

**Study Series 10: Study on 2 Peter 3:1-13 (Sub studies on: “Language of a Thousand Years;”
“God and Time;” “Thief in the Night;” and “Elements”)**

2 Peter 3:1-4 "1 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, 3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. "

I. BELIEVERS REMEMBER WHILE NON-BELIEVERS DOUBT:

A. (2 Peter 3:1-2): Peter is telling his 1st century readers that he is saying nothing which was not said before by the Old Covenant prophets, so our interpretation of his epistle must be kept in light that he is reiterating what we studied earlier in **Study Series 5, 6 and 7** (as well as what we will study in **Study Series 11** where we will again dig heavily into more OT scriptures). Never, anywhere in the Bible, did any of the Prophets speak about the end of the Christian age, or cosmos, or any passing away of the heavens and earth in a literal sense, and likewise, neither does Peter in this passage.

- He says to them in vs. 1 to “**remember**,” confirming that this is not any new teaching they have not heard from the OT prophets from their past.
- In vs. 1 he says **both** of his epistles are joined to “**remind**” the beloved, so to understand this better we need to go back to 1 Peter to know more clearly what he is referring to:
- 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 20 he says that the OC prophets knew the things they spoke of were not for their time, but that they were searching and speaking of things which were referring to a time in their (OT writers) future, which Peter is now writing saying “**is**” the time these 1st century Christians were living in.
- In vs. 20 he also says that “**their time**” when Jesus was just with them was said to be “these last times.”

- 1 Pet. 4:5 he used the Greek work “*hitoimos*” → which literally means that the time is morally and temporally ready to judge the living and the dead (a very strong sense of nearness).
- 1 Pet. 4:7 “*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*” He uses another very significant Greek word for our English term “at hand,” which is “*eggiken*” in the perfect active indicative tense → literally means “**has drawn near.**” (the “all things” needs to be kept in perspective of the Old Covenant world, as that was the world they were living in).

It is important for us to understand that Peter was not talking about the end of our literal heaven and earth because even now, two thousand years later, they have not ended. He was instead talking to his 1st century audience (Notice he writes to **them** → **your** prayers) about the end of the Jewish age. This occurred in AD 70, just a few short years after writing this letter – consistent with “at hand.”

- 1 Pet. 4:17 he says the “time” has come, and uses the Greek word “*Kairos*” → literally means “the appointed time,” and combines this with saying for “judgement” to begin, and uses the Greek word “*krino*” → literally means “the judgement.” He also indicated that this judgement was to begin with those early believers “**first,**” writing in around mid-AD 63, in which as short as a year away was to begin the great Neronic persecution on the church.

The Bible never contradicts itself. It is one thing to say we believe this, but do we not tend to read different passages in different ways? Where are we told that we can interpret one passage literal and the other spiritual, or the other way around? Why if we read some verse or language description in the Old Testament and come to understand it as being spoken as a metaphor or hyperbole, yet when we flip over the pages and come into the New Testament, that we assume everything has changed and “A” does not mean “A” anymore? We need to ask ourselves the question: if we are viewing similar language descriptions, or even direct verse quotes, where do we derive the authority to interpret it in a different way than it is described in another place in the Bible? We cannot just decide to use our presuppositions to change verses to fit into some preconceived ideas, but other Bible verses must be our precedent.

If a meaning or interpretation in a Bible passage was being changed by a writer, from what was the commonly held beliefs of his audience, then the writer himself would need to provide the audience clear understanding if he was “**changing**” the meaning or interpretation from the way it had always been understood or interpreted, or he would clearly be misleading his audience. I believe this makes it all the more important for why we need to understand the **audience relevance** of any given passage. **We need to know what it first meant to them** if we are going to have any proper understanding to see what may apply to us.

(Read) Isa. 26:9-10, “**...For when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Though the wicked is shown favor, He does not learn righteousness...and does not perceive the majesty of the LORD.**”

- This is clearly not speaking about an earth burning or time ending event, as no one would see that event and not understand it. It also cannot even be an event which is seen as the supernatural, or the unrighteous could perceive that. No, this is speaking about judgment events from God, which predominantly are in the unseen realm, where the “righteous will learn/perceive” what is happening (often from what they had been learned from previous prophecies), but the “wicked will not see/perceive.”
- Daniel 12:10 and 1 Thess. 5:2-9 both clearly state that the righteous **will** “perceive/understand” what is happening from the signs and events around them, while at the same time the wicked **will not** understand. If these events were supposed to be cosmic destroying, time ending events then these passages would not have any meaning because there isn't a wicked person who would not have understood that the earth and universe had just ended and burned up.

B. (2 Peter 3:3-4): Peter says that **scoffers** were to come in the last days of the Jewish age. They will be impatient about when the Lord would come in judgment upon Israel. Jesus had said that it would be in His 1st century generation (Matt. 24:34). Peter is reminding the people to whom he just wrote this letter, and his first letter, that the Prophets of old had foretold this event, and that they should not be surprised that they are having scoffers ask them: 'Where is the promise of His coming?' When will the promise be fulfilled? These were 1st century Jewish people asking these questions. It was their fathers in the OT that they were specifying. Practically speaking, this would not be a question asked by Gentiles, two thousand years later!

- Peter is an Apostle predominantly to the Jews as stated in Gal. 2:9. It is mostly understood that in both 1 & 2 Peter that he is writing to the same group of people, which are Christian Jews from the scattered Diaspora, as stated in 1 Pet. 1:1. With those 1st century receivers of his letters having a Hebrew background, knowledge and worldview, it is important for us to gather as much understanding as we are able to about the things they would know from their history, such as Isaiah 28.
 - Isa. 28:14 is prophesying to the “rulers of the people in Jerusalem,” called “scornful” men, about a future judgment that will come upon them. This prophecy is not about the coming captivity in Babylon. We know this because of the timing God gives Isaiah to tell them – it would be at the time when God would lay the “cornerstone” in Zion, and everyone clearly knows that is referring to Jesus, and that happened in the 1st century (Quoted by Jesus in Matt. 21:42. In Acts 4:11 Peter quotes this directly to those people standing in front of him. Also referenced in Rom. 9:33, 10:11, Eph. 2:20, 1 Pet. 2:6-8).
 - In Isa. 28:14 the people in Israel are told that the sign to “them” would be when they saw/heard people speaking in other tongues, and Paul directly quotes this in 1 Cor. 14:21 to say that this passage was being fulfilled right there in the 1st century.
 - Isa. 28:18 says that “your covenant with death” (Only the OC Jews had a covenant with God, and Paul even said the OC was called a “ministry of death” and that it “kills” in 2 Cor. 3:6-9). Isaiah only went to Israel to proclaim these judgements of God and his audience clearly knew he was referring to them. He was telling them that the OC would be annulled and have no power to protect them, as they would be judged as their harlot sister northern kingdom was (Jer. 3:8; Ezek. 16:1-3, 32-38, chapters 22 and 23).
 - Isa. 28:19 says that the judgement is going to be so severe that it will be a horror to just report it. **AND in verse 22** God has Isaiah call them mockers (**scoffers**), and that a destruction is determined for **all the land** (Greek word from the Septuagint = *Erects* → Context: land of Israel, or Jews throughout all the land → See Isa. 10:21-23 for same word and context).

- It also would assist us to (read) Acts 13:41, where Paul directly quotes Hab. 1:5, indicating to his audience that this prophecy was being fulfilled right there in the 1st century. (Read) In Hab. 1:5-6 the prophet was saying that it would be God who was going to do an amazing thing by raising up the Chaldeans (Babylonian) to bring about terrors and His judgements throughout their world. Here, we have Paul in the 1st century, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quoting that very prophecy the Jews in his audience were well aware of. And also again here, in Hab. 1:5/Acts13:41, we have the familiar language used: despisers, mockers, scoffers. Then just 5 verses later in Acts 13:46 (the next gathering on the Sabbath) Paul proclaims that since the Jews have rejected their Messiah, they have sealed their fate, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.
- Jude also sheds some light for us on whom Peter is speaking about in Jude 18, where he is reminding his audience that there would be “mockers in the last time.” Remember, Jude had started initially to write about something different, but then in verse 3 he declares that there was an important reason that he had to change and write about what was the rest of what he wrote in Jude, which was specifically said to be for – his then living and breathing audience.

Jude said to them in verse 17 to “remember,” meaning he is declaring to them what they had already previously heard, and was now reminding them that what they were now experiencing was exactly what they had heard would happen.

The Greek word used here for “mockers” is *Empaiktai*, and the only other time in the Bible this word is used is in 2 Peter 3:3. 2 Peter and Jude were both written in the same time around late-AD 64. They are both reminding their audiences of what they already had heard would happen, and now was happening.

- As in Jude 18, back in 2 Pet. 3:3 it is powerful to notice how they both are writing to their current 1st century audiences, about how the scoffers they had heard about would come, had come, and they both refer to that time as “the last days, or last time.” There is a well-known Bible interpretation rule called the hermeneutic “law of 1st mention.” This 4th rule is a fancy way to say that the 1st time a doctrine is spoken about in the Bible is where we need to study to get the fundamental inherent meaning of that doctrine.

- **(Read)** Gen. 49:1 is the first place in which the term is given to us: "**the last days.**" When studying into that passage it is undeniably clear that Jacob is speaking to his 12 sons (**12 tribes of Israel**), as he gathered them all together, to tell **them** about the general evil that will come upon **them** (their tribes) in **their** last days. So, according to this rule, if a writer is wanting to relay something different to his audience then was originally taught in this "law of 1st mention," then he must explain the change to his audience, and if there is no explained change, then the correct way to interpret the passage is through the original doctrine taught in the passage it first appeared.
- Looking back as 2 Pet. 3:3 seen in this light of Peter speaking about the "last days of Old Covenant Israel," it fits into perfect context, and audience relevance, with the other passages we have just studied above. It also gives light, and works in conjunction with: 1 Pet. 1:20; Heb. 1:2, 9:26; 1 Cor. 10:11 and Gal. 1:4, which all were written to living breathing people in the first century, where they were told that the time they were living in were called "**the last days.**" Someone needs to break precedent, hermeneutical rules, context (both within the passage, as well as the other correlated verses we just looked at), and audience relevance, to say that Peter is not speaking to his audience about the end of the OC Mosaic system and people. To try to impose upon the passage that he is speaking about some 2,000+ years in the future end of the cosmos event → it is untenable.

C. The coming of Christ in 2 Pet. 3:4 is referring to His "*Parousia*." (Greek word meaning: presence, return, specifically to punish covenant breaking Jerusalem and their wicked. Matt. 24:3, 27, 29; Jam. 5:8). It is also interesting that the expression of the unbelieving scoffers, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation", is more identifiable with the Jews in Peter's time. It is **not** something that Gentile unbelievers of today would particularly say. Many of today's people are humanists and evolutionists. They reject the truth of creation and seldom refer to it.

2 Peter 3: 5-7 ⁵ *For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,* ⁶ *by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.* ⁷ *But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* "

II. JUDGMENT BY WATER AND JUDGMENT BY FIRE:

A. (2 Peter 3: 5-6): Peter gives a former example of the flood. (A similar comparison was made in Matthew 24:37-39 by Jesus). He compares the soon *Parousia*/Coming of Christ with the prophesied judgment of the flood. The world and society that then existed, "perished" (vs 6). This was **not** the complete destruction of the physical heaven and earth. The Greek word "*kosmos*" is used, which means the world in its orderly arrangement, including the inhabitants thereof, who were ungodly sinners. Peter means that it was to be the world of the ungodly in the Old Covenant Jewish system which was to perish, not the literal earth itself. **In Noah's day, the literal heavens were not destroyed by the flood.** The literal earth was not destroyed by the flood. **It was the people who were destroyed.**

B. (2 Peter 3:7): Peter says that the heavens and earth that existed in the first century were likewise to be destroyed. This time by fire and not flood. We did an extensive study of the Hebrew understanding, and biblical descriptions, of what it meant when it spoke of the old "heavens and the earth" back in **Study Series 7 Lesson 3**. The Bible definition of this term when speaking in prophecy of "the old heavens and earth" is referring to the animal sacrifice system epitomized by the Old Covenant religious system of Israel (Isa. 51:15-16; Lev. 26:19; Isa. 65:17, 66:22). Peter is saying that they were kept in store until the day of God's judgment, which was coming shortly in AD 70 against the ungodly people of the Old Covenant system.

C. NOTE: Jesus had fulfilled all of the Old Covenant laws. He was the final sacrifice for sin. His earthly ministry, along with His suffering and death on the cross were the most prophesied event in history. For the ungodly Jewish leaders to reject that and continue onward with sacrifices, ceremonies, and false worship, was the greatest offense and abomination that man could commit toward God. The "perdition of ungodly men" was the nation of the ungodly Israelites vanishing away by fire in God's burning of Jerusalem in AD 70 (they had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life – Acts 13:46).

2 Peter 3: 8-10 ⁸ *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* ⁹ *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."*

III. THE JUDGMENT DAY OF THE LORD:

A. (2 Peter 3:8): It does not say one day "IS" a thousand years, but says "as or like" a thousand years. You cannot take all the clear imminent timing verses throughout the New Testament (NT) and attempt to make them all meaningless and try to use this verse to sweep all of them away. No, the issue Peter was dealing with here, and one of the main reasons He wrote His letter, was that the time when he wrote was nearly 35 years after the cross, and nearing the end of the "generation" Jesus spoke to and had promised about His coming (Matt. 16:27-28, 23:31-36, 24:34, Heb. 10:37), and there were scoffers saying "where is his coming?" In other words, they knew Jesus' promises, and the expectancy of the believers (as we also see written throughout the NT), and they were saying it had been a long time and were scoffing and saying that the Lord was not going to do the things He had promised His 1st century audience.

The Language of a "Thousand Years"

In 2 Peter 3:8, Peter described this "uncertain period of duration" as like a day for God. In other words, what appears to be very long and uncertain in duration to man, is just like a day for God. Nowhere is there a specific reference to an exact, literal, one thousand years being described by the writers of either Peter or John, or any other New Testament author anywhere.

In addition to the grammatical problems a person might face when trying to apply a proper, literal, exact interpretation to the word "*chilioi*," the idea of a "thousand" in the symbolic literature of the Old and New Testament is quite prevalent. In Leviticus 26:8 the number thousand is used to signify a "great number" while not being strictly literal. In Deut. 1:11 it says that God shall make him a "thousand times" greater than he is. Does this mean God will not make him a thousand and one times greater? No. The language is figurative of "a lot" or "much" greater.

In **(Read)** Deuteronomy 7:8-9 God says that He is faithful to Israel even to "a thousand generations." Does that mean that God isn't faithful to a thousand and one generations? No. This is figurative for "all of them." In **(Read)** Deuteronomy 33:2, it says that the Lord came with "ten thousands" holy ones. Does this mean that God came with literally ten thousands holy ones? No. It means that He came with "all of His people." In **(Read)** Judges 15:16, it says that Sampson killed a "thousand" men with a single jaw bone of a donkey. Did he really kill exactly 1,000 men? No. We may never know exactly how many men Samson killed with the jawbone of a donkey. This is figurative of the "many" people that Samson killed, however many it actually was, it was "a lot." Many people use the same sort of typological language. Have you ever heard someone say, "I've told you a thousand times," when it was really only a few times?

In **(Read)** 1 Chronicles 16:14-16, it says that God's Covenant would continue for a "thousand generations" forever! Is this an exact figure? No. It means "for all of them," or that His Covenant would continue for as long as it was in force, to the fullest of its time, without end. In **(Read)** Job 9:3, it says that a person could not contend and answer God once in a "thousand" times. Does this mean that on the one thousand and first time he could? No. This is figurative for "every time." **(Read)** Psalm 50:10 says that the cattle on a "thousand" hills are His. Does this mean that the cattle on the thousand and first hill is not His? No. It means that they are "all" His! **(Read)** Psalm 84:10 says that a day in Your courts are better than a "thousand" elsewhere. Does this mean that a thousand and one days elsewhere is better than to be with the Lord? No. It means that a single day with the Lord is better than "all days" without Him.

As you can see, the language used here is quite figurative for "all," or "complete," or "the fullness thereof" (regardless of whether it is actually speaking of many, or literally tens, hundreds, thousands, or millions).

A Day as a Thousand Years

In 2 Peter 3:8-10 Peter says the following (with my own comments in brackets):

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day [when it is past, cf. Psalms 90:4] is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day [when it is past]. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief [in the night], and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." (2 Peter 3:8-10)

Two critical elements of this passage must be seen. First, when Peter draws from the analogy of the thousand years as a day, he is clearly quoting from and alluding to (**Read**) Psalm 90:4. Peter didn't just make this idea up. And so, when we see that this "day" is a direct allusion to a "watch in the night" we **MUST** see the connection between the use of "night and day" language with that of the "thousand years" and also the "watch in the night." (There is also a direct allusion to the "thief in the night" related to the thousand years which we will do a **sub study** on later in this study.) For Peter, the time that is being spoken about is the time in which they were being mocked by the scoffers because the coming of the Lord "seemed" to be taking a very long time.

The scoffers, both in Peter's epistles and in Jude 18, were mocking the Christians because Christ had promised **them** that the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Jewish Age would occur in **that** generation (cf. Matthew 23-24). But Peter reassures them that for God a "thousand years" in God's eyes is like a very short period of time (i.e. - as a watch in the night, or the time from sunset to dawn or sunrise).

Since there is no doubt that the New Testament writers, including Christ Himself, used this analogy and drew from this idea to express the time of the "night" and the "coming day," it is very likely that Peter is also doing the same thing here, and is simply attempting to "ease their minds" because what "seems" long to **those** Christians who are suffering and being persecuted at the hands of their enemies, is actually going to come to pass exactly as Christ had promised.

The strength of this argument becomes even stronger when we see Peter also reference the idea of the Lord coming "like a thief" in the very same passage. What other Scriptures draw on this analogy or idea, and how do they apply it? Job 24:14, Matthew 24:43, and 1 Thess. 5:2 all specifically use the idea of the thief coming and they each describe this event as one which happens "during the night" when **those who are not ready** will be taken by surprise (we will do a **sub study** on this topic shortly below).

Therefore, in one chapter, and in only three verses, Peter describes the "day far gone," the "thief in the night," and also alluded to the "thousand year" language from Psalm 90:4, which to any observant reader would recall the readers' mind to the same idea that Christ would come at the "end of the night." What did Peter, Paul, James and John say about the night in which they lived? It was ready to pass, and was growing old, and day was approaching soon! (1 Pet. 4:7; Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:29, 31; Jam. 5:7-9; 1 John 2:8, 18).

Sub study on "God and Time:"

In order to assist us in understanding the biblical meaning being taught here in 2 Pet. 3:8, I believe it is beneficial at this point to do a sub study on the biblical teaching on "God and Time." In spite of the issue of the faithfulness of God, some people insist we must believe in what they call the "elasticity of prophetic chronology," and that, "time, in connection with prophecy, is an exceedingly relative matter." We are told that prophetic time may indicate imminence, when in fact hundreds of years are involved. In order to demonstrate the falsity of this concept let us see how God has dealt with time statements in scripture.

In (**Read**) Numbers 24:17-18, Balaam the prophet made a prediction of Christ's coming: "I see him but not now, I behold him but not near." Notice he said Christ's coming was not near, it was not at hand. Why did he say this? Because Christ's coming was over 1400 years away, and 1400 years really is a long time! This is a *concrete example of where God referred to an event being a long time and meant exactly what He said.*

Daniel Chpts 10-12 encompassed a period of time from 536 BC to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, about 600 years. Two times in this text Daniel was told "the appointed time is long" and, "the vision refers to many days to come" (10:1, 14). Remember, this vision was relayed to Daniel from God. While God is not bound by time, He was '**communicating to man**' who is bound to time. God called this 690 year period of time "**long**," He said it involved "**many days**." God can most assuredly tell time and read a calendar!

Daniel contains another example of how God used time words. Chapter 8 contains a prophecy that extends from circa 530 BC to about 165-164 BC and the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. A span of approximately 365 years. How did God express the prophecy? Did He say it was at hand? Did He say **some** of it was at hand while **some** of it was for a long time off? No! God viewed the prophecy as a whole. He said the vision "refers to many days in the future" (8:26). God called 365 years "a long time." If *God called 365 years a long time*, how can some men say that time, when God is speaking to man, means nothing?

This is an important question in light of the traditional interpretations of Revelation. Daniel was told to seal up his vision because the time for fulfillment was a long time away – 690 years. John was told not to seal up his vision because what he saw was at hand! John is told that his vision, (*not part of his vision*), was "at hand" and "must shortly come to pass." God called the 365 and 690 years for the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies a "long time." He also told John that the fulfillment of Revelation was so close "at hand" that he was not to seal up his book (Rev. 22:10). In fact, Revelation starts with God saying it must "quickly take place" (1:1), then Jesus promising the persecuted Christians in the church in Philadelphia that "I am coming quickly" (3:11), and then He ends the Revelation "three" times telling those 1st century Christian receivers of this letter, "I am coming quickly" (22:7, 12, 20).

- I ask the question: If He had wanted to tell those 1st century believers that this was all about to happen "very shortly" from the time when they just received this letter, then what more could He have said to emphasize it that He had not said already? I believe it is untenable, and a distortion of the Revelation, as well as the rest of the NT imminency scriptures, to try and insert any gap of delay outside of the 1st century, never mind how many modern teachers are trying to say this gap and delay is well over 2,000 years.

In (**Read**) Jeremiah 29:10, YHWH told Israel the Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years. In verse 28, the people complained that YHWH said, "The exile will be long." **YHWH called seventy years a "long time."** Why? Because to man seventy years is a long time. Thus, *God used time words as **man** would normally understand them.* God can tell time when speaking to man.

In (**Read**) Ezekiel 7:1-12, God said the Day of the Lord was at hand. The Day of the Lord in this context was when God used Babylon to punish Israel for her sin. It is not an "end of time" idea. It is when God used one nation to punish another as it related to His chosen people (See more on the biblical meaning of the "Day of the Lord" under 2 Pet. 3:10 below).

In (**Read**) Ezekiel 11:1-3, Israel responded to the threat of coming judgment. They insisted that although Ezekiel said it was at hand, that it really was **not**, and that it was 'a time to build houses, and no need to worry about judgment.' When Israel "elasticized" God's words of imminence and basically said that God's "near did not mean near," God responded.

In (**Read**) Ezekiel 12:21-28, God told Ezekiel to tell Israel that her days of changing the time for His predictions were over. God had said judgment was at hand. Israel said it was not at hand. YHWH would not tolerate it, and within that very generation there were slaughtered by the Babylonians and taken off into captivity. *When God said "at hand" He meant "**at hand**."* He did not mean thousands of years, or even hundreds of years, He meant "soon."

In Jeremiah and Ezekiel, then, when God said something (captivity) was near, Israel said it was not near, and God condemned them. When God said something (deliverance) was not near, Israel said it was near, and God condemned them! There could be no greater refutation of the claim that "prophetic time statements are extremely elastic." God meant what He said, and said what He meant whenever He said "**near**" or "**not near**."

Another example of man changing the meaning of God's time words is in Amos 6:3. God warned Israel the time had come for her to be judged (Amos 8:2, contemporary Hosea 1:4). In spite of the warnings, Israel "put far off the evil day." (**Read**) Isaiah 56:12 (another contemporary) shows they were saying "tomorrow shall be as today." In spite of God's warning that judgment was at hand, they insisted, "All things continue as they were," (reminds us of exactly what we just read Peter said the people in his day were doing. 2 Peter 3:3-4). They refused to believe God meant "near" when He said "at hand." As a result God said "Woe" to them (Amos 6:3)!

What is the difference between Israel of old denying that "at hand" meant "soon," and Bible students today who read the New Testament time statements, and say they did not mean "soon?" What is the difference between those in Isaiah's day who denied the warnings of imminent judgment, saying life was going to go on as usual, and those today who read the New Testament time statements, and say the predicted events were not truly near? *Those who deny the first century application of the "at hand" time statements of the New Testament are doing the same thing as the Israelites of old – denying that "at hand" meant "soon!"*

Has God changed His vocabulary? Is it true that "at hand" once did mean "near" but now it can mean "a long time?" *If so, where is the evidence for the change?* God can still tell time? When God said something was at hand, it was near. For man to argue otherwise is to reject the inspiration of the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16). It is to impugn the faithfulness of God. It is to impugn the ability of God to communicate. It is to do the very thing Israel of old did, and for which they were condemned! This is a very serious matter indeed.

- Questions to ponder: if words mean nothing in God's language to us → then if He said something could take 1,000 years, then it could really mean it may take only one day?! Or, if He said something was to just be a day, then it could actually mean 1,000 years?! If God's words writing to people do not mean what He is really trying to say → then could good mean evil, or evil mean good? Who is to say what the words truly mean?

When you cross a line like this, by saying that God "can say the same thing, but can mean different things at different times, and that He has not clearly communicated with man what He truly means" then by what authority do we have to claim that God did not mean something else about any of the doctrines of salvation and faith we hold to be truth? This destroys the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, and opens the door to any liberal, sceptic and agnostic.

B. (2 Peter 3:9): In this verse we find an often overlooked statement: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness" (NASV). The word translated "slow" (Greek = *braduno*) means just that - slow. Compare Paul's usage of the same term in (**Read**) 1 Timothy 3:15. Peter's point is that if God sets a time for fulfillment He fulfills it on time. He is not slow, God can tell time, and knows how to keep His promises on time. This verse asserts in no uncertain terms that God is a God who keeps His promises!

God spoke through Peter so that those 1st century Christians receiving the letter would be able to understand, and He had Peter tell those early saints that they needed to be ready for the soon coming judgment on the Old Covenant system. God had been longsuffering with His elect He was calling out of Old Covenant Israel, allowing them time to repent (**Read**: John 6:39, 10:29; Rom. 11:1-10). He provided an extra forty years, one full generation after the Cross, for the Messianic prophecies and the Gospel message to be understood by them. Christ's resurrection was the promised sign that His message was true, and He had promised those Old Covenant people standing right in front of Him that He was going to come in judgement on their evil generation (Luke 11:29-32; Matt. 23:31-38, 24:34).

Jesus had said in Matt. 24:14 that before the "end of the age (vs. 3)" would come that the gospel had to be preached in all the *Oikoumene* (Known world, or Roman Empire: See same word in Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28, 17:6, 19:27, 24:5). Paul's inspired scriptures declare that the gospel had been preached to all of the Jews, and throughout the entire known world before AD 70 (Col. 1:5-6, 23; Rom. 1:8, 10:18, 16:25-26; 1 Thess. 1:8; Titus 2:11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:17; Acts 2:5).

God was indeed longsuffering towards Old Covenant Israel as Peter was inferring to in 2 Peter 3:9 (See also Isa. 65:2, Matt. 23:37), as He had provided an entire generation of the gospel message to be preached and sent forth to the four corners of the known world before the promised final destruction of the temple, Jerusalem, and the complete shattering and ending of the Old Covenant system and people would occur in AD 70. (Fulfilling Daniel 9:24-27, 10:14, 12:1-13).

C. (2 Peter 3:10a): Peter connects Jesus' coming (verse 3:4) with the "day of the Lord." This is an expression also taken from the Old Testament and was often used regarding judgments of various nations. Examples:

- Isaiah 13:1-11, 13, 17, 19 the "day of the Lord" comes against Babylon to "lay the land desolate and destroy its sinners."
 - It is significant to notice how the Lord says that it is **Him** coming through the Medes to do the destruction against Babylon: Jer. 51:11-14.
- Isaiah 19:1-4, 16, 22-23, 20:3-4 judgement by God against Egypt.
 - Again, see how the Lord says that it is **Him** coming through the Assyrians to do this destruction against Egypt: Isa. 10:5-6.
- This "day of the Lord" involves another judgment of Egypt, this time the Lord uses Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (Ezekiel 30:3-4, 10).
- For other examples see: Ezek. 7:1-12, 11:1-3, 12:21-28 (we looked at this example earlier in this study); Isaiah Chpts 24 and 34, Micah 1:1-9; Zeph. 1:2-4, 7, 12-18; Oba. 1:1, 8-10, 15, 18; Joel 1 – 2:27.

Question: Why are we to think Jesus' coming, who is God Himself, is supposed to be any different than the Father has always done in the past, especially when Jesus said that it would be in the same manner as His Father in John 5:19?

(End of sub study)

**** Back to 2 Peter 3:10b** Peter said that this “...day of the Lord will come as a ‘thief in the night’ ...”

Sub study on “Thief in the night:”

I believe this would be a very beneficial place for us to do a sub study on the biblical teaching of “thief” and “thief in the night.”

What is often overlooked is that Peter gave a definite **sign** that they were in the last days before he even writes about that climactic event in verse 10! Peter had already reminded his audience of the prophecies of the Old Covenant prophets and the other apostles (v. 1-2). Those prophets predicted that in the last days before the Day of the Lord scoffers would come (Recall the section on Isaiah 28 from earlier in this study). *These scoffers were a sign of the impending Day of the Lord!*

It must not be forgotten that Peter more than once affirmed that he and His contemporaries were already living in the last days foretold by the ancient prophets. In Acts 2:15-21, the fisherman quoted the promise of Joel 2 that the Spirit would be poured out in the last days. Peter said, "This **is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Peter did not say this is *like* it will be when the last days finally arrive. He said "**this is that**"! Further, in 1 Peter 1:20 he said Jesus had been revealed "in these last times." Thus, when Peter spoke of "the last days" he was not anticipating a time in the distant future; he was speaking of his generation.

It should be noted that these "scoffers" were not just individuals skeptical about the coming of the Lord. Norman Hillyer in the New International Bible Commentary (Hendrickson, 1992, p. 212, 214) says, the word for scoffers, "Goes beyond the utterance of mere words, for the Greek terms imply physical persecution."

Who might best fit this description of scoffers who would persecute the brethren? Jesus' prediction of false prophets, false Messiahs, etc., (Matthew 24:11-26), who would persecute the church, fills the bill very nicely. And all of this was predicted to occur within Jesus' generation (Matthew 24:34). Jude's short epistle confirms that the scoffers were a sign of the end times. Jude is simply a reminder of what Peter had written (Jude 17). He said what Peter had predicted was present. They were living in the predicted last days before the coming of the Lord! Jude said the Old Covenant Prophets foretold these scoffers and their destruction at the coming of the Lord (vs. 14-15). We say again, the presence of those scoffers was to Jude and Peter a positive sign that they were in the last days before the day of the Lord – *the scoffers were a sign!*

Notice the argument:

- **The scoffers foretold by Peter were a sign of the impending day of the Lord (Jude 14-17; 2 Peter 3:3f).**
- **But the day of the Lord was to come as a thief (2 Peter 3:10).**
- **Therefore the scoffers were a sign of the coming of the Lord as a thief.**

A close examination of Peter's first epistle bears out this conclusion. In 1 Peter 4:7 Peter affirmed "the end of all things is at hand" the scoffers in 2 Peter 3 affirmed, "all things continue as they were." The scoffers were denying what Peter affirmed! Who was right, Peter or the scoffers?

Since 2 Peter 3 is simply a reminder of 1 Peter (2 Peter 3:1), and since 1 Peter declared that the end was at hand, then *the coming as a thief was near*.

We find in Peter the same pattern as in the Olivet Discourse, the warning of *imminent judgment* (Matthew 24:34 / 1 Peter 4:7, 17). We find the giving of *signs* and the *exhortation to watch* (Matthew 24:4-15, 42-44/2 Peter 3:2; 1 Peter 4:7). We find the coming of the Lord as a thief (Matthew 24:43/ 2 Peter 3:10).

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4:

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief."

In chapter 5:1-2 the apostle says, "Concerning the times and the seasons you have no need that I should write to you for you know perfectly that the Day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night." Relevant and contextual questions to ask at this point is, "Upon *whom* would the coming of the Lord be as a thief? Would the coming of the Lord be as a thief upon the Thessalonians?" Paul gives an emphatic answer to both questions:

"When **they** shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction comes on **them**. But you brethren, are not in darkness that that Day should overtake you as a thief."

Note the distinction between *them* and *you*. The *them* are those who did not *know*; *they* were in darkness. *They* were going about their business oblivious to the impending *Parousia*. Their cry of "peace and safety" echoes Matthew 24:37-39 where Jesus said His coming would be like it was in the days of Noah. Unbelievers were "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Those unbelievers, "knew not, until the flood came and took them all away."

In contrast to the unbelievers the Thessalonians were not in darkness; they were not in ignorance. The Lord's coming would not be "as a thief" *upon the Thessalonians!* Why? The Thessalonians were not ignorant about the Day of the Lord. Paul positively states that the Thessalonians did possess enough knowledge about the Lord's coming so that it would not come as a thief upon *them*. It would only come as a thief upon the *unbelievers*.

Luke 12:37-40:

"Blessed are those servants whom the master, when He comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that He will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if He should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Jesus warned His disciples in Luke 12:35, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when He shall return from the wedding, that when He comes and knocks they may open to him immediately." Verse 39 contains the reference to the coming as a thief.

The urgency of this passage should not be ignored. The imagery of having the waist girded refers to the normally loose fitting clothing of the times that when activity was called for was then tucked into a belt or girdle. The imagery of the lamp refers to the lamps of the time that had to be constantly attended to prevent them from going out. Both of these images present a positive statement of the imminence of the *Parousia*.

In 1 Peter we find direct echoes of Luke 12. In chapter 1 Peter said Jesus was "ready to be revealed" (vs. 5-7). He told his audience, "gird up the loins of your minds and hope to the end for the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus" (v. 13). Peter is all but quoting from Luke 12! In 1 Peter 4:7, Peter said, "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." Here we find the exact motifs as in Luke. Who can doubt that Peter is citing the Lord's statements in Luke?

Whereas in Luke Jesus said His coming would be as a thief, in Peter the apostle affirmed that the end was near. In 1 Peter 4:17, he even declared that the appointed time for the judgment had arrived. Unless therefore, one can delineate between Luke and Peter, we find an unequivocal statement by the inspired apostle that the thief coming of Christ was imminent in the first century.

Day and Hour:

In Matthew 24:36, Jesus said, "but of that day and hour knows no man." It is wrong to use Matthew 24:36 to mitigate the time statements in the epistles. To suggest that because Jesus did not know the exact time of His coming while He was still on earth, does not mean that the disciples could not know, by inspiration, when it was near, after Jesus' ascension and sending of the Spirit. It is true that in Matthew 24:36, Jesus did not know *the day or the hour* of His coming. It is not true, however, that He did not know the generation. He emphatically stated the contrary, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall by no means pass until all these things be fulfilled." And, the "all these things" included His coming on the clouds with power and great glory of verses 29-31.

