall experience one glorious reality on that day, "the resurrection of life." Paul sums up the point beautifully, "*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:18) You shall arise to the full realization of this truth that claimed your comfort through your pilgrimage here. You shall not arise to a condemning judgment, for Jesus already faced that judgment for you, wholly, decisively, and finally.

Only the wicked shall arise on that day to "the resurrection of damnation." In this term, "damnation" refers to the judgment event in which all the wicked shall be righteously judged for their sins and experience the righteous sentence from God against them for those sins. In this life, we may doubt or question the severity of their sentence, but on that day when we shall understand God's righteous ways fully, we shall realize that the sentence is altogether just. Whatever awaits you, child of grace, Jesus sums up with the glorious words, "*the resurrection of life.*" What a day that will be!

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor