

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Rethinking 2 Peter 3:10–13:
An Exposition of This *Millennial Restoration* and *Eternal State* Telescoping Prophecy

A Dissertation Submitted to
The Faculty of the Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Bible Exposition

by

Robert Hogan Franklin

Lynchburg, VA

July 24, 2023

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ABSTRACT

Second Peter 3:10–13 is one of the most debated passages in Scripture. Understandably, the text concerns eschatology which evokes diverse perspectives. Accordingly, this dissertation will research two majority views on 2 Peter 3:10–13 and one minority view on 2 Peter 3:10–13 for which there is evidence that it was held by a few ante-Nicene fathers.

After the ante-Nicene era, expositors have almost universally interpreted 2 Peter 3:10–13 as a *single meaning* prophecy pertaining entirely to the eternal state. A common agreement in the two majority views on 2 Peter 3:10–13 is that fire will be the means that God will use to accomplish either the *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* or the *eternal state restoration* of the physical universe to transition by conflagration (interpreted as occurring at Revelation 20:11) to the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1.

On the other hand, a minority view on 2 Peter 3:10–13 evidenced by Irenaeus, Methodius, and Lactantius, demonstrate interpreting this passage as a *contextual telescoping* prophecy with the earthly conflagration in 3:10–12 pertaining to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will cleanse the earth’s surface and atmosphere (the first heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ’s earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 telescopes *post-millennium* to the promised *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1); two distinct prophecies in the same context separated by more than a thousand years, which is consistent with the literary feature of telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature. The thesis will argue that this minority view on 2 Peter 3:10–13 is the biblical view. Notably, the thesis is not dependent on the views of a few ante-Nicene fathers or 2 Peter 3:10–13 characterizing a *contextual telescoping* prophecy, but *sola Scriptura*.

TABLE

Table 1: Correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude.....30

ABBREVIATIONS

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>1 Apol.</i>	<i>First Apology</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>2 Apol.</i>	<i>Second Apology</i> (Justin Martyr)
<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians</i> (Clement of Rome)
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> (Josephus)
<i>Antichr.</i>	<i>De antichristo</i> (Hippolytus: <i>On Christ and Antichrist</i>)
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>Autol.</i>	<i>To Autolycus</i> (Theophilus of Antioch)
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
Barn.	Barnabas
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsus</i> (<i>Against Celsus</i>) (Origen)
CGTSC	Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges
<i>Civ.</i>	<i>The City of God</i>
<i>Comm. Dan.</i>	<i>Commentarium in Daniele</i> (Hippolytus: <i>On Daniel</i>)
<i>Comm. Apoc.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John</i> (Victorinus)*
CurTM	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. ET. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> (Jerome)
<i>Epit.</i>	<i>Epitome of the Divine Institutes</i> (Lactantius)
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i> (<i>Elenchos</i>) (Irenaeus: <i>Against Heresies</i>)
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Histories</i> (Herodotus)
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> (<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>) (Eusebius)
<i>Hex.</i>	<i>Hexaemeron libri sex</i> (<i>Six Days of Creation</i>) (St. Ambrose)
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>The Divine Institutes</i> (Lactantius)
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
Jub.	Jubilees
K&D	Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. <i>Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament</i> . Translated by James Martin et al. 25 vols. Edinburgh, 1857–1878. Repr., 10 vols., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996

L&N	Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989
LEH	Lust, Johan, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, eds. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> . Rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003
MSJ	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
Nat. hom.	<i>On the Nature of Man</i> (Nemesius)*
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
NPNF ¹	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1</i>
NPNF ²	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2</i>
Oct.	<i>The Octavius of Minucius Felix</i>
Praep. ev.	<i>Praeparatio evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)</i> (Eusebius)
Princ.	<i>De Principiis (First Principles)</i> (Origen)
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
Res.	<i>De resurrectione (From the Discourse on the Resurrection)</i> (Methodius)
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLGNT	The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
Symp.	<i>Symposium (Convivium decem virginum) (The Banquet of the Ten Virgins)</i> (Methodius)
SwJT	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
Them	<i>Themelios</i>
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

OLD TESTAMENT (Cited)

Gen	Genesis	Jer	Jeremiah	Hag	Haggai
Exod	Exodus	Ezek	Ezekiel	Zech	Zechariah
Lev	Leviticus	Dan	Daniel	Mal	Malachi
Deut	Deuteronomy	Hos	Hosea		
Josh	Joshua	Joel	Joel		
Judg	Judges	Amos	Amos		
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings	Obad	Obadiah		
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Jonah	Jonah		
Job	Job	Mic	Micah		
Ps/Pss	Psalms	Nah	Nahum		
Prov	Proverbs	Hab	Habakkuk		
Isa	Isaiah	Zeph	Zephaniah		

NEW TESTAMENT (Cited)

Matt	Matthew	Col	Colossians
Mark	Mark	1–2 Thess	1–2 Thessalonians
Luke	Luke	1–2 Tim	1–2 Timothy
John	John	Titus	Titus
Acts	Acts	Heb	Hebrews
Rom	Romans	1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians	1 John	1 John
Gal	Galatians	Jude	Jude
Eph	Ephesians	Rev	Revelation
Phil	Philippians		

MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS (Cited)

ESV	English Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version ¹

¹ The *SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* (SBL), Second Edition, by Billie Jean Collins, Project Director; Bob Buller, Publishing Director; and John F. Kutsko, Executive Director (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), is the guide for abbreviations and style for this dissertation. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, Ninth Edition, by Kate L. Turabian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), is the guide for style not addressed in the SBL. Three distinctives of the SBL, Second Edition, are: “Quotations of five or more lines in any language should be formatted as separate paragraphs with all lines indented on the left” (2.1.3.3); “For academic readers, Greek should be given in Greek characters” (5.3); and “books of the Bible cited without chapter (or chapter and verse) should ordinarily be spelled out in the main text. Books of the Bible cited with chapter are more commonly abbreviated unless they come at the beginning of the sentence.” (8.2; exceptions have been taken for the Abstract, chapter titles and subtitles). With two noted exceptions (*), publications not abbreviated in the SBL have not been abbreviated.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RETHINKING 2 PETER 3:10–13

The interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 has been a bone of contention since at least the fourth century. Understandably, the text concerns eschatology which evokes different perspectives, often strong perspectives from all sides. Yet, other than the fact of Christ’s sure return foretold in 3:10, which is a fundamental of the Christian faith, the remainder of 2 Pet 3:10–13 would probably be considered as secondary or tertiary doctrines of the Christian faith and subjects for which all believers can pleurably ponder different views and drink coffee over. Accordingly, it will be beneficial to review the two majority views on 2 Pet 3:10–13 and one minority view on 2 Pet 3:10–13 for which there is evidence that it was held by a few ante-Nicene church fathers.

After the ante-Nicene era, expositors have almost universally interpreted 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a *single meaning* prophecy pertaining entirely to the eternal state. A common agreement in the two majority views on 2 Pet 3:10–13 is that fire will be the means that God will use to accomplish either the *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* or the *eternal state restoration* of the physical universe to transition by conflagration (interpreted as occurring at Rev 20:11) to the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth in Isa 65:17–19; 2 Pet 3:13; and Rev 21:1.

Conversely, Methodius (ca. 260–312 CE), regarded as holding a form of premillennialism,² argued the minority view on 2 Pet 3:10–13 holding that the conflagration in 3:10–12 was “for the purpose of purification and renewal” (*Res.* 1.8)³ of the earth, not for the eternal state, but for the future millennium. He held that “the earth and the heaven must exist

² Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 39.

³ Methodius, *Res.* 1.8 (*ANF* 6:365).

again after the conflagration and shaking of all things [cf. Hag 2:6, the shaking of the earth is generally understood as a reference to Armageddon]” (*Res.* 1.8).⁴

Like most ante-Nicene premillennialists, if not all, Methodius literally interpreted Ps 90:4 and 2 Pet 3:8, “With the Lord one day is like a thousand years.” Consequently, he held that the Lord in this present evil age would work for six one-thousand-year days and would rest on the seventh one-thousand-year day in the seventh millenary of years, for a *Sabbath rest millennium* based on Heb 11:9. Methodius wrote: “Celebrate with Christ the millennium of rest [*Sabbath rest millennium*], which is called the seventh day, even the true Sabbath” (*Symp.* 9.5).⁵

Concerning 2 Pet 3:13, he remarks: “For since in six days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made, . . . signifies that . . . this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years [*post-millennium*] when God shall have completed the world” (*Symp.* 9.1).⁶

Therefore, Methodius demonstrated interpreting 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a *contextual telescoping* prophecy with the earthly conflagration in 3:10–12 pertaining to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will purify and renew the earth for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to when the “world shall be terminated” (*Symp.* 9.1)⁷ and replaced with the promised new creation of the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1). Notably, as will be demonstrated, when Methodius, Irenaeus, and Lactantius, wrote about the post-millennium transition from the future

⁴ Methodius, *Res.* 1.8 (*ANF* 6).

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Symp.* 9.5 (*ANF* 6:347).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.1 (*ANF* 6:344).

⁷ *Ibid.*

millennium to the eternal state (interpreted as occurring at Rev 20:11), they did *not* mention fire being associated with it. The thesis of this dissertation will argue that this minority view on 2 Pet 3:10–13 is the biblical view.

However, as noted, the thesis of this dissertation is not dependent on the views of a few ante-Nicene fathers or 2 Pet 3:10–13 characterizing a *contextual telescoping* prophecy, but *sola Scriptura*. Accordingly, as will be demonstrated, a biblical exposition of the immediate and intertextual context of 2 Pet 3:10–13 unequivocally teaches, when centuries held presuppositions are not forced on its translation and interpretation, that 3:10–12 pertains to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (unrelated to Rev 20:11 post-millennium) which will cleanse the earth’s surface and atmosphere (the first heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ’s earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1). Therefore, this dissertation advances the following thesis.

The Thesis

This dissertation will employ elements of traditional exposition and will argue *sola Scriptura* that 2 Pet 3:10–13 is not a *single meaning* prophecy that pertains entirely to the eternal state as commonly interpreted but is a *contextual telescoping* prophecy with 3:10–12 pertaining to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will cleanse the earth’s surface and atmosphere (the first heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ’s earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1); two distinct prophecies in the same context separated by more than a thousand years, which is consistent with the literary feature of telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature.

The Strategy

The strategy for arguing this thesis progresses over eight chapters: 1) Introduction to Rethinking 2 Peter 3:10–13; 2) Historical and Literary Analysis of 2 Peter; 3) Contextual Analysis of 2 Peter 3:10–13; 4) Contemporary Views on the Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13; 5) Views Dating to the Early Church on the Conflagration Cosmology of 2 Peter 3:10–13; 6) Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature Such As 2 Peter 3:10–13; 7) Exegetical Exposition of 2 Peter 3:10–13; and 8) Summary and Conclusion to Rethinking 2 Peter 3:10–13.

To commence this dissertation research, this introductory chapter will present: 1) The Significance of This Research on 2 Peter 3:10–13; 2) The Research Goals for 2 Peter and 2 Peter 3:10–13; 3) Prior Research That Affects the Current Research on 2 Peter and 2 Peter 3:10–13; and 4) The Research Organization: A Chapter by Chapter Synopsis.

The Significance of This Research on 2 Peter 3:10–13

A near-universal consensus on 2 Pet 3:10–13 is that the passage pertains entirely to the eternal state, that is, it refers to the burning up or burning of the physical universe for either *eternal state (annihilation) replacement*, being the replacement of the physical universe with a different eternal state new creation (Rev 21:1), or *eternal state restoration*, being a restoration of the present physical universe for the eternal state new creation (Rev 21:1).

Arguably, these centuries held majority views on 2 Pet 3:10–13 influence modern translations of this passage, certain portions of which are translated: “the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved” (3:10c, ESV); “the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze” (3:10c, NET); “the earth and its works will be burned up” (3:10d, NASB); “the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (3:10d, NKJV); “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (3:10d, KJV); “the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies

will melt as they burn! (3:12b, ESV)”; “That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire” (3:12b, NIV); “the heavens will be burned up and dissolve, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze!” (3:12b, NET); the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire” (3:12b, NKJV); and “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved” (3:12b, KJV).

Accordingly, the significance of this research is, firstly, to determine, based on a biblical exposition of the immediate and intertextual context of 2 Pet 3:10–13, the meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that the author likely intended and, secondly, to determine if six English Bible translations⁸ of 2 Pet 3:10–13 render the passage as the author likely intended. Therefore, research goals will be pursued for 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13.

The Research Goals for 2 Peter and 2 Peter 3:10–13

The research goal of chapter two is to perform an historical and literary analysis of 2 Peter to establish its canonical credibility. This is because many contemporary scholars regard 2 Peter as a spurious and dubious work.⁹

The research goal of chapter three is to perform a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by researching the immediate and intertextual context to determine from Scripture the meaning of the passage that the author likely intended.

The research goal of chapter four is to assess the biblical basis for contemporary views on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13 held by amillennialists and some modern dispensational premillennialists.

⁸ ESV, KJV, NASB, NET, NIV, and NKJV.

⁹ E.g., Ernst Käsemann, “An Apologia for Primitive Eschatology,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes: Studies in Biblical Theology*, eds. C. F. D. Moule et al., trans. W. J. Montague (Naperville, IL., Alec R. Allenson, 1964), 169.

The research goal of chapter five is to assess the biblical basis of views dating to the early church on the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13, namely, *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* and *eternal state restoration* held by both amillennialists and dispensational premillennialists, and *millennial restoration* (3:10–12) and the telescoped *eternal state* (3:13) demonstrably held by Irenaeus, Methodius, and Lactantius.

The research goal of chapter six is to examine the phenomenon of telescoping distant events in the same context in biblical prophetic literature such as 2 Pet 3:10–13, to evaluate scholarly opposition to telescoping interpretations, and to exhibit eye-opening evidence of scores of telescoping prophecies in Old and New Testament prophetic literature.

The research goal of chapter seven is to perform an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by conducting a semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in the passage, by offering a proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 based on the semantic study, and by performing an exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 based on the semantic study and proposed translation that more accurately aligns with the author’s likely intended meaning of the passage.

The research goal of chapter eight is to provide a summary and conclusion to the dissertation. The overall goal of this research is to support the thesis. This study will also incorporate prior research that affects the current research on 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Prior Research That Affects the Current Research on 2 Peter and 2 Peter 3:10–13

Substantive prior research by contemporary scholars, church fathers, and classical secular writers will be referenced in the dissertation to provide diverse viewpoints. Consequently, this section will note cited works of prior research that affect the current research on 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13 in six subsections: 1) Prior Research on an Historical and Literary Analysis of 2 Peter; 2) Prior Research on a Contextual Analysis of 2 Peter 3:10–13; 3) Prior Research on

Contemporary Views on the Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13; 4) Prior Research on Views Dating to the Early Church on the Conflagration Cosmology of 2 Peter 3:10–13; 5) Prior Research on Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature Such As 2 Peter 3:10–13; and 6) Prior Research on an Exegetical Exposition of 2 Peter 3:10–13.

Prior Research on an Historical and Literary Analysis of 2 Peter

Chapter two addresses a significant historical concern with 2 Peter: the epistle's authenticity. Many scholars argue against the authenticity of 2 Peter and regard it to be a pseudonymous work, which Mark Mathews affirms in his article, "The Genre of 2 Peter."¹⁰ Ernst Käsemann remarked that "the Second Epistle of Peter is . . . perhaps the most dubious writing in the canon."¹¹ Conversely, many scholars defend the authenticity of 2 Peter, including Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*; Peter Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*; Michael Green, *2 Peter, and Jude*; and Grant Osborne, *2 Peter*; all of whom provide informative summaries for both arguments. Charles Bigg, in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, gives historical support to the authenticity of 2 Peter by citing church fathers.

Regarding literary issues affecting 2 Peter, the testament genre was identified by Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, and Duane Watson, "The Epistolary Rhetoric of 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude." Conversely, Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, and Mathews, "The Genre of 2 Peter," provide alternative perspectives regarding the testament genre in 2 Peter. In *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, Bigg provides a commendable view regarding the literary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude.

¹⁰ Mark D. Mathews, "The Genre of 2 Peter: A Comparison with Jewish and Early Christian Testaments," *BBR* 21 (2011): 51.

¹¹ Käsemann, "An Apologia for Primitive Eschatology," 169.

Prior Research on a Contextual Analysis of 2 Peter 3:10–13

Chapter three researches and analyzes the immediate and intertextual context of 2 Pet 3:10–13 to determine from Scripture the author’s likely intended meaning of the passage. Prior research facilitating this contextual research are works by: Craig Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*; D. A. Carson, *Approaching the Bible*; David Wheaton, *2 Peter*; Osborne, *2 Peter*; Green, *2 Peter and Jude*; Josephus, *Ant. 1.2.3*; Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*; and Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, all of whom provide informative commentary related to a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Prior Research on Contemporary Views on the Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13

Chapter four researches and assesses the biblical basis of contemporary views on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13. Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*; G. K. Beale and David Campbell, *Revelation*; Beatrice Neall, “Amillennialism Reconsidered”; and Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*; provide substantive commentary regarding the amillennial occasion and duration perspective for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Regarding the dispensational premillennial perspective on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13, Gangel, *2 Peter*; Craig Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology”; Richard Mayhue, “The Bible’s Watchword: Day of the Lord”; and John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*; offer significant commentary on the modern dispensational premillennial occasion and duration perspective for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Prior Research on Views Dating to the Early Church on the
Conflagration Cosmology of 2 Peter 3:10–13

Chapter five researches and assesses the biblical basis of centuries held views on the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13, namely, *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* (3:10–13), *eternal state restoration* (3:10–13), *millennial restoration* (3:10–12) and the telescoped *eternal state* (3:13). Prior research on cosmic cosmologies prevalent when 2 Peter was written are researched in works by Carsten Thiede, “A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix”; Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 20 and *2 Apol.* 7); Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 34); Origen (*Cels.* 4.12, 69; *Princ.* 2.1.1; 3.6.3); Eusebius (*Praep. ev.* 15.18.2); Augustine (*Civ.* 20.14.1); Nemesius (*Nat. hom.* 38.3, 535); Jacqueline Lagrée, “Stoicism and Christianity: From Collusion to Distortion”; and A. A. Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy*.

Regarding the *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, this perspective was advanced by Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 34); and in the contemporary era by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Church and the Last Things*; John Walvoord, *Revelation*; John MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*; and R. Larry Overstreet, “A Study of 2 Peter 3:10–13.”

Regarding the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, this perspective was advanced by Origen (*Cels.* 4.12, 69; *Princ.* 2.1.1; 3.6.3); Augustine (*Civ.* 20.14.1); and in the contemporary era by Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*; Michael Svigel, “Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition—Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It *Ex Nihilo*?”; and Craig Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18.”

Regarding the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13, no known contemporary scholarly writings are advocating this interpretation. This should not be surprising since the Augustinian West, as expressed by the Reformers Calvin, Luther, and Melancton, has long been treated to a *no* future biblical millennium (amillennial) interpretation of Rev 20:4–6. However, historically, Irenaeus, *Haer.*; Methodius, *Symp.*; and Lactantius, *Epit.*; demonstrate conveying this perspective.

Prior Research on Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature Such As 2 Peter 3:10–13

Chapter six examines the phenomenon of telescoping distant events in the same context in biblical prophetic literature. Accordingly, scholars supporting and opposing telescoping interpretations are presented. Scholars noted who support telescoping and double fulfillment interpretations of Bible prophecy are George Eldon Ladd, *The Theology of the New Testament and A Commentary on the Revelation of John*; William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*; John Walvoord, *Revelation*; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*; Richard France, *Matthew*; and Craig Blomberg, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment.” Riddlebarger acknowledges double fulfillment prophecies: “There are specific instances in the Scriptures when a prophet foretold what appears to be a single future event, but as history unfolded, it became clear that the original prophecy referred to multiple events. Certain prophecies may have double or multiple fulfillments.”¹²

¹² Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 71.

Conversely, scholars who oppose telescoping and double fulfillment interpretations of Bible prophecy are Randal Otto, “The Prophets and Their Perspective”; and Theodore of Mopseustia, noted in the work by Robert Hill, trans., *Theodore of Mopseustia: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*.

Prior Research on an Exegetical Exposition of 2 Peter 3:10–13

Chapter seven presents an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by performing a semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in the passage to determine the author’s likely intended meaning of the text. Noted prior research facilitating the exegetical study of 2 Pet 3:10–13 are works by: W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG); J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs. *Enhanced Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; T. Friberg, B. Friberg, and N. F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*; Henry Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*; Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Revised Edition*; Eckhard Plümacher, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*; Karl Kertelge, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*; Gerhard Delling, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*; and Verlyn Verbrugge, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

All prior research that affects the current research on 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13 is organized to support the thesis chapter by chapter.

The Research Organization: A Chapter by Chapter Synopsis

The research organization progresses over eight chapters. Chapter one articulates the thesis, the strategy, the significance of this research on 2 Pet 3:10–13, the research goals for 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13, provides cited works of prior research that affects the current research on 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13, and offers a synopsis of the research chapter by chapter.

Chapter two concentrates on the canonical credibility of 2 Peter by performing an historical and literary analysis of 2 Peter. Consequently, this chapter documents internal and historical attestation of 2 Peter, notes recipients and reasons for 2 Peter, provides evidence for the location and date of 2 Peter, relates the literary characteristics of 2 Peter, addresses the literary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude, and articulates arguments opposing and counterarguments defending the authenticity of 2 Peter. Upon completion, a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed necessary and will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter three performs a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by researching the immediate and intertextual context of the passage which may shed interpretive light. Upon completion, researching contemporary views on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed necessary and will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter four researches and assesses the biblical basis of contemporary views on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, this chapter researches the amillennial *Armageddon* occasion and duration perspective of 2 Pet 3:10–13, and the modern dispensational premillennial *long day of the Lord* occasion and duration perspective of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Upon completion, researching centuries held views on the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed necessary and is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter five researches and assesses the biblical basis of views dating to the early church on the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, this chapter will research the *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 and assess its biblical basis; research the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 and assess its biblical basis; and research the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 and assess its biblical basis. Upon completion, researching telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature such as 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed necessary and is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter six examines the phenomenon of telescoping distant events in the same context in biblical prophetic literature such as 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, this chapter will demonstrate two types of telescoping in biblical prophecies; note opponents of telescoping interpretations; furnish characteristics of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature; address reasons for telescoping in biblical prophetic literature; and exhibit eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature. Upon completion, having built the foundation for arguing the thesis, an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed necessary and will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter seven will present an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, this chapter will conduct a semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in the passage, offer a proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 based on the semantic study, and perform an exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 based on the semantic study and proposed translation that is deemed more accurately reflects the author's likely intended meaning of the passage.

Chapter eight will present a summary and conclusion to the dissertation.

Chapter Summary

This important introductory chapter has articulated the thesis, documented the strategy for arguing the thesis, noted the significance of this research on 2 Pet 3:10–13, informed the research goals for 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13, provided cited works of prior research that affects the current research on 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13, and offered a synopsis of the research chapter by chapter. Having articulated the thesis and strategy for arguing the thesis, the next chapter will focus on establishing the canonical credibility of 2 Peter by performing an historical and literary analysis of 2 Peter.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY ANALYSIS OF 2 PETER

Before a discussion can begin on 2 Pet 3:10–13, canonical credibility needs to be established for 2 Peter. Grant Osborne opines that “there is probably no other New Testament epistle so universally contested as 2 Peter.”¹³ Even in antiquity, the church historian Eusebius recorded 2 Peter “among the disputed writings” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.3).¹⁴

In modernity, 2 Peter is often classified as being in the testament genre, and since testaments in Second Temple Jewish literature were typically pseudonymous, many scholars today regard 2 Peter as pseudonymous. Mark Mathews relates that “the genuineness of 2 Peter has been continually challenged both before and after its acceptance into the NT canon and, since the turn of the 20th century, has faced the unabating indictment of pseudonymity.”¹⁵

Also, most scholars today believe that the author of 2 Peter used the Book of Jude as a source. Since Jude is thought to be post-apostolic, as suggested in Jude 17–18, it is held that Peter would have been deceased. Thus, it follows that Peter could not have written 2 Peter. Therefore, many scholars assert Jude’s priority and regard 2 Peter as a spurious work. Peter Davids notes other contemporary concerns with 2 Peter: “It is not just that the extended prophetic denunciation is unpalatable to some people and the apparent description of the destruction of the universe in chapter 3 is disturbing, but that many readers wonder whether the

¹³ Grant R. Osborne, *2 Peter*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011), 275.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* 3.25.3 (*NPNF*² 1.156).

