



LESSON SIX

God's Judgement on the Heretical mockers and on the Heavens and the Earth

Scripture Reading:

2 Peter 3

- 3:1** This second letter, beloved, I now write to you; in them *both* I stir up your sincere mind with a reminder,
- 3:2** So that you would remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *preached* by your apostles;
- 3:3** Knowing this first, that in the last of days mockers will come with mocking, going on according to their own lusts
- 3:4** And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue in this way from the beginning of creation.
- 3:5** For this escapes them by their own choosing, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth was compacted out of water and through water,
- 3:6** Through which the world then, being flooded with water, perished.
- 3:7** But the heavens and the earth now, by the same word, have been stored up for fire, being kept unto the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.
- 3:8** But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.
- 3:9** The Lord does not delay regarding the promise, as some count delay, but is long-suffering toward you, not intending that any perish but that all advance to repentance.
- 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements, burning with intense heat, will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be burned up.
- 3:11** Since all these things are to be thus dissolved, what kind of persons ought you to be in holy manner of life and godliness,
- 3:12** Expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements, burning with intense heat, are to be melted away?

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. In the last days mockers will come. What period is the last days refer to?
2. The mockers said the everything has continued unchanged from the beginning of creation. Is that true? How did Peter fight back?

Section 2:

1. What is the reason Peter passes over the millennial kingdom?
2. What does it mean to be righteous and godly? How does it contrast to living an ungodly life?

Section 3:

1. What is Peter's word about 'the day of the Lord' in verse 10? When will this take place?
2. Why is the Lord's heart is not set on the time of His fulfillment but on His people?
3. What is the way for us to hasten the Lord's coming back?

Section 4:

1. Why do we need to live a life in holy manner of God's holy nature and godliness?
2. What should be our attitude toward the day of God?
3. How is 'the day of God' related to 'the day of the Lord'?

----- [SECTION 1] -----

In this message we come to chapter three of 2 Peter. In 3:1-9 we see God's judgment on the heretical mockers. In this Epistle we have not only false teachers but also mockers. These mockers may be the false teachers themselves or those who are influenced by the teachings of the false ones. Both the false teachers and the heretical mockers will be judged by God. Let us now consider 3:1-9 verse by verse.

In verse 1 Peter says, "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you, in both of which I stir up your pure mind by a reminder." Here we see that Peter's aim was to stir up the pure mind of the saints. In order to understand God's governmental dealings, we need a pure mind.

In verse 2 Peter continues, "To remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior by your apostles." The words spoken by the prophets are the contents of the Old Testament, the Scriptures (v. 16; 1:20), and the commandments by the apostles are the contents of the New Testament, the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). Peter uses both to confirm and strengthen his writings as an inoculation against the heretical teachings in the apostasy. In his first Epistle, concerning the full salvation of God, he refers to both the prophets and the apostles (1 Pet. 1:9-12). Then in the second Epistle, concerning the shining of the divine truth, he refers again to both (1:12-21). Here in verse 2 Peter does this for the third time. Therefore, Peter's teaching is based upon the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament, the two sections of the Holy Word. This indicates that what Peter says here actually refers to the entire Bible. His reminder is based upon both the prophecies of the Old Testament and the teachings of the New Testament.

HERESIES MOCKERS IN THE LAST

In the Old Testament there were not only genuine prophets speaking God's word, which is like a lamp shining upon us, but there were also false prophets among the people. In 2:1 Peter says that there will be also false teachers among us, those who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.

Verse 3 says, "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come with mocking, going on according to their own lusts." The "last days" denotes the closing period of the present age (2 Tim. 3:1; Jude 18). This period began from the end of the so-called apostolic age, in the latter part of the first century, and will last until Christ's second appearing. In verse 3 Peter tells us that in the last days mockers will come. These mockers may be the false teachers in 2:1. Their mocking is part of the apostasy and is according to their lusts.

According to verse 4, these mockers say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." The promise of the Lord's coming was given to the fathers by the holy prophets in the Old Testament (Psa. 72:6-17; 110:1-3; 118:26; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14:3-9; Mal. 4:1-3). But the mockers said, with a mocking tone, "Where is the promise of His coming?" It is possible that they used the pronoun "His" in a contemptuous manner. The mockers said that everything has continued unchanged from the beginning of creation.

WILLFULLY IGNORANT OF THE WORD OF GOD

In verses 5 and 6 Peter fights back: "For this is hidden from them by their own willfulness, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth, subsisting out of water and through water, through which the world then, being flooded by the water, perished." Here Peter points out that the mockers willingly ignore the record in the Old Testament concerning God's judgment by the flood. That flood was a serious judgment. Nevertheless, the mockers willingly ignored the record in the Bible about it. Literally, the Greek words rendered "this is hidden from them by their own willfulness" mean "this escapes them by their own willfulness"; that is, they are willfully ignorant of this. Hence, it escapes their notice. The heretical mockers ignore willfully and deny purposely the word of God spoken by the prophets in the Scriptures. Therefore, Peter reminds the believers to remember the holy words spoken by both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles (vv. 1-2).

The promise concerning the Lord's coming (v. 4) is the word of God. The mockers should not

ignore that it was by the word of God that the heavens and the earth came into existence (Heb. 11:3), and it is by the same word that the heavens and the earth are being kept (Heb. 1:3) for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:7). Therefore, the mockers should be assured that by the word of God all the material universe, including them, will be judged by the coming of the Lord.

Peter says in verse 5 that by the word of God the heavens were of old. The words “were of old” mean existed from ancient times. In the beginning, that is, of old, the heavens and the earth were created by God (Gen. 1:1). By the word of God (Psa. 33:6) the heavens came into existence first, and then the earth (Job 38:4-7).

In verse 5 Peter speaks of the earth “subsisting out of water and through water.” As in Colossians 1:17, the Greek word rendered “subsisting” literally means standing together, standing with (in juxtaposition, side by side). First the earth came into existence in Genesis 1:1, and then from Genesis 1:9, also by the word (the speaking) of God (Psa. 33:9), the earth began to subsist out of water and through water, that is, to stand together with water in juxtaposition, partly emerging out of water and partly submerged under water. This is the way the earth came into existence.

The relative pronoun “which” in verse 6 refers to water in verse 5. The earth subsisted out of water and through water in an orderly condition. But through the same water it was judged and destroyed by the flood at Noah’s time (Gen. 7:17-24). This indicates that all things have not remained as they were from the beginning of creation.

JUDGMENTS BY WATER AND FIRE

The Greek word for world, kosmos, denotes order, a system, the world with its inhabitants. The earth in the preceding verse became the world in this verse, not merely the earth, but the earth with its inhabitants in a system. This refers to the world in Noah’s age, which was judged by God with the flood due to the sinfulness and ungodliness of that age (Gen. 6:5-7, 11-13, 17). This book is concerned mainly with the divine government and all its judgments. The first judgment on the world was the one executed by the flood in Noah’s day, which cleared up that ungodly world. This thought must have been in

Peter while he was writing this verse. It implies that this age of apostasy will also be judged on the day of the Lord’s appearing, as it was judged in the day of Noah (Matt. 24:37-39). The word “then” in verse 6 refers to the age of Noah.

The word “flooded” in verse 6 refers to the flood of Noah’s time, the flood that caused the earth to be destroyed. The word “perish” means destroyed, demolished, laid waste (Gen. 6:13, 17). The earth, therefore, did not remain the same, but had a change, a cataclysm, by being flooded with water, and was destroyed. Here we see Peter’s strong argument against the heretical mockers. They said that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” But actually a cataclysm came upon the earth because of the ungodliness of its inhabitants. This implies that the present world will not remain as it is, but will also have a cataclysm by the Lord’s coming with His judgment upon the rebellious, including the false teachers and the heretical mockers in the apostasy.

----- [SECTION 2] -----

In verse 7 Peter goes on to say, “But the heavens and the earth now, by the same word, have been reserved for fire, being kept unto the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” In this verse the word “now” is in contrast with “then” in verse 6. It refers to the present heavens and earth, which remain by the word of God (Gen. 8:22), not to be destroyed again by water (Gen. 9:11), but to be burned by fire on the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

In verse 7 Peter speaks of the “same word.” The false and heretical teachings in the apostasy are a deviation from the word of God spoken by the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament. Hence, the antidote administered by Peter’s inoculation against the poison of the apostate teachings is the holy word with the divine revelation, which he emphasizes repeatedly.

According to Peter’s word, the heavens and the earth “have been reserved for fire.” The word “reserved” means kept in store. The fire here is the fire that will burn up the heavens and the earth (v. 10) at the end of the millennium when the judgment of the great white throne is come (Rev. 20:11). God’s initial judgment upon the universe was by water (2 Pet. 3:6), but His consummate judgment will be by fire. Water

only washes away the filthiness from the surface, but fire changes the nature of the entire substance. This indicates further that the heavens and the earth will not remain the same as they are, but will be cleared up by fire, and that the ungodly false teachers and mockers will be judged and destroyed under the divine government.

The judgment in verse 7 denotes the judgment of the great white throne, which will follow the millennium and precede the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 20:11—21:1). Through that judgment all the ungodly will be cast into the lake of fire for destruction. Since it will be the final judgment upon men and demons, it is of the greatest concern to the government of God in the universe.

A THOUSAND YEARS AS ONE DAY

Here Peter skips over the millennium, the period of time from the Lord's coming to the judgment of the great white throne. To Peter, as to the Lord, that one thousand years will be as one day (v. 8), a short time. Peter is dealing here with God's governmental judgment. The millennium will not be for this purpose in God's dispensation.

Here Peter speaks concerning the "mountain peaks" of the Lord's coming and of God's final judgment, but not of the "plain" of the millennial kingdom that lies between the "peak" of the Lord's coming and that of the final judgment. In this Epistle Peter is concerned with God's judgment, not with the peaceful kingdom of the thousand years. For this reason he passes over the matter of the millennial kingdom.

In verse 8 Peter says, "But do not let this one thing be hidden from you, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Literally, the Greek word rendered "be hidden from you" means escape you, that is, escape your notice.

With the Lord God, who is eternal, the sense of time is very different from what it is with man. Hence, for the fulfillment of His word, especially the word of His promise, time is not the crucial matter. The crucial matter is the fact. Whatever God has promised will eventually become a fact. We should not be troubled by the sense of delay according to our reckoning of time.

Verse 9 says, "The Lord does not delay regarding the promise, as some count delay, but is longsuffering toward you, not intending any to perish, but all to come to repentance." Here Peter says that the Lord does not delay, or is not tardy, regarding the promise, as some count delay, tardiness. The mockers must have been those who count the Lord's delay as tardiness. They may have accused Him of being idle, since tardiness is a delay that is related to idleness.

In verse 9 Peter says that the Lord is longsuffering toward us. The Lord's heart is set not on the time of the fulfillment of His promise, but on His people, whom He possesses peculiarly as a treasure (1 Pet. 2:9; Titus 2:14), so that none of us, His precious redeemed ones, would be punished by His governmental judgment, but have a prolonged season to repent so that we may be spared from His punishment.

The words "to perish" in verse 9 mean to be destroyed. Since "you" in this verse refers to the believers in Christ, "to perish" refers not to the eternal perdition of the unbelievers, but to the punishment of God's governmental discipline of the believers (1 Pet. 4:17-18; cf. 1 Thes. 5:3, 8). Likewise, the word "all" refers to the believers. Furthermore, "repentance" here is repentance unto salvation (2 Pet. 3:15), repentance for not being watchful for the day of the Lord's coming (v. 10) and not living a life in a holy manner and in godliness (v. 11).

We need to realize that the Lord's heart is not set on the time of the fulfillment of His promise, but is set on His people. If necessary, the Lord can wait for another day, another period of a thousand years, to fulfill His promise. Today many Christians are saying that the Lord Jesus will come back soon. However, the Lord's coming may not be as soon as people think. In Revelation 22 the Lord said, "I come quickly." Nevertheless, nearly two thousand years have passed since the Lord spoke that word. To Him, this is only two days, for with the Lord a thousand years are as one day.

Do not listen to those who set a time for the Lord's coming back. In the past some predicted the time of the Lord's coming. In the last century one group of people believed that the Lord Jesus was coming on a particular day. They made themselves ready and even put on white robes. Of course, nothing happened.

After World War I, a number of books were written on the prophecies concerning the Lord's coming. Some Bible teachers claimed that, according to their view of the world situation, the Lord's coming was at hand. But more than fifty years have passed since those writings appeared, and the Lord Jesus still has not come. We need to be reminded, therefore, of Peter's word concerning a thousand years being as one day to the Lord.

When the Lord Jesus comes back, He will not only judge the negative things, but will also receive His bride. This means that He will come both as the Judge and as the Bridegroom. Hence, in order for the Lord to come as the Bridegroom, the bride must be prepared for Him. Is the bride ready for the Bridegroom's coming? Is it possible for the Lord to come today as the Bridegroom? Because the bride is not yet ready, we may say that it is possible that the Lord's coming will not be as soon as some figure. The bride can be prepared only through growth in life, and this takes time. Higher forms of life require more time to develop than lower forms do. The higher a certain life is, the longer it will take to grow. Because the bride must be prepared for the Bridegroom and because this preparation is through the growth in life, a growth that requires time, it is not likely that the Lord Jesus will come back right now.

My point here is that we should not be bothered or surprised by any delay concerning the Lord's coming. Do not blame the Lord and say, "Lord, You said in Revelation 22 that You were coming quickly. Why, then, has it been so long?" Instead of blaming the Lord for delaying His coming, we should be diligent to prepare ourselves to meet Him. We should also minister life to others so that they may grow and be prepared. This is the only way to hasten the Lord's coming back.

----- [SECTION 3] -----

THE DAY OF THE LORD COMING AS A THIEF

In 3:10 Peter said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements burning with intense heat will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be burned up." The day of the Lord will come mostly in the sense of judgment (1 Thes. 5:2) for God's government. Peter's word about the day of the Lord is mainly a

warning. In the New Testament the day of the Lord is mentioned mainly in relation to the Lord's judgment (1 Cor. 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 2 Tim. 4:8). The day of the Lord for His judgment (1 Thes. 5:3-4) will come before the millennium (Rev. 18:1; 19:11; 20:4-6).

In the day of the Lord the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be burned up. This will take place after the millennium (Rev. 20:7, 11). Peter's word regarding the day of the Lord in verse 10 indicates that again he passes over the one thousand years of the millennium, just as he did earlier in this chapter when he spoke of the Lord's coming in verse 4 and the judgment of the white throne in verse 7. The word "roar" indicates a rushing sound or noise. This may be a proclamation of a great change in the universe from the old to the new. The "elements" here are the physical elements of which the heavens are composed.

We may compare the words "dissolved" and "burned up" in this verse with "roll up" and "changed" in Hebrews 1:12, "fled away" and "no place found for them" in Revelation 20:11, and "passed away" in Revelation 21:1. The "burning with intense heat" to dissolve the heavens and the earth is the procedure God will use to roll up the heavens and the earth and put them away so that they may be changed from the old to the new (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). This will be God's final and consummate dealing with His creation in His government. All the material things in God's final dealing will pass away, but His eternal word will abide forever (Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:25). The word of His prophecy will remain and be fulfilled at His appointed time for the accomplishment of His eternal will, regardless of the changes that occur in the physical universe.

In 3:10 "works" may include both God's works of nature and man's works of art.

We have pointed out that the term "the day of the Lord" mainly signifies judgment. Hence, the day of the Lord equals the judgment of the Lord. This day of judgment will come as a thief in the night.

Peter says in verse 10 that in the day of the Lord the heavens will pass away. As in 3:7, Peter passes over the millennium because he is dealing here with God's governmental judgment. The

millennium will not be for this purpose in God's dispensation.

If we have a thorough study of both the Old and New Testaments, we shall see that the day of the Lord will probably last about seven years. It is nearly the same as the last week of the seventy weeks spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27. The first sixty-nine weeks, a period of four hundred eighty-three years, ended when the Lord Jesus was crucified, when He, the Messiah, was "cut off." There is now a gap between the sixty-ninth week and the beginning of the seventieth week. We are not told in the Bible how long this interval will be. But we do know that after this interval, there will be a period of seven years, which will be the seventieth week, before the millennium. The coming of the Lord will take place during these years.

THE LORD'S COMING

In 3:4 the mockers said, "Where is the promise of His coming?" The Greek word for "coming" is *parousia*, which literally means presence. According to the New Testament, the Lord's *parousia*, His coming, will not last merely an hour or a day. Rather, it will last for a period of time. Through detailed study of the Scriptures we have come to see that the Lord's *parousia* will probably begin at the middle of the seventieth week, that is, in the middle of the last seven years before the millennium. Furthermore, it will probably begin from the time the Lord leaves the throne of God in the third heaven and descends to the air wrapped in a cloud (Rev. 10). This means that the Lord's *parousia* will take place during the last three and a half years of this age.