In John 16, Jesus told His disciples that there were many things He could not yet tell them, but that the Father would send the **Spirit**, who would reveal to them "**things to come**"(John 16:13) *The Spirit was to reveal to the disciples what Jesus could not reveal to them while He was on earth*. What was to be revealed was "things to come." In other words, what Jesus did not know while He was on earth, was to be revealed by the Spirit after Christ's ascension.

Jesus did send the Spirit. The Spirit revealed to the disciples things that Jesus could not reveal to them while He was on earth. Thus, when we read the epistles, all *written after the sending of the revelatory Spirit*, and they say that the coming of the Lord had drawn near, we must accept their statements as the inspired revelation of God. Let me express it like this:

- **The *Parousia* of Christ in James 5:8-9 is the coming of Christ concerning which Jesus, while on earth, did not know the day or hour (Matthew 24:36).**
- **After Christ's ascension the Spirit, from the Father, was to guide the apostles into all truth, and reveal "things to come."**
- **James wrote after Christ's ascension, through inspiration of the Spirit, from the Father, who instructed him to write "the *Parousia* has drawn near."**
- **Therefore, what Jesus did not know while He was on earth, the Spirit, from the Father, revealed to James that Christ's *Parousia* was near.**

The reality that all of the New Testament books were written after the outpouring of the Spirit means that all of the NT statements about the nearness of Christ's coming were true. They were not the statements of mere hope, or of personal belief, *but fact*. It means that what Jesus could not reveal while He was on earth, was now being revealed by the Father through the revelatory Spirit.

As it was in the Days of Noah:

There were obvious and very clear signs in the day of Noah. First, it needs to be realized that Noah positively preached an imminent flood and judgment (2 Pet. 2:5). He was told that he and his family would enter the Ark (Genesis 6:13, 18). Therefore I believe we can see that it was not only possible, or distinctly probable → but that it was exactly the case → that some knew the Flood was imminent and others, "knew not until the Flood came." Jesus declared the similarity between Noah's day and His coming. Since Noah predicted the imminent judgment without being able to tell His contemporaries the "day or the hour" of the impending catastrophe, it is absolutely possible that Jesus and His disciples could declare the imminence of Jesus' coming without knowing or revealing "the day or hour" of its occurrence. Signs in the time of Noah:

- **Noah had known for over 100 years that God had promised to destroy mankind for their wicked sin and was a witness while he built the ark.**
- **Another clear and obvious sign of danger was while all the animals were being loaded onto the ark.**
- **Yet another sign while the ramp was being raised by the Lord.**

Watch:

In Matthew 24:37-42 Jesus tells His disciples to "watch." The question that needs to be asked, but no one seems to want to ask is, "*Watch for what?*" *What were they to watch for if there was nothing to watch for?* Were they not to watch for the signs that He had told them they would see? The first section of Matthew 24 says "*you will see.*" The (supposed) second section says, "*you watch!*" Were they to watch for something different from what He told them they would see? Watching demands looking; looking denotes seeing; seeing denotes something to see.

Now, it certainly is true that "seeing" can be both physical and spiritual, i.e. *perceptual*. This is not the issue. What kind of watching and seeing had Jesus told His disciples they would experience? They would see and hear of wars, apostasy, persecution, etc. They would see the Abomination of Desolation. These were things they would experience that would positively indicate the imminence of the Day of the Lord (Matt. 24:32-33).

Consistent with this context of things to look for, in verse 42 Jesus warned His disciples, "*Watch*, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." In verse 44 He said, "You be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him." In chapter 25:13 He continued, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse is more graphic. A reading of Mark 13:29-37 is confirmation of the personal, (contemporary) application of the things Jesus was speaking of, and therefore His warnings to watch cannot be referent to still future events. Notice Mark's account: "When you see these things happening, know that it is near, at the very doors"; "take heed, *watch* and pray, for you do not know when the time is"; "*Watch* therefore, for you do not know the hour"; "And what I say to you, I say to all: *Watch!*"

Jesus was saying, "you will *see* these things. When you *see* them you know the *Parousia* is at hand; therefore *watch!*" To deny the connection between Jesus' statements that they would see these things, therefore they should watch, destroys the unity of the discourse, and changes the meaning of, "Watch!"

Incidentally, the fact that Jesus' apostles proclaimed the nearness of the end, in light of Jesus' statements about seeing the signs, is significant. Jesus warned His disciples not to believe, or make, premature declarations of the nearness of the end (Luke 21:8). But, He told them that when they saw the signs, they could know the end was truly near (Matthew 24:33). And, clearly, those apostles *did say the end was near!* Thus, unless the apostles were wrong, then they did see the signs, and the end was truly near.

As a Thief Upon Whom?

It is argued (erroneously), that Jesus told the story of Noah to illustrate that there would be no signs, "they ate, they drank, they were marrying and giving in marriage ... and knew not until the flood came and took them all away" (Matthew 24: 37-39). Why is it that some, "knew not until the flood came"? Why were they "eating and drinking" without regard to the impending disaster?

- **First, it cannot be said that they were not warned. Noah told them the disaster was coming *within their generation*. He preached an *imminent judgment!* Thus, it cannot be said that those who "knew not" did not know from the perspective of actual ignorance. (2 Pet. 2:5)**
- **Second, as just seen, it cannot be said that they did not have signs to see. Anyone passing by Noah's driveway could see that the boat was under construction and that its completion would be meaningful!**
- **Third, this means that they "knew not" because *they refused to believe; they were "willfully ignorant."* They refused to heed the *message* of imminent judgment and *refused to watch* and heed *the signs* before their eyes. As a result, they refused to prepare.**

By not watching, they were caught unaware while "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Their disbelief caused them not to watch. While they could plainly see the Ark, the gathering of the animals, etc., in other words the signs, but their disbelief rejected the *meaning* of the signs. They rejected the events they were seeing as signs. But whether they accepted them as signs or not, *signs they were!*

In direct contrast, notice what Jesus said to His disciples. He told them what the signs were (Matt. 24:4-28). He said *by watching they could know* when His coming was "near – at the doors!" (vs. 32-33). Please note the personal pronouns in Matthew 24. "When *you* see"; "*you* will see"; etc.. Jesus was speaking to His disciples, those who would believe His words and "Watch!" But notice what He said about those in the days prior to the coming of the Son of Man. They would be just like the ones in the days of Noah, "*they* ate, *they* drank, *they* were marrying." Who are the "*they?*" *Unbelievers!*

Notice the parallels with 1 Thessalonians 5. There it was, "when *they* shall say peace and safety sudden destruction will come on them, but *you* brethren are not in *darkness ... watch!*" In Matthew, Jesus told His disciples to watch, but He said that others, "they," would not believe. Consequently it would happen to those unbelievers, "them," as in the days of Noah.

Jesus told His disciples, "When you see the abomination of desolation ... flee!" The danger would come *so suddenly* that He warned them not even to go back into their houses if they were on their roofs or in the fields (Matt. 24:17-18, cf. Luke 21:20-24). We know from history that the disciples did flee. But would those who rejected Jesus and His word flee? Why flee if you do not believe? And what would be the consequences of disbelief and not fleeing? It would be as it was in the days of Noah "they knew not until the Flood came." As Jesus said, "one will be taken, another left" (Matthew 24:40-41). Their failure to believe led to a failure to watch. Their failure to watch led to their destruction.

The Ark, the Coming, the Fleeing:

The relationship between the story of Noah and the fleeing must not be overlooked. Jesus places the fleeing event – (the fall of Jerusalem) – in the same time period as that to which He applies the warning concerning Noah's day.

In Luke 17:26-30 Jesus told the identical story of Noah as in Matthew 24. He even drew the same point: "as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed." But He also said that when the Son of Man is revealed, "*In that day*, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away, and likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back." They were to flee in the days when the Son of Man was revealed!

Let us now make the connection with the coming as a thief:

- **The day when the Son of Man would be revealed, (His coming as a thief) would be as the days of Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:36-43; Luke 17:26-30).**

- **But the day when the Son of Man would be revealed, (His coming as a thief), *would be a time of flight* (Luke 17:26-30).**
- **Therefore the day when the Son of Man would be revealed, (His coming as a thief), would be a time of flight for those who were watching, and a time of judgment for those who were not.**

Jesus associated the time of His coming as a thief, the story of Noah, and the time of flight. Since the time of flight is irrefutably the time of Jesus' coming in the fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:16-20), *this inextricably links Matthew 24 together as a unified whole discussing but one subject: the coming of the Lord in the fall of Jerusalem.* Follow the progression of scriptures closely.