¹⁵ Mark D. Mathews, “The Genre of 2 Peter: A Comparison with Jewish and Early Christian Testaments,” *BBR* 21 (2011): 51.

book is genuine and belongs in the canon at all.”¹⁶ Notably, the Muratorian Canon (ca. late second century CE) does not include 2 Peter, but neither does it include 1 Peter. Thomas Schreiner comments that this is perhaps due to the text being incomplete, “and so definite conclusions should not be gleaned from its omission.”¹⁷ Still, Ernst Käsemann remarks: “The Second Epistle of Peter is from beginning to end a document expressing an early Catholic viewpoint and is perhaps the most dubious writing in the canon.”¹⁸

Conversely, Schreiner says “that such assessments misread 2 Peter dramatically. . . . The charge that 2 Peter collapses into traditionalism also veers off course. . . . Such a claim appears to come from Protestants who worry that any vestige of tradition or ‘early Catholicism’ diverges from the gospel. . . . The Spirit may even inspire that which becomes tradition.”¹⁹ Osborne also adds that “the apocalyptic perspective of the book pulsates with a Jewish mind-set, and what it says is in complete agreement with Jesus and Paul.”²⁰

Thus, 2 Peter has been heralded both as inauthentic and authentic since antiquity. Nevertheless, 2 Peter was recognized as fully canonical by the Canons of Laodicea and by the church councils of Hippo and Carthage in the fourth century.²¹ Still, because 2 Peter is so contested, to establish its canonical credibility, this chapter will present an historical and literary analysis of this book in six sections: 1) Internal and Historical Attestation of 2 Peter; 2)

¹⁶ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, in *Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 121.

¹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37, eds. E. Ray Clendenen et al. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 262.

¹⁸ Käsemann, “An Apologia for Primitive Eschatology,” 169.

¹⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 254–55.

²⁰ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 275.

²¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 264.

Recipients and Reasons for 2 Peter; 3) Location and Date of 2 Peter; 4) Literary Characteristics of 2 Peter; 5) Literary Correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude; and 6) Arguments Opposing and Counterarguments Defending the Authenticity of 2 Peter.

Internal and Historical Attestation of 2 Peter

The internal attestation for the authorship of 2 Peter is the introductory claim that the author is “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1).²² The author attests to being the apostle Peter by saying that he was an eyewitness to the transfiguration of Jesus and heard the utterance that was “made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’” (1:17). Only the apostles’ Peter, James, and John were with Christ on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured (Matt 17:1–8). The author also mentions the writings of “our beloved brother Paul” (3:15), indicating parity and contemporaneity with the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13). Additionally, the author mentions that this is the second letter he is writing to them (3:1), the first being 1 Peter. Finally, the author says that he will soon depart this earthly life, being informed of such by Jesus (1:14). The latter also informed Peter decades earlier on the shore of the Sea of Galilee how he would glorify God in his death (John 21:18–19). Thus, there is strong internal attestation that the author of 2 Peter is the apostle Peter (1:1). Osborne affirms, “Who could fit all this except Simon Peter . . . ? While it is possible that a pseudonymous author was using all this information to appear apostolic, it is not very likely. Yet the vast majority of critical scholars, and indeed several in the early centuries of the church age (see Eusebius *History* 3.3.4; 6.25.8), have great doubts that Simon Peter was the author of this epistle.”²³ Although some

²² All English biblical references, unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation).

²³ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 275.

in the early centuries of the Christian faith questioned the authenticity of 2 Peter, others attested to the authenticity of 2 Peter.

Jerome (ca. 347–420) relates that “the apostles James, Peter, John, and Jude have published seven epistles (*Epist. to Paulinus* 53.9).”²⁴ Charles Bigg says, “In the *Epistle to Paulinus*, prefixed to editions of the Vulgate, Jerome accepts all the seven Catholic Epistles without reserve.”²⁵ Jerome anticipates authenticity concerns and expresses that the difference in style between 1 and 2 Peter could be attributed to two different amanuenses (*Epist. to Hedibia* 120.11).²⁶ The difference in the style of Greek between 1 and 2 Peter, refined in the first letter and unrefined in the second, may be that Peter was incarcerated (cf. 2 Pet 1:14) during the Neronian persecution and wrote 2 Peter himself from prison rather than using an amanuensis.

Eusebius (ca. 260–339) names five disputed epistles in his time that, nevertheless, many recognized: “Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John (*History* 3.25.3).”²⁷ Although Eusebius expressed doubt about the genuineness of 2 Peter (see Eusebius *History* 3.3.4; 6.25.8), it is also likely that most of the church accepted the authenticity of 2 Peter and the other four disputed epistles.

²⁴ Jerome, *Epist. to Paulinus* 53.9 (NPNF² 6.102).

²⁵ Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, in *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, eds. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901), 199.

²⁶ Jerome, *Epist. to Hedibia* 120.11 (NPNF² 6.224).

²⁷ Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* 3.25.3 (NPNF² 1.156).

Origen (ca. 185–254), says Terrance Callan, “is the earliest extant writer to mention the Second Letter of Peter by name. He does so in his *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* on John 5:3.”²⁸ Michael Green remarks that Origen quoted 2 Peter six times as Scripture.²⁹

Additional historical attestations of 2 Peter include Irenaeus, who follows closely with the wording of the phrase “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years” (2 Pet 3:8).³⁰ Clement of Alexandria may have written a commentary on 2 Peter (Eusebius *History* 6.14.1).³¹ Athanasius included 2 Peter in the NT in 367, remarks Callan.³² Michael Green comments that there are “probable traces of 2 Peter in 1 Clement (AD 95), 2 Clement (AD 150), Aristides (AD 130), Hermas (AD 120), Valentinus (AD 130) and Hippolytus (AD 180).”³³ Therefore, there is both internal and historical attestation for the authenticity of 2 Peter. Having established canonical credibility for 2 Peter, this informs the identity of the recipients and the reasons for the writing of 2 Peter.

Recipients and Reasons for 2 Peter

The author of 2 Peter says this is “the second letter I am writing to you” (3:1). If Petrine authorship of 2 Peter is accepted, then the apostle would be referring to the same recipients he wrote to in 1 Pet 1:1. On the other hand, Jerome Neyrey, who thinks 2 Peter is a pseudonymous

²⁸ Duane F. Watson and Terrance D. Callan, *First and Second Peter*, in Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament, eds. Mikeal C. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 143.

²⁹ Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 18, ed. Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987), 20

³⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.28.3 (ANF 1.557).

³¹ Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* 6.14.1 (NPNF² 1.261).

³² Watson and Callan, *First and Second Peter*, 144.

³³ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 13.

work, only calls “attention to the fact that the author of 2 Peter claims to have written a previous letter. . . . More important, the author knows another Christian document, whether he penned it himself or merely alludes to it (see Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 143–47).”³⁴

However, since there is internal and historical attestation for the authenticity of 2 Peter, the writer defends Petrine authorship of 2 Peter and that the recipients of his second letter (3:1) are the same churches named in 1 Peter; specifically, “those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1). These churches, located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), were comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Bigg says these churches “were exposed at the time to a particular danger. In this district there had been, or seemed likely to be in the near future, an attempt to propagate Antinomian doctrines, and to discredit the belief in the Second Advent.”³⁵

Consequently, in response to the doctrinal and philosophical dangers being propagated by these false teachers, one of the main reasons for Peter writing 2 Peter, in addition to explaining both the reason for the delay in Christ’s return (3:8) and the particulars concomitant with this coming eschatological day of the Lord (3:10–13), was to encourage these churches not to be “carried away by the error of unprincipled men . . . , but [to] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:17–18). Accordingly, the letter of 2 Peter demonstrates apostolic concern for the spiritual well-being of Christ’s flock, even though Peter, according to tradition, was not located at the time in their region.

³⁴ Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37c, eds. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 135.

³⁵ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 238.

Location and Date of 2 Peter

Irenaeus tells us that Matthew “issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church.”³⁶ Regarding Peter’s first letter, it is generally held that 1 Peter was authored by the apostle Peter (1:1). In closing his first letter, the apostle affectionately says to the recipient churches in 1:1, “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark” (5:13). Bigg comments that “down to the Reformation, Babylon was generally understood as here signifying Rome.”³⁷ In Col 4:10, Mark is found in Rome. Bigg remarks “that Rome was commonly spoken of as Babylon by Jewish writers of an apocalyptic tinge is beyond question.”³⁸ Although Erasmus and Calvin interpreted Babylon in 1 Pet 5:13 as referring to the ancient city in modern Iraq, it is generally held that Babylon in this text is figurative for Rome and the location from where apostle Peter wrote 1 Peter. Since there exists internal and historical attestation that 2 Peter was also authored by apostle Peter (1:1), it can be reasonably concluded that apostle Peter wrote his “second letter” (3:1) from the same location he wrote 1 Peter, from Rome.

However, Neyrey, who regards 2 Peter as pseudonymous, believes that the person who authored 2 Peter was located “in Asia Minor, not Rome.”³⁹ Therefore, the location for the composition of 2 Peter is influenced by one’s position regarding authorship. Nevertheless, Schreiner notes that “those who see the letter as authentic usually follow the tradition that Peter

³⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1 (ANF 1.414).

³⁷ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 75.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁹ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 130.

was at Rome at the end of his life (cf. Ignatius, *Rom.* 4:3; *1 Clem.* 5:4). Perhaps the Neronian persecution had even begun when the letter was written.”⁴⁰ David Wheaton comments that 2 Peter “gives us no clues as to where it was written. If we accept that Peter wrote it and that he wrote his first letter in Rome . . . , then this letter could also have well been written there.”⁴¹

Regarding the date of 2 Peter, this is also influenced by one’s position regarding authorship. Osborne comments that many scholars consider 2 Peter to be “a pseudonymous work written at the end of the first century or beginning of the second.”⁴² However, 2 Pet 3:16 mentions Paul’s letters. As noted, Irenaeus affirmed that Peter and Paul both ministered in Rome. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Peter in Rome had access to Paul’s letters. Also, Peter mentions that his departure from this earthly life is imminent (1:14), likely referring to the apostle’s soon martyrdom during the Neronian persecution. Davids says the Great Fire in Rome occurred in 64 CE, “which marked the start of Nero’s persecution of Christians.”⁴³ According to tradition, both Peter and Paul were executed in or near Rome. Osborne notes that the commonly held view is that Peter and Paul died around 65 CE during the Neronian persecution based on Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44; cf. *1 Clement* 5–6).⁴⁴ Because 1 Peter is generally dated around 62–63 CE, an approximate date for the composition of 2 Peter is between 64–65 CE.

⁴⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 276.

⁴¹ David H. Wheaton, *2 Peter*, in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., eds. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1387.

⁴² Osborne, *2 Peter*, 275.

⁴³ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 130.

⁴⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *1 Peter*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011), 133.

Based on internal and historical attestation for the authenticity of 2 Peter, the writer follows the traditional view that apostle Peter authored 2 Peter, that Peter’s “second letter” (3:1) was sent to the same churches he wrote to in 1 Pet 1:1, and that Peter was in Rome when he composed 2 Peter in approximately 64–65 CE. However, many scholars today do not agree with these positions and regard 2 Peter as pseudonymous; one reason for this conclusion is based on the literary genre of this letter, which prompts the need to research the literary characteristics of 2 Peter.

Literary Characteristics of 2 Peter

Peter’s moral instructions to Christians just before his death (2 Pet 1:14) are similar, remark Peter Davids, Douglas Moo, and Robert Yarbrough, to “a popular Jewish intertestamental genre called a testament. Works such as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Testament of Job*, and the *Testament of Moses* illustrate this genre.”⁴⁵ Relatedly, Duane Watson opines that after Peter’s salutation and blessing (1:1–2), elements from the testament genre follow his letter.⁴⁶ Explaining the literary structure, he remarks that the first element presents the shared traditions in the form of a miniature homily (1:3–11), replacing the standard thanksgiving of a letter.⁴⁷ The second element is Peter’s announcement of his impending death, functioning as the body opening of the letter (1:12–15).⁴⁸ Watson claims, “The

⁴⁵ Peter H. Davids, Douglas J. Moo, and Robert W. Yarbrough, *1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude*, in Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 81.

⁴⁶ Duane F. Watson, “The Epistolary Rhetoric of 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude,” in *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students*, eds. Eric F. Mason and Troy W. Martin, vol. 77 of *Society of Biblical Literature: Resources for Biblical Study*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2014), 56.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

body-middle of the letter (1:16–3:13) develops the testamentary commonplace of the coming of false teachers and refutes their unwanted modification of tradition.”⁴⁹ Richard Bauckham is also known for identifying 2 Peter as a testament and, therefore, a pseudo-apostolic letter. He identifies two literary genres in 2 Peter: letter and testament.⁵⁰ He explains that 2 Pet 1:3–11; 12–15; 2:1–3a; and 3:1–4 are in the testament genre and concludes that “these four passages, but especially 1:12–15, would leave no contemporary reader in doubt that 2 Peter belonged to the genre of ‘testament.’”⁵¹ Since such testaments were typically pseudonymous, many scholars regard 2 Peter as pseudepigraphic.

Conversely, Schreiner questions the contemporary conclusion that 2 Peter is in the genre of testament, saying, “Perhaps it is. But such a notion was not clear to previous generations of scholars.”⁵² Additionally, Mark Mathews notes that ancient Jewish pseudepigraphy was written in the name of an important ancient figure in a third-person narrative framework and contained a deathbed scene, none of which pertains to 2 Peter.⁵³ In 2 Peter, the apostle is writing in the first-person (“after my departure” 1:15). Mathews also notes the work by Johannes Munck in the 1950s, who identified 2 Peter with the genre of ‘farewell discourse’ that is exhibited in John 13–17; Acts 20:17–38; 2 Tim 4:6–8; and 2 Pet 1:14–15.⁵⁴ Since 2 Peter lacks significant features of the testament genre, Mathews concurs with Munck that 2 Peter is not a testament but is a farewell

⁴⁹ Watson, “The Epistolary Rhetoric of 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude,” 56.

⁵⁰ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50, eds. David A. Hubbard et al. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1983), 131.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵² Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 275.

⁵³ Mathews, “The Genre of 2 Peter,” 53.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

discourse. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the two primary literary genres of 2 Peter are letter and farewell discourse, which abrogates the testament genre pseudonymity argument and attests to the authenticity of 2 Peter. Second Pet 3:3–13 is in the genre of prophecy. Yet, in addition to the literary testament genre being advocated in arguments opposing the authenticity of 2 Peter, the priority of the Book of Jude to 2 Peter is often advocated as well, which necessitates researching the literary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude.

Literary Correspondence Between 2 Peter and Jude

Second Peter and Jude “must be studied together,” opines Montague James.⁵⁵ Arguably, he makes a good point. Not only are 2 Peter and Jude in the literary genre of letters, but their correspondence is remarkable when comparing their discussions about false teachers, fallen angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Balaam, and mockers. James confirms, “It has long been recognized that there is a close connection between them. No one can read the second chapter of 2 Peter and the Epistle of Jude without seeing that the authors must have used a common source or that one of them borrowed from the other.”⁵⁶ Therefore, to ascertain literary priority, it is necessary to examine the literary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude in terms of vocabulary, structure, and content.

Literary Correspondence Between 2 Peter and Jude in Terms of Vocabulary

Regarding the vocabulary of 2 Peter, the letter contains thirty-two words not found in biblical literature (the LXX and the New Testament), notes Peter Davids.⁵⁷ Fifteen of these are

⁵⁵ Montague R. James, ed., *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude*, CGTSC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 131.

found in works by Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Philo and Josephus, indicating the cultural thinking of the author of 2 Peter.⁵⁸ If tradition is accepted that Peter ministered in Rome, then his use of vocabulary found among Hellenistic writers would be understandable. Scholars also point out that the vocabulary in 2 Peter leans toward the grandiose (ἐξέραμα, ἐπόπτης, ροιζηδόν, ταρταροῦν, τεφροῦν).⁵⁹ However, Davids remarks that “it appears that 2 Peter’s vocabulary is his own, . . . not from his borrowing from other works.”⁶⁰ Charles Bigg also adds that the vocabulary in 2 Peter existed in the apostolic age.⁶¹ These points about vocabulary are notable for ascertaining the priority of 2 Peter or Jude.

Regarding the vocabulary of Jude, scholars commend the language as it demonstrates a good command of Greek, and introduces eighteen words into the vocabulary of the New Testament, including occasional Semitisms, says Davids.⁶² Jude’s occasional Semitisms indicate that he “had roots in a community where the Hebrew Scriptures were used.”⁶³ Although uncertain, evidence suggests that Jude was the brother of Jesus, even though he chose to be called the brother of James (1:1). Hegesippus was the first to call Jude the brother of the Lord.⁶⁴ Jude’s vocabulary suggests that he likely lived in the eastern Mediterranean region. This has significance for ascertaining priority since Peter was in Rome; their writings were to different

⁵⁸ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 131.

⁵⁹ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 225.

⁶⁰ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 131.

⁶¹ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 232.

⁶² Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 25.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

⁶⁴ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 317.

groups of people. Bigg affirms, “St. Jude’s people were not the same as St. Peter’s.”⁶⁵ Jude’s people related to his vocabulary of occasional Semitisms, and even though Peter employed occasional Hebraisms, Peter’s people related to his Hellenistic vocabulary, which many scholars argue is a basis for denying Petrine authorship of 2 Peter.

Regarding the vocabulary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude, the two letters correspond in their use of vocabulary in that they contain no direct quotations from the Old Testament. These epistles also correspond in their phrasing, of which many have a poetic ring to them, notes Bigg.⁶⁶ Conversely, there are instances in which the vocabulary of 2 Peter and Jude do not correspond. Davids notes, “There are only four words that the two books share exclusively in the NT.”⁶⁷ Also, Jude uses Pauline words. Bigg remarks, “Jude has certain words, which may be called Pauline, and are certainly not Petrine.”⁶⁸ Thus, the vocabulary in 2 Peter and Jude has both correspondence and non-correspondence, which would seem to indicate that one is not simply copying the other, but discussing similar ideas and events, possibly influenced by the other author. The structure of 2 Peter and Jude also has both correspondence and non-correspondence.

Literary Correspondence Between 2 Peter and Jude in Terms of Structure

Regarding the structure of 2 Peter, like many NT letters, it is rhetorical. Second Peter begins with a typical letter sender formula (“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” 1:1). This is followed by the recipient formula (“to those who have received a faith of the

⁶⁵ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 220.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁶⁷ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 131.

⁶⁸ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 217.

same kind as ours” 1:1). Although no specific recipients are mentioned, Peter does allude in 3:1 (“the second letter I am writing to you”) that the recipients are the same as those identified in 1 Pet 1:1 (“To those . . . scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”). Second Peter also includes a typical salutation (“Grace and peace be multiplied to you” 1:2).

However, untypical is that 2 Peter does not introduce with a thanksgiving nor conclude with a blessing on the recipients. Thus, Davids is probably correct when he remarks that even though the apostle follows conventional terminology that 2 Peter is a letter, the work is not entirely a letter but is characteristic of a sermon or speech within a letter structure (a letter beginning and no letter ending).⁶⁹ Of note, even though Galatians is a letter, it likewise does not contain all the rhetorical elements of a letter (no thanksgiving), as with 2 Peter. Yet, as Davids explains, the requirements in Greco-Roman rhetoric were looser for letters than for a speech.⁷⁰

Additionally, regarding the structure of 2 Peter, Duane Watson has performed a rhetorical analysis of this epistle in terms of Greek rhetoric and observes the following main headings: Epistolary Prescript (1:1–2), Exordium (1:3–15), Probatio (1:6–3:13), and Peroratio (3:14–18).⁷¹ Although Birger Pearson, in his book review, heralds Watson’s book as a “ground-breaking work,”⁷² aspects of it may need further analysis. Schreiner adds: “The problem with many rhetorical analyses of New Testament letters is that they tend to force the data to fit the proposed outline. . . . New Testament writers were effective communicators, and hence they inevitably

⁶⁹ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 143.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Duane F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter*, SBLDS 104 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988), 141–42.

⁷² Birger A. Pearson, review of Duane F. Watson, “Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 166.

used elements of Greek rhetoric. Nevertheless, it is quite another thing to argue that the letters were consciously structured in accord with such rhetoric.”⁷³ Nonetheless, 2 Peter contains elements of Greek rhetoric, as does Jude.

Regarding the structure of Jude, apparently, he was a student of Greek rhetoric, as his letter closely follows the Hellenistic style. Jude contains a typical letter opening (epistolary prescript) with a sender, recipients, and greeting structure (vv. 1–2). However, there is no thanksgiving. His letter also contains a letter body with a body opening that includes the thesis (vv. 3–4), a body middle (*probatio*) (vv. 5–16), and a body closing (*peroratio*) (vv. 17–23). Although Jude’s closing does not contain a personal greeting or a blessing, it does have the epistolary feature of a doxology (vv. 24–25). Thus, as Davids remarks, Jude is classified as deliberative rhetoric, but “the letter form has an over-riding literary structure, and within the letter structure rhetorical form is secondary and often modified.”⁷⁴

Regarding the structure correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude, these two letters correspond in that they present a modified style of Greek rhetoric. However, non-correspondence is evident in that 2 Peter, although classified as a letter, is more a sermon within a letter structure (a letter beginning and no letter ending). Conversely, Schreiner notes that Jude “bears the marks of a careful and disciplined structure.”⁷⁵ Therefore, there is both correspondence and non-correspondence in the structure of 2 Peter and Jude. However, the content of these letters does closely correspond.

⁷³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 281.

⁷⁴ Davids, *The Letters of Second Peter and Jude*, 24–27.

⁷⁵ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 419.

Literary Correspondence Between 2 Peter and Jude in Terms of Content

Although there is both correspondence and non-correspondence in the vocabulary and structure of 2 Peter and Jude, their correspondence in terms of content is remarkable:

Table 1: Correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude

Correspondence	2 Peter	Jude
False teachers	2.1 “False teachers . . . destructive heresies.”	v. 4 “Certain persons . . . deny . . . Jesus Christ.”
Fallen angels and darkness	2.4 “If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but . . . committed them to pits of darkness.”	v. 6 “Angels who did not keep their own domain, . . . He has kept in . . . darkness.”
Sodom and Gomorrah	2.6 “Sodom and Gomorrah . . . reducing them to ashes, having made them an example.”	v. 7 “Sodom and Gomorrah . . . an example in undergoing the punishment.”
Revile angelic majesties	2.10 “They revile angelic majesties.”	v. 8 “These men . . . revile angelic majesties.”
Balaam	2.15 “Gone astray, . . . the way of Balaam.”	v. 11 “Error of Balaam.”
Black darkness	2.17 “Black darkness has been reserved.”	v. 13 “Black darkness has been reserved.”
Mockers	3:3 “Mockers will come.”	v. 18 “There will be mockers.”

Accordingly, content correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude is evident. Consequently, it seems apparent that either Peter and Jude used a common source, which some scholars refute since no such common source has been found, or one of them was dependent on the other. Thus, the question of literary priority arises.

Literary Priority: Second Peter or Jude?

Bigg remarks, “The priority of 2 Peter was affirmed with confidence by Luther. No one, he says, can deny it. But since the time of Eichhorn, the opposite view has gained ground.”⁷⁶ Consequently, most scholars and commentaries today assert Jude’s priority. However, Bigg states that such scholars as Lumby, Mansel, Plummer, Spitta, and Zahn support Luther’s assertion of the priority of 2 Peter.⁷⁷ More recently, Daniel Wallace defended the priority of 2 Peter to Jude, arguing “that most scholars opt for the posteriority of 2 Peter because they assume its inauthenticity,” notes Schreiner.⁷⁸ However, Green points out that the priority of either 2 Peter or Jude has no bearing on authenticity: “Peter could well have taken up and used either a traditional sermon or tract devised by the early church to meet the ravages of false teaching, or alternatively the short fiery letter of ‘Jude the brother of James’, had he deemed it appropriate to his purpose. . . . The question of the relationship of 2 Peter to Jude has no bearing whatever on the authenticity of 2 Peter.”⁷⁹

One factor that suggests the priority of 2 Peter to Jude is Peter’s declaration about the apostles that “we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (1:16). This statement suggests that the apostles were still living. On the other hand, the posteriority of Jude to 2 Peter is suggested in Jude 17–18: “Remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles . . . , that they were saying to you.” This statement implies that the apostles were no longer living.

⁷⁶ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 216.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 418.

⁷⁹ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 32.

Another factor that suggests the priority of 2 Peter to Jude is 2 Pet 2:1, “Just as there will also be false teachers [ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι] among you.” This statement implies that false teachers in the future will infiltrate the church. Conversely, Jude 4, “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed,” implies that false teachers had already infiltrated the church.

Yet, the most probable explanation in favor of the priority of 2 Peter to Jude is asserted by Bigg that “both Epistles took their origin from Corinth, that the disorder was spreading, that St. Peter took alarm and wrote his Second Epistle, sending a copy to St. Jude with a warning of the urgency of the danger, and that St. Jude at once issued a similar letter to the churches in which he was personally interested.”⁸⁰ Since Peter was in Rome and Jude was likely in the eastern Mediterranean region, Peter’s people were not the same as those of Jude. Accordingly, after Jude received a copy of Peter’s second epistle, he wrote to churches familiar with him a shortened version of 2 Peter (many scholars hold that 2 Peter and Jude are contemporaneous), which explains the remarkable content correspondence between both epistles. Therefore, in the vein of Luther, the writer argues in favor of the priority of 2 Peter to Jude.

As noted, most scholars today assert the priority of Jude to 2 Peter, and since Jude is often thought to be post-apostolic, it is held that Peter could not have authored 2 Peter because he would have been deceased. Thus, many scholars deem 2 Peter inauthentic. Yet, this and other arguments opposing authenticity are plausibly countered in defense of the authenticity of 2 Peter.

Arguments Opposing and Counterarguments Defending the Authenticity of 2 Peter

As established, there is both internal and historical attestation for the authenticity of 2 Peter. Still, many scholars deny Petrine authorship of 2 Peter and, instead, identify the epistle as

⁸⁰ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 316.

pseudonymous. Yet, Schreiner says if 2 Peter were pseudepigraphic, it would be expected that the writer would employ the form of address in 1 Peter.⁸¹ Accordingly, many other scholars accept Petrine authorship of 2 Peter.

Therefore, the question from antiquity to today is whether 2 Peter is authentic, that is, was it written by the apostle Peter? Following are five arguments opposing authenticity that are typically set forth along with counterarguments defending the authenticity of 2 Peter: 1) Church Fathers' Attestation of 2 Peter; 2) Hellenistic Concepts and Language in 2 Peter; 3) The Priority of Jude to 2 Peter; 4) The False Teachers Were Gnostics in 2 Peter; and 5) Second Peter Is Early Catholic and Departs from the Gospel's Central Message.

Church Fathers' Attestation of 2 Peter

One argument opposing authenticity is the questionable attestation of 2 Peter by Church Fathers. Concerning 2 Peter, Green says, "No book in the canon is so poorly attested among the Fathers."⁸² As noted, Eusebius placed 2 Peter among the disputed books but added that most accepted its authenticity (*Hist. eccl.* 3.3.1, 4; 3.25.3–4).

In defense of authenticity, Origen commented that some questioned the authenticity of 2 Peter (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.11). However, Origen quoted 2 Peter six times as Scripture concerning which, says Schreiner, "we can conclude from this that the doubts of others were not compelling to him."⁸³ Schreiner notes that "textual evidence also points to the authenticity of 2 Peter, for it is included in the Bodmer papyrus (P⁷²) from the third century and Codexes

⁸¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 260.

⁸² Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 13.

⁸³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 263.

Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus.”⁸⁴ As mentioned, 2 Peter was recognized as fully canonical by the Canons of Laodicea and by the church councils of Hippo and Carthage in the fourth century.⁸⁵ Therefore, there is attestation by Church Fathers of 2 Peter, which plausibly counters this argument and defends the authenticity of 2 Peter.

Hellenistic Concepts and Language in 2 Peter

A second argument opposing authenticity is that Hellenistic concepts and language used in 2 Peter are not used in 1 Peter. Schreiner explains, “The idea that a Galilean fisherman would use so many words and concepts from Greek culture seems quite improbable, especially when 2 Peter is compared to 1 Peter, for the latter does not betray the same Hellenistic flavor.”⁸⁶

In defense of authenticity, if the tradition that Peter ministered in Rome is accepted, then his use of Hellenistic concepts and language would be understandable. In 2 Pet 1:14, the apostle remarks that his death “is imminent.” According to tradition, Peter was martyred between 64–68 CE during the Neronian persecution. Those times of extreme persecution likely necessitated Peter using a different amanuensis, if at all, than he used for 1 Peter, possibly Mark (1 Pet 5:13). A different amanuensis could account for differences in language between the two epistles. Green concurs, “We are specifically told that not only Mark [see Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.5] but also one Glaucias [see Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.17] were among Peter’s other secretarial assistants, so there is nothing improper in arguing that much of the stylistic difference may be due to a change in scribe.”⁸⁷ Therefore, the Hellenistic concepts and language in 2 Peter

⁸⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 264.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 256–7.

⁸⁷ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 24.

argument is plausibly countered by Peter's use of Hellenistic language common to Rome and by his possible use of different amanuenses for the two epistles.

The Priority of Jude to 2 Peter

A third argument opposing authenticity, addressed in the previous section, is the belief that 2 Peter used Jude as a source. As noted, since Jude is thought to be post-apostolic, as suggested in Jude 17–18, it is held that Peter could not have written 2 Peter because he would have been deceased. Therefore, many scholars are of the opinion that 2 Peter is pseudepigraphic.

In defense of authenticity, as mentioned, the most probable explanation in favor of the priority of 2 Peter to Jude is asserted by Bigg that “both Epistles took their origin from Corinth, that the disorder [false teaching] was spreading, that St. Peter took alarm and wrote his second epistle, sending a copy to St. Jude with a warning of the urgency of the danger, and that St. Jude at once issued a similar letter to the churches in which he was personally interested.”⁸⁸ Since Peter was in Rome and Jude was likely in the eastern Mediterranean region, Peter's people were not the same as those of Jude. Thus, after Jude received a copy of Peter's second epistle, he wrote to churches familiar with him a shortened version of 2 Peter, which explains the remarkable content correspondence of both epistles. Therefore, the priority of Jude to 2 Peter argument is plausibly countered by evidence for the priority of 2 Peter to Jude, a position affirmed by Luther and contemporary scholars.

The False Teachers Were Gnostics in 2 Peter

The recognized authority on early church history and Gnosticism, Edwin Yamauchi, remarks that “scholars continue to experience difficulty in agreeing upon a definition of

⁸⁸ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 316.

Gnosticism. . . . To underline the distinction between the apparently inchoate phenomena in the first century and the fully articulated systems in the second century, Wilson has been urging that we use the term ‘Gnosis’ for the former and reserve ‘Gnosticism’ for the latter.”⁸⁹ Notably, Paul uses the term γνῶσις (*gnosis*, knowledge) in his letters to the Corinthians (e.g., 1 Cor 14:6; 2 Cor 10:5). Because Paul used ‘Gnosis,’ a term used later in Gnostic literature, Gnosticism has been presupposed by some scholars to explain the false teachers who were opposing Paul at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 11:13). However, Yamauchi notes that “an impressive number of scholars have now rejected the view that Gnosticism must be presupposed to understand Paul’s opponents at Corinth.”⁹⁰ R. McL. Wilson concurs, “What we have at Corinth, then, is not yet Gnosticism, but a kind of *Gnosis*.”⁹¹ Accordingly, false teachers in the first century who opposed both Paul and Peter (2 Pet 2:1–3) likely held a kind of *Gnosis*, not fully articulated Gnosticism.

Nevertheless, a fourth argument opposing authenticity is that the false teachers in 2 Peter are identified as second-century Gnostics beyond Peter’s lifetime.⁹² Schreiner comments that second-century Gnostics “questioned the second coming of Christ, spiritualized the second coming, and led libertine lives.”⁹³ These Gnostic characteristics have similarities with those of the mockers in 2 Pet 3:3–4.

⁸⁹ Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Pre-Christian Gnosticism: The New Testament and Nag Hammadi in Recent Debate,” *Them* 101 (1984): 23; see also R. McL. Wilson, “Nag Hammadi and the New Testament,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 292.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹¹ R. McL. Wilson, “Gnosis at Corinth,” in M. D. Hooker, S. G. Wilson, and C. K. Barrett, eds., *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett* (London: SPCK, 1982), 112.

⁹² Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 257.

⁹³ Schreiner, *I, 2 Peter, Jude*, 257.

In defense of authenticity, Davids et al. remark that many scholars think the false teachers may have held a form of Gnosticism as gnostic-like ideas were spreading throughout the last half of the first century, although Gnosticism was “not formally distinguished as a full-blown ‘ism’ until the second century.”⁹⁴ Another possibility is that the false teachers held the Greco-Roman philosophy of the day of Epicureanism. Davids et al. comment, “The Epicureans were known especially for their denial of providence, the afterlife, or any kind of divine judgment—just the view that seems to be taken by the false teachers according to [2 Pet] chapter 3. . . . People in the ancient world, as in our day, were bombarded by viewpoints and ideas from many different perspectives.”⁹⁵ Accordingly, there is insufficient evidence for the claim that the false teachers in 2 Peter were second-century Gnostics, as they may have held the philosophy of Gnosis, Epicureanism, Antinomianism, or other religious or philosophical ideas of the day. Thus, the false teachers were Gnostics in 2 Peter argument is plausibly countered due to insufficient evidence to support this claim.

Second Peter Is Early Catholic and Departs from the Gospel’s Central Message

The fifth argument opposing authenticity was asserted by Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998), who identified 2 Peter as ‘early Catholic’ and criticized it for departing from the gospel’s central message (i.e., justification by faith).⁹⁶ In defense of authenticity, Osborne addresses the claim that 2 Peter is early Catholic:

When viewed from the perspective of a close reading of 2 Peter, this is a gross misrepresentation of the contents of the epistle. The so-called institutionalization (called ‘early Catholicism’ by Käsemann and others) is based on the mistaken assumption that

⁹⁴ Davids, Moo, and Yarbrough, *1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude*, 79.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79–80.

⁹⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 253.

the early church was charismatic in the beginning and only became institutional late in the apostolic period. There is no evidence for that.⁹⁷

Regarding the claim that 2 Peter departs from the central message of the gospel (i.e., justification by faith), it should be noted that 2 Peter is only comprised of three chapters and does not contain the entirety of Petrine theology.

Further, the claim that 2 Peter departs from the gospel's central message misrepresents this epistle. Peter addresses justification by faith in 1:1, "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Here, Peter refers to justification by faith ("faith of the same kind as ours" 1.1), whereby sinners, such as Peter, are justified and declared righteous through faith in "our God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (1:1). By this faith, says Peter, God "has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises" (1:4). Therefore, Peter encourages his Christian readers, "In your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control. . . . For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (1:5, 6, 11). Clearly, 2 Peter does not depart from the gospel's central message (i.e., justification by faith). Even Neyrey, who regards 2 Peter as pseudonymous, observes in this epistle that "our author seems to be presenting himself as fully orthodox, faithful to traditions found in the gospels (1:16–18)."⁹⁸ Therefore, the argument that 2 Peter is early Catholic and departs from the gospel's central message is plausibly countered by a close reading of 2 Peter, which speaks otherwise. As demonstrated, these five arguments typically set forth opposing the authenticity of 2 Peter are plausibly countered in defense of the authenticity of 2 Peter.

⁹⁷ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 277.

⁹⁸ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 250.

This chapter has focused on establishing the canonical credibility of 2 Peter by presenting an historical and literary analysis of the book. This analysis has involved researching the internal and historical attestation of 2 Peter, the recipients and reasons for 2 Peter, the location and date of 2 Peter, the literary characteristics of 2 Peter, the literary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude, and arguments opposing and counterarguments defending the authenticity of 2 Peter. Having argued for the canonical credibility of 2 Peter by presenting an historical and literary analysis of the book, the next chapter will focus on the passage under study, 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, to determine from Scripture the meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that the author likely intended, the next chapter will present a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Chapter Summary

Before a discussion can begin on 2 Pet 3:10–13, canonical credibility needs to be established for 2 Peter. To establish its canonical credibility, this chapter has presented an historical and literary analysis of 2 Peter in six sections:

- 1) The internal and historical attestation of 2 Peter. This section demonstrated that there is both internal and historical attestation for the authenticity of 2 Peter;
- 2) The recipients and reasons for 2 Peter. This section argued that the recipients of 2 Peter (cf. 3:1) were the same churches named in 1 Pet 1:1. One of the main reasons for Peter writing 2 Peter, in addition to explaining both the reason for the delay in Christ's return (3:8) and the particulars concomitant with this coming eschatological day of the Lord (3:10), was to address the doctrinal and philosophical dangers being propagated by false teachers (cf. 2 Pet 2; 3:17–18);
- 3) The location and date of 2 Peter. This section argued that 2 Peter was composed in Rome in approximately 64–65 CE;

4) The literary characteristics of 2 Peter. This section argued that the two primary literary genres of 2 Peter are letter and farewell discourse, while 2 Pet 3:3–13 is in the genre of prophecy;

5) The literary correspondence between 2 Peter and Jude. This section documented for 2 Peter and Jude the correspondence and non-correspondence in terms of vocabulary and structure and the close correspondence in terms of content. Based on the literary correspondence, the writer argued in favor of the priority of 2 Peter to Jude; and

6) Arguments opposing and counterarguments defending the authenticity of 2 Peter. This section documented five arguments typically set forth opposing the authenticity of 2 Peter and demonstrated that these are plausibly countered in defense of the authenticity of 2 Peter.

Having argued in this chapter for the canonical credibility of 2 Peter by presenting an historical and literary analysis of the book in six sections, the next chapter will focus on the passage under study, 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, to determine the author's likely intended meaning of the passage, the next chapter will present a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF 2 PETER 3:10–13

Scripture interprets Scripture. Therefore, to accurately interpret 2 Pet 3:10–13, it is essential to research the immediate and intertextual context of this passage which may shed interpretive light. Craig Evans explains: “To understand a given passage, one must reconstruct as much as possible the world of thought in which the New Testament writer lived. Since the New Testament frequently quotes the Old Testament . . . or alludes to it . . . , exegesis should be particularly sensitive to its presence and careful to reconstruct the exegetical-theological context.”⁹⁹ D. A. Carson adds: “Any text is surrounded by expanding concentric circles of context. . . . Because the Bible was graciously given to us by God *in a lengthy series of specific historical contexts*, significant light can be shed on a passage by patiently probing some of those contexts.”¹⁰⁰ In addition to probing the immediate and intertextual biblical context, extrabiblical ancient and contemporary writings may also shed interpretive light on 2 Pet 3:10–13.

In 2 Pet 3, the apostle addresses eschatology, especially in 3:7, 10–13, which present two prophetic themes: 1) Christ’s return with fire on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (3:7, 10–12); and 2) the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (3:13). The immediate context for 3:10–13 is in vv. 1–9 and 14–15. Schreiner says this “new section is clearly marked in terms of both content and structure.”¹⁰¹ Hence, to determine from Scripture the author’s likely intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13, this chapter will present a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that

⁹⁹ Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 6.

¹⁰⁰ D. A. Carson, *Approaching the Bible*, in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., eds. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 15–16.

¹⁰¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 366–67.

will involve researching intertextually the immediate context of this passage in 3:1–9 and 3:14–15, which consists of nine sections: 1) Remember the Words of the Holy Prophets and the Lord (2 Peter 3:1–2); 2) Mockers of Christ’s Return (2 Peter 3:3–4); 3) Rebutting Mockers Based on God’s Intervention at Creation (2 Peter 3:5); 4) Rebutting Mockers Based on God Destroying the Cosmos at the Flood (2 Peter 3:6); 5) The Present Heavens are Reserved for Fire (2 Peter 3:7a); 6) The Present Earth is Reserved for Fire (2 Peter 3:7b); 7) The Judgment and Destruction of the Ungodly (2 Peter 3:7c); 8) God’s Perspective of Time and Why the Day of the Lord is Delayed (2 Peter 3:8–9); and 9) Christ’s Call to Godly Living while Awaiting His Return (2 Peter 3:14–15).

Remember the Words of the Holy Prophets and the Lord (2 Peter 3:1–2)

¹ “Ταύτην ἤδη, ἀγαπητοί, δευτέραν ὑμῖν γράφω ἐπιστολήν, ἐν αἷς διεγείρω ὑμῶν ἐν ὑπομνήσει τὴν εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν, ² μνησθῆναι τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν ἐντολῆς τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος,” (2 Pet 3:1–2).¹⁰²

¹ “This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles” (2 Pet 3:1–2 NASB).¹⁰³

¹⁰² Michael W. Holmes, ed., SBLGNT (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software and the Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 2 Pet 3:1–2.

¹⁰³ All English biblical references, unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation). Concerning words in *italics*, The Lockman Foundation explains that “italics are used in the text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it,” quoted in “Explanation of General Format,” *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation).

Peter's "second letter" (3:1) addresses the churches he wrote to in his first letter (1:1) with the endearing term "beloved" (ἀγαπητός), which he repeats four more times in this chapter (3:8, 14, 15, 17). Osborne comments, "The term 'beloved,' which dominates this section (3:1, 8, 14, [15], 17), shows Peter's close relationship with these believers."¹⁰⁴ Not only does the apostle express kind affection toward these believers, but he also reminds them in 3:1 of what he had told them in his first letter. Peter had conveyed to them that the Old Testament "prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come . . . made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know . . . the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Pet 1:10–11). The apostle had related to them that the glories to follow will accompany Christ's return (1 Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13; 5:1, 4). Thus, in 2 Pet 3:1–2, Peter reintroduces the theme of the παρουσία (*coming*). For expositors who interpret Scripture to teach two παρουσίας, one *for* the church before the wrath judgments of Revelation (6:16–17; cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9) and one *with* the church at the end of the wrath at Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16; 19:14; cf. Zech 14:5), the question is, which παρουσία is in view in 2 Pet 3?

Notably, the apostle refers to both advents in 2 Peter; the advent of Christ in the sky *for* the church (1:16; 3:4, 14) and the advent of Christ to earth *with* the church at Armageddon (3:10, 12). Since Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16; 18:8; 19:11–20:3) is associated with Christ's battle for Jerusalem (cf. Zech 14:1–5) and with fire ("the Lord will come in fire. . . . For the Lord will execute judgment by fire . . . on all flesh" Isa 66:15–16; cf. Mal 4:1–3), and since fire is a major motif in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, the advent in view in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, arguably, is the day of the Lord at Armageddon.

¹⁰⁴ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 333.

Concerning Christ's advent at Armageddon, Peter reminds his beloved brethren to "remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets" (3:2; cf. Acts 3:21). Old Testament prophets often prophesied about the day of the Lord at Armageddon (cf. Isa 13:6–13; Joel 1:15; 2:1–11; Zeph 1:14–18). Osborne opines, "The content of [2 Pet] 1:16–21 and 3:2–10 makes it clear that he [Peter] was speaking specifically about the prophecies of the end times."¹⁰⁵ Consequently, Peter's reminder to his beloved brethren to remember Old Testament prophecies demonstrates the significance of these revelations for accurately interpreting the day of the Lord at Armageddon in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, and the telescoping prophecy more than a thousand years distant that concerns the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth in 3:13.

Also, Peter reminds his beloved brethren to remember "the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Pet 3:2 NIV). In addition to Old Testament prophets speaking eschatologically, the Lord and the apostles also spoke about Christ's return (Matt 24:29–31; 1 Thess 4:14–17; Rev 19:11–20:3). Schreiner adds, "Eschatology is central for the entire book, and the adversaries in 2 Peter denied the eschatological judgment and the coming of the Lord. . . . In 1 Peter, the readers were exhorted to fix their hope on the eschatological coming of Christ [cf. 1:3–13]."¹⁰⁶ Thus, in this section (3:1–2), Peter reminds his beloved brethren to remember both Old Testament prophecies and the words of the Lord and the apostles to accurately interpret Christ's return in the sky *for* the church (3:4, 14), Christ's return *with* the church on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (3:7, 10–12), and the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (3:13). However, Peter says mockers in the last days will scoff at biblical promises about Christ's return.

¹⁰⁵ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 333.

¹⁰⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 369–370.

Mockers of Christ's Return (2 Peter 3:3–4)

³ “Τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι ἐλεύσονται ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐν ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαϊκται κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι ⁴ καὶ λέγοντες· Ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ’ ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως.” (2 Pet 3:3–4).¹⁰⁷

³ “Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation” (2 Pet 3:3–4).

The time indicated for the manifestation of the mockers is in the last days. Technically, the last days began with the first advent of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 1:2). Green adds, “With the advent of Jesus, the last chapter of human history had opened, though it was not yet completed.”¹⁰⁸ Since, at this point, the last days have encompassed two millennia, based on 2 Pet 3:8, the last days may be about the duration of days from God’s perspective (“one day is like a thousand years”). The phrase ‘the last days’ is found often in Scripture (Isa 2:2; Ezek 38:16; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1).

However, the last days can also refer to the last days (years) of the age, including events associated with Christ coming again. When Christ returns, it will be for salvation and judgment. At Christ’s first advent, He atoned for sin. However, Christ “will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Heb 9:28 NIV). At Christ’s second advent, the salvation of the church will be realized when followers of Jesus Christ are

¹⁰⁷ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3:3–4.

¹⁰⁸ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 149.

resurrected and raptured “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:17). At His second advent, Christ returns only in the air (sky) *for* the church for salvation and escorts His followers to heaven to rescue them from the terrifying wrath judgments (cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9) that He will pour out on the ungodly left on earth (Rev 6:16–17; 8–9; 15–16). Victorinus taught that the church would not be on earth during the terrible wrath judgments of Revelation: “For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these shall be in the last time when the Church shall have gone out of the midst” (*Comm. Apoc.* 15.1).¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, amillennialists and historic premillennialists teach that the church of Jesus Christ will be left on earth but protected during the terrible plagues of the wrath of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) judgments of Revelation, an interpretation that seems at odds with 1 Thess 1:10 and 5:9.

At the end of the wrath judgments, at Christ’s subsequent advent, Jesus Christ returns to the earth’s surface *with* the church for the great battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14–16; 19:11–20:3; cf. Zech 14:4–5). At this advent will occur the judgment of the “present heavens and earth” by conflagration and the “destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7 NIV; cf. 3:10–12; Rev 19:20–21). Afterward, Christ will establish His earthly millennial kingdom (Rev 20:4–6).

Yet, when the mockers ask, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet 3:4), which promise of Christ’s return do they have in mind—His return *for* the church or His return *with* the church at Armageddon? Both. Mockers in the last days will reject both advents. The mockers

¹⁰⁹ Victorinus of Pettau, *Comm. Apoc.* 15.1 (*ANF* 7.357). Notably, Victorinus refers to Leviticus concerning “obstinate people,” i.e., those who disobey the Lord. One of the penalties for disobeying the Mosaic Covenant was: “If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins” (Lev 26:21). Thus, in commenting on Rev 15:1, Victorinus refers to the seven plagues of the wrath of God that will come on the obstinate people who disobeyed God and rejected His free gift of salvation in the Savior, Jesus Christ. These obstinate people will be left on earth to suffer the “seven plagues” (Rev 15:1) of the wrath of the Lamb judgments of Revelation from which, Victorinus says, “the Church shall have gone out of the midst” (*Comm. Apoc.* 15.1; cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9).”

will reject biblical teaching about Christ coming again for salvation and judgment. Davids opines, “They mock the idea that such a ‘coming’ of God in judgment and salvation will happen.”¹¹⁰ This unbelief of God’s word reflects on the character of the mockers. Peter said the mockers would be characterized by lusts or evil desires (3:3). Schreiner comments, “When Peter noted that they followed their own desires, we are again reminded of the criticisms of chap. 2. The false teachers were not constrained by any moral standards. They were libertines who lived to satisfy their own selfish desires . . . , false teachers [who] were mockers and licentious.”¹¹¹ Thus, the last days mockers will be in moral and spiritual rebellion towards God and His word.

Although the mockers will scoff, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (3:4), such skepticism is not new in human history. Similar mocking is found in Pss 42:3; 79:10; 115:2; and Joel 2:17, “Where is their God?” Ezekiel experienced mockers, “The days are long and every vision fails” (12:22). Jeremiah also experienced mockers: “Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come now!” (17:15). Jeremiah prophesied for at least twenty-three years (25:3), which means that many of his prophecies did not come to pass until years after his initial prediction. Most people, likely because of humans’ short life spans, do not understand when God warns that it is usually years in advance of fulfillment, which may seem a long time to people but a short time to the eternal God. Habakkuk learned to wait for God to fulfill a vision: “The vision is yet for the appointed time Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay” (2:3).

Yet, the delay in Christ’s return will be the reason the mockers will give for denying the παρουσία: “For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning

¹¹⁰ Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 263.

¹¹¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 372.

of creation” (2 Pet 3:4). Likely, many of the mockers will have heard for years about Christ’s predicted return, which they have not seen come to pass. Therefore, they will mock, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (3:4). Without doubt, most of the mockers will be spiritually lost; however, many may be Christians, as Osborne suggests.¹¹²

A belief among first-century Christians was that Jesus would return in their generation. Clement, an associate of Paul (cf. Phil 4:3), addressed aged Christians who were doubting Jesus’ return: “Let us not be double-minded. . . . ‘Wretched are they who are of a double mind, and of a doubting heart; who say, these things we have heard even in the times of our fathers; but, behold, we have grown old, and none of them has happened unto us’” (*1 Clem* 23).¹¹³ Clement encouraged these believers not to doubt the sure return of Christ: “Of a truth, . . . ‘speedily will He come, and will not tarry’” (*1 Clem* 23; cf. Heb 10:37).¹¹⁴ Although mockers in the last days will scoff at God’s word about Christ’s return, which will be a sign of its nearness, the return of Christ will indeed happen because He is faithful to fulfill His word, as exemplified when God spoke the Creation into existence (Gen 1).

Rebutting Mockers Based on God’s Intervention at Creation (2 Peter 3:5)

⁵ “Λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας ὅτι οὐρανοὶ ἦσαν ἑκπαλαι καὶ γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι’ ὕδατος συνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ,” (2 Pet 3:5).¹¹⁵

⁵ “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water” (2 Pet 3:5).

¹¹² Osborne, *2 Peter*, 335.

¹¹³ Clement of Rome, *1 Clem.* 23 (*ANF* 1.11).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Holmes, ed., *SBLGNT*, 2 Pet 3:5.

In 2 Pet 3:5, the apostle rebuts the basis for the mockers' denial of Christ's return; specifically, their claim that all continues as normal ("all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" 3:4). In 2 Pet 3, the apostle relates two times when all did not continue as normal (3:5–6). The first time when all did not continue as normal was when God intervened supernaturally at creation and spoke the universe into existence ("by the word of God the heavens existed long ago" 3:5). Accounts are found elsewhere about God simply speaking and creating the universe (Gen 1:3–27; Pss 33:6; 148:5; Heb 11:3; Wis 9:1; *4 Ezra* 6:38). Osborne relates that God's spoken word in 2 Pet 3:5 "emphasizes the creative power of God's commands. These . . . people [mockers] have ignored the fact that divine intervention in the cosmos was most evident in the ancient and cataclysmic act of Creation. . . . Creation is the result . . . of a God who acts powerfully to create a world *ex nihilo* with his very command."¹¹⁶ Since God created the universe by speaking, does it not logically follow that He can uncreate the universe (Rev 20:11) by speaking, and then speak the new creation into existence (Rev 21:1)?¹¹⁷ Clement affirms: "By the word of His might He established all things [the universe], and by His word, He can overthrow them [destroy the universe]" (*1 Clem.* 27).¹¹⁸

In 2 Pet 3:5, the apostle places heavens before earth, as in the introduction to the Creation account (Gen 1:1). Osborne explains Peter's meaning for the heavens in 3:5, "In his first point regarding the Creation, Peter remarks that long ago God "made the heavens" (not only the sky but the entire universe . . .)."¹¹⁹ Thus, Peter begins his argument against the mockers' view that

¹¹⁶ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 336.

¹¹⁷ Notably, there are no speaking verbs in Rev 20:11 and 21:1 just as there are no nouns in these verses concerning fire. However, Scripture records that when God created the universe He simply spoke (Gen 1:3–24) and when He uncreated, as He did with a storm on the Sea of Galilee, He simply spoke (Matt 8:26; Mark 4:39).

¹¹⁸ Clement of Rome, *1 Clem.* 27 (*ANF* 1.12).

¹¹⁹ Osborne, *2 Peter*, 336.

all continues as normal based on God’s intervention at creation to bring into existence the heavens (“by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago” 3:5). As Osborne relates, the heavens in 3:5 refer to the totality of the heavens, the universe, which includes earth’s heaven (the first heaven, atmosphere, or firmament in Gen 1:8) and the celestial heavens of the planets, moons, and stars. Schreiner affirms, “The initial creation of the universe was in Peter’s purview.”¹²⁰

Peter also argues against the mockers view that all continues as normal based on God’s intervention at creation to bring into existence the earth (“*the* earth was formed out of water and by water” 3:5). Notably, in 2 Pet 3:5, Peter says that water was elemental to the earth's creation. At the beginning of creation, water covered the surface of the earth (Gen 1:2). On the second day, God created the firmament,¹²¹ with waters below and above it. Accordingly, this section will address in two subsections: 1) The Firmament and the Long History of a Water Canopy Interpretation; and 2) The Evidence for a Mild Antediluvian Climate: What Happened?

The Firmament and the Long History of a Water Canopy Interpretation

The “waters which were above the firmament” (Gen 1:7 NKJV) have long been interpreted as a *vapor* or *water canopy*, dating to the early church, that may have existed at creation and throughout the antediluvian age, which is based on Gen 1:6–8:

¹²⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 376.

¹²¹ The expanse, vault, or firmament (in this context) is the earth’s atmosphere where birds fly (Gen 1:20), also called the first heaven (Gen 1:8), or troposphere, between the earth’s surface and the stratosphere. Firmament also refers to celestial space where the planets, moons, and stars are located (Gen 1:14–15, 17). Expanse or vault are good translations for the firmament referred to in Gen 1:6–8; however, historical works often use the term ‘firmament’ to refer to this region where birds fly (Gen 1:20), or the troposphere, between the earth’s surface and the stratosphere.

Then God said, “Let there be a firmament [רָקִיעַ; (*rāqîa*) ‘expanse, vault, “or ‘firmament,’ regarded by Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it”]¹²² in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. (NKJV)

As Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs (BDB) relate, the ancient Hebrews envisioned the cosmos as a tiered structure with the underworld beneath the earth; the earth in the middle surrounded by a hemispherical firmament (solid at the top) that included within it the earth’s atmosphere, sun, moon, and stars; the waters which were above the firmament; and above the waters above the firmament was the location of heaven.¹²³ Noticeably, the ancient Hebrew understanding of the cosmos was comparable to ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, note John Walton, Victor Matthews, and Mark Chavalas:

The expanse (sometimes called “the firmament”) set up in day two [of creation] is the regulator of climate. The ancient Near Eastern cultures viewed the cosmos as featuring a three-tiered structure consisting of the heavens, the earth and the underworld. Climate originated from the heavens, and the expanse was seen as the mechanism that regulated moisture and sunlight. Though in the ancient world the expanse was generally viewed as more solid than we would understand it today, it is not the physical composition that is important but the function. In the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma Elish*, the goddess representing this cosmic ocean, Tiamat, is divided in half by Marduk to make the waters above and the waters below.¹²⁴

Paul Seely adds that “the concept of ‘water above the firmament’ . . . as described in Genesis . . . reflects an ancient Near Eastern concept, particularly shaped by a Mesopotamian tradition found in *Enuma Elish*. The historical definition of ‘the water above the firmament’ is, therefore, a

¹²² Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, רָקִיעַ, *BDB* 956.

¹²³ Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 269-70.

¹²⁴ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 28.

veritable sea located above a solid firmament.”¹²⁵ Interestingly, the interpretation of “the waters which *were* above the firmament” (Gen 1:7 NKJV) as being a *water canopy*, or something comparable to it, has a long history with opinions both affirming and denying.

During the patristic era, Theophilus (ca. 115–181 CE) remarks that “this heaven which we see has been called ‘firmament,’ and to which half the water was taken up that it might serve for rains, and showers, and dews to mankind. And half the water was left on earth for rivers, and fountains, and seas” (*Autol.* 13).¹²⁶ Based on Theophilus’ view, if half of the earth’s water was left on earth for rivers and oceans and a half was taken up above the firmament, then the waters above the firmament would contain oceans of water. St. Ambrose (ca. 339–397 CE) also commented on the firmament and the waters above it:

Based on the word of God: ‘Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ . . . First of all, these interpreters wish to destroy the profound impressions which frequent reading of the Scriptures have made in our mind, maintaining that waters cannot exist above the heavens. That heavenly sphere, they say, is round, with the earth in the middle of it; hence, water cannot stay on that circular surface. . . . ‘Let there be a firmament made,’ He said, ‘amidst the waters and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ From this I learn that the firmament is made by a command by which the water was to be separated and the water above be divided from the water below. What is clearer than this? He who commanded the waters to be separated by the interposition of the firmament lying between them provided also the manner of their remaining in position. . . . Why do you marvel if, by the operation of such majesty, water can be held suspended above the celestial firmament? Reflect on this . . . if you look for an explanation of how the sea divided at the crossing of the Jews. This is not a customary act of nature that water should separate itself from water¹²⁷ The waves became solid, we are told, and like the waters in the firmament they checked their course when they reached their unusual boundaries.¹²⁸ (*Hex.*, 2.2, 3)¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Paul H. Seely, “The Firmament and the Water Above Part II: The Meaning of ‘The Water Above the Firmament’ in Gen 1:6–8,” *WTJ* 54 (1992): 31.

¹²⁶ Theophilus, *Autol.* 13 (*ANF* 2.100).

¹²⁷ Exod 14:21–22.

¹²⁸ Exod 15:8.

¹²⁹ St. Ambrose, *Hex.*, 2.2, 3, trans. John J. Savage; *The Fathers of the Church* 42 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1961), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt32b3wr>.

Thus, Ambrose ardently argues for a water canopy above the firmament, or something comparable to it. He argues that God who separated the waters by a firmament also provided the manner for the waters above the firmament “remaining in position.”¹³⁰ He does not postulate as to how such would be designed but simply appeals to the omnipotence of “majesty.”¹³¹

In addition to Ambrose, Seely remarks that “Augustine . . . insisted that there was water above the starry firmament as well, adding, ‘we must not doubt that it does exist in that place.’”¹³² However, the interpretation of Genesis 1:6–8 referring to a water canopy above the firmament has largely been abandoned. Seely explains:

By the time of the Renaissance, . . . the pressure on the church from the outside to give up its belief in water above the starry firmament has become quite strong. Consequently, the idea began to be entertained that perhaps “the water above the firmament” referred *only* to terrestrial clouds. Luther was tempted to accept this new interpretation but stuck with the Scriptures. He said, . . . “But Moses says in plain words that the waters were above and below the firmament. Here, I take my reason captive and subscribe to the Word even though I do not understand it.”¹³³ Calvin, on the other hand, was apparently swayed by the pressure from the outside world.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ St. Ambrose, *Hex.*, 2.3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Seely, “The Firmament and the Water Above Part II,” 38. Also see, St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (New York: Newman, 1982), 1.52.

¹³³ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, in vol. 1 of *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1–5* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 26.

¹³⁴ Seely, “The Firmament and the Water Above Part II,” 38.

Concerning the new interpretation “that perhaps ‘the water above the firmament’ referred *only* to terrestrial clouds,”¹³⁵ it should be noted that terrestrial clouds form *within* the firmament (the troposphere), *rarely* above it except in polar regions.¹³⁶ Cole Bristow explains:

Almost always, clouds form in the troposphere [the firmament], the lowest level of the atmosphere where we live and where all weather takes place. The troposphere easily has the most water vapor compared to any other layer of the atmosphere. In fact, the other layers have so little water vapor that it is incredibly difficult for clouds to form anywhere above the troposphere. However, on rare occasions, special mechanisms in the atmosphere can force water vapor to exist in above average quantities in the stratosphere or mesosphere. The first of the two strange upper atmosphere clouds are called nacreous clouds. . . . These clouds typically form in the polar regions of the stratosphere, the layer of the atmosphere just above the troposphere. Clouds are usually not found in the stratosphere [above the firmament] because it is warmer there than at the top of the troposphere. The warmth of the stratosphere prevents air from rising past the troposphere due to convection, which is why clouds usually can’t form there. Nacreous clouds are the exception.”¹³⁷

Thus, terrestrial clouds form *within* the firmament, the troposphere, *rarely* above it except in polar regions. So, the new interpretation “that perhaps ‘the waters which were above the firmament’ referred *only* to terrestrial clouds,”¹³⁸ which form *within* the firmament, rarely above it, does not hold water.

Nonetheless, from the last few centuries to today, the water (vapor) canopy interpretation of Gen 1:6–8 has largely been abandoned due to countering arguments both from science and Scripture. Bodie Hodge comments that “a vapor canopy would absorb both solar and infrared

¹³⁵ Seely, “The Firmament and the Water Above Part II,” 38.

¹³⁶ Cole Bristow, “Unusual Clouds of the Upper Atmosphere (Credit: NASA),” *Global Weather and Climate Center*, <https://www.globalweatherclimatecenter.com/weather-education/archives/06-2019#:~:text=Clouds%20are%20usually%20not%20found,Nacreous%20clouds%20are%20the%20exception.>

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

radiation and become hot,”¹³⁹ overheating the surface of the earth. However, Hodge’s concern that a water canopy would overheat the earth references models about its design that may not be valid.

Hodge also references five Scripture texts to support his claim that ‘the waters which were above the firmament’ still exist and were not destroyed by the Flood, citing Ps 148:4, “Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens!”¹⁴⁰ As Bristow remarks, there are still waters above the troposphere (‘above the heavens,’ that is, above earth’s atmosphere, the firmament, Gen 1:8) but there is “so little water vapor [there] that it is incredibly difficult for clouds to form anywhere above the troposphere. However, on rare occasions, special mechanisms in the atmosphere can force water vapor to exist . . . in the stratosphere or mesosphere. . . . These clouds typically form in the polar regions.”¹⁴¹ So, even though on rare occasions there are still some waters that are ‘above the heavens,’ or firmament, typically in the polar regions for which we can praise God, it does not mean that the same amount of water vapor exists today as may have existed ‘above the heavens,’ or firmament, at Creation.

Hodge also references 2 Kgs 7:2, 19; and Mal 3:10 concerning rain from the ‘windows of heaven,’ and Gen 8:2 concerning the rain from the ‘windows of heaven’ being stopped after the Flood as proof that ‘the waters above the firmament’ still existed post-Flood and were not destroyed by it. However, was the moisture rising from the primeval oceans that

¹³⁹ Bodie Hodge, “What Is the State of the Water Canopy Model?,” *Answers in Genesis*, <https://answersingenesis.org/environmental-science/state-of-canopy-model/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Bristow, “Unusual Clouds of the Upper Atmosphere (Credit: NASA).”

formed clouds (“in the troposphere [*within* the firmament]”)¹⁴² and rain, and the underground rivers bursting open (Gen 7:11), sufficient water at the Flood to cover “all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens” (Gen 7:19), including Mount Everest at 29,032 feet above sea level?

According to estimates by Frédéric Fabry, associate professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at McGill University in Canada, interviewed by Joe Phelan, the amount of water required at Noah’s Flood to cover all the high mountains (Gen 7:19–20), which would have become sea level at the Flood, would require significantly more water than presently exists on earth. Using Fabry’s estimates, there are presently about 367 quadrillion gallons of water on Earth.¹⁴³ To raise ocean levels, 37.5 trillion gallons of water “would raise the global ocean level by about 1.5 inches.”¹⁴⁴ If Mount Everest was the highest mountain at the Flood, which is 29,032 feet above sea level, plus about 22 feet more because “the water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered” (Gen 7:20), or to 29,054 feet, which is 348,648 inches above sea level, it would require about 8,716 quadrillion gallons of water to reach that height. That is about 23 times the amount of water estimated to presently exist on the earth. This is one reason why some people deny that Noah’s Flood happened, “because they think there is not enough water to cover the highest mountains.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Bristow, “Unusual Clouds of the Upper Atmosphere (Credit: NASA).”

¹⁴³ Joe Phelan, “How Much Water Is in Earth’s Atmosphere?,” *Livescience*, <https://www.livescience.com/how-much-water-earth-atmosphere>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ “Marine Fossils on Mount Everest,” *Creation Ministries International*, <https://creation.com/media-center/youtube/marine-fossils-on-mount-everest>.

Accordingly, one explanation for the disparity between the amount of water existing on the earth and the amount of water needed at the Flood “so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered” (Gen 7:19) is: “The mountain ranges formed at the end of the Flood. With vertical earth movements towards the end of the flood, the mountains rose and the water flowed off the continents into the newly formed oceans basins.”¹⁴⁶ However, Scripture says it was in the seventh month *after* the Flood when “the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat [Mount Ararat is 16,946 feet above sea level]”¹⁴⁷ (Gen 8:4) and in the tenth month when “the tops of the mountains became visible” (Gen 8:5). Thus, the mountains that exist today would have formed *during* the “forty days and forty nights” (Gen 7:12) of the Flood and would have been covered with water,¹⁴⁸ with the water receding after seven months so that “the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat” (Gen 8:4). There are two mountains of Ararat, which Fisher explains: “Snow-capped Great Ararat [Mount Ararat] . . . , the traditional resting place of Noah's Ark, reaches an altitude of 16,946 feet (5,169 meters) above sea level; 7 miles (11 km) southeast, Little Ararat is 12,877 feet (3,928 meters) above sea level.”¹⁴⁹ An expedition team

¹⁴⁶ “Marine Fossils on Mount Everest,” *Creation Ministries International*.

¹⁴⁷ Kenton Fisher, “Earth from Space,” *NASA*, <https://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/Collections/EarthFromSpace/photoinfo.pl?PHOTO=STS064-80-87>.

¹⁴⁸ At Noah’s Flood, it is believed that tremendous tectonic shifts occurred that separated the continents and which created or increased the height of mountains. See: Michael Oard, “The Ice Age and the Genesis Flood,” *Institute for Creation Research*, <https://www.icr.org/article/ice-age-genesis-flood/>. Based on Gen 1:9–10; 7:19, some mountain ranges may have been formed on the third day of creation when God supernaturally elevated land masses “to let the dry land appear” (Gen 1:9). Previously, the earth was covered with water (Gen 1:2). Also, at creation, God supernaturally depressed land masses to form ocean basins: “God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas” (Gen 1:10).

¹⁴⁹ Fisher, “Earth from Space.”

believes they found remains of Noah’s ark “buried at 13,000 feet (4,000 meters) above sea level, near the peak of Mount Ararat.”¹⁵⁰

Accordingly, based on Gen 8:4–5, the mountains that exist today (e.g., Mount Everest at 29,032 feet above sea level and Mount Ararat at 16,946 feet above sea level) would have formed *during* the Flood and would have been covered with water (Gen 7:19–20). Where on earth did all that water come from? Where did it go if that amount of water was on the earth at the Flood? Perhaps, after the Flood, a significant amount of water flowed back into underground rivers for which there may be no accurate way of measuring. Thus, perhaps the amount of water estimated to exist on Earth may not be completely accurate. Yet, it seems that a significant amount of water is unaccounted for at the Flood, and far more than just the water vapor that would have risen from the primeval oceans to form clouds (notably, when water vapor rises from the oceans it depresses ocean levels by a corresponding amount), underground rivers, and rainfall. It sounds more likely that an atmospheric canopy of some sort containing oceans of water collapsed at the Flood and no longer exists in the same state it existed at Creation (Gen 1:6–8).

Perhaps more scientific study is needed as to how what is described in Gen 1:6–8 may have been designed so it worked to provide a mild antediluvian climate (Gen 2:8, 25) and sufficient water for the Flood. As Luther commented, “Moses says in plain words that the waters were above and below the firmament. Here, I take my reason captive and subscribe to the Word even though I do not understand it.”¹⁵¹ It has been postulated that what is described in Gen 1:6–8

¹⁵⁰ Ker Than, “Noah’s Ark Found in Turkey,” *National Geographic*, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/100428-noahs-ark-found-in-turkey-science-religion-culture>.

¹⁵¹ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 26.

may have provided a mild antediluvian climate, for which there is abundant evidence did exist in the pre-Flood era.

Evidence for a Mild Antediluvian Climate: What Happened?

Interestingly, the first time that the term *cold* (קר) is used in Scripture is *after* the Flood when Noah and his family exited the ark (Gen 8:16) and the Lord told Noah: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen 8:22). So, the term *cold* first appears in Scripture immediately after the Flood.

Were Adam and Eve ever cold in the garden? It is unknown how long Adam and Eve lived in the garden, likely for a while but less than 130 years (Gen 5:3), during which time Scripture says they were naked (Gen 2:25). Evidently, they were not cold and enjoyed a mild Edenic climate. The evidence for a mild antediluvian climate is why Tom McIver says a canopy interpretation of Gen 1:6–8 has been “invoked to explain both the pre-Flood conditions described in Genesis and the scientific cause of the Flood. . . . It proposes that before the Flood the earth was surrounded by a heavy cloud cover—the Canopy—containing a whole ocean of water, which made the entire planet a lush greenhouse with uniform mild climate.”¹⁵²

Paleontological evidence confirms this mild antediluvian climate. The geologist and British Parliament member Henry Howorth researched the extinct mammoth. He comments that hunters in search of mammoth bones on the island of Kotelnoi (aka Kotelny and Kotelniy), located about 600 miles north of the Arctic Circle in northern Siberia, Russia, found the remains of the mammoth as well as “the skulls and bones of horses, buffaloes, oxen, and sheep in such

¹⁵² Tom McIver, “Whence the Flood Waters?: The Rise and Fall (and Likely Return) of the Pre-Flood Water Canopy,” *Skeptical* 8 (2001): 76.

abundance that they must have lived there in large herds.”¹⁵³ Chris Flynn says “An estimated 10 million to 20 million mammoths are locked in the permafrost, many so well preserved that the smell sends tusker dogs into a frenzy.”¹⁵⁴ I. P. Tolmachoff affirms: “In no other country of the world are the remnants of the mammoth and, to a lesser extent, of the diluvial rhinoceros and other fossil mammals of the same geological age so familiar to everybody, as they are in Siberia.”¹⁵⁵

Howorth notes that Siberia consists of two zones; namely, southern Siberia, where forests grow and, because of the extreme cold, northern Siberia, “where forests will not grow, and where the immense flat wastes are . . . known as tundras. . . . The vast herds of mammoths and the associated animals could not live in northern Siberia under its present conditions.”¹⁵⁶ However, in the frozen Siberian tundra, he says, “mammoths’ bodies have been discovered more or less intact. . . . A curious fact about the mammoth carcasses and skeletons is that in several cases they have been found standing upright in the ground as if they had sunk down where they lived in soft ground and been frozen in that position.”¹⁵⁷ Soft ground is consistent with the Genesis Creation account that rain may not have occurred during the antediluvian period, “but a mist use to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground” (2:6).

¹⁵³ Henry H. Howorth, *The Mammoth and the Flood: An Attempt to Confront the Theory of Uniformity with the Facts of Recent Geology* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1887), 54.

¹⁵⁴ Chris Flynn, “Mammoth Mining in Siberia,” *The Australian Financial Review*, <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/mammoth-mining-in-siberia-20200407-p54htx>.

¹⁵⁵ I. P. Tolmachoff, “The Carcasses of the Mammoth and Rhinoceros Found in the Frozen Ground of Siberia,” *American Philosophical Society* 23 (1929): 7.

¹⁵⁶ Howorth, *The Mammoth and the Flood*, 57.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57, 61.

Regarding mammoth's food, Howorth remarks that vegetable remains are found "in the same beds with the mammoth in northern Siberia, . . . inconsistent with what is found on the surface of the tundra at this moment."¹⁵⁸ The natural question is, how could the mammoth live in such an intensely cold climate so ill-suited for them? Howorth answers that "the facts compel us to admit that when the mammoth was buried in Siberia, the ground was soft and the climate therefore comparatively mild and genial and that immediately the same ground became frozen, and the same climate became Artic. . . suddenly and *per saltem*."¹⁵⁹

In addition, paleontological evidence confirms that humans were contemporary with the mammoth. Howorth notes, "In the year 1700, Duke Eberhard Ludwig of Wurtemberg caused some excavations . . . where the remains of a human skull were found in the midst of a number of fossil animals. They lay in the lehm or loess associated with the bones of the mammoth. . . . They are deposited in the Stuttgart Museum."¹⁶⁰ Also, says Howorth, in 1833, the published work of M. Schmerling "showed that in the Belgian caves, the bones of man existed in precisely the same mineral condition as those of the mammoth."¹⁶¹ Howorth argues that "the extinction of the mammoth in the Old World was sudden, and operated over a wide continental area, involving a widespread hecatomb in which man, as well as other creatures, perished; that this destruction was caused by a flood of waters [Noah's Flood] which passed over the land, drowning the animals and then burying their remains."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Howorth, *The Mammoth and the Flood*, 70.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 96, 99.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 229–230.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 256.

Even though Howorth in the nineteenth century attested as factual that when the mammoth inhabited Siberia that the ground was soft and the climate mild “and that immediately the same ground became frozen, and the same climate became Artic,”¹⁶³ causing the extinction of the mammoth, Valentina Ukraintseva offers a contemporary explanation for the extinction of the mammoth:

In the late Pleistocene of the Quaternary this era . . . came to an end, or the beginning of an end; mammals began to die out on a mass scale. . . . Some authors . . . have related the extinction of certain species of large herbivorous mammals to climate cooling in the Quaternary, whereas others . . . relate it to warming. . . . The extinction of the woolly mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, cave bear, and other species of the “mammoth faunal complex” was the result of the environmental changes occurring at too great a rate for evolution to “keep up.”¹⁶⁴

Accordingly, some authors attribute the extinction of the mammoth and similar mammals to climate cooling and others to climate warming. Flynn attributes the extinction of the mammoth to “the arrival of humans in the region, whose presence changed the landscape with fire, hunting, and farming.”¹⁶⁵ Regarding climate cooling and warming, David Herring and Rebecca Lindsay explain that the earth has experienced periods of climate cooling and warming “on roughly 100,000-year cycles for at least the last 1 million years.”¹⁶⁶ Since climate cooling and warming occur gradually over long periods, plausibly, this would not have caused the mammoths to suddenly die and be “frozen”¹⁶⁷ in place with many being “discovered more or less intact.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Howorth, *The Mammoth and the Flood*, 96, 99.

¹⁶⁴ Valentina V. Ukraintseva, *Mammoths and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 295–96, 313.

¹⁶⁵ Flynn, “Mammoth Mining in Siberia.”

¹⁶⁶ David Herring and Rebecca Lindsay, “Hasn't Earth Warmed and Cooled Naturally Throughout History?,” *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration* (NOAA), <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/climate-qa/hasnt-earth-warmed-and-cooled-naturally-throughout-history>.

¹⁶⁷ Howorth, *The Mammoth and the Flood*, 61.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

Nor, would human hunting and farming produce this result for 10–20 million mammoths entombed in the Siberian permafrost.¹⁶⁹ Instead, a more plausible explanation is that a catastrophe occurred that destroyed the earth’s climate such as Noah’s Flood causing certain regions of the planet to suddenly turn cold (Gen 8:2), such as northeastern Siberia that has recorded a bone-chilling -90°F (-67.8°C).¹⁷⁰

However, it is argued that the temperature drop in Siberia cannot be compared to Mesopotamia where the Garden of Eden was located (Gen 2:10–14) because Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq primarily, Kuwait, eastern Syria, and southeast Turkey) is warmer. Indeed, it is warmer in post-Flood Mesopotamia! In July 2016, the temperature in Iraq reached 128.8°F (53.8°C).¹⁷¹ However, it also gets cold in post-Flood Mesopotamia. In January 2020, the temperature in Iraq dropped to a shivering 7°F (-13.8°C).¹⁷² On 11 February 2020, residents of Baghdad, Iraq, woke up to snow.¹⁷³ Consequently, the climate in post-Flood Mesopotamia would not be conducive for a husband and wife to live for an extended period in a garden out in the open, naked (Gen 2:25). Nor would it be conducive for mammoths and similar mammals to live in post-Flood Siberia, one of the coldest regions of the world.

¹⁶⁹ Flynn, “Mammoth Mining in Siberia.”

¹⁷⁰ Tony Phillips, “What Is the Coldest Place on Earth?,” *NASA Science*, https://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/2013/09dec_coldspot.

¹⁷¹ “The Climate in Iraq,” *WorldData*, <https://www.worlddata.info/asia/iraq/climate.php#:~:text=Temperature%20records%20of%20the%20last,%C2%B0C%20was%20reported%20here>.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ “The Weirdest Places It Has Snowed,” *Weather Underground*, <https://www.wunderground.com/article/safety/winter/news/2021-11-22-strange-places-snow-us-world>.

Yet, the evidence strongly suggests that the climate was mild during the antediluvian age when Adam and Eve enjoyed walks in a Mesopotamian garden, naked (Gen 2:25), and when mammoths, horses, oxen, and sheep in large herds roamed on soft ground grazing on abundant vegetation in Siberia.¹⁷⁴ Still, in addition to the once mild antediluvian Mesopotamian and Siberian climates, the climate in Greenland was once tropical as proven “by the remains of an extensive tropical flora which are found there.”¹⁷⁵ Antarctica was once a tropical paradise, relates Robin McKie, “it is only in the recent geological past that it got so cold.”¹⁷⁶

Clearly, something catastrophic happened at Noah’s Flood that destroyed Earth’s mild antediluvian climate that changed it into a postdiluvian climate producing erratic temperature swings, devastating tornadoes, destructive hurricanes, fatal floods, sweltering famines, and glacial ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica. What happened? Michael Oard relates that more than 60 theories have been suggested for the cause of the post-Flood ice age.¹⁷⁷ Yet, other regions of the post-Flood world endure a hot age with the temperature reaching a scorching 156.7° F (69.3° C) in the shrublands of Queensland, Australia.¹⁷⁸ What cataclysm happened at the Great Flood that destroyed the mild antediluvian climate? The Spirit-inspired apostle tells us exactly what happened in 2 Pet 3:6: the *cosmos* was *destroyed* at the Flood.

¹⁷⁴ Howorth, *The Mammoth and the Flood*, 54.

¹⁷⁵ Renee Bache, “Tropical Greenland,” *Prism (University of Kansas)*, <https://ku-prism.org/polarscientist/losttribes/Jan131897Boston.htm#:~:text=Greenland%20was%20once%20upon%20a,flora%20which%20are%20found%20there>.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Michael Oard, “The Ice Age and the Genesis Flood,” *Institute for Creation Research*, <https://www.icr.org/article/ice-age-genesis-flood/>.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Carlowicz, “Where Is the Hottest Place on Earth? It Lies Somewhere Between Folklore and Science, the Desert and the City,” *NASA*, <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/HottestSpot>.

Rebutting Mockers Based on God Destroying the Cosmos at the Flood (2 Peter 3:6)

⁶ “Δι’ ὧν ὁ τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο.” (2 Pet 3:6).¹⁷⁹

⁶ “Through which the world [κόσμος (*cosmos*)] at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water” (2 Pet 3:6).

In 2 Pet 3:6, the apostle presents his second rebuttal of the basis for the mockers’ denial of Christ’s return; specifically, their claim that all continues as normal (3:4). In 3:6, the apostle reminds the mockers that life did not continue as normal in Noah’s day. Peter says, “The world [κόσμος] at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water” (2 Pet 3:6). Schreiner notes that Peter’s “shift of words from ‘heavens and earth’ [3:5] to ‘world’ [κόσμος, 3:6] is significant. Peter signaled to us a new referent.”¹⁸⁰ In 3:5, Peter related how God spoke (“by the word of God”) in the creation process to bring into existence the heavens and the earth, forming the earth “out of water and by water.” In 3:6, Peter changes the referent from ‘heavens and earth’ (3:5), in reference to the creation of the universe, to a term that also includes ‘humanity,’ and so he uses the term κόσμος.¹⁸¹ Accordingly, in 3:6, Peter relates how the water that was used in Earth’s creation was used at the Flood to destroy the world (κόσμος).

Thus, Peter notes two distinct worlds, the pre-Flood created world (3:5) and the post-Flood destroyed world that now exists (3:6), which is the destroyed world (“the present heavens and earth . . . reserved for fire” 3:7) that now exists in 3:7, 10–12. Richard Bauckham comments on Vögtle’s view of the parallelism between 3:5 and 3:7: “Vögtle (*Zukunft*, 135) argues that the parallelism is between οὐρανοὶ . . . ἔκπαλαι καὶ γῆ (“heavens and an earth . . . long ago”) in v 5,

¹⁷⁹ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3:6.

¹⁸⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 377.

¹⁸¹ E.g., in John 1:10, the two meanings for κόσμος are used.

and *οἱ . . . νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ* (“the heavens and the earth which now exist”) in v 7, but this parallelism itself implies that the Flood marks a break between the heavens and the earth which existed before it and those which exist now.”¹⁸² Exactly! The writer concurs with Vögtle. As mentioned, Peter notes two distinct worlds, the pre-Flood created world (3:5) and the post-Flood *destroyed* world that now exists (3:6–7, 10–12).

Peter addresses in 2 Pet 3:6–7, 10–12, the post-Flood destroyed world that now exists (“the present heavens and earth” 3:7) and says it is “reserved for fire” (3:7), which will occur on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (3:7, 10–12). Armageddon does *not* consummate this present age. Peter says in plain words in the last phrase of 2 Pet 3:10 that *after* the Armageddon conflagration described in the first part of the verse: “γῆ [*earth, ground, land, or soil*)]¹⁸³ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται,” *the earth and the works done on it will be found*. This is the literal translation of this last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10 when deep-rooted presuppositions are not forced on it. Richard Bauckham concurs with this translation with only a slight variation: “*The earth and the works done in it will be found.*”¹⁸⁴

The earth. . . will be found (2 Pet 3:10d) ‘after’ the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration because planet Earth will still exist, but its surface and atmosphere will have been cleansed by fire at Armageddon in preparation for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign (Rev 20:4–6) and beyond (cf. Rev 20:7–9 concerning the post-millennium Gog and Magog war; Ezek 39:12, “For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them [Gog’s dead soldiers] in order to cleanse the land”; and Ezek 39:9, “Those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make

¹⁸² Bauckham, *Jude–2 Peter*, 135.

¹⁸³ T. Friberg, B. Friberg, and N. F. Miller, γῆ, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.98.

¹⁸⁴ Bauckham, *Jude–2 Peter*, 303.

fires with the weapons [Gog's weapons] . . . and for seven years they will make fires with them"). Thus, Scripture records that the present earth [*the earth. . . will be found*, 2 Pet 3:10d] continues for at least 1,007 years beyond Armageddon (cf. Rev 20:4–9; Ezek 39:9, 12) although the Lord will have cleansed its surface and atmosphere by fire at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12).

Having cleansed the earth's surface and atmosphere, during the post-Armageddon *future millennium* when Christ reigns on the earth with His holy people, He will transform the earth back to its Edenic state: "Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD" (51:3). Ezekiel also foretells about Israel's now desolate land that the Lord will transform during the *future millennium*: "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation. . . . They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden'" (36:34–35).

Notably, when God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1) and called His creation "very good" (Gen 1:31), He created the κόσμος for a holy people with an Edenic mild climate; the pre-Flood world (2 Pet 3:5). Because of sin, God destroyed that Edenic first world at the Flood (2 Pet 3:6; cf. Gen 6:13). The destroyed second world that now exists is for a sinful people many of whom hate God (John 7:7). Actually, the adverse climatic conditions of the post-Flood destroyed world reflects God's grace by helping sinful people come to repentance and faith in Jesus and be saved even if it takes an F4 tornado bearing down on some of them to motivate their calling upon the Lord (Rom 10:13).

At the Flood, the present world in which sinful humanity lives was destroyed. Not in the sense of annihilation. Rather, like a car after a collision that may still be drivable, but not as before. Like a person with a broken leg who can still walk, but not as before. The post-Flood world in which humanity lives has many marvelous qualities, but not as before. That Edenic pre-

Flood world is gone, and will not be restored until the future millennium when Christ reigns on the earth (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:34–35). Presently, humanity resides in a destroyed *cosmos*, which has two meanings in 2 Pet 3:6.

The two meanings for κόσμος (*cosmos*) in 2 Pet 3:6 are also used by John: “He was in the world, and the world [κόσμος, meaning here the *universe*] was made through Him, and the world [κόσμος, meaning here *humanity*] did not know Him” (John 1:10). Luke also uses κόσμος to refer to the *universe*: “The God who made the world [κόσμον; κόσμος, meaning here the *universe*] and all things in it” (Acts 17:24). The other usage of κόσμος, meaning *humanity*, is found often throughout the New Testament, e.g., “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world [κόσμος, meaning here *humanity*] might be saved through Him” (John 3:17; cf. 1 Cor 1:21; 1 John 4:5; 5:19).

Thus, the New Testament conveys two meanings for κόσμος, the *universe* and *humanity*, with κόσμος having both meanings in 2 Pet 3:6, “Through which the world [κόσμος, the *universe* and ungodly *humanity*] at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.” However, the portion of the universe that was destroyed at the Flood is stated in Gen 6:13: “Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh [ungodly *humanity*] has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.’” Note that God did *not* say that He was going ‘to destroy them (ungodly *humanity*) with the ‘heaven and the earth,’ He said, “I am about to destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:13). The heavens of the celestial bodies of planets, moons, and stars were *not* destroyed at the Flood. Only the ungodly of *humanity* and the *earth* were destroyed at the Flood (Gen 6:13). This is the meaning that Peter conveys with his usage of κόσμος (*earth* and *humanity*) in 2 Pet 3:6. Notably, as Verlyn Verbrugge relates, “The OT has no *word* corresponding to the Gk. *kosmos*. It calls the universe

‘heaven and earth.’”¹⁸⁵ However, God specifically stated what part of the universe He would destroy at the Flood: “the earth” (Gen 6:13).

This is an important point! At the Flood, in addition to ungodly humanity, *only* the earth (Gen 6:13), that is, what is associated with the earth, was destroyed:

- 1) *The earth’s surface* along with the mist that “used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground” (Gen 2:6); and
- 2) *The first heaven* (Gen 1:8) (the Edenic earth’s atmosphere or firmament) to include “the waters which were above the firmament” (Gen 1:7 NKJV).

The above components of the *earth* were destroyed at the Flood (Gen 6:13). The heavens of the celestial bodies of planets, moons, and stars are *not* in view in 2 Pet 3:6–7, 10–12, *only* the first heaven (earth’s atmosphere, the firmament in Gen 1:8, often referred to in Scripture as *heavens*)¹⁸⁶ associated with “the earth” (Gen 6:13). As Peter explained: “Through which the world [κόσμος, ungodly *humanity* and the *earth*; cf. Gen 6:13] at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water” (2 Pet 3:6).

Second Peter 3:6–7, 10–12 solely concern the κόσμος (*cosmos*) that relates to ungodly *humanity* and the *earth* (Gen 6:13) and has nothing to do with the celestial bodies of planets, moons, and stars. Bible translations that imply that the celestial bodies in 2 Pet 3:10–12 will be burned up are in error. Since the heavens of the celestial bodies, the planets, moons, and stars, were *not* destroyed at the Flood, God will *not* destroy them on the day of the Lord at

¹⁸⁵ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, κόσμος, *NIDNTT: Abridged Edition*, 315.

¹⁸⁶ In Scripture, *heavens* may refer to the earth’s atmosphere, the first heaven (Gen 1:8), which is the expanse or firmament (Gen 1:20) where rain or dew falls and birds fly (cf. Deut 28:12; 33:28; Judg 5:4; 1 Kgs 8:35; 14:11; 16:4; 2 Chr 6:26; 7:13; Job 1:16; 35:5; 38:37; Pss 8:8; 68:8; 78:26; 104:12; Prov 23:5; Jer 4:25; 51:16; Ezek 31:13; 32:4; and Zech 8:12). The destroyed at the Flood and corrupted *heavens* (earth’s atmosphere, Gen 1:8) will pass away in its corrupted state on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12; cf. Rom 8:19–22).

Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7; 10–12) because He appointed them “for signs and for seasons” (Gen 1:14), both for the present time and for the *future millennium* (Rev 20:4–6) and beyond (Rev 20:7–9).

Indeed, Scripture confirms that *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10–12), the present physical universe will still exist for the *future millennium*. The sun is a star that gives light on the earth as does the moon and will do so *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration, which Isaiah foretells about their brightness during the post-Armageddon *future millennium*: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (30:26). Therefore, during the *future millennium* the sun and earth’s moon still exist and will *not* be destroyed by the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7; 10–12. Thus, the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration does *not* bring the world to an end (consummation) so that the new creation telescoped in 2 Pet 3:13 (cf. Rev 21:1) can begin. In the Greco-Roman era when 2 Peter was written, Stoic cosmology taught that “conflagration brings the present world to an end,”¹⁸⁷ and then another cycle (new creation) begins.¹⁸⁸

Yet, regarding the celestial bodies, Scripture confirms that they will *not* exist during the *eternal state*. Scripture teaches that more than a thousand years distant from the day of the Lord at Armageddon, and unrelated to it, in Rev 20:11, that the entire universe (planets, moons, and stars) immediately prior to the great white throne final judgment (Rev 20:12–15) will *vanish* (“earth and heaven [ἔφουγεν; φεύγω, *vanished, quickly disappeared, fled away*]¹⁸⁹ and no place

¹⁸⁷ A. A. Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 270.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 256–7.

¹⁸⁹ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *φεύγω, Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.398.

was found for them” (Rev 20:11). *Vanished* does *not* connote the long process of conflagration. The present celestial bodies will *vanish* and no longer exist at Rev 20:11. Isaiah foretells: “No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the LORD for an everlasting light” (60:16; cf. Rev 22:5). Thus, in the *eternal state* of the *new* heavens and the *new* earth the presently existing physical universe and its celestial bodies will no longer exist (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 22:5). As John wrote, “And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’ (Rev 21:5). “And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them” (Rev 22:5).

Consequently, as David Wheaton affirms, “The *present* heavens and earth [2 Pet 3:7, 10–12] contrast with the new heavens and earth [2 Pet 3:13] of the future (Rev 21:1).”¹⁹⁰ Therefore, when interpreting prophetic Scripture, it is important not to confuse prophecies about the *future millennium* with others about the *eternal state*, as John Walvoord explains: “Expositors have often confused the eternal state with the Millennium. . . . The [*eternal state*] new heaven and new earth are not to be confused with the Millennium [*old heaven and old earth*].”¹⁹¹

Therefore, in 2 Pet 3:6–7, 10–12, Peter is strictly speaking about the presently existing κόσμος (*cosmos*) of ungodly *humanity* and the *earth*, the earth’s surface and the earth’s corrupted atmosphere or firmament which Peter refers to as the “heavens” in 3:7, 10, 12. These are “the present heavens . . . reserved for fire” (3:7a).

¹⁹⁰ Wheaton, *2 Peter*, 1394.

¹⁹¹ John F. Walvoord, *Revelation*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 984.

The Present Heavens Are Reserved for Fire (2 Peter 3:7a)

⁷ “οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.” (2 Pet 3:7).¹⁹²

⁷ “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7 NIV).

The apostle names three events in 2 Pet 3:7 that are associated with the coming “day of judgment”: One, the present heavens are reserved for fire (3:7a); two, the present earth is reserved for fire (3:7b); and three, the judgment and destruction of the ungodly (3:7c). What is described is a day of judgment by fire. Fire in this pre-millennium context is a reference to the day of the Lord at Armageddon (cf. Isa 66:15–16; Mal 4:1–3; 2 Pet 3:10–12). The Lord will also use fire during the post-millennium Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:9), but 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 pertain to the pre-millennium day of the Lord at Armageddon.

At Armageddon, Peter reveals that “the present heavens . . . are reserved (θησαυρίζω) for fire” (3:7a NIV). The word used for “reserved” (θησαυρίζω, *lay up, store up*¹⁹³) is interesting in that this word is used both for storing up something for reward (cf. Matt 6:19–21) or judgment (cf. Rom 2:5). W. Bauer et al. explain that θησαυρίζω is “to do something that will bring about a future event.”¹⁹⁴ Hence, the future event for the present earthly heavens is a judgment by fire. The motif of fire is associated with judgment in the Old Testament (Deut 32:22; Isa 33:11–14; 66:15–16; Ezek 38:22; Amos 7:4; Nah 1:6; Zeph 1:18; Zech 12:6; Mal 4:1), in Second Temple literature (*I Enoch* 1:6–7; 52:6; *Sibylline Oracles* 4:173–183), and in the New Testament (Matt

¹⁹² Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2013), 2 Pet 3:7.

¹⁹³ W. Bauer et al., θησαυρίζω, *BDAG*, 456.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

5:22; 18:9; 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12; Rev 20:9–10, 14–15). Yet, why would the Lord judge the post-Flood destroyed earthly present heavens by fire at Armageddon?

Paul relates that the present creation is corrupted (Rom 8:21). Again, referring to creation associated with the earth (Gen 6:13), not the stars. The creation will be set free from its corruption when Christ returns at Armageddon so God’s holy people can enjoy a purified and restored creation for the future millennium: “The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now” (Rom 8:21–22).

The creation associated with the post-Flood destroyed earthly present heavens has been corrupted with pollutants. Yutao Wang et al. remark: “In recent years, smog has become one of the greatest challenges in China and many other countries.”¹⁹⁵ Sana Rehman and Rizwan Iqbal explain that smog is a “mixture of air pollutants . . . forming smog and can also be described as a mixture of numerous gases (burnt fumes and fuels from cars and industry).”¹⁹⁶ According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Ambient (outdoor) air pollution in both cities and rural areas was estimated to cause 4.2 million premature deaths worldwide per year in 2016; this mortality is due to exposure to fine particulate matter of 2.5 microns or less in diameter (PM2.5), which cause cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and cancers.”¹⁹⁷

Accordingly, since the present heavens (earth’s atmosphere) have been corrupted with pollutants that could adversely affect humans and animals during the future millennium, Christ

¹⁹⁵ Yutao Wang et al., “Public Awareness and Willingness to Pay for Tackling Smog Pollution in China: A Case Study,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 112 (2016): 1627.

¹⁹⁶ Sana Rehman and Rizwan Iqbal, “Smog,” *Pakistan Journal of Medical Research* 55 (2016): 98.

¹⁹⁷ “Ambient (Outdoor) Air Pollution,” *World Health Organization*, [https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health).

will cleanse the earth's atmosphere with fire on "the day of the Lord" (2 Pet 3:10) at Armageddon. Thus, the present heavens in their corrupted state "will pass away with a roar" (2 Pet 3:10) and will be set free (λύω, *set free, loose*)¹⁹⁸ by burning (2 Pet 3:12) on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12).

Consequently, after the Lord at Armageddon cleanses the heavens by fire which will burn particulate matter in the atmosphere to ashes causing it to fall to the earth and be absorbed into the soil, this will result in a brighter sky which may be why Isaiah prophesies that "the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*" (30:26). Miroslav Kocifaj and John Barentine remark that "light pollution is a novel environmental problem whose extent and severity are rapidly increasing. Among other concerns, it threatens global biodiversity. . . Air pollution, specifically aerosols, decreases NSB [Night Sky Brightness] by tens of percent."¹⁹⁹

Hence, when earth's heavens "pass away" (2 Pet 3:10) from their corrupted state on the day of the Lord at Armageddon, the cleansed atmosphere will make the sun appear brighter during the day and the stars appear brighter at night, all for God's people to enjoy while they look up from the earth that has been restored "like the garden of Eden" (Ezek 36:35; cf. Isa 51:3) for the *future millennium*. The cleansed by fire atmosphere (heavens) will also improve the climate benefiting crops and animals: "The mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water" (Joel 3:18). With the improved *future millennium* climate, the earth will become so productive that the harvester (reaper) of crops will not be able to keep up: "The plowman will overtake the reaper and the

¹⁹⁸ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, λύω, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.250.