According to chapter twelve of Revelation, the man-child will be raptured to the throne of God. Revelation 12:5 says, "And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who was about to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne." To be "caught up" is to be raptured. The rapture of the man-child will be to the throne of God, and it will be before the one thousand two hundred sixty days (v. 6), which will be the time of the great tribulation of three and a half years (forty-two months, Rev. 12:14; 13:5; 11:2). After the rapture of the man-child, there will be a period of three and a half years, or forty-two months. We need to notice the fact that the man-child will be raptured not to the air, but to the throne of

God, where the Lord Jesus is today. Therefore, for the man-child to be raptured to the throne of God means that the man-child will be in the presence of the Lord, in the *parousia* of the Lord. This proves that, in the midst of the seventieth week, the Lord Jesus will still be at the throne of God in the third heaven.

Chapter fourteen of Revelation speaks of the one hundred forty-four thousand firstfruit. Revelation 14:1 says, "And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." These one hundred forty-four thousand "who have been purchased from the earth" (Rev. 14:3) have been "purchased from among men as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb" (v. 4). These will be the first ripe ones in God's field and will be reaped before the harvest as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb. The harvest will be reaped later in verses 14 through 16. This means that the one hundred forty-four thousand will be raptured to the heavens before the harvest, just as the firstfruits of the good land were reaped and brought into the temple of God before the harvest (Lev. 23:10-11; Exo. 23:19). The events recorded in Revelation 14:6-13, all of which will take place during the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21), indicate clearly and prove strongly that the firstfruit in Revelation 14:1-5 will be raptured before the great tribulation, and the harvest in verses 14 through 16, which includes the majority of believers, will be raptured after the great tribulation. The firstfruit will be raptured to the heavens and will be with Christ there. After this rapture, there will be a period of three and a half years, the second half of the seventieth week.

Revelation 12 and 14 both speak of the same period of time. These chapters give us the ground to say that, at the earliest, the *parousia* of the Lord will begin from the middle of the seventieth week. After the raptures of the man-child and of the one hundred forty-four thousand firstfruit, the Lord Jesus will leave the third heaven with these overcoming saints and descend to the air. Instead of coming directly to the earth, He will remain in the air enclosed in a cloud. In Revelation 10:1 Christ is clothed with a cloud, but in Revelation 14:14 He is on the cloud. This latter verse corresponds to 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and indicates that the Lord's coming back is then to be made public. This means that first the

Lord's *parousia* will be hidden. Then, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:8 there will be the appearing of His *parousia*. The Lord's coming, therefore, will be hidden before it appears openly. His coming involves a period of time. First it will be in secret, and then it will appear to the public. It will be probably at the end of the seventieth week that the Lord's *parousia* will appear. At this time the Lord will no longer be clothed with the cloud, as in Revelation 10, but will be sitting on the cloud, seen openly, as in Revelation 14. That will be the appearing of His *parousia*, the appearing of His coming. The best way to translate 2 Thessalonians 2:8 is to follow a literal rendering and speak of the appearing of His coming.

If we have at least a general idea concerning the Lord's coming, we shall know why Peter says that the day of the Lord will come as a thief. Not only will the Lord Himself come as a thief, but even the day of the Lord will come in this way. The coming of that day will be hidden, not open.

We have pointed out that in 3:10 Peter says that in the day of the Lord the heavens will be burned. This will take place after the millennium. The day of the Lord will come before the millennium, but the burning of the heavens will be after the millennium. This is the reason we say that here Peter passes over the millennium, a period of a thousand years, and regards the burning of the heavens and the earth as the last matter that will take place in the day of the Lord.

----- [SECTION 4] -----

HOLY MANNER OF LIFE AND GODLINESS

In verse 11 Peter goes on to say, "All these things being thus dissolved, what kind of persons ought you to be in holy manner of life and godliness." All things, both in the heavens and on the earth, have been defiled by the rebellion of Satan and the fall of men. Although all things whether on earth or in the heavens have been reconciled to God through Christ by His blood (Col. 1:20), the heavenly things having been purified by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:23), they still need to be cleared up by being burned up in God's governmental dealing so that they may become new in nature and appearance in God's new universe (2 Pet. 3:13). Thus, what kind of persons ought we, the children of the holy God, to be in holy manner of life and godliness; that

is, what kind of transformation ought we to have to live a life in the manner of God's holy nature and godliness to express Him so that we may be qualified to match His holy government? How wonderful that the divine power has provided us with all things that are needed to live such a life in the holy manner and godliness (1:3).

