

The Revelation of Righteous Judgment Series

PART 23

JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE

(CONTINUED)

I Peter 4:17...*"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"*

II Peter 3:3-13...*"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."*

As you may recall, we made a remarkable discovery in our last message. Much to the surprise of many, this was not the first time that prophecy was given concerning the consumption of the world...and this was not the first time where it actually came to pass! According to God's Own irrefragable and immutable Word, the world has been on fire before! That's right! Even if we were to exclude the first-century perspective which we shared of the above passage (concerning the fall of old Jerusalem in 70 A.D.), the fact remains that when Isaiah prophesied of the fall of the Babylonian empire (which prophecy, incidentally, was fulfilled in 539 B.C.), he expressed it just the way that Peter did, in terms of fiery universal destruction (Isa. 13:6-19). Read it again for yourselves! Therefore, unless you are one of those folks who believe that the prophets just went around babbling incomprehensible gibberish which had no relevance or meaning to those of their day, you will have to admit that this is so. In fact, if we really wanted to get technical about it, the same terminology could be used of any of the times judgment was

pronounced on a leader, nation, or people in ancient days. Whenever the fire fell, the Day of the Lord was at hand, and their world ceased to exist as they once knew it. The results were invariable, and the Word of the Lord stood sure, no matter how it was expressed in sacred Script!

To reiterate the conclusion reached in Part 22, we would say that while Peter's words to the first-century believers primarily described something they could expect to occur within their lifetime, they actually imply more than just one thing, or any singular event in history. And, as we intend to show in this message, they are not always to be seen negatively! In the broader sense, they represent an impeccable set of principles, which can apply to any generation, or describe the divine dealings in the life of any individual. Beloved, this is the mark of a Word truly inspired of God; though it may have immediate ramifications, it will always remain the same yesterday, today, and forever. It will never be in need of revising, in order to make it relative to the reader. It is consistent and clear to a thousand generations! Praise His great name!

Now, as we resume our studies, we are compelled to take a closer look at what is meant by the word world. There are three words translated as world in the New Testament, each of which are worthy of our consideration. Those words are:

1) AION --- which means, age; or undetermined duration of time;

2) OIKOUMENE --- which is used in reference to the civilized world in general, and the Roman Empire in particular (Matt. 24:14; Lk. 2:1; Acts 11:28; and Rev. 3:10, to name a few places);

and finally, 3) the Greek word, KOSMOS.

There are certainly some very interesting points that could be made concerning how and where the words aion and oikoumene were employed by New Testament writers (what tremendous confusion has come because they have all been translated to mean the same thing)! These points would require separate studies, in order to give them fair treatment. However, since it is the more common word, KOSMOS, which Peter used, it is this word which primarily concerns us today. It is used in a variety of ways throughout Scripture. In certain instances, it is used to describe the material universe (Isa. 2:8; 14:17, 21; II Sam. 22:16; Psa. 50:12; 89:11; 90:2; 93:1; 96:10; Jer. 10:12; Jn. 21:25; Acts 17:24; Rom. 1:20; I Tim. 6:7). In other places, it is used in reference to the inhabitants of the world, especially to those who are alienated from God and His Christ (Jn. 1:10; 3:16; 14:17; 14:27; 15:18; Heb. 11:38). But in the majority of cases, it is used to describe the world-system in general, that is, that mysterious influence which seems to somehow govern men's lives, and compel them to be conformed to a certain lifestyle or way of thinking. Included in this definition would be any one of the myriads of systems, organizations, or arrangements of worldly affairs (be they social, political, or religious), which, regardless of their origin, can continue to operate without fresh impetus or inspiration from the Spirit of the living God. Anything which stirs our desires, appeals to either our pride, our intellect, or our emotions, and which ultimately woos us away from Christ is of the world

(as John so aptly expressed in I Jn. 2:16), and must be recognized as such. When we view the world in this sense, it becomes obvious that there is much more to it than meets the eye. There is a spirit behind the system, and principles upon which it is built. It is of this that we should beware.

In Peter's admonition, he speaks of three worlds: the world that then was (verse 6); the world that now is (verse 7); and the world which is to come (verse 13). How are we to understand the world that then was? That was the world which existed before the flood in Noah's day. What was it like? The writer of Genesis says, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination and intention of all human thinking was only evil continually... the earth was depraved and putrid in God's sight, and the land was filled with violence (desecration, infringement, outrage, assault, and lust for power). And God looked upon the world and saw how degenerate, debased, and vicious it was, for all humanity had corrupted their way upon the earth and lost their true direction (Gen. 6:5, 11-12, Amp.). It should be noted that when God looked upon the world of that day, He did so by observing the state and condition of human thinking. He does the same today. The reason for this is that every emerging expression in the world at large, every condition which existed in that Godless society, every form of human organization or arrangement, originated in and sprang forth from the mind of fallen man. They began as thoughts, ideas, philosophies, and theories... and gradually developed into the various forms of human expression which comprise the world. (This development is what is referred to in I Cor. 7:31 as the fashion of the world, that is, the style or form which the world takes on at a particular point in history.) All of the trends, courses, and patterns humanity was following in that day found their base in the carnal mind. Let us underscore this thought, for it is an important one.

The world that then was was described as being only evil continually. It had digressed to the degree that darkness completely covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. However, in the midst of that sin-sick society, when debauchery and lawlessness were the order of the day, and violence filled the land to the point that there was no place wherein to find refuge, there was a man who refused to be a part of it. That man was Noah. Of him, it was written: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God (Gen.6:9). Therefore, when the Day of the Lord came upon his generation, and they came to their appointed time of crisis (judgment, or turning point), Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Noah's testimony is familiar to us all, so we need not take up much time with it here. For a duration of time, this preacher of righteousness witnessed to his generation, warning them of the inevitable end which was nigh at hand, and proclaiming a message of salvation for all to hear. ENTER INTO THE ARK OF SAFETY; FOR A FLOOD SHALL SURELY COME! As you know, God had commanded him to build an ark, and to bring a reproductive couple from every species of animate creature into it. As a result, the Lord would establish His covenant with him, insuring him of their preservation. So Noah reverently carried out this command, even in the face of constant mocking and jeering by the global community. Oh, if only they would have understood that the foolishness of God was wiser than men! And if only they would have heeded the call to

accept God's way of escape (I Cor. 10:13)! They would have spared themselves much unnecessary sorrow!

Finally, the day arrived when the prophecies came to pass. The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And God...yes, God shut the doors of the ark! Suddenly, the spirit of frivolity and festivity turned to one of dread and fear, as the masses watched in absolute horror and stunned disbelief an event which they never imagined could happen. Torrential rainfall was pouring out of the skies as if a floodgate had been opened, and the seas were rapidly swelling out of their banks! Alas, for the Day! For the Day of the Lord was at hand! And as a destruction from the Almighty had it come!

Pandemonium broke out across the land; people were running in all directions. Some were primarily concerned about their possessions, how they might save them from ruin and loss. Others had only one thing on their minds, and that was to save their lives from drowning. But try as they may, there was no place to hide, and no way to keep out this thief in the night! Those unwelcome waters intruded into their homes, their businesses, and impartially sought them out!

We can only suppose what Noah must have felt, as he beheld this great sight. No doubt, he grieved for his friends and neighbors, who, in spite of his warnings, were caught by surprise. But because he had mentally prepared for it in advance (being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, Heb. 11:7), we would venture to say that, by this time, his feelings about this event were quite a bit different from those around him. You see, he understood that the very waters which would bring about an end of all flesh were also the waters which would bring complete deliverance to him and his household! They were saved from the world of their day, as they were raised higher and higher above the earth! (And just think...they didn't have to be raptured, or taken out of the world to be kept from the evil, either)!

Now, the question arises. What world was it that God was bent on destroying in Noah's day? And what world was it from which the Noah family was saved? Was it the natural planet, with its mountains, trees, rocks, and soil? Was it the valleys and dales, deserts and woodlands? We will readily agree that all these things were definitely effected during the course of that world-wide deluge. But the incontrovertible fact remains that when it was all over, and Noah stepped out of that tar-pitched ark after forty days and nights of unending rain, he stepped onto the very same planet that had been there before!