¹⁹⁹ Miroslav Kocifaj and John Barentine, "Air Pollution Mitigation Can Reduce the Brightness of the Night Sky in and near Cities," *Scientific Reports* 11 (2021). <https://www-nature-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/articles/s41598-021-94241-1>.

treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine” (Amos 9:13). This immensely productive vegetable and fruit-bearing, Edenic, millennial earth, will have been made possible because of the Lord’s judgment at Armageddon of the post-Flood destroyed and corrupted present heavens (atmosphere) by fire (2 Pet 3:7a, 10–12). Yet, the Lord will also bring judgment on the post-Flood destroyed and corrupted present earth by fire (2 Pet 3:7b).

The Present Earth Is Reserved for Fire (2 Peter 3:7b)

⁷ “οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.” (2 Pet 3:7).²⁰⁰

⁷ “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7 NIV).

As noted, the apostle names three events in 2 Pet 3:7 that are associated with the coming “day of judgment,” the second being that the present earth is reserved for fire (3:7b). As mentioned, fire in this context is a reference to the day of the Lord at Armageddon (cf. Isa 66:15–16; Mal 4:1–3; 2 Pet 3:10–12). Accordingly, this section will address the second event concerning the corrupted present earth being reserved for fire (2 Pet 3:7a) in two subsections: 1) Scriptural Imagery of the Present Earth and Fire; and 2) Ancient Theories about Fire and Modern Fire Scholarship.

Scriptural Imagery of the Present Earth and Fire

To determine if scriptural imagery may shed interpretive light on the earth and fire motifs in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, present earth and fire imagery in Scripture will be researched. Accordingly, this subsection will examine: 1) Earth Imagery Over Four Future Periods; and 2) Fire Imagery.

²⁰⁰ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3:7.

Earth Imagery Over Four Future Periods

In earth imagery during the *wrath judgments*, John foretells that “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Rev 16:20). The mountains not being found suggests that violent shaking of the earth (cf. Hag 2:6, 21; Heb 12:26) during the wrath will collapse many islands and mountains due to avalanches from severe earthquakes (cf. Rev 11:13, 19; 16:18).

In earth imagery during *Armageddon*, Scripture teaches a restructuring and general leveling of the earth’s surface with mountains rising and falling (cf. Isa 2:2; 49:11; Hab 3:6). In preparation for the future millennium, “the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills” (Isa 2:2). Isaiah foretells a leveling of many mountains: “I will make all my mountains a road” (49:11). Habakkuk says, “The perpetual mountains were shattered, the ancient hills collapsed” (3:6). Consequently, Armageddon will witness a violent shaking of the earth: “The foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard and it totters like a shack, for its transgression is heavy upon it, and it will fall, never to rise again” (Isa 24:18–20). Notably, Isaiah’s remark that the earth “will fall, never to rise again,” suggests that the earth in its present post-Flood destroyed state, in preparation for the future millennium, will no longer exist after Armageddon (cf. 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12). Evidently, at Armageddon, the Lord will restructure the earth’s surface, possibly as it was at Creation, with a general leveling, or at least a lowering of hills and mountains, for His earthly millennial reign.

In earth imagery during the *future millennium*, Amos said “the mountains will drip sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved (מִיָּג, *melt*) (9:13). The BDB comments on מִיָּג that “it is perhaps dubious whether *melt* is [the] original meaning; *be moved*, . . . *moistening* is suggested,

this may be perhaps derived from *agitating, loosening, dissolving*.”²⁰¹. Likely, “the hills will be dissolved” means that most of the hills were leveled during Armageddon from the Lord shaking the earth (cf. Isa 24:18–20; Hag 2:6). Consequently, many of earth’s hills and mountains will still exist during the future millennium, although reduced in elevation.

In earth imagery during the *post-millennium Gog and Magog war* (Ezek 38–39; Rev 20:7–9), Ezekiel foretells that Gog and his troops will be summoned “to the mountains of Israel” (38:8). Gog’s troops will be so numerous that they “will be like a cloud covering the land” (Ezek 38:9). However, Gog and his company will meet their doom because the Lord’s fury will be executed against them: “The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble. . . . I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains” (Ezek 38:20, 21 NIV). Thus, it is apparent that planet Earth and some mountains will still exist post-millennium.

Consequently, the Armageddon fire in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 does *not* burn up and destroy planet Earth. Instead, at Armageddon, the earth’s surface will undergo a general leveling and restructuring through violent shaking to prepare the earth’s surface for the future millennium (Isa 2:2; 24:18b–20; 49:11; Ezek 38:8, 20, 21; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; Hab 3:6; Hag 2:6, 21; Heb 12:26; Rev 11:13; 16:18, 20). The intense heat from the fire will also aid in the general leveling and restructuring of the earth’s surface.

Fire Imagery

In fire imagery, Scripture teaches that smoke is released when there is fire on a mountain: “Mount Sinai *was* all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace” (Exod 19:18). Smoke is the product of natural oxygen-consuming fire. However, sometimes smoke and fire are used figuratively in Scripture as in Isa

²⁰¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, אִשׁ, *BDB* 556.

65:5, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’ These are *smoke* in My nostrils, a *fire* that burns all the day” (italics added). Obviously, God does not have a literal fire burning in His (anthropomorphic language) nostrils.

Concerning the Armageddon fire, the Psalmist also said, “The mountains melted [טִּמָּן, *dissolve, melt*]²⁰² like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth” (97:5). Intense heat over 1,830°F (1,000°C)²⁰³ will melt rock (stone, boulders) into flowing lava and collapse mountains. William Anthony explains that “lava is never actually on fire; it is just extremely hot.”²⁰⁴ However, lava’s intense heat will combust organic materials it contacts (e.g., grass). The melting of boulders due to intense heat does not mean that mountains will catch fire and burn up planet Earth. Instead, the intense heat, combined with the violent shaking of the earth (Isa 24:18–20), will cause mountains to appear to melt (collapse). Stefan Doerr and Richard Shakesby comment that intense heat “generated within exposed rock surfaces during fire leads to thermal expansion stress and disintegration of rock surfaces.”²⁰⁵

Consequently, intense heat will melt and pulverize rock (cf. 1 Kgs 18:38), including concrete. At Armageddon, the intense heat of the Lord’s fire will pulverize concrete structures, burn to ashes everything on the earth’s surface, and melt rock inside hills and mountains, collapsing many of them or at least restructuring many of them. This collapsing of mountains is part of the general leveling and restructuring of the earth’s surface at Armageddon (cf. Isa 2:2;

²⁰² Brown, Driver, and Briggs, טִּמָּן, BDB 587.

²⁰³ William Anthony, *Fire Elemental Earth* (New York: Cavendish Square, 2021), 13.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Stefan H. Doerr and Richard A. Shakesby, “Fire and the Land Surface,” in *Fire Phenomena and the Earth System: An Interdisciplinary Guide to Fire Science*, ed. Claire M. Belcher (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 137.

49:11; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5, 6; Hab 3:6) concomitant with the cleansing and restoration of the earth's surface for the future millennium.

Notably, Scripture suggests the reason the Lord will dissolve hills and collapse many mountains is because of their potential harm to people during the future millennium. Magnus Echter explains the risk: The Alps have been frightful places best to avoid, yet mountaineers have been “willing to risk their lives climbing to the mountaintops. For them, mountains were both frightful and sublime, attractive because of their mortal danger.”²⁰⁶ Since mountains and many hills are dangerous, the Lord will lower or level many of them at Armageddon to protect His people. He will do this because, during the future millennium, the Lord says there will be “no evil or harm in all My holy mountain” (Isa 65:25).

Scripture also suggests the reason the Lord will elevate the mountain of the house of the Lord in Zion: “The mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it” (2:2). During the future millennium, the increased height of the mountain of the house of the Lord will exalt Zion.

Consequently, both scriptural earth imagery and fire imagery confirm that the Armageddon fire does *not* burn up and destroy planet Earth. Instead, the earth's surface will undergo a general leveling and restructuring through violent shaking and intense heat at Armageddon, which will prepare the earth for the future millennium (cf. Isa 2:2; 24:18–20; 49:11; Ezek 38:8, 20, 21; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). So, why have some modern expositors interpreted 2 Pet 3:7, 10–13 as teaching that the physical universe burns up at Armageddon or,

²⁰⁶ Magnus Echter, “Call of the Mountain: Modern Enchantment on and off the Screen,” *Culture and Religion* 21 (2020): 59.

more than a thousand years distant, at Rev 20:11, to permit the new creation (Rev 21:1)?²⁰⁷ Have ancient theories about fire rather than modern fire scholarship influenced these interpretations?

Ancient Theories about Fire and Modern Fire Scholarship

Heraclitus (ca. 540–480 BCE) said the cosmos is “an ever-living Fire, with measures of it kindling, and measures going out” (*Fragments*, B30).²⁰⁸ However, the cosmos being an ‘ever-living fire’ is inconsistent with modern cosmological and fire scholarship. Andrew Scott et al. remark that the “earth is the only planet known to have fire. . . . Oxygen is an important part of one of the fire triangles. . . . Combustion, therefore, is an exothermic chemical oxidative reaction, and removal of oxygen leads to extinguishing a fire.”²⁰⁹ Due to a lack of oxygen, planets, except Earth, are not known to have fire. Stars, also, are *not* on fire but are undergoing nuclear “fusion reactions.”²¹⁰ Kristine Spekkens comments: “A fire cannot burn without oxygen. . . . The burning that a star does, then, is a *nuclear reaction*, and not a *chemical* one like the fires on Earth.”²¹¹

Valentinus (ca. 100–160 CE) the Gnostic is attributed by Irenaeus as holding the belief that fire destroys (annihilates) matter, rendering it nonexistent, and claimed at the end of the age,

²⁰⁷ E.g., John MacArthur relates: “The heavens will pass away with a roar [2 Pet 3:10]. . . . This universe will be utterly destroyed. . . . It will melt away in a final holocaust of unimaginable intensity,” quoted in: John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 23s, u. Also, Larry Overstreet comments on 2 Pet 3:10–13: “The heavens shall be dissolved, that is, annihilated. The elements will also melt and likewise be annihilated,” quoted in: R. Larry Overstreet, “A Study of 2 Peter 3:10–13,” *BSac* 137 (1980): 367.

²⁰⁸ Heraclitus, “The Fragments of Heraclitus,” <http://heraclitusfragments.com/files/en.html>.

²⁰⁹ Andrew C. Scott et al., *Fire on Earth: An Introduction* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), xiii, 65.

²¹⁰ Márcio Catelan and Horace Smith, *Pulsating Stars* (Weinheim, Germany: Wiley-VCH, 2015), 68.

²¹¹ Kristine Spekkens, “How Can a Star Burn with No Oxygen (Beginner),” *Cornell University*, <http://curious.astro.cornell.edu/physics/84-the-universe/stars-and-star-clusters/nuclear-burning/403-how-can-a-star-burn-with-no-oxygen-beginner>.

“shall that fire which lies hidden in the world blaze forth and burn; and while destroying all matter, shall also be extinguished along with it, and have no further existence” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.1).²¹² John Turner relates that Gnostic conjectures about Seth, the son of Adam, resulted in Gnostic “speculations about Seth as a savior or transmitter of secret knowledge, a notion based on a tradition that Seth had erected two pillars, one of stone to survive the flood, the other of brick to survive the conflagration.”²¹³ Concerning the prevalent Greco-Roman view that the world would be destroyed by a conflagration, Charles Bigg relates that the Valentinians “may have borrowed it from the Stoics; but it was opposed by Irenaeus ([*Haer.*] 1.7.1), whose own belief was that the world would be transformed by fire, but not destroyed ([*Haer.*] 5.36.1).”²¹⁴ He also relates that “it is possible that the Valentinians found a scriptural handle for their [conflagration destruction of the world] tenet in this passage of 2 Pet [3:7].”²¹⁵

As noted, certain modern expositors interpret 2 Pet 3:7, 10–13 as teaching that the physical universe (all matter) will be burned up (annihilated) at either Armageddon or Rev 20:11 to make possible the creation of the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 21:1). However, modern fire scholarship has proven, through the work of Lavoisier, that fire does not destroy (annihilate) matter, but only changes its molecular structure.

Antoine Lavoisier (1743–1794) is considered the father of modern chemistry. Lavoisier is noted for his experiment in which he placed a diamond inside a sealed glass container and, using a magnifying glass, focused a beam of the sun’s hot rays onto the diamond while rotating the

²¹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.7.1 (*ANF* 1.325).

²¹³ John D. Turner, “Genres of Gnostic Literature and the ‘Classical Gnostic’ School of Thought,” in *The Gnostic World*, eds. Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen, and Jay Johnston (London: Routledge, 2019), 144.

²¹⁴ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 215.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 295.

container so it would not melt and witnessed, along with his colleagues, the diamond burn and disappear. Afterward, he saw that “the weight of the glass container that held the diamond did not change.”²¹⁶ When the diamond burned, Lavoisier concluded that its original composition combined with oxygen in the sealed glass container to form carbon dioxide with the result that the weight of the new composition (molecular structure) was the same as before.

Thus, Lavoisier proved that fire does not destroy (annihilate) matter rendering it nonexistent, but rather fire changes the molecular structure of matter and has the same weight afterward. Jose Torero explains the transformation of matter caused by burning: “Combustion is a process by which fuel and oxidizer react to produce a different set of chemical products.”²¹⁷ Spekker explains with an illustration: “When a candle burns, the atoms themselves remain unchanged: just the molecules are affected.”²¹⁸ In other words, fire does not change the atomic structure of matter, just the molecular structure of matter (e.g., into ashes, carbon dioxide); the same matter still exists after burning but exists in a different molecular state.

Therefore, modern fire scholarship has proven that oxygen-consuming fire does not destroy (annihilate) matter into nonexistence. Accordingly, the interpretation of the fire in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 as meaning the physical universe (all matter) will be burned up (annihilated) at Armageddon or at Rev 20:11 to make possible the creation of the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 21:1) is, scientifically speaking, a *non sequitur*.

²¹⁶ Robert E. Krebs, *The History and Use of Our Earth's Chemical Elements: A Reference Guide* (London; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 149.

²¹⁷ Jose L. Torero, “An Introduction to Combustion in Organic Materials,” in *Fire Phenomena and the Earth System: An Interdisciplinary Guide to Fire Science*, ed. Claire M. Belcher (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 21.

²¹⁸ Spekkens, “How Can a Star Burn with No Oxygen (Beginner).”

Modern fire scholarship has prompted a new interpretation of 2 Pet 3:7, 10–13, one that would cause the fire in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 to relate to Rev 20:11 and 21:1; namely, God will introduce a new unnatural type of fire. A new unnatural (no oxygen required) fire would enable God to burn up the stars and planets. However, historically, for this physical world, God has used fire according to the natural order He created (cf. Gen 19:24–25, 28; Exod 19:18), natural oxygen-consuming fire. As noted in scriptural fire imagery, fire pertaining to this physical world is limited to the earth (earth’s surface and earth’s atmosphere). Therefore, it seems apparent that God will use natural oxygen-consuming fire when He brings judgment on the present heavens by fire (2 Pet 3:7a), the present earth by fire (2 Pet 3:7b), and on the ungodly (2 Pet 3:7c).

The Judgment and Destruction of the Ungodly (2 Peter 3:7c)

⁷ “οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.” (2 Pet 3:7).²¹⁹

⁷ “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7 NIV).

The apostle names three events in 2 Pet 3:7 that are associated with the coming “day of judgment,” the third, addressed in this section, being the “judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (3:7c NIV). Peter says, “The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept [τηρέω] for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7 NIV). The word translated *kept* (τηρέω, *keep, hold in reserve, hold in custody*²²⁰) is the same word used in 2 Pet 2:4 for the fallen angels. Similarly, as God is keeping the fallen angels in custody, so is He

²¹⁹ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3:7.

²²⁰ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, τηρέω, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.379.

keeping the present heavens and earth reserved for fire in custody until “the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7c NIV). This will happen at Christ’s return on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16; 19:11–21; cf. Mal 4:1–3).

Malachi spoke of Armageddon as being a time, in the Lord’s righteous judgment, that the ungodly “will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze. . . . You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing” (4:1, 3). Craig Blaising comments on 4:1:

Malachi here elaborated on the day of the Lord. As in 3:2–3, the judgment on that day is described as a judgment of fire. . . . This passage emphasizes the destruction of the wicked (cf. Isa. 66:15; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8). . . . This does not mean annihilation in the sense of cessation of being (the wicked will be resurrected, Dan. 12:2), but rather the complete exclusion of the wicked from God’s kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:46).²²¹

Isaiah also foretold about the day of the Lord at Armageddon, “The LORD will come in fire . . . to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For the LORD will execute judgment by fire . . . and those slain by the Lord will be many” (66:15–16).

Therefore, when Christ returns at Armageddon, He will deluge the heavens (earth’s atmosphere, the first heaven, Gen 1:8) and earth’s surface with fire to cleanse and restore the planet for the future millennium (cf. Isa 35:7; 2 Pet 3:10–12). The Armageddon conflagration will also bring about the “judgment and destruction of the ungodly” (2 Pet 3:7 NIV; cf. Rev 19:21). However, in the Lord’s kindness and patience, Christ is delaying His return on the day of the Lord at Armageddon.

²²¹ Craig A. Blaising, *Malachi*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1586–87.

God’s Perspective of Time and Why the Day of the Lord Is Delayed (2 Peter 3:8–9)

⁸ “Ἐν δὲ τοῦτο μὴ λανθανέτω ὑμᾶς, ἀγαπητοί, ὅτι μία ἡμέρα παρὰ κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία. ⁹ οὐ βραδύνει κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὡς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι.” (2 Pet 3:8–9).²²²

⁸ “But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:8–9).

In 2 Pet 3:8, the apostle shifts his focus from the mockers who will scoff at Christ’s return to the “beloved” (3:8), the church. In the first century, even some believers began to question the scriptural promises concerning Christ’s return. Peter needed to address these believers doubting of God’s word and did so by exhorting them in 3:8–9. Schreiner explains, “Peter exhorted the beloved believers not to forget a crucial truth about God, a truth they were liable to forget since they were under pressure from the [false] teachers, who quite likely argued that too much time had elapsed for the promise of Christ’s return to be credible.”²²³

Accordingly, Peter reminds the beloved in 3:8 about God’s perspective of time and why the day of the Lord is delayed by alluding to Ps 90:4, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or *as* a watch in the night.” Ps 90 contrasts the eternity of God (“from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” v. 2) with the brevity of human life spans (“the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years” v. 10) (cf. *2 Apoc.*

²²² Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3: 8–9.

²²³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379.

Baruch 48:12–13). Bigg states: “What St. Peter wishes is to contrast the eternity of God with the impatience of human expectations.”²²⁴ Some first-century Christians had become impatient with the delay of Christ’s return. They had forgotten about God’s perspective of time in Ps 90:4, which prodded Peter to remind them: “But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” (3:8). In other words, although the delay of Christ’s return may seem a long time to humans, the time is brief to the eternal God. Schreiner adds: “The passing of a thousand years, after all, is like the passing of a single day to him.”²²⁵

God’s perspective on time indicated in Ps 90:4 and 2 Pet 3:8 (“with the Lord one day is like a thousand years”) has elicited two main interpretations: 1) the length of one day of the creation days. However, concerning this view, when the relationship between God and man was in harmony, the length of a creation day seems to have been not a thousand-year day but a 24-hour day (“there was evening and there was morning, one day” Gen 1:5); and 2) to explain the length of God’s days in this evil age as demonstrated by Adam’s longevity after his sin (cf. Gen 5:5; *Jub.* 4:29–30; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.23.2; 5.28.3), that is, thousand-year days.

Concerning Adam’s sin and death, expositors have made much about the fact that Adam died spiritually on the day he sinned (Gen 3:6; cf. 2:17), which is true. However, spiritual death is a New Testament concept (e.g., Rom 7:9; Eph 2:1). Throughout the remainder of Scripture, death is physical, for “it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment” (Heb 9:27). Adam died physically *once* at age 930 years (Gen 5:5). Since God did not lie to Adam when He told him regarding the tree of good and evil that “in the day that you eat from it you will surely

²²⁴ Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 295.

²²⁵ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 379.

die” (Gen 2:17; cf. Tit 1:2), and since Adam died physically at age 930 years, suggests that God’s day in this present evil age is, not 24-hour days but, “like a thousand years” (2 Pet 3:8).

However, Schreiner argues against this thousand-year day for God in this evil age view because it results in the consequent interpretation “that human history would last six days (i.e., six thousand years), which would culminate in the millennium (the last thousand years—cf. *Barn.* 15:4; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.28.3).”²²⁶ He bases his argument “on two grounds. First, the text does not say that one day with the Lord is a thousand years. It says one day with the Lord is *like* a thousand years.”²²⁷ Understood, in 2 Pet 3:8, the thousand years may not be exact. Still, the text also does not say that one day with the Lord is *like* 900 years or *like* 1,100 years, but “is *like* a thousand years.” Second, Schreiner argues that “the proposed interpretation does not make sense in context. Peter would then have been saying that the day of judgment lasts one thousand years.”²²⁸ Concerning his latter statement, this is a false presupposition. The last ‘one thousand years,’ or the seventh day with the Lord, is *not* ‘the day of judgment,’ but is ‘the day of rest’ (Heb 4:9). Immediately before this *day of rest* begins, the Lord at Armageddon will lock two of the ungodly in the lake of fire (Rev 19:20) and the other ungodly in the abyss (Rev 20:3, 5), and He and God’s people will enjoy an earthly millennium of “Sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb 4:9). Then, it will be said, “The whole earth is at rest *and* is quiet; they break forth into shouts of joy” (Isa 14:7). Assuredly, if God works six one-thousand-year days (or whatever length is His days in this evil age), He will rest on the seventh one-thousand-year day or equivalent to one of His previous six days (cf. Exod 20:11; 31:15). Green comments on 2 Pet 3:8, “This verse, of course, had a great

²²⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

influence on second-century chiliasm, the view that there would be a thousand years of rule by the saints in an earthly Jerusalem when the Day of the Lord dawned at the *παρουσία*.²²⁹

Nevertheless, mockers will scoff at scriptural promises about Christ's return mainly because of the long delay since His ascension ("Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet 3:4). However, the delay in Christ's return should not be misunderstood, as Schreiner rightly explains: "The Son will come as promised, but the apparent slowness should not be misunderstood."²³⁰ Peter adds: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). Therefore, the reason for the delay in Christ's return is to give humanity time to repent and be saved (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4). Yet, even though mockers will scoff at biblical teaching about Christ's return, God's people are called to live godly while awaiting His return (2 Pet 3:14–15).

Christ's Call to Godly Living while Awaiting His Return (2 Peter 3:14–15)

¹⁴ “Διό, ἀγαπητοί, ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμόμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ, ¹⁵ καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἠγεῖσθε, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δοθεῖσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν” (2 Pet 3:14–15).²³¹

¹⁴ “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you” (2 Pet 3:14–16).

²²⁹ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 158.

²³⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

²³¹ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3: 14–16.

Since Peter begins 3:14 with *διό* (*therefore*), he wants his readers to remember the truths he addressed, especially those in chapter 3 which concern events associated with Christ's return ("since you look for these things," 3:14). Consequently, given Christ's sure return, Peter encourages the Lord's people to live godly lives while awaiting His return so that when Christ appears believers will "be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" (3:14).

In 3:15, the apostle revisited first-century believers' concerns about the slowness of Christ's coming. The mockers had seized on their concern ("Where is the promise of His coming" 3:4). Peter addressed this concern in 3:8 by reminding his beloved brethren from Ps 90:4 that God's perspective on time is different from that of humans. He had related to them that God is patient, "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (3:9). Therefore, in 3:15, Peter reminds believers to "regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation." God is patient, wanting all to come to salvation in Jesus. Accordingly, He allows people time to repent and turn in faith to Jesus Christ and be saved. Therefore, Peter encourages believers to "regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation" (3:15), as Paul wrote, both their salvation (cf. Phil 2:12–13) and the salvation of those who are spiritually lost (cf. Rom 10:9–13; 1 Tim 2:4).

In this chapter, the focus has been on determining from Scripture the author's likely intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by performing a contextual analysis of the passage. This analysis, comprising nine sections, has involved researching intertextually the immediate context of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in 3:1–9 and 3:14–15. Having ascertained from the contextual analysis insight into the author's likely intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13, the next chapter will focus on determining how others have interpreted 2 Pet 3:10–13 by researching contemporary views on the occasion and duration of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Chapter Summary

Scripture interprets Scripture. Therefore, to accurately interpret 2 Pet 3:10–13, it is essential to research its immediate and intertextual context, which may shed interpretive light. Consequently, this chapter has presented a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that has involved researching intertextually the immediate context of this passage in 3:1–9 and 3:14–15, which consisted of nine sections.