EXPECTING AND HASTENING THE DAY OF GOD

In verse 12 Peter says, "Expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens, being set on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements burning with intense heat are melted." While we live a transformed life in a holy and godly manner, we are expecting, awaiting, and hastening the coming of the day of God. Knowing that God is so holy as to dissolve all things, we ought to be in a holy manner of life and godliness as we expect and hasten the coming of the day of God. Not only do we expect the day of God—we would hasten it.

THE DAY OF GOD

The day of God is the day of the Lord (v. 10), and the day of the Lord is the day of Jehovah to the children of Israel in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:12; Joel 1:15; 2:11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14, 18; 2:2-3; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:1, 5). The "day" in such terms is mainly used in the sense of judgment for governmental dealings. Before the Lord comes it is "man's day" in which man judges until the Lord comes (1 Cor. 4:3-5). Then it will be the "day of the Lord," which will begin from the Lord's *parousia* (with all its judgments) and will end with the judgment upon men and demons at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). The Lord's *parousia* will start when the overcoming saints will be raptured to the throne of God in the heavens before the great tribulation of three and one-half years (Rev. 12:5-6; 14:1). Then, with the overcomers, His *parousia* will come to the air (Rev. 10:1). Along with that, all the natural calamities of the sixth seal and the first four trumpets will be meted out to smite the heavens with their heavenly bodies and the earth with the things on it (Rev. 6:12-17; 8:7-12).

Then the great tribulation will begin; it will last for three and one-half years with the woes and plagues of the last three trumpets and the seven bowls (Matt. 24:21-22, 29; Rev. 8:13—9:21;

11:14; 15:5—16:21). That will be a time of trial to the inhabitants of the whole earth (Rev. 3:10), including the Jews (Isa. 2:12; Zech. 14:1-2; Mal. 4:1, 5; Joel 1:15-20; 2:1, 11, 31) and the believers in Christ who will be left in the tribulation (Rev. 12:17). Before the end of the great tribulation, the dead saints will be resurrected and raptured together with the majority of the living believers, who will have passed through the great part of the tribulation, to meet with the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 14:14-16). Following this, all the believers will be judged by the Lord at His judgment seat in the air (2 Cor. 5:10).

About this time, the great Babylon will be destroyed on the earth (Rev. 17:1—19:3). Then the Lord will have His wedding feast with the overcoming saints (Rev. 19:7-8). Immediately after this, the Lord with His bride, composed of the overcoming saints as His army, will fight and defeat the Antichrist and his army, the army of Satan. They will seize the Antichrist and his false prophet and cast them alive into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:11-21). Following this, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss, the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3). Then the Lord will come with His saints to the earth (Zech. 14:4-5; Jude 14; 1 Thes. 3:13) and will judge the nations (the living—Matt. 25:31-46; Joel 3:2). After this will be the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6).

Following the thousand years, Satan will be loosed from the abyss to instigate part of the nations, Gog and Magog in the north of the eastern hemisphere, to rebel the last time against God. They will be subdued and burned, and the deceiving Devil will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7-10). Following this, the heavens and the earth will be fully cleared up by being burned up (2 Pet. 3:7, 10). Then will come the final judgment upon men (the dead) and demons, and probably also the fallen angels, at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). That will be God's consummate dealing with His old creation in His universal government, in addition to so many judgments and dealings executed within the day of the Lord to clear up the old universe. Then a new universe will begin with a new heaven and new earth for eternity (Rev. 21:1), in which there will be no more judgment of God's governmental dealing, for no unrighteousness will be there. Therefore, not counting the one thousand years, the day of the Lord will be very short, probably not more than seven years, of

which the last week (seven years) of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 will be the main part.

It is not correct to consider the day of God and the day of the Lord as two different days and claim that the day of the Lord ends with the millennial kingdom and that the day of God begins with the burning of the heavens and the earth followed by the judgment of the great white throne. Actually, because the judgment of the great white throne will still be executed by the Lord Jesus (Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1), it will also be in the day of the Lord. God does not judge anyone; He has given all judgment to the Lord (John 5:22).

In 3:12 the relative pronoun “which” refers to the coming of the day of God. The coming of the day of God is to execute judgment upon every part of the old creation to clear it up. On account of the coming of such a day, the heavens will no longer be able to stand and remain as they have been, but will be dissolved, their elements melting in the intense heat of the burning fire. Therefore, Peter says that “the heavens, being set on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements burning with intense heat are melted.”