Scripture emphatically states that the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished (verse 6). And the fact that real, natural water did overflow the planet immediately causes some to conclude that this was what was meant. But more importantly, it also overflowed a world-system, an orderly arrangement, and the people who had conformed to that particular world-system. This is the world that is brought into focus; and this was the world that perished as a result of the flood. The world of mankind, and all that proceeded out of his God-forsaken mind...all of this was completely

submerged, with the exception of Noah and his remnant. They were the only ones to come out from that corrupt system of things, that subterranean world of yesteryear.

We mentioned this passage in our last message, but it bears repeating here. Lest there be any misunderstanding over His dealings with mankind in the future, the Lord had this declaration of intent unalterably recorded in Scripture for all future generations to take note of: NEVER AGAIN will I curse the ground because of man, however evil his inclinations may be from his youth upwards. I will NEVER AGAIN kill every living creature, as I have just done. While the earth lasts, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall never cease (Gen. 8:21-22, NEB). Now, why, pray tell, do you think that He would say this? Do you think that it was because He felt like He'd just made a huge mistake, and was on a guilt trip for dealing so severely with His creation? Or do you think that perhaps He was ashamed for His actions, and so, in a round-about way, was making a public apology? We don't think so! We are more inclined to believe that it was because one world-wide natural calamity was enough to make His point. Most of us would agree that His primary objective was to have a world wherein dwelleth righteousness. According to II Peter 3:13, that is His expressed desire. BUT THAT OBJECTIVE CAN NEVER BE OBTAINED THROUGH NATURAL MEANS. Now, that may be a truth which has only recently dawned on us, but it is certainly not news to God! He Who declared the end from the beginning knew full well what the outcome would be long before the first raindrop fell from the sky. His omniscience insists upon it! Besides, the fact that He never expected the flood to remedy the problem of moral depravity is seen in His words, I will never again curse the earth for man's sake, however evil his inclinations may be from his youth upwards. Ask yourselves this: does that sound like the voice of one who had just fixed a problem, and was confident in the solution? Or does it sound more like one who knew that the problem would reoccur in the not-so-distant future?

Beloved, allow us to say that as significant as the flood was, and as far and wide as its influence was spread, it basically served to establish this one indisputable fact. While it was successful in bringing Noah out of the world, it was not able to remove the world out of Noah! Because the waters were merely external, certain elements of that antediluvian world survived the judgment, by finding passage in the depths of Noah's unchanged heart. This was evidenced not long after he had set foot on dry land (Gen. 9:21)! So, while the earth and the works therein were destroyed (that is, the outward expressions, or manifest works of the flesh, as listed in Gal. 5:19-21), the foundation of the world remained intact (being founded in the carnal mind). The potential remained for a rebuilding of the past, based upon those primary elements.

The divine Record shows that over a brief course of time, this is exactly what happened. The elementary principles by which the old world had operated were progressively influencing the new, while the god of this world was situating himself in the heavens once again. Why was this? Since not a trace of that evil society was left after the flood, the excuse of a bad environment can be ruled out. There was no one around to influence them with unrighteousness, and no peer pressure to conform. There is but one answer for this, and that is, the former things were still being remembered, and were coming to

mind. Place was given for the old man to dwell, and room for the reconstruction of his ideas! Therefore, it should not surprise us that conditions would return to the state in which they had previously been found. How could it have been otherwise?

Within the first century following, we read that Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod, built the morally corrupt kingdom of Babel. In this fleshpot of iniquity, vice was openly treated as virtue, and virtue as vice. In fact, vileness was in vogue. It was the fashion statement of the then young world! So again, in spite of the fact that the devastation of the flood was still fresh in their minds, the need arose for divine intervention, when the inhabitants of the earth arrogantly attempted to be like the Most High, and to ascend into the heights of the clouds by the aid of their man-made tower (thus signifying that even the heavens were unclean in God's sight; Job 15:15)! Clearly, then, the point had been made. Natural catastrophe could not rid the world of the mysterious working of iniquity; and even the later issuance of the Law only suppressed it on the surface (and that, only slightly). So it was not long until talk began for the need of new heavens and a new earth to replace the one just formed. Amazing, isn't it? Man, left to himself, naturally follows the path toward self-destruction. He is his own worst enemy!

At sundry times and divers manners, God spoke of this new world to come. He described it through the use of types and shadows; and He did so through the mouths of the prophets. This time, however, the terminology used was significant, in that it included the one element essential for change. This can best be seen in Isaiah's prophetic monologue. In chapter 65, verse 17, the Lord says through him, For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former SHALL NOT be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more in her, nor the voice of crying.... And again, in Isa. 43:18-21, Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it?... THIS PEOPLE HAVE I FORMED FOR MYSELF; they shall shew forth My praise. Plainly stated, the way in which God proposed to create new heavens and a new earth would be BY CREATING JERUSALEM A REJOICING, AND HER PEOPLE A JOY (in other words, through a sovereign act of God, in changing the hearts and minds of His people)! This is exactly in accord with what Ezekiel was saying, when he prophesied, And I will give them one heart, and I will put A NEW SPIRIT within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I shall be their God. And this is also what Jeremiah had in mind, when he spoke for the Lord, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make A NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel... I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Only in this way could the conditions be met for a world wherein dwelleth righteousness, where the former things would not be remembered, nor come into mind! No other way would do! Therefore,

while the Old Testament writings began with a natural baptism of the earth by water; they conclude with a prophecy concerning a spiritual one, typified by fire (Malachi 3:1-3). Messiah would come, and pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28). He would make a new covenant with them, baptizing the earth with holy Fire! This, dear friend, was the promise extended by the Father; and this was the hope of all Israel. But still, they wondered... how would He implement His program, and bring all this about?

THE TWO BAPTISMS: NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL

John had been called to a unique calling... and certainly during a unique time in history. Like his spiritual predecessor, Noah, his commission was to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Lk. 3:3). This responsibility he took quite seriously, baptizing all who came to him in chilly Jordan's waters, and charging them before God to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. No reed shaken by the wind was he! Standing before them in rugged wilderness apparel, he was the embodiment of the very baptism which he offered.

Sensing some great significance about his ministry, but not knowing exactly what to think about it, the people naturally wondered among themselves whether this spiritual redwood of a man was He Who should come, the promised One of Israel. But he had no hesitancy in answering them, in that strong and reassuring voice which they had grown so accustomed to hearing by then. I INDEED BAPTIZE YOU WITH WATER, he thundered, but One mightier than me cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST AND WITH FIRE: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable (Lk.3:16-17). As important as John's work was, he realized that it was in no wise comparable to His Whose baptism was slated next to come. His ministry was merely illustrative in nature, introducing men to, and preparing them for that which would bring about the necessary change.

In due season, John the baptizer gave way to Jesus the Christ. And it was obvious from the things which Jesus said that John's assessment of Him could not have been more right. If there had been any question in anyone's mind as to what His intentions were for coming, our Lord dispelled them utterly, when He announced, I AM COME TO SEND FIRE ON THE EARTH; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I HAVE A BAPTISM TO BE BAPTIZED WITH; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished! (Lk. 12:49-50). Coupling this with those immortal words recorded in John 12:31, where He said, NOW IS the judgment of the world; NOW SHALL the prince of this world be cast out, it became apparent to those under the sound of His voice that even as it was in the days of Noah, so had they come to a turning point in history, a critical time of transition. The Messenger of the Covenant had come, and was about to set things right!

Closely they followed Him, carefully analyzing His every word. And patiently they waited for something to be said or done that would signal the end. Their level of anticipation must have been overwhelming! On the cross, He cried, IT IS FINISHED,

thus signifying that a conclusion had been reached. And they knew almost instinctively that something greater than what they understood had just transpired. But it was not until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that He counseled them to wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4-5). Finally, after all they'd gone through, they had some instructions to go by! The promise would come not many days hence!

Still, they had no idea what to expect. They'd never experienced anything like this before, and had nothing wherewith to compare it. But one moment after the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they needed not that any should teach them! It was an experience they would never forget!

Beloved, it is our heartfelt conviction --- and we believe we have the support of Scripture to say this--- that what happened on the Day of Pentecost was the fulfillment in part of God's promise concerning the new world. The creative genius of God was just as much at work that day as it was back in Genesis! Now, we know that the productive process actually began with Jesus (Who was the beginning of the [new] creation of God, Rev. 3:14), and the Fire was kindled back then (as He changed the order from one of observing natural type and shadow, and the performing of religious rites and rituals, to the higher order of actually becoming the embodiment of all spiritual reality, i.e. Priest, Temple, Altar, Sacrifice, etc.). However, we think it not robbery to say that as far as the experiential transformation of humankind was concerned, a new thing was done in the earth. Most of us are familiar with the King James Version of II Cor. 5:17, where it says, Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. But the New English Version brings it out in a way that greatly emphasizes our point: When anyone is united to Christ, THERE IS A NEW WORLD; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun. From first to last this has been the work of God. Well put! So, just as surely as the heavens and the earth came into being when God first spoke the Word of life in the beginning, and just as truly as a new world came forth after the flood had passed over the earth, even so did a new kosmos transpire, and a new order take over, whenever tongues of fire sat upon those who tarried in the upper room! Do you believe that? It's the truth! It was just as real!

Those who entered into Christ that day were delivered from this present evil world in much the same way that those who entered into the ark were from theirs. The parallels between these two exoduses are remarkable! The main difference, however, was that not only did the first-century church enter into God's Ark of deliverance for them, but the Ark entered into them! After spending forty days shut up before God in suspense-filled and sobering seclusion, the Lord Whom they'd sought suddenly came into His living temple like as of a rushing mighty wind, to sit within them as a Refiner and Purifier of silver, and to purge them of all filthiness of flesh and spirit. The purpose for this was to incinerate every inclination toward the world in them, and to ultimately prepare them to offer an offering in righteousness (Mal. 3:3). You see, by creating this new world, He was also producing a new priesthood that would function according to the new order, the

order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:5, 6)! The old was obsolete, waxed old, and was ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). Now, all things were being made new!

The thing that throws some people off, however, is the fact that Peter wrote his second epistle after the Day of Pentecost. And John, writing from the lonely isle of Patmos, also told of seeing a new heaven and a new earth some thirty odd years following that blessed event (Rev. 21:1-5). Since this is so, how could it have possibly been what they were seeing? Simple. If you will reexamine what we said above, you will notice that we said it was the fulfillment in part. There are two reasons why we said it this way. The first reason is because there was a two-fold work to be performed by the Fire in order for these prophecies to be fulfilled; an up-side and a down-side, if you will. Study the Scriptures, and you will see that this is so (take, for example, Joel 2:28-32; Mal. 3:1-6; 4:1-3; Lk. 3:16-17). The up-side, of course, would refer to what happened in the upper room. The down-side could no doubt relate to what happened to Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Taking into consideration that both Peter's and John's words were penned after the former, but before the latter, it would make perfect sense that the outpouring at Pentecost was that which was spoken of by the prophets, but not all of that. There was more to occur during this overlapping of covenants.

The second reason is that what happened in the upper room was but the initiation of God's work by Fire, not the consummation of it. Know of a surety that the melt-down described by Peter is a process, not an instantaneous act. This was true for them then; and it is true for us now. And it is not a one-time event! This becomes apparent from a general review of the Book of Acts. The early church had obviously been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13). The change in their lives was proof of this. The devouring Fire had brought immediate judgment to their individual worlds, burning up major segments of their former lifestyles and thought patterns. Still, there was evidence that God was not finished with them yet. So, spiritually speaking, at different times and in different ways, we see the Angel of His Presence repeatedly taking fire from the altar, and casting it into their earth (Rev. 8:5). By this, He was dissolving more and more of the old world system in them, and replacing it with the new.

Now that we've mentioned it, there is an interesting point to be made on this. The word translated in II Peter, dissolved, comes from the Greek word, LUO. It is translated elsewhere in Scripture as loosed, and, in a couple of places, as destroyed. For example, in Matt. 16:19 and 18:18, Jesus said Whatsoever ye loose (luo) on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Mk. 7:35 says that the string of the dumb man's tongue was loosed. In Lk. 13:12, the woman bound by an infirm spirit was told, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. Jesus told those who stood by Lazarus' tomb, Loose him, and let him go (Jn. 11:44). And finally, I Jn. 3:8 says, For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy (luo) the works of the devil (also see Acts 2:24; 16:26; Rev. 9:15; 20:3, 7). Now, to loose something means to release it from confinement, restriction, bondage or control. It speaks of it's undoing. It also speaks of the process of breaking down a substance to it's component parts, in order that they might be revealed. We cannot think of a better way to describe what was happening in the lives of the saints. As suddenly as

Lazarus was recalled from among the dead, even so had they been raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places (Eph. 2:1-6). Their resurrection was complete! However, they were still in need of being released from the confining graveclothes of the past, and into the glorious liberty of the children of God. You see, they were still contending with an Old Covenant mentality, and the worldly elements of legalism (Gal. 4:1-10; Col. 2:20-22). Therefore, a loosening process was required, in order for them to be free indeed!

Beloved, for the past thousand years, God has been working on His New Creation Project. And He has been working on it primarily as a covert operation. Just consider, for a moment, what an astounding thing this is. A whole new world has been in the making; and, for the most part, the masses of humanity have been oblivious to it! While the natural-minded man has looked on, God has very aggressively been fashioning this new world, giving it form and definition over time. At no time has He ceased in His activities! And yet, during this massive undertaking, and amidst all this heavy construction, only a few have really understood what was happening. This goes for believers, as well as nonbelievers! The blindness in part has been staggering! So many of God's people see no connection between the inward dealings, fiery trials and loosening resulting from the baptism of Fire in the lives of His saints, and the formation of the new heavens and new earth. They have been taught to view it as two separate things; one, present, the other, future. But, precious friends of ours, it is one and the same! Jesus is not out there building a new heaven somewhere way beyond the Milky Way; and He is not planning on adding another planet to the solar system! He has been building a people who can be led by His Spirit, who have the law of the New Covenant written in their inward parts. He is developing a people who are not in any way conformed to this world, but have been transformed by the renewing of their minds. And He shall ultimately produce, and put on display a people who are unlike any other who have ever dwelt upon the earth; who are free from the burial shroud and the spices of man-made religion and theology; who are the perfect expression of all spiritual truth. As Paul said, YE ARE GOD'S BUILDING!

A PRESENT REALITY

While preparing this article, we found beautiful confirmation for these things in the veteran voice of J. Preston Eby. He has written, Vast multitudes of men and women all about us walk through this life with their minds closed, their hearts centered in this old world. How men's hearts and minds are tied to this world! The man who is living in this world is forever worrying about earthly things --- how he can provide more in the bank for old age, how he can provide more to see and hear and taste and feel and smell --- the pleasures of this world, how he can be sure he will never want for food, clothing or shelter. His concern is that the outer physical man will never be in need, never be unsatisfied or dissatisfied. He is always mindful of the comfort, entertainment, protection and provision of the natural man. However much we may elaborate on this point, we will not express it more aptly than did the apostle Paul when he declared, For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh. On the other hand, there is a small minority who spend their lives minding the things of the Spirit. The welfare of the inner man, the spiritual man, the new creature, the heavenly man is uppermost in their

thoughts, for they seek the mind of Christ. They, like Paul, die daily to this present evil world, counting it as a passing thing that is destined for destruction.

The child of God stands out as the revelation of the divine power of Jesus Christ to come into the spirit of man, and change it and make it lovely and pure and wise and powerful like God Himself. To come into the mind of man, and take possession of all its faculties, infusing the mind of Christ until that man esteems the fashions and fantasies of this world as less than nothing, seeking always to be one with the Father. To come into the nature of man and transform it by the power of God until his thoughts and desires and actions are filled with wisdom and understanding, manifesting the life and glory of the world to come,

the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. These, being after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit. These are putting on immortality and incorruption, for the Christ shall come into even our diseased and mortal bodies until the action of the Holy Spirit revolutionizes every cell and our bodies are quickened by the Spirit that dwells in them (Rom. 8:11). This, my beloved, is what it means to be **SAVED FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD!**

I know of nothing that will so thoroughly awaken the fathomless depths of wisdom and understanding than the blessed knowledge of the sacred mystery that Christ saves men right now from this present evil world. And while you, dear reader, may be one of those waiting with rapturous expectation to be whisked away and evacuated off this earth to spend eternity in some far-off heaven somewhere, Peter expresses with urgent and profound aspiration the true desire of all sons of God who groan for the deliverance of creation and triumph of the Kingdom of God, saying, 'Nevertheless we, according to His promise look for **NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH**, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found in Him in peace, without spot, and blameless'. It is an incontrovertible fact that the average Christian today is not looking for the same thing Peter was looking for --- new heavens and a new earth.