Jesus said His coming would be as in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-39/Luke 17). His coming as in the days of Noah, would be a *time of flight* (Luke 17:26-30). But Jesus identified the time of His coming and the time of flight as the fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:16-31). Since Jesus linked the days of His coming as in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-39), and the time of flight (Matthew 24:16-20/Luke 17), then the coming of Matthew 24:36-39 cannot be a different coming from that in Matthew 24:16-31.

Matthew 24:36-39 and the discussion of the story of Noah and Jesus' coming as a thief cannot be divided from Matthew 24:16-31. Therefore, since Jesus said His coming would be in that generation, (Matthew 24:29-34), then His coming as a thief must have been in that generation.

Jesus' Wedding, a United Discourse, His Coming as a Thief:

Did you know that we have positive, irrefutable proof that Jesus' thief coming was at the time of His coming in judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70? Did you know that we have positive, irrefutable proof that the Olivet Discourse cannot be divided into two topics, i.e. the fall of Jerusalem and the "end of time"? Here is our argument:

- **The coming of Christ in Matthew 25:1-13 → the coming for His wedding → is the coming of Christ as a thief, in Matthew 24:42-51. (Those who divide the Discourse readily admit this).**
- **But, the time of the wedding of Christ was to be (and was) at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. (Matthew 22:1-13. The story of the great wedding feast, for the son, is patently the same wedding as in Matthew 25, *is it not?* The wedding in Matthew 22 takes place when the wicked citizens who killed the servants sent to them were destroyed, along with their city, verse 7).**
- **Therefore, the coming of Christ for the wedding – His thief coming – was at the time of the destruction of the wicked citizens who killed the servants sent to invite them to the wedding, when their city was destroyed.**

Do you see the significance of that? Do you see that the wedding of Matthew 22 is the wedding of Matthew 25? Do you see that the wedding of Matthew 22 is not postponed, not delayed? Here is what the correlation between Matthew 22 and Matthew 25 proves:

- **It proves that the Olivet Discourse cannot be divided. If Matthew 25 is about the wedding at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, then patently, it is not about a proposed end of time event.**
- **It proves that Christ's thief coming was, therefore, in AD 70. You see, unless you are willing to suggest that Christ was going to get married, to two different "women", at two different times, at the end of two different ages, at the destruction of two different cities, then the wedding of Matthew 25 and Matthew 22 really are the same. But, if the wedding of Matthew 22 is the wedding in Matthew 25, then Christ's thief coming occurred at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.**

Matthew 24 and Revelation:

We have already shown some of the similarities between the Olivet Discourse and the Apocalypse. But the chart below will illustrate the parallel nature of the two prophecies and show that the thief coming in both books was to be a first century event.

Matthew 23-24	Revelation
Prophecy against Jerusalem (23:29-39; 24:2f)	Prophecy against the city "where the Lord was crucified" (11:8)
Message of judgment proclaimed into all the world (24:14)	Message of judgment proclaimed into all the world (14:6f)
Judgment was for persecuting the saints and prophets (23:29-34)	Judgment was for persecuting the saints and prophets (16:5-7; 18:20-24)
Saints to flee (24:15-22)	Saints to flee (18:4)
Coming as a thief (24:43)	Coming as a thief (16:14-15)
Signs of the coming (24:4-33)	Signs of the coming (16:1-11)
Judgment was imminent (24:34)	Judgment was imminent (22:12)

These are precise parallels. Thus, in Matthew and Revelation, Jesus' coming as a thief is inextricably linked with *signs*, *imminence*, *fleeing* and the Lord's coming in judgment *against Jerusalem* at the end of Israel's Old Covenant Age.

Jesus positively identified the time, and locus for the avenging of the blood of the martyrs. Standing in the Temple at Jerusalem, He recounted Israel's bloody history of killing the prophets, and predicted that she would kill the prophets that He was about to send to her. He then said that all the blood of all the righteous martyrs, "from righteous Abel, to Zacharias", indeed "all the righteous blood shed on the earth" would be avenged in His generation, "Verily I say unto you, all of these things shall come upon this generation" (Matthew 23:34-36). This unambiguous, emphatic statement must guide our understanding of Revelation, and the promise of the vindication of the martyrs at the Great Day of the Lord.

The Great City is "**where the Lord was crucified**" (Revelation 11:8) – none other than first century Jerusalem. And, in perfect harmony with this identification, Jesus specifically identified *Old Covenant Jerusalem* as the city guilty of persecuting the saints and the object of His coming in vengeance in that generation (Matthew 23:31-39). He even said, "It is not possible that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem." (Luke 13:31-33) (Correlate this with Rev. 16:6, 18:20, 24)

Here then is our argument:

- **The Lord's coming as a thief would be the Great Day of God's Wrath against the city guilty of crucifying the Lord (Revelation 11:8; 16:16).**
- **But the city guilty of crucifying the Lord was Old Covenant Jerusalem.**
- **Therefore the Lord's coming as a thief would be the Great Day of God's Wrath against Jerusalem.**

Here is a similar argument:

- **The Lord's coming as a thief would be the Great Day of God's Wrath against the city guilty of shedding the blood of the martyrs (Revelation 16-18).**
- **But, the city guilty of shedding the blood of the martyrs was Old Covenant Jerusalem (Matthew 23:29-39).**
- **Therefore, the Lord's coming as a thief would be the Great Day of God's Wrath against Old Covenant Jerusalem.**

A corollary argument would be:

- **The Lord's coming against Jerusalem for shedding innocent blood would be in the first century generation (Matthew 23:34-36; 24:29-34).**
- **But the Lord's coming against Jerusalem – for shedding innocent blood – would be His coming as a thief (Revelation 11:8; 16:16).**
- **Therefore, the Lord's coming against Jerusalem would be as a thief in His generation.**

Revelation 16 is emphatic and irrefutable. Four facts emerge from this single text: **1.)** Christ's thief coming was to be *against Jerusalem*. **2.)** That thief coming *was imminent*. **3.)** The thief coming was Christ's coming in vindication of the blood of the martyrs. **4.)** There were to be *signs* of the thief coming.

Revelation 3:

"...Therefore if you will not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (Revelation 3:3). It is widely admitted by many that we have here a prediction of something that was to occur within the lifetime of the Sardisians. And, notice, *the church at Sardis does not exist today*, so, it would be rather difficult to apply Revelation 3 to a future coming. Jesus did come and remove their candlestick! Notice several facts.

- **Jesus called the predicted judgment on Sardis His coming.**
- **The Sardisians *knew* it was something to occur in their lifetime for sure. And remember, that church no longer exists!**
- **They were told to *watch*.**
- **The coming would be *as a thief*.**
- **They could not know the "hour" of Christ's coming.**

The parallels between Matthew 24:34-51 are apparent. In Matthew, Jesus said His coming was positively to occur in that generation (vs. 29-34). The coming would be as a thief (v. 43). They were told to watch (v. 42). They could not know the day or hour (v. 36). These are the identical elements of Revelation 3! The fact is that Revelation 3 is positive, irrefutable proof that Jesus' thief coming was in the first century.

Revelation, the Wedding, the Thief Coming:

Revelation 18-19 depicts the coming of Christ in judgment of the Harlot city Babylon. At the time of that judgment, John says:

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. '"
(Revelation 19:6-8).

Remember the correlation between Matthew 22 and Matthew 25? Well, a similar correlation is here in Revelation. Take a look:

- **The wedding of Christ would occur at the time of the judgment of Babylon of Revelation (Revelation 18-19).**
- **But, Babylon of Revelation was "where the Lord was slain" (Revelation 11:8), that is, Old Covenant Jerusalem.**
- **Therefore, the wedding of Christ occurred at the time of the judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem.**

There is no doubt about the identity of the city "where the Lord was slain", *is there?* So, Revelation – like Matthew 22 – posits the wedding of Christ at the time of the judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem. How does that correlate with Christ's thief coming? Perfectly.

Remember that Christ's coming for His wedding in Matthew 25 is His thief coming foretold in Matthew 24:37-51. And that wedding – *the thief coming* – would be when Jerusalem was destroyed (Matthew 22:1-7). Well, in Revelation 16:15-19 Jesus' thief coming is in the context of the judgment of the city Babylon, and of course, the judgment of that city is the time of the wedding. Perfect correlation.

So, Revelation agrees perfectly with Matthew and the rest of the New Testament teaching about Christ's thief coming. It was near. **It had signs**. It was to occur at the time of the wedding. It was to occur at the time of the judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem.

(End of sub study)

IV. SYMBOLIC COSMIC LANGUAGE:

A. Back to (2 Peter 3:10c): "...the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the **elements will melt with fervent heat** both the *earth* and the *works* that are in it will be **burned** up." (Please refer back to the extensive study on the "heavens passing away" in our earlier **Study Series 7 lesson 3** if you would like to refresh yourself on the Old Covenant Israel connotations of this). As for this prophesied destruction, recall some important facts from the verses below, where God said (1) the Spirit would be poured out before the great and terrible "day of the Lord"; and (2) there would be symbolic imagery of cosmic disruptions, commotions, and hyperbole metaphoric events in connection with that "day of the Lord".