In section one, remember the words of the holy prophets and the Lord (3:1–2), Peter reminds his beloved brethren to “remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets” (3:2; cf. Acts 3:21). Peter’s appeal to his beloved brethren to remember Old Testament prophecies demonstrates the significance of these revelations for accurately interpreting the day of the Lord at Armageddon in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, and the telescoping prophecy over a thousand years distant that concerns the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth in 3:13.

In section two, mockers of Christ’s return (3:3–4), Peter relates that mockers in the last days will scoff at biblical teaching about Christ’s return for salvation and judgment. Even though the mockers will scoff at Christ’s coming, the return of Christ will indeed happen because God is faithful to fulfill His word.

In section three, rebutting mockers based on God’s intervention at creation (3:5), the apostle rebuts the mocker’s claim that the world continues as normal (3:4). In 3:5, Peter relates the first time when all did not continue as normal was when God intervened supernaturally at Creation and spoke the universe into existence. Also, in 3:5, the apostle remarks that water was elemental to the earth’s creation. At the beginning of creation, water was over the surface of the earth (Gen 1:2). On the second day, God created the firmament, with waters below and above it. Accordingly, this section addressed God’s intervention at creation in two subsections: 1) The

Firmament and the Long History of a Water Canopy Interpretation; and 2) The Evidence for a Mild Antediluvian Climate: What Happened?

In section four, rebutting mockers based on God destroying the cosmos at the Flood (3:6), the apostle presents his second rebuttal of the basis for the mockers' denial of Christ's return; specifically, their claim that all continues as normal (3:4). In 3:6, the apostle reminds the mockers that life did not continue as normal in Noah's day. Peter says, "The world [κόσμος] at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water" (3:6). Thus, Peter notes two distinct worlds, the pre-Flood created world (3:5) and the post-Flood destroyed world that now exists (3:6). Regarding the κόσμος (*cosmos*), the New Testament conveys two meanings: the *universe* and *humanity*, with κόσμος having both meanings in 2 Pet 3:6. However, the portion of the universe that was destroyed at the Flood is stated in Gen 6:13, "the earth." Accordingly, 2 Pet 3:6–7, 10–12 solely concern the κόσμος (*cosmos*) that relates to *humanity* and *the earth* (Gen 6:13) and have nothing to do with the celestial bodies of the planets, moons, and stars.

In section five, the apostle relates the first event associated with the coming day of judgment, the present heavens are reserved for fire (3:7a). After the Lord at Armageddon cleanses the heavens (earth's atmosphere) by fire, this will result in a more improved climate for the future millennium.

In section six, the apostle relates the second event associated with the coming day of judgment, the present earth is reserved for fire (3:7b). Accordingly, this section addressed: 1) scriptural imagery of the present Earth and fire; and 2) ancient theories about fire and modern fire scholarship.

In section seven, the apostle relates the third event associated with the coming day of judgment, the judgment and destruction of the ungodly (3:7c). This will happen at Christ's return on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16; 19:11–21; cf. Mal 4:1–3).

In section eight, God's perspective of time and why the day of the Lord is delayed (3:8–9), Peter shifts his focus from the mockers to the beloved, the church. Even some first-century believers had begun to question the scriptural promises concerning Christ's return. Peter reminds them, by alluding to Ps 90:4, that “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years” (3:8). Thus, the delay in Christ's return may seem long for humans, but not for the eternal God. Additionally, Peter explains the reason for the delay of Christ's return is because God does not wish “for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (3:9; cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4).

In section nine, Christ's call to godly living while awaiting His return (3:14–15), Peter encourages the Lord's people to live godly lives while awaiting Christ's coming so that when He appears believers will “be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (3:14). In 3:15, the apostle revisited first-century believers concerns about the slowness of Christ's return. Consequently, Peter reminds them that God allows people time to repent and turn in faith to Jesus Christ and be saved. Thus, Peter encourages believers to “regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation” (3:15), as Paul wrote, both their salvation (cf. Phil 2:12–13) and the salvation of those who are spiritually lost (cf. Rom 10:9–13; 1 Tim 2:4).

In this chapter, the focus has been on determining from Scripture the author's likely intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by performing a contextual analysis of the passage. This analysis has involved researching intertextually the immediate context of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in 3:1–9 and 3:14–15. Having ascertained from the contextual analysis insight into the author's likely intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13, the next chapter will focus on determining how others have

interpreted 2 Pet 3:10–13 by researching contemporary views on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES
ON THE OCCASION AND DURATION FOR 2 PETER 3:10–13

Contemporary perspectives on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13 asserted by amillenarians and some modern dispensational premillenarians are dissimilar. These interpretive differences are, of course, influenced by overarching eschatological beliefs. Therefore, this chapter will research contemporary perspectives on the occasion and duration of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in two sections: 1) Amillennial *Armageddon* Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13; and 2) Modern Dispensational Premillennial *Long Day of the Lord* Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13.

Amillennial *Armageddon* Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13

The amillennial view claims that the millennium is presently being realized and that 2 Pet 3:10–13 is at Christ’s second advent and occurs at Armageddon. Kim Riddlebarger explains:

The second advent of Jesus Christ is central to New Testament eschatology because the Lord’s return marks the final consummation of redemptive history and the dawn of the eternal state . . . when the old order of things finally passes away (Rev 21:4). This present evil age will pass away in the light of the glories of the age to come when Christ makes all things new and the temporal gives way to the eternal. When Jesus Christ returns on the last day, God will raise the dead, judge the world, and renew the cosmos. . . . [Will occur] when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven—the day of *apokalypsis*, which is also his parousia. . . . This cosmic renewal will occur when Christ returns, making this renewal a concomitant event with both the resurrection and the judgment (2 Pet 3:3–15). Peter wrote, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (v. 10).²³²

²³² Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 160, 163, 166.

As Riddlebarger relates, the amillennial expectation for the second advent is “the day of *apokalypsis*, which is also his [Christ’s] parousia.”²³³ *Apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις) refers to *revelation*,²³⁴ as in “the revelation [ἀποκάλυψις] of Jesus Christ” (1:1 ESV). However, *apokalypsis* is also a term often associated with Armageddon,²³⁵ which is the sense in which Riddlebarger uses the term in this context, as he explains:

In Revelation 16:13–16, we read of how the kings of the whole earth are gathered for battle at Armageddon “on the great day of God Almighty” (v. 14). This is the day, John said, when Jesus returns like a thief in judgment (v. 15). Therefore, when we read in Revelation 19:19, “Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army [Armageddon],” it is clear who these people are. These are those “who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image” (Rev. 19:20), i.e., the nations. . . . What is depicted in Revelation 16 and 19 is judgment day. This is when Jesus Christ returns in wrath to judge the nations, raise the dead, and make all things new.²³⁶

Accordingly, Riddlebarger argues the amillennial one-phase return of Christ at Armageddon perspective, claiming this is “when Jesus Christ returns in wrath to judge the nations, raise the dead, and make all things new.”²³⁷ Therefore, Riddlebarger’s references to “cosmic renewal . . . when Christ returns . . . (2 Pet 3:3–15),”²³⁸ and to “the day of the Lord” in 2 Pet 3:10, convey the amillennial perspective that the occasion of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is at Armageddon.²³⁹

²³³ Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 163.

²³⁴ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, ἀποκάλυψις, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.67.

²³⁵ Merriam-Webster, “Apocalypse,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apocalypse>.

²³⁶ Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 231.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

²³⁹ Scripture texts associated with Armageddon include 2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 16:14–16; 19:11–20:3.

However, it should be noted that amillennialists assert different occasions for the fulfillment of 2 Pet 3:10–13, saying that it will occur at Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3),²⁴⁰ at the Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–10),²⁴¹ and the final judgment (Rev 20:11–15).²⁴² This is because amillennialists claim that these events happen at Christ’s second advent on “the last day” (John 6:39–40, 44). William Evans relates that “the last day” in John 6:39–40, 44, “does not mean a day of twenty-four hours, but a period of time.”²⁴³ A. Plummer comments on *the last day*: “This phrase is peculiar to S. John, and occurs seven times in this Gospel. Elsewhere it is called ‘the Day of the Lord.’”²⁴⁴ Another interpretation of *the last day* held by dispensational premillennialists is that it refers to the “day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) at Christ’s first-phase return in the sky for the resurrection and rapture of the church long before Armageddon, and not to “the day of the Lord” (2 Pet 3:10) at Armageddon.

Nevertheless, amillennialists claim that multiple eschatological events will occur at Christ’s advent at Armageddon, including the battle of Armageddon and the Gog and Magog war. G. K. Beale and David Campbell equate the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14; 19:11–20:3) that occurs *before* the future millennium (cf. Rev 20:4–6) and the Gog and Magog war that occurs *after* the future millennium (cf. Rev 20:7–9), as being the *same* war: “Rev 16:14; 19:19; and 20:8 all have an article before the word ‘war,’ which carries the meaning of *the* war rather

²⁴⁰ See Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 163.

²⁴¹ See G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 325.

²⁴² See Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 217.

²⁴³ William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 249.

²⁴⁴ A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St John, with Maps, Notes and Introduction*, in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, ed. J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 151.

than simply *a* war. *The* war is the same great final battle between the Lamb and the forces of evil portrayed in these parallel verses.”²⁴⁵

However, it should be noted that the characters in these two wars are different. At the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 16; 19:11-20:3), Christ battles with the beast (the antichrist), the false prophet, and their ungodly human forces. Afterward, the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (cf. Rev 19:19–20). After the future millennium, at the Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–9; Ezek 38–39:24), Christ battles Satan and his ungodly forces commanded by Gog (cf. Rev 20:7–9; Ezek 38:16). There is no mention of the beast and the false prophet participating in the Gog and Magog war because they have been in the lake of fire for the previous thousand years (cf. Rev 19:20).

Another scriptural example that the *pre*-millennium battle of Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3) and the *post*-millennium Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–9; Ezek 38–39:24) are *not* the same war is found in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah prophesies about the *pre*-millennium world-judgment on the day of the Lord at the battle of Armageddon:

The LORD will roar from on high He will shout like those who tread *the grapes* [cf. Rev 19:15], against all the inhabitants of the earth. A clamor has come to the end of the earth, because the LORD has a controversy with the nations. He is entering into judgment with all flesh Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground. (Jer 25:30–31, 33)²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 325.

²⁴⁶ J. P. Lange and C. W. Eduard Nägelsbach comment on Jer 25:30–33, “While in the previous section a long series of nations was adduced by name as the object of judgments, . . . ended indefinitely (ver. 26), in what follows . . . the limits of the territory to be reached by the judgment are strictly defined in the words all the inhabitants of the earth (ver. 30), all flesh (ver. 31), from one end, *etc.* (ver. 33). From this it follows that the prophet here beholds the judicial act of God in its last and highest stage. . . . He now describes the world-judgment, *i.e.* the judgment of all nations of the earth absolutely. . . . Vers. 32, 33. Thus saith Jehovah Zebaoth . . . face of the earth. . . . Described as proceeding from the ends of the earth, from nation to nation, a destructive tempest (ver. 32), especially as a universal dying, in consequence of which the earth will be full of unburied corpses (ver. 33),” quoted in J. P. Lange and C. W. Eduard Nägelsbach, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Theologically and Homiletically Expounded*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Samuel R. Asbury, in vol. 12 of *The Old Testament: Containing Jeremiah and Lamentations* (New York: 40 Bible House, 1871), 236, repr. Logos Bible Software.

Note, at the *pre*-millennium battle of Armageddon, that Jeremiah foretells that those slain are *not buried* (25:33). However, after the *post*-millennium Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–9; Ezek 38–39:24), Gog’s slain *are buried* (“For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them [Gog’s ungodly army] in order to cleanse the land. Even all the people of the land will bury them” Ezek 39:12–13). Thus, Scripture proves that the *pre*-millennium battle of Armageddon (slain are *not buried*) and the *post*-millennium Gog and Magog war (slain are *buried*) are *not* the same war. Accordingly, Scripture disproves the amillennialist argument that the eschatological timeline goes directly on one day, interpreted as the *last day*, from Armageddon (along with intervening events) to the new creation in Rev 21:1. Scripture teaches that there are at least a thousand years (Rev 20:4–6) between the battle of Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3) and the Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–9; Ezek 38–39). Plus, God’s people will spend another seven months burying Gog’s dead troops (Ezek 39:12) and seven years burning Gog’s weapons (Ezek 39:9), totaling at least 1,007 years.

Notably, following the *post*-millennium Gog and Magog war, there is hardly any reason for God’s people to spend seven months burying Gog’s troops “in order to cleanse the land” (Ezek 39:12)²⁴⁷ and seven years burning Gog’s weapons (Ezek 39:9) if the eschatological timeline goes directly from that point to the dissolution of the universe in Rev 20:11 and the eternal state new creation in Rev 21:1. Paul spoke of “the ages to come” (Eph 2:7). Plausibly,

²⁴⁷ Seven months to bury Gog’s troops (Ezek 39:12) indicates a vast number of troops, perhaps more than those born during the millennium who join Gog. Dieter Sänger poses, “Gog and Magog are proper names for the peoples (appearing in apposition to τὰ ἔθνη) whom Satan deceives after the thousand-year kingdom of peace (20:1–6). . . . On the basis of the special emphasis on Satan in [Rev 20] vv. 2f. and 7, it is very possible that “the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog” (v. 8), are thought of as . . . the dead [resurrected ungodly, Rev 20:5], the troops of the world below,” in Dieter Sänger, Γόγ, *EDNT*¹, 267. John wrote, “Fire came down from heaven and devoured them” (Rev 20:9). The Psalmist foretells: “The wicked will return to Sheol, *even* all the nations who forget God” (9:17).

since the Lord will restore the earth following the Armageddon conflagration to its Edenic paradisiacal state (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35), it is conceivable that there may be an age(s) for hundreds or thousands of years after the future millennium until “the earth, and the heavens . . . wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed” (Pss 102:25–26).

Still, regarding the pre-millennium battle of Armageddon and the post-millennium Gog and Magog war, Beatrice Neall summarizes the amillennial interpretation stating that these two wars are “one event. . . . The battle culminates in the second coming of Christ, . . . which marks the end of the millennial Christian era. Thus, there is no future millennium.”²⁴⁸

Regarding the final judgment (Rev 20:11–15), Anthony Hoekema answers his question: “When will the final judgment take place? . . . Biblical passages suggest the judgment will take place at the time of Christ’s Second Coming.”²⁴⁹ Thus, amillennialists maintain that the great white throne final judgment (Rev 20:11–15) is also concomitant with Armageddon.

Hence, amillennialists claim that multiple eschatological events will happen at Christ’s advent on the day of the Lord at Armageddon; namely, the resurrection of the good and the evil, the rapture of the church, the battle of Armageddon, the Gog and Magog war, the final judgment, the burning of the universe for either annihilation and replacement or restoration, and the creation of the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Thus, the amillennial perspective for the occasion and duration of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is that it will occur at Armageddon on “the last day” (John 6:39–40). On the other hand, the occasion and duration of 2 Pet 3:10–13 are interpreted differently in modern dispensational premillennialism.

²⁴⁸ Beatrice S. Neall, “Amillennialism Reconsidered,” *AUSS* 43 (2005): 186.

²⁴⁹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 217.

**Modern Dispensational Premillennial *Long Day of the Lord* Occasion and Duration
for 2 Peter 3:10–13**

The modern dispensational premillennial perspective on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13, and the ‘day of the Lord’ it describes, is explained by Kenneth Gangel:

The day of the Lord describes end-time events that begin after the Rapture [held to occur at Christ’s first-phase return seven years before Armageddon] and culminate with the commencement of eternity. . . . In the catastrophic conflagration at the end of the Millennium, the heavens (the earth’s atmosphere and the starry sky, not God’s abode) will disappear with a roar, which in some way will involve fire (2 Pet 3:7, 12). The elements (*stoicheia*, either stars or material elements with which the universe is made) will be destroyed by fire (and will melt, v. 12), and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (*eurēthēsetai*). . . . That event concludes “the day of the Lord” (v. 10) and commences “the day of God.” The old cosmic system will then give way to a new heaven and a new earth [the re-creation; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1].”²⁵⁰

Accordingly, the modern dispensational premillennial interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is that “the day of the Lord” (3:10) will “begin after the Rapture and culminate with the commencement of eternity,”²⁵¹ after which there will be a new heaven and a new earth, the re-creation (3:13).

Notably, this interpretation makes the duration of “the day of the Lord” in 2 Pet 3:10 as being more than one thousand years long. Craig Blaising expounds on this view: “This view that the day of the Lord extends from the rapture to the re-creation, what might be called the *long* day of the Lord, came to dominate dispensational premillennial thinking.”²⁵² However, this *long* day of the Lord interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is biblically problematic for three reasons:

- 1) Second Pet 3:12 speaks of “the day of God.” The term ‘day of God (θεοῦ)’ is only found twice in the New Testament, in 2 Pet 3:12 and Rev 16:14, in reference, not to

²⁵⁰ Kenneth O. Gangel, *2 Peter*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 876–7.

²⁵¹ Gangel, *2 Peter*, 876.

²⁵² Craig A. Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169, no. 673 (Jan–Mar 2012): 8.

the rapture of the church, but to Armageddon. In the Old Testament, the phrase ‘day of Yahweh (יהוה)’ (Isa 13:6, 9) is in reference to Babylon and Armageddon. In Joel 2:11, 31, the phrase ‘day of Yahweh (יהוה)’ is in reference to Armageddon;

2) Second Pet 3:10–12 contains the imagery of *fire, burning, and intense heat*.

Dispensational premillennialists understand Scripture to teach that *fire, burning, and intense heat* occur at Armageddon, not at the rapture. Dispensational premillennialists interpret Scripture to teach a two-phase return of Christ, the first phase being *for* the church at the rapture, and the second phase, seven years later, being *with* the church at Armageddon cf. Zech 14:2–5; Rev 19:11–20:3) when Christ will execute judgment by *fire* (cf. Isa 66:15–16). Therefore, the references to *fire, burning, and intense heat* in 2 Pet 3:10–12 suggest not the rapture but the day of the Lord at Armageddon;

3) Second Pet 3:10 describes the day of the Lord as coming unexpectedly “like a thief,” language not found in the post-millennium account of Rev 20:7–10.

Therefore, the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord occasion and duration view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, an interpretation that the duration of “the day of the Lord” in 2 Pet 3:10 is more than one thousand years long, needs to be compared to historical and eschatological days of the Lord to determine if there is a biblical basis for this perspective. Consequently, this section will present in three subsections: 1) Historical Days of the Lord (Yahweh) Occasions and Durations; 2) Eschatological Days of the Lord Occasions and Durations; and 3) Assessment of the Biblical Basis for the Modern Dispensational Premillennial *Long* Day of the Lord Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13.

Historical Days of the Lord (Yahweh) Occasions and Durations

Scripture teaches that *the day of the Lord* is when God intervenes in human history for judgment and salvation. Thomas Schreiner adds that the day of the Lord in the Old Testament is “when those who oppose God will be punished and those who love him will be delivered (Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5).”²⁵³

The Hebrew phrase *Yahweh* (יהוה) *day* (יום) or *the day of Yahweh*, rendered ‘the day of the Lord,’ appears fifteen times in the Old Testament. However, there are scriptural variants to the *day of the Lord* (*day of Yahweh*) phrase, such as: “day of vengeance” (Jer 46:10); “day of panic” (Isa 22:5); “the day” (Ezek 7:10); “the day of the wrath of the Lord” (Ezek 7:19); “day of their disaster” (Obad 13); “day of trouble” (Nah 1:7); and “day of distress” (Hab 3:16). Historical days of the Lord, in which these types of phrases may be observed, involved the Northern Kingdom, Israel (722 BCE); Nineveh, Assyria (612 BCE); Egypt (605 BCE); the Southern Kingdom, Judah, Jerusalem (587/6 BCE); Edom (551 BCE); and Babylon (539 BCE). Accordingly, this section will present the occasions and durations of these historical days of the Lord and will summarize and compare the results to the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

The Northern Kingdom, Israel (722 BCE)

Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria, warred against the northern kingdom for three years, placed the king of Israel, Hoshea, in prison, and carried Israel into exile in Assyria, ending the existence of Israel in 722 BCE (2 Kgs 17:3–6). Accordingly, the duration of this historical day of

²⁵³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 321.

the Lord on Israel could be described as the initial day of the attack or up to three years during which Shalmaneser warred against Israel.

Nineveh, Assyria (612 BCE)

Regarding Nineveh, Zephaniah prophesied: “He [the Lord] will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and He will make Nineveh a desolation” (2:13; cf. Nah 2:8). Kenneth Barker comments that “Nineveh actually fell in 612 BCE, not long after Zephaniah proclaimed these words.”²⁵⁴ History records that the attack on Nineveh began in 614 BCE by the Medes and Babylonians, who conquered the city two years later.²⁵⁵ Accordingly, the duration of this historical day of the Lord on Nineveh could be described as the initial day of the attack or up to two years during which the Medes and Babylonians warred against Nineveh.

Egypt (605 BCE)

History records that the Egyptians were defeated at Carchemish on the River Euphrates by the Babylonians in 605 BCE (cf. Jer 46:2).²⁵⁶ Accordingly, the duration of this historical day of the Lord on Egypt could be described as the initial day of the attack on the Egyptians at Carchemish, or for about one year during which Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, warred against Egypt.

²⁵⁴ Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, in *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 20, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and Kenneth A. Mathews (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 465.

²⁵⁵ John D. Hannah, *Zephaniah*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1531.

²⁵⁶ Hetty Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, in *TOTC 21*, ed. David G. Firth and Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Pres, 2013), 24.

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, Jerusalem (587/6 BCE)

Nebuchadnezzar and his army attacked Jerusalem on three occasions, taking captives to Babylon in 605 BCE, 597 BCE, and 587/6 BCE. Scholars have different opinions as to the starting and end dates of Nebuchadnezzar's final assault on Jerusalem, depending on which calendar is presumed to have been used by the Judeans. Jeremiah remarks, "When Jerusalem was captured in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the city *wall* was breached" (39:1–2). Calculating from the dates given by Jeremiah, scholars who work with ancient Israel's 'lower chronology' liturgical (or Babylonian) calendar in which the New Year begins in March/April (cf. Exod 12:2) date the siege beginning in January 587 and the fall of Jerusalem in July 586.²⁵⁷ On the other hand, scholars who work with ancient Israel's 'higher chronology' civil calendar in which the New Year begins in September/October date the siege beginning in January 588 and the fall of Jerusalem in July 587.²⁵⁸ The Jewish historian, Josephus, says this siege lasted eighteen months (*Ant.* 10.116).²⁵⁹ Accordingly, the duration of this historical day of the Lord on Judah and Jerusalem could be described as the initial day of the attack in 605 BCE or about nineteen years during which Nebuchadnezzar and his army on three occasions warred against Judah and Jerusalem (605–587/6 BCE).

²⁵⁷ Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 26.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.116.

Edom (551 BCE)

Due to limited historical sources, scholars have been uncertain about the precise dating for the end of Edom. However, Bradley Crowell says the discovery of the as-Sila' relief of Nabonidus, King of Babylon, provides "further clarity to the chronology of Nabonidus's Arabian campaign and the decline of Edom."²⁶⁰ He comments, "Nabonidus traveled south on the King's Highway from the region of Syria during his third year (553 BCE) and fourth (552 BCE) years. In his fifth year (551 BCE), he and his troops reached the mountainous terrain of Edom. . . . This attack [and end of Edom] can now be relatively securely dated to 551 BCE, the fifth year of Nabonidus."²⁶¹ Accordingly, the duration of this historical day of the Lord on Edom could be described as the initial day of the attack or for a few months during which Nabonidus and his troops warred against Edom.

Babylon (539 BCE)

History records that Babylon was conquered in 539 BCE by a coalition of Medes and Persians led by Cyrus II, also known as Cyrus the Great, King of Persia. Derek Kidner adds, "In 539, Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army in the field."²⁶² The surviving Babylonians then withdrew into the city behind the presumed safety of Babylon's walls. Consequently, remarks Herodotus, Cyrus divided his army into two companies. He stationed his first company, which consisted of his best fighters, near Babylon, with instructions that when the Euphrates River flowing under Babylon's walls was fordable, they were to enter the city under the walls (*Hist.*

²⁶⁰ Bradley L. Crowell, "Nabonidus, As-Sila', and the Beginning of the End of Edom," *BASOR* 348 (2007): 80.