Did Jesus teach us to pray, 'Come quickly Lord Jesus, and take us to heaven,' or did He teach us to pray, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven?' To be saved from this present evil world doesn't mean to be taken anywhere. It means to be transformed, it means to be in a different condition, or state of being, than the world. It means to be holy instead of vile, spiritual instead of carnal, heavenly minded instead of earthly minded, peaceful instead of agitated, full of wisdom and understanding instead of ignorant and foolish, full of faith instead of fear and frustration, living instead of dying. With what holy understanding did our Lord beseech the Father, 'I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world' (Jn. 17:15-17). This was Noah's condition too, his state of being, in his corrupt world. He was perfect with God. And now it is our turn to be perfect with God, to walk with God, and be completely delivered out of this present evil world into the life and power and glory of the Kingdom of God --- the new age, the new condition, the new state of being --- the **NEW WORLD ORDER**, the **WORLD TO COME!** People are always looking for 'the end of the world,' but most

sincerely do I say to you today that this is where the world ends ---it ends within yourself. The new heavens (spirit) and the new earth (soul and body) are glorious and eternal realities right now upon this earth for each and every man and woman who has been delivered from this present evil world. The new age has dawned within our hearts, the new world has come into our reality, old things are passed away, and behold, all things are now made new. Hallelu-yah! ---end quote.

We do believe there is a further expression of the Fire, a finishing work, and a manifestation of that Fire baptism on a magnitude and scale this world has never before witnessed. It is this salvation ready to be revealed in the last time that we earnestly look for and hasten, knowing that the brightness of this coming will so radically transform a people, they will in no wise resemble the image of the earthy. For them, the heavens of old will be rolled up like a scroll, and will vanish away like smoke; while the new is stretched out in its place (Isa. 34:4; 51:6). The new system of divine leadership will completely govern every aspect of their existence, namely, the Law of the Spirit of Life (Rom. 8:2); and they shall walk in the light of His ways!

As great as that will be, however, the process does not stop there. In the absence of the old man's script, the Lord has also said that He will change these vile bodies, and make them like unto His glorious body. This, too, is a result of the Fire. Their molecular structures shall go through a metamorphosis of sorts, their blood will be cleansed, and we shall be changed! That, dear readers, is God's purpose and plan; to have a body of sons who have become so purged, so purified, so absolutely one with the Fire, they are no longer subject to death! Now, that is a blessed hope worth considering!

Know that the Fire of God is unquenchable; it cannot be contained or limited in any way (Lk. 3:17). For after the work is complete in His firstfruits, it will continue to spread world-wide. And though some men may attempt to resist it at first, and some will be adversely affected by it as long as they remain unyielding, the Lord will fan the flame, until every nation under heaven has been emblazoned by it, every individual has been immersed in it, and every human institution and organization has been thoroughly swallowed up by it. In fact, the extent of it will be as vast and far-reaching as were the waters of Noah (Isa. 54:7-10)! Then, when once the whole creation has been delivered from the bondage of corruption, and all things have been restored to its rightful and due order, the knowledge, glory, power, and dominion of it will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea! Praise God for such a vision!

What has been said should suffice for the moment. But may we share one more thought in our closing remarks? II Peter 3, verse 10 says that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. The actual wording in the Greek is rhoizedon, which means, whizzingly, i.e. with a crash. We have a term for a certain class of children which possess a higher level of intelligence than others in their age bracket. We call them whiz kids. However, we would submit to you that the real whiz kids are those whose heavens are presently being dissolved, who are being loosed from the former lines of reasoning, and are being brought to a place where all things are made new. This unusual species shall exhibit the mind of Christ with perfect clarity, manifesting the powers of the coming age, and

walking with God and one another in perfect step and unity of Spirit. As it was said of Daniel, an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts shall be found in them (Dan. 5:12), inasmuch that they, and they alone, shall be meet for the challenges which lay ahead. They will be the representatives of the order of Melchisedec, and the administrators of the world to come! Hallelujah!

to be continued...

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