Old Testament prophecy - Joel 2:28-31: "28 And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."

New Testament prophecy- Acts 2:16-21: "16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."

B. The Spirit of God was poured out at Pentecost in AD 30 which Peter declares "IS" the commencing of the Joel 2 prophecy. This prophecy was then fully consummated with the final part of the Joel 2 judgment day of the Lord that occurred in AD 67-70 (in 2 Peter he is now writing 34-35 years after his prophecy in Acts, and now only a few years away from the final fulfillment). Peter uses cosmic instabilities as symbols to describe the coming judgment of God upon Jerusalem. These signs and images are exactly like the ones used in the Old Testament when the various "days of the Lord" occurred.

C. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise. The elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth and the works therein shall be burned up. This is all symbolic for the Old Covenant system, including the sacrifices and ceremonies, the land of Israel, and the unsaved Jewish people. Israel is the **only** nation in the New Testament concerning which prophecy was made with reference to "the day of the Lord." Israel was to be destroyed at the "*Parousia*" (coming) of Christ in AD 70. The language of 2 Peter 3:10 is the same kind of text as found in the symbolic imagery of Isaiah 13:9-10; 24:23; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:30; Amos 8:9; and Zephaniah 1:14-18.

- It is very important that we allow other Bible verses to interpret other Bible verses, and we must not pull a verse like 2 Peter 3:10 out of context and impose different interpretations that are not supported by the other verses on the topic. One of the proper hermeneutic rules of Bible interpretation is that clear verses help interpret ones not as clear.
 - Peter mentions in vs. 16 how Paul in **all** of his epistles is speaking about these things: however, **never** anywhere in Paul's writings does he ever talk about the end of the cosmos, or of the church age → He actually says the opposite in Eph. 3:21. Paul only speaks of Israel's judgement, so it is the end of the Old Covenant Hebrew world that must be "these same things."

Sub study on the word “Elements:”

This will be a very beneficial time in this study to do a sub study on the biblical meaning and teaching on the word “elements.” The Greek word is “stoicheion,” and it is only used “7” times in the New Testament, so let us do a study and attempt to allow Bible verses to interpret Bible verses.

The word "element" in Greek is "*stoicheion*." It means "something orderly in arrangement – a rudimentary principle, an elementary rule, base ordinances and practices".

- **Strong’s 4747** *stoixeíon* – properly, *fundamentals*, like with the *basic components* of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) "*first principles*," like the basic fundamentals of Christianity.
- **Strong’s 4747** (*stoixeíon*) refers to "the *rudiments* with which mankind . . . were *indoctrinated* (before the time of Christ), i.e. the elements of religious training or the ceremonial precepts common alike to the worship of Jews..." (J. Thayer).

Verses and context:

(Read) Galatians 4:3, “So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.”

- Paul, since Galatians 1:6, had just gone through an entire diatribe against the Judaizers, and all those who were claiming that they held some special right to being heirs to the promise and true sons of God because they were born Jewish and followers of the Mosaic Old Covenant.
- Now, in verse 4:3 Paul was telling the Galatian believers that the Jewish people prior to Christ and the Cross were living under the **bondage of ceremonies and ordinances of the Old Covenant**. In this context, the "elements" of the Old Testament laws and sacrifices were no longer needed. Christ fulfilled the requirements of the law and made the OC obsolete on the Cross, but it was not until the events of AD 66-70 where this obsolete OC system and its elements of worship and practice would in finality vanish away and be burned up (Heb. 8:13).

(Read) Galatians 4:9-11, “⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless **elemental** things, to which you desire to be **enslaved** all over again? ¹⁰ **You observe days and months and seasons and years.** ¹¹ I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.” (NASB)

- Put yourself in that 1st century Galatian church’s audience – what had Paul just spend the entire book leading up to this trying to teach us → the “**weak and beggarly elements**” of the Old Testament put Christians in bondage.” Now, as a result of the pressure from the Jews without, and the Judaizers within, some of them were turning from “grace alone” and trying to add to that by following again the observances of the Mosaic Old Covenant of “observing days and months and seasons and years.” (vs. 10)
- Paul is sorrowful in verse 11 asking if all of the work he did in his teaching to try and destroy the bondage, and to teach them to “die to/separate” themselves from the law (Gal. 2:18-19), was in vain. He goes on just shortly later in Gal. 4:22-25 to visually give them a picture of the Old Covenant from Mount Sinai, and how it only produced children of bondage.

(Read) Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the **elementary principles** of the world, rather than according to Christ.” (NASB)

- A first **important** thing to notice in this verse is that the original text does **not** have any word in it that would translate into the English word “spirits,” or “spiritual.” The NIV, ESV and NLT all “**add**” one of these words which simply do **not** have any Greek word in the original text. The only word in the corresponding Greek text is “*stoicheia*,” from which we have already learned from the definitions earlier, and see here correctly translated by the NASB as “elementary principles.”
- These “base/elementary principles of the world” cheat and deceive Christians from all of the completeness they have in Christ. These root principles are what have developed into the philosophies and traditions of men.

(Read) Colossians 2:20-22, “²⁰ If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” ²² (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?” (NASB)

- "Basic principles (same word re: Old Covenant rudimentary principles, elementary rules, sacrifices, ceremonies, ordinances, etc.) of the world" keep us from enjoying the freedom that we have in Christ. Notice how in verse 21 it even spells out very clearly Old Covenant food and drink rules and regulations which they would be all too familiar with from the pressures and deceitful teachings of the Judaizers.
- The "elements" of religion were “destined to perish (vs. 22)” or be "burned up (2 Pet. 3:10)" because Christ had already made them obsolete through His death on the Cross. In Christ, we are free from the “writings of requirements that was against us (vs. 14)” by these "elements, ordinances, ceremonies, laws, requirements, principles and rudiments" of the Old Covenant.

Colossians 2:14-17 - "¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. ¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ".

Ephesians 2:14-15 - "¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, "

(Read) Hebrews 5:12, Here is this verse in Young’s Literal Translation, as well as 4 of the most popular modern English verses:

- “for even owing to be teachers, because of the time, again ye have need that one teach you what are the **elements of the beginning of the oracles of God**, and ye have become having need of milk, and not of strong food,” (YLT)

- “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the **elementary principles of the oracles of God**, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” (NASB)
- “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the **basic principles of the oracles of God**. You need milk, not solid food,” (ESV)
- “In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the **elementary truths of God's word** all over again. You need milk, not solid food!” (NIV)
- “You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the **basic things about God's word**. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.” (NLT)
 - We need to ask a serious question: why is it so simple in this verse to translate the word “*stoicheia*” to it’s clear foundational meaning, and yet when we turn to 2 Peter 3:10, 12, for some reason this **exact same word**, which is “**never once**” translated to mean anything other than all of the verses we have just looked at (rudimentary principle, an elementary rule), are we then supposed to believe that it is all of sudden meaning the atoms of the universe?

(Read) 2 Peter 3:10b, 12b, “¹⁰ ...in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the **elements** will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up ... ¹² the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the **elements** will melt with fervent heat?”

- Again we need to ask: is Peter really trying to teach something *different* here in these two verses from everywhere else in the Bible? Because if he was, then he would need to explain his change from the commonly held understanding his audience would be thinking, or he would be misleading them (or in actuality, it would be the Holy Spirit who is inspiring Peter’s writing Who would be misleading them)!
- Is Peter really bringing in a new understanding of this word contrary to every one of the other 5 times this word appears in the NT outside on 2 Peter 3, or is it our presuppositions and former futurist teachings which are telling us that the root meaning of this word must be changed for the 1st time in the NT, even though it violates interpretation laws without providing clear indication of where and why it is doing so?

- No, he is not teaching any new meaning or doctrine from the other books in the Bible. We have just looked verse by verse up to this point through Chpt 3 showing from verse 1 and 2 how he was speaking in both books of 1 and 2 Peter to “remind” his 1st century Christian audience how he was only teaching them what they had heard already from the prophets of the past, and other disciples. (And it is important to remember that never, anywhere in the Bible, did any of the Prophets speak about the end of the Christian age, or cosmos, or any passing away of the heavens & earth in a literal sense).
- It would also be beneficial for us to re-mention here the well-known Bible interpretation rule called the hermeneutic “law of 1st mention,” which law states that if a writer is wanting to relay something different to his audience than was originally taught in this “law of 1st mention,” then he must explain the change to his audience, and if there is no explained change, then the correct way to interpret the passage is through the original doctrine taught in the passage it first appeared.
 - It is unanimously agreed to by all that 2 Peter was written after both Galatians and Colossians, so this necessitates that 2 Peter be interpreted in light of those earlier writings since Peter does not indicate that he has changed any original understanding and is now all of a sudden speaking about some different meaning.