²⁶¹ Crowell, "Nabonidus, As-Sila', and the Beginning of the End of Edom," 84–85.

²⁶² F. Derek Kidner, *Isaiah*, in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., eds. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 629.

1.191).²⁶³ Cyrus then withdrew upstream with the second company of his army and directed them to dig a channel running the river into a lake.²⁶⁴ When the river had sunk and become passable, the Persians entered underneath Babylon's walls and into the city through the riverbed.²⁶⁵ Thus, the Persians caught the Babylonians by surprise, unaware that the Persians had invaded and captured the city. Kidner notes that Cyrus conquered the Babylonian army in 539 BCE when "his forces entered Babylon without a fight."²⁶⁶ Accordingly, this historical day of the Lord on Babylon could be described as having a duration of only one day. Following is a summary of the historical days of the Lord durations compared to the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Summary and Comparison of Historical Days of the Lord Durations to the Dispensational Premillennial *Long* Day of the Lord for 2 Peter 3:10–13

Based on the six historical days of the Lord (Yahweh) that had durations ranging from one 24-hour day to perhaps nineteen years (Judah/Jerusalem), the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is problematic because it interprets the day as having a duration of more than one thousand years, which lacks historical biblical precedent.

It has also been argued that the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is comparable, not to historical days of the Lord durations or a human 24-hour day, but to one day with the Lord based on 2 Pet 3:8, "With the Lord, one day is like a thousand

²⁶³ Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, Vol. 1, trans. G. C. Macauley (London: MacMillan and Company, 1890), 191.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Kidner, *Isaiah*, 629.

years.”²⁶⁷ In the Old Testament, a day generally refers to a human 24-hour day (Gen 7:11); however, it may refer to daylight hours (Gen 29:7) or to a period of time (Dan 4:34). Likewise, in the New Testament, a day generally refers to a human 24-hour day (Matt 6:34), but it may refer to daylight hours (John 11:9) or to a period of time (Acts 7:45). J. Louw and E. Nida (L&N) explain that ἡμέρα [*day*] refers to “an indefinite unit of time (whether grammatically singular or plural).”²⁶⁸ However, in context, 2 Pet 3:8 addresses first-century Christian’s concerns as to why Christ’s return is delayed, which the mockers exacerbate: “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet 3:4). Peter responds by reminding believers that the eternal God measures time differently than humans with short life spans (2 Pet 3:8). Thus, 2 Pet 3:8 concerns how time passes for eternal God, not for humans. The six historical days of the Lord durations were measured in human days/months/years. Accordingly, 2 Pet 3:8 is being taken out of context to justify the *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 and is unconvincing.

Additionally, 2 Pet 3:10–12 describes *judgment*. Richard Mayhue, a dispensationalist, expresses concern with the *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that extends through the peaceful future millennium to immediately preceding eternity future because the day of the Lord in 2 Pet 3:10 describes judgment: “2 Peter 3:10 He [Peter] applies the term of judgment to God’s terminal wrath poured out on the earth. No other OT [Old Testament] or NT DOL [New Testament Day of the Lord] passage uses the term in a detailed reference to the event that immediately precedes eternity future.”²⁶⁹ Hence, Mayhue asks and responds to an important question:

²⁶⁷ See Craig A. Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18,” *BSac* 169 (2012): 401, “One should also note that Peter prepared the reader for an extended [*long*] day of the Lord by his previous reference to Psalm 90:4 (2 Pet. 3:8–9).”

²⁶⁸ J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, L&N, 2nd ed., Vol. 1 (Swindon, UK: United Bible Societies, 1996), 647.

²⁶⁹ Richard L. Mayhue, “The Bible’s Watchword: Day of the Lord,” *MSJ* 22 (2011): 74.

An important question is raised. Is the DOL [Day of the Lord] a lengthy period [*long* day] that includes the entire millennial period? Most dispensationalists insist that the extended period [*long* day of the Lord] concept is right. John Walvoord is used here merely to illustrate the point. “. . . The day of the Lord” is an extensive period which includes not only the tribulation and the judgments taking place at the second advent, but which includes also the entire millennial reign of Christ as a time period in which the Lord deals directly with human sin.”²⁷⁰ Other than the fact that DOL is used to describe a judgment which precedes the Millennium and is used to describe the postmillennial, pre-eternity judgment (Rev 20:7–10), there is minimal biblical evidence to warrant extending DOL into the Millennium. Because DOL is chiefly a time of judgment, the Millennium is not part of DOL.²⁷¹

Accordingly, Mayhue argues that the day of the Lord in 2 Pet 3:10, which “is chiefly a time of judgment,”²⁷² is not part of the future millennium: “The Millennium is not part of DOL [Day of the Lord].”²⁷³

Blaising, a progressive dispensationalist, also expresses concern with the judgment depicted by “the day of the Lord” (2 Pet 3:10; cf. 3:7) being consistent with the *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that extends at least a thousand years from the rapture through the peaceful millennium and the final judgment:

If the day of the Lord [2 Pet 3:10] includes the parousia, the resurrection, and final judgment, . . . then the day of the Lord must extend over at least one thousand years. However, this raises questions about its character since the day of the Lord is the day of judgment. How can the day of the Lord be a day of judgment if it is mostly the millennial reign of Christ? The millennium seems to eclipse the judgment and change the character of the day.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 273.

²⁷¹ Mayhue, “The Bible’s Watchword: Day of the Lord,” 74–75.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology, 5.

Blaising rightly questions “the day of the Lord” in 2 Pet 3:10 being associated with “the parousia [rapture].”²⁷⁵ Indeed, the imagery related to the day of the Lord in 2 Pet 3:10–12 is *fire* (v. 10 NIV), *intense heat* (v. 10), and *burning* (v. 12). These are judgment terms associated with Armageddon (cf. Isa 13:8–13; 66:15–16; 2 Pet 3:7), not salvation terms associated with the rapture. Blaising also notes that “the day of the Lord is the day of judgment,”²⁷⁶ which he recognizes is the antithesis of the character of the peaceful future millennium (cf. Zech 8:12; 9:10; Mic 4:3). Accordingly, he asks, “How can the day of the Lord be a day of judgment if it is mostly the millennial reign of Christ?”²⁷⁷ Of course, it cannot. Relatedly, Schreiner comments on the interpretation of the thousand years in 2 Pet 3:8 as being a day of judgment: “Peter would then have been saying that the day of judgment lasts one thousand years, which is a rather strange notion.”²⁷⁸ Evidently, Mayhue, Blaising, and Schreiner all have concerns about the biblical accuracy of the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Summarizing, the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, which extends from after the rapture to the commencement of eternity for a duration of more than one thousand years, has been found in this study of the historical days of the Lord occasions and durations to have three problems biblically: 1) The *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 lacks historical biblical precedent. The six historical days of the Lord had durations ranging from one 24-hour day to perhaps nineteen years (Judah/Jerusalem); 2) The *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 takes 2 Pet 3:8 out of context; and 3) The *long* day of the Lord

²⁷⁵ Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology, 5.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 380.

view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 extends through the future millennium, yet the imagery of 2 Pet 3:10–12 describes *judgment*, which is inconsistent with the peaceful future millennium.

Perhaps a study of the eschatological days of the Lord will provide a biblical basis for the *long day* of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, eschatological days of the Lord occasions and durations will be researched and compared to the dispensational premillennial *long day* of the Lord occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Eschatological Days of the Lord Occasions and Durations

There are two eschatological days of the Lord: 1) The day of the Lord for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17; 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2), and 2) the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 16:14–16, 19:11–20:3).²⁷⁹ Concerning the dispensational premillennial perspective for these two eschatological days of the Lord, Blaising explains that older dispensationalists, such as Cyrus Scofield, viewed the day of the Lord for the resurrection and rapture of the church “and ‘the day of the Lord [at Armageddon]’ as two different events, the former associated with the rapture and the latter involving Christ’s second coming and subsequent judgments extending through the millennium. This is the approach taken in *The Scofield Study Bible*.”²⁸⁰ However, he says, “this view was not accepted for long”²⁸¹ because the rapture is associated with “the day of the Lord” in 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Thess 2:2.²⁸² Consequently,

²⁷⁹ Amillennialists and historic premillennialists maintain that these two eschatological days of the Lord occur on the same day of the Lord, at Armageddon.

²⁸⁰ Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology, 6–7.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁸² Some translations (e.g., KJV and NKJV) render “the day of the Lord” in 2 Thess 2:2 as “the day of Christ.” However, most scholars are of the opinion that κύριος (*lord, master*) in 2 Thess 2:2 is better rendered ‘Lord’ and prefer the former translation.

the interpretation of the *day of the Lord* associated with the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17; 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) and the *day of the Lord* associated with Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 16:16, 19:11–20:3) as *two different events* was reinterpreted by modern dispensationalists as ‘one’ *long day* of the Lord. Blaising explains:

In 1958 J. Dwight Pentecost focused on the “unexpected” commencement of the day of the Lord in 1 Thess 5, relating it to the unexpected event of the rapture. He concluded, “The day of the Lord is that extended period of time beginning with God’s dealings with Israel after the rapture at the beginning of the tribulational period and extending through the second advent and the millennial age unto the creation of the new heavens and new earth after the millennium.” . . . This view that the day of the Lord extends from the rapture to the re-creation, what might be called the *long day* of the Lord, came to dominate dispensational premillennial thinking. It was adopted in the revised *Scofield Reference Bible*, . . . and it appeared in subsequent publications, such as *Major Bible Prophecies*, by John F. Walvoord.²⁸³

Accordingly, in modern dispensational premillennialism, the *day of the Lord* for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17; 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) and the *day of the Lord* at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 16:14–16, 19:11–20:3), were reinterpreted as ‘one’ *long (same)* day of the Lord. Thus, the question is: Is the day of the Lord for the resurrection and rapture of the church and the day of the Lord at Armageddon the *same* day of the Lord?²⁸⁴ This

²⁸³ Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology, 7–8. Also see, J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 230–31; *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 929 n.1, and 1372–73 n. 5; and John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 271.

²⁸⁴ The *long day* of the Lord view of modern dispensational premillennialism was challenged by Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation: A Biblical Examination of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 89–99. Gundry contested the starting point for the *long day* of the Lord placing it at Armageddon rather than at the resurrection and rapture of the church. Thus, he distinguished between the ‘day of the Lord’ for the resurrection and rapture of the church and the ‘day of the Lord’ at Armageddon as *two* distinct eschatological events. He remarks: “Most contemporary pretribulationists feel that the day of the Lord will begin immediately upon the rapture of the church and will thereby include the tribulation. In this they depart from older pretribulationists. . . . Comparison [Old Testament with Revelation] rather favors the view that the day will begin at the posttribulational advent [Armageddon] rather than earlier [rapture]. . . . Isaiah 66:15, 16 probably refers to the Lord’s coming in judgment at Armageddon (compare v. 15 with 2 Thess 1:7–9), i.e., at the close of the tribulation. . . . OT passages which mention the day of the Lord point to the crisis of Armageddon” (pp. 89–91). Unfortunately, Gundry affirms the *long day* of the Lord view, a period of more than one thousand years that extends through the future millennium to the re-creation (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1), only that it starts at Armageddon.

section will argue that these *two* days of the Lord are *not* the *same* day of the Lord as taught in amillennialism, historic premillennialism, and modern dispensational premillennialism, but are *distinct* eschatological days of the Lord. Therefore, in two subsections, the occasions and durations of these *two* days of the Lord will be researched: 1) Day of the Lord Occasion and Duration for the Resurrection and Rapture of the Church; and 2) Day of the Lord Occasion and Duration at Armageddon.

Day of the Lord Occasion and Duration for the Resurrection and Rapture of the Church

“The day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; cf. 1 Thess 4:16–17) for the resurrection and rapture of the church has scriptural variant names: “day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6); “day of Christ” (Phil 1:10; 2:16); “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8); and “day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5). In 1 Thess 4:13–5:10, Paul explains what will transpire on the day of the Lord when Christ returns in the clouds to resurrect and rapture the church. Although Jesus said, “of that day and hour no one knows, . . . but the Father alone” (Matt 24:36), scholars note scriptural teachings that point to the general occasion. Accordingly, this subsection will present the day of the Lord occasion perspectives and duration for the resurrection and rapture of the church in two subdivisions: 1) Day of the Lord Occasion Perspectives for the Resurrection and Rapture; and 2) Day of the Lord Duration for the Resurrection and Rapture.

Day of the Lord Occasion Perspectives for the Resurrection and Rapture

Concerning the occasion maintained for “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; cf. 1 Thess 4:16–17) for the resurrection and rapture of the church, this is influenced by the interpretation of 1 Thess 1:10 (“Wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead,

that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come”); and 5:9 (“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”).

Concerning 1 Thess 1:10 and 5:9, amillennialists and historic premillennialists interpret these passages as teaching that the church will be on earth but ‘protected’ during the wrath of the Lamb judgments of Revelation.²⁸⁵ Therefore, amillennialists and historic premillennialists maintain that the occasion for the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) to resurrect and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) will be at Armageddon²⁸⁶ (one-phase return of Christ). Amillennialists and historic premillennialists maintain that the rapture is to form a greeting party for the Lord.²⁸⁷ The amillennial and historic premillennial argument for this rapture ‘greeting party for the Lord’ view is based on an interpretation of ἀπάντησις, “an action *meeting, encountering*,”²⁸⁸ in 1 Thess 4:17 (“to [ἀπάντησις] meet the Lord in the air”). However, this interpretation seems at odds with Christ’s teaching in the parable of ten virgins, among whom five were prudent and five were foolish:

At midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to [ἀπάντησις] meet him.’ . . . The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*;

²⁸⁵ See Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind: Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 74, “Believers—God’s servants on earth protected from his wrath during the outpouring of the twenty-one judgments [of Revelation].”

²⁸⁶ See Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 231. However, amillennialists maintain that the resurrection of the good and evil, the rapture of the church, Armageddon, the Gog and Magog war, the final judgment, and the re-creation all occur on “the last day” (John 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48), so some amillennialists may use a different term than Armageddon.

²⁸⁷ The amillennial and historic premillennial rapture ‘greeting party for the Lord’ view is based on the ancient practice of people going outside a city to greet a visiting celebrity, then after the joyful meeting the people immediately returned with the celebrity to the city. Correspondingly, it is asserted that the church will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to form a greeting party for the Lord, then after the joyful meeting the church will immediately return with Christ to earth. See: Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 176. Also see: Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 146. Also see: Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind: Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 72.

²⁸⁸ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, ἀπάντησις, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.61.

go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.’ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. (Matt 25:6, 8–10)

For expositors who interpret Scripture to teach that there is only *one* resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17), this parable indicates that the heavenly bridegroom took the five prudent virgins to *heaven*, not back to earth, “and the door was shut” (Matt 25:10; cf. John 14:3).

Therefore, based on ἀπάντησις in the parallel parable of Matt 25:1–12 to 1 Thess 4:16–17, the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus, on the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) will take His resurrected and raptured bride, the church, not back to earth (as in ancient people greeting a celebrity outside a city and then immediately returning with the celebrity back to the city), but to *heaven*. Therefore, Scripture indicates that the church will be in *heaven* while the wrath of the Lamb’s judgments take place on earth. Yet, after being in heaven during the wrath judgments, the bride, the church (cf. Rev 19:14), will return *with* Christ, the Bridegroom, riding on white horses (Rev 19:14) to earth for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3; cf. Zech 14:5).

Nevertheless, the amillennial and historic premillennial view for the occasion for the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) to resurrect and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) is held to occur at the *end* of the wrath judgments at Armageddon (one-phase return of Christ), and that the rapture is only a swift ascension to form a ‘greeting party for the Lord’ and a speedy descension back to earth.

Conversely, dispensational premillennialists interpret Scripture to teach a *two-phase return* of Christ with the occasion for the Lord’s return on “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) to resurrect and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) being *before* the wrath judgments of Revelation, also referred to as the ‘tribulation’ (*first-phase return of Christ for the*

church), and Christ's return at the *end* of the wrath judgments at Armageddon (*second-phase return of Christ with the church*, cf. Rev 19:14).

On a side note, among ante-Nicene premillennialists there is also evidence for a *two-phase return* of Christ view. Victorinus placed the resurrection and rapture of the church *before* the wrath judgments of Revelation: "For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these shall be in the last time when the Church shall have gone out of the midst" (*Comm. Apoc.* 15.1).²⁸⁹ In his commentary on Rev 6:14, which comes *before* the wrath of the Lamb judgments begin in Rev 6:16–17, Victorinus commented: "For the heaven [sky] to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away" (*Comm. Apoc.* 6.14).²⁹⁰ Thus, Victorinus believed that the church would be taken *off* the earth *before* the wrath judgments begin, obviously by Christ at His *first-phase return* in the sky.

In a search of the ante-Nicene library, nothing was found that indicated a belief that the church would be left on earth but protected during the wrath judgments, further indicating that a *two-phase return* of Christ view existed in the ante-Nicene church. *After* the wrath judgments, which would be at Armageddon, which immediately precedes the inauguration of the future millennium, ante-Nicene premillennialists (e.g., Victorinus, Hippolytus, and Lactantius) believed that the church would return *with* Christ because they believed that the righteous saints, the church, would be on earth with Christ during the future millennium, as Lactantius comments: "This [millennial] kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years [cf. Rev 20:4–6]" (*Epit.*

²⁸⁹ Victorinus, *Comm. Apoc.* 15.1 (*ANF* 7.357).

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6:14 (*ANF* 7.351).

72).²⁹¹ Therefore, based on Victorinus' belief in a *first-phase return* of Christ *for* the church (*before* the wrath) and a *second-phase return* of Christ *with* the church (*after* the wrath at Armageddon), indicates that a *two-phase return* of Christ view existed in the ante-Nicene church.

Yet even though dispensational and ante-Nicene premillennialists both hold that the *first-phase return* of Christ to resurrect and rapture of the church will occur *before* the wrath judgments, the actual occasion is interpreted differently. The dispensational premillennial occasion perspective for “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) is *before* the seventieth week (Dan 9:27), a period referred to as *the tribulation* but also as the *wrath*. As demonstrated by Hippolytus, ante-Nicene premillennialists maintained that the church would endure the tribulation and great tribulation of persecution: “Now, concerning the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary [the Antichrist]” (*Antichr.* 60).²⁹² Hippolytus, as well as other ante-Nicene premillennialists, placed the church in heaven *after* “the time, times, and half a time” (Dan 12:7) tribulation and great tribulation of persecution that will begin in the *middle*²⁹³ of the seventieth week (Dan 9:27; 12:11) and *before* the wrath judgments of Revelation begin (cf. Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.* 2.43, 44; *Antichr.* 60; and Victorinus, *Comm. Apoc.* 6.14; Matt 24:29–31; Rev 6:14;

²⁹¹ Lactantius, *Epit.* 72 (*ANF* 7:254).

²⁹² Hippolytus, *Antichr.* 60 (*ANF* 5.217).

²⁹³ *Middle*, meaning “at neither extreme,” and *midpoint*, meaning “a point at or near the center,” may not always coincide, see Merriam-Webster, “Middle” and “Midpoint,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/middle>; and <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/midpoint>. Since the seventieth week (Dan 9:27) is held to be seven years, or 2,556 days (counting leap year), the first part of the week would be between days 1–852; the *middle* part of the week between days 853–1,704; and the last part of the week between days 1,705–2,556.

9:5, 10; Gen 7:24).²⁹⁴ Thus, ante-Nicene premillennialists distinguished between the tribulation of persecution and the wrath of the Lamb judgments of Revelation as *two* distinct eschatological events, not one, nor did they interpret Scripture to teach that the church must be raptured before the seventieth week (Dan 9:27) can begin. Hence, the tribulation period is defined differently in dispensational and ante-Nicene premillennialism. Nevertheless, both dispensational and ante-Nicene premillennialists agree that Scripture teaches that the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, will take the church to heaven *before* the wrath judgments but will return *with* Christ to earth at the *end* of the wrath judgments at Armageddon (*two-phase return of Christ*).²⁹⁵

Therefore, on the one hand, modern dispensational premillennialists distinguish between “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) and the day of the Lord at Armageddon as *two distinct* eschatological days of the Lord. However, on the other hand, the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord (rapture to the re-creation with a duration of more than one thousand years) view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 negates this distinction, demonstrating that the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is a *non sequitur*.

²⁹⁴ Concerning the church being resurrected and raptured *after* the tribulation and great tribulation of persecution and *before* the wrath judgments, Hippolytus commented: “By mentioning ‘a time, and times, and a half, when the dispersion is accomplished,’ he indicated the three years and a half of Antichrist. For by ‘a time’ he means a year, and by ‘times’ two years, and by a ‘half a time,’ half a year [3 ½ years]. These are the thousand two hundred and ninety [1,290] days of which Daniel prophesied [12:11]. . . . The words, ‘Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty [1,335] days,’ have also their value, as the Lord said: ‘But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved’” (*Comm. Dan.* 2.43, 44). As noted, Victorinus placed the resurrection and rapture of the church *before* the wrath judgments at Rev 6:14 (*Comm. Apoc.* 6.14).

²⁹⁵ Ante-Nicene premillennialists, as demonstrated by Victorinus, differ from dispensational premillennialists in that they maintain that Christ will return to resurrect and rapture the church at Rev 6:14 which says “the sky rolled back like a scroll” (NIrV), also translated “the sky was split apart [ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπεχωρίσθη, *the heaven/sky split open*] when it is rolled up” (NASB), prompting Victorinus to interpret this verse: “For the heaven [sky] to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away” (*Comm. Apoc.* 6.14). Many dispensational premillennialists maintain that Christ will return to resurrect and rapture the church at Rev 4:1.

Summarizing, the amillennial and historic premillennial view for the occasion for the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) to resurrect and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) is held to occur at the *end* of the wrath judgments at Armageddon (one-phase return of Christ). The dispensational premillennial occasion perspective for “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) is *before* the seventieth week (Dan 9:27), which is referred to as *the tribulation* but also as the *wrath*. The ante-Nicene premillennial occasion perspective for “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) is *after* “the time, times, and half a time” (Dan 12:7) tribulation and great tribulation of persecution that will begin in the middle of the seventieth week (Dan 9:27; 12:11) and *before* the wrath judgments of Revelation begin (cf. Rev 6:14; Rev 9:5, 10; Gen 7:24).²⁹⁶ Both dispensational and ante-Nicene premillennialists interpret Scripture to teach a *two-phase return* of Christ, the first *for* the church and the second *with* the church at Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3).

Concerning the occasion of the day of the Lord for the resurrection and rapture of the church, Paul relates that this occasion is the blessed hope of believers who await “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). As followers of Jesus look forward to this resurrection and rapture day, Paul admonished believers to “be alert. . . . Having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess 5:6, 8). Paul also related the day of the Lord duration for the resurrection and rapture.

²⁹⁶ John foretold, “They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Rev 20:4). Notably, in Scripture, numbers are rounded (cf. 1 Kgs 6:1, 37–38; temple construction took 7 years, 6 months. “So he was seven years in building it” (1 Kgs 6:38). Thus, a thousand years and five months, biblically speaking, is “a thousand years” (Rev 20:4).

Day of the Lord Duration for the Resurrection and Rapture

“The day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) will happen in a flash! Paul said, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor 15:52). Afterward, “We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). Therefore, this eschatological “day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) will have a duration of only a few seconds, or at most a few minutes, on one day (cf. Mark 13:32). What does Scripture teach concerning the day of the Lord at Armageddon occasion and duration?

Day of the Lord Occasion and Duration at Armageddon

Armageddon is perhaps the most misunderstood subject in Scripture. This is mainly due to diverse eschatological views among Christians resulting in diverse perspectives about Armageddon. Further, the secular world has invoked the term *Armageddon* to describe anything cataclysmic. Thus, many believers have become confused about what transpires at Armageddon. Hans LaRondelle quips, “The fact that basically conflicting interpretations of Armageddon are found among orthodox Christians, . . . shows that a more concerted effort is needed to arrive at a basic unity of understanding. . . . How can we expect politicians and the secular world to know what ‘