Additionally, have you ever wondered why the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to use the phrase in vs. 10 “the works that are in it will be burned up”? How does something not physical (a work) burn up? The Holy Spirit never does something arbitrarily. He chooses His words for a reason, and this makes it very beneficial for us to understand as much about the audience, context, their history, their worldview and other aspects of the people being written to as possible → here is the definition for “works:”

- Greek = *Ergon*. Strong's Concordance: work, task, employment; a deed, action; that which is wrought or made, a work.
- HELPS Word – studies: *érgon* ("work") is a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an *inner desire* (intension, purpose).
- You cannot burn up something which is *not physical or tangible* → like the “works or actions” meant by this word used in this verse. However, this word has powerful and meaningful understanding when seen in the light of the rest of the verse, as well as the audience relevance of Old Covenant Israel, and seeing it in respect to the burning of the temple, city, and entire system of the “covenant of works.” (Mosaic Old Covenant)

2 Peter 3:11-13 ¹¹ *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons 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 dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?* ¹³ *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*"

D. The Old Testament language that "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved" in Isaiah 34:4 is the same kind of language in 2 Peter 3:12 – "the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire." Neither of these is describing a complete dissolving of the physical heavens. Isaiah 34:6 tells us that Isaiah is talking about Bozrah and the land of Edom and their judgment at the day of the Lord's vengeance (Isaiah 34:8)(i.e. Ezek. 35:1-4, 15; God would use the Babylonians to fulfill this: Jer. 25:8-9, 17-26; Mal. 1:1-4 looks back on the Isaiah 34 **fulfilled** prophecy). Isaiah and Peter are using symbolic terminology referring to judgment of a nation and its religious system, and not to the actual heavens being burned up.

- Also, of high important is to notice the "tense" used in the 2 Peter 3:11-12 → where our English translations say "will melt/dissolve" the actual Greek was written in the present participle of "**being dissolved**," and "**are melting**," respectively in vs. 11 and 12. We need to understand the power of what Peter is writing → he was writing in the "present tense" of this "**dissolving/melting**" already in process at the time he wrote this letter.
- No, it is impossible that he was referring to the literal heavens and earth, as we would not be in existence if part of them has dissolved away. However, this makes perfect sense when we see **he was referring to the Old Covenant Mosaic system**, having been annulled at the cross (Col. 2:14), and as Heb. 8:13 says, "...Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

E. In 2 Peter 3:11 he was saying to them that in spite of their first century persecutions, the believers should be godly, knowing that God's judgment is coming soon upon Israel and their Jewish tormenters. The word "earth" (2 Peter 3:7, 10) in this letter from Peter refers prophetically to the (Greek: *ge*) "land" of Israel. "**Burned up**," and "**Fire**" (3:10, 12) refers to the thorough devastation that took place in AD 70 throughout the entire land of Palestine. The "heavens" (3:10, 12) being dissolved (present tense), refers to the annulling of the Old Covenant Mosaic system in the nation of Israel, and their ultimate final passing away as a special covenantal people. The "elements" (3:10, 12) melting, refers to the Old Covenant ordinances and rules that are no longer needed or valid in the worship of God.

F. (2 Peter 3:13) Peter concludes this passage by saying that the first century believers look for a new heaven and a new earth. This is a perfect illustration of the new eternal Gospel age. God had promised this in Isaiah 65:17. This consummation was referring to after Christ's *Parousia/Coming* in AD 66-70 and take away "the old heavens and the old earth." The Old Covenant system shall no longer be remembered or be applicable to God's people. The New Jerusalem is the Body of Christ made up of all believers. Jesus has defeated sin through His sacrifice. Righteousness now dwells forever in the new heavens and the new earth everlasting covenantal cosmology by the blood of Jesus Christ with how God and man now have fellowship and life and relationship in the seen realm of the Kingdom in the church. Christians are a holy nation and are the new people, and priests of God. (See: 1 Peter 2:9-10).

As we will recall from our more extensive study into "the Heavens and the Earth" back in **Study Series 7 Lesson 3**, the New Covenant cosmological order by the blood of Jesus Christ, which had been promised by God, is called the NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH. In the seen realm of His one eternal Kingdom this is the church, which is made up of all Jew/Gentile believers in Christ. Their sins are all forgiven. They are justified in the eyes of God. They dwell in spiritual righteousness. No sacrifices or ceremonies are needed to make them pure. It has already been done for them by the Messiah, Yeshua.

Recall from back in John 18:36, that Jesus said: "*My kingdom is not of this **world** [Gk. *kosmos*]. If My kingdom were of this **world**, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is **not from here**."*

 (NKJV)

Here, the word *kosmos* is applied only to the visible earthly realm ("the world below"), and not to the heavenly realm ("the world above") from where Christ's Kingdom actually comes. **His one eternal Kingdom is a new arrangement of the universe, both in the unseen realm of heaven and in the seen realm on earth.** The invisible realities of His Kingdom emanates in the unseen realm from heaven, and manifests itself on earth through the visible Church. The New Heavens and Earth is a new government (Kingdom) and new world order of things both in the SEEN and UNSEEN realms, **based on the redemptive work of Christ**. The old arrangement of the world, which was based on the sacrificial system (instituted since the fall in the garden where the Lord Himself slayed the first animal to cloth Adam and Eve), passed away, and Christ's new world order (*kosmos*) or administration (*oikonomia*) was set up.

The Old Covenant system required continual animal blood sacrifices for the people in order to cover/atone their sins. The New Covenant people of God have been forgiven forever through Christ's sacrifice and no further sacrifices are needed. Unrighteousness continually ruled in the Old Covenant. But righteousness dwells among the New Covenant people, even though they are still sinners. This is because they are made perfect and are forgiven in Christ, their Lord and Savior.

G. "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18).

- Question: Is the law still binding after the cross? Do believers need to keep the jots and tittles? This verse says it is all or nothing! Not one jot or tittle will pass until (1) all is fulfilled! AND (2) heaven and earth pass away!
- It is imperative that we keep in mind the "time" and "context" in which Christ spoke, to whom He was speaking and referring to, for how long His reference was for, and why. He spoke to His Judean Hebrew followers in the 1st century "before," for the time up to the removal of the obsolete old heaven and earth in AD 70.
- Also, we need to keep in mind that for these Hebrew Christians there was also a clear the distinction between being "under the Law" versus "keeping the Law." Apostle Paul declared that he was NOT "under the Law," but yet was still "keeping the Law." He was keeping every jot and tittle of it, just like the other apostles in Judea, but was not bound "under the Law" (Romans 6:14-15; Galatians 5:18).
- So, we might wonder why he would "keep the Law" if he was not "under the Law." He tells us that he kept it in order to win those who were under the Law (1 Corinthians 9:20). The Jews would never have listened to a Gentile or fellow Jew who did not keep the Law. The gospel would have been instantly rejected by any Jew if it came out of the mouth of a law-breaker. That is why Jesus told them to keep every jot and tittle of it better than the scribes and Pharisees, so that none of the Jews (not even the most strict law-keepers) would have any excuse for rejecting it.

H. Which "heaven and earth" was Jesus referring to? It could not have been the "physical" universe, since there would be *no reason or purpose to destroy and recreate the literal heaven*, as **there is no sin there** – it is the place of our Holy God, in whose presence sin cannot dwell, and also of which God Himself said, "Praise Him you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens...He also *established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.*" (Psa. 148:4-6).

No, in actuality, Jesus was speaking to His 1st century audience of the then still existing Old Heavens and the Old Earth: The Old "heavens", were symbolic for the Old Covenant religious system of sacrifices, ceremonies, ordinances, laws and statutes" (in other words: the way in which God had established his Old Covenant with the Hebrew people as His way to be in relationship with mankind); and the old "earth", meaning the land and nation of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, and the material temple; which all were finally, visibly shaken and destroyed in AD 70, never to be used again by God.

This AD 70 final destruction fulfilled a multitude of prophecies God had promised would come upon Old Covenant Israel for all of their harlotry with foreign gods, and for their continual breaking of their covenant with Him. (Deut. 28:15, 20-23, 26, 31:16-17, 19-20, 26-29; Hos. 1:2, 2:2, 4:11-13; Jer. 2:1-2, 20-21, 3:1-3, 6-9, 14, Ezek. 16:32-38, Ezek. Chpt 23; Rev. 17:5 to just list a few of them).

This AD 70 final destruction also fulfilled so many specific prophecies God had declared throughout the Old Testament about this final end time for "Israel," when the promised culmination of curses for their continual harlotry and breaking of their covenant with God would be brought upon her, just some of which are: Amos 7:8, 8:2; Isa. 5; Jer. 8:20; Deut. 32:20, 23-26; Matt. 8:11-12, 21:40-41, 43, 45, 23:31-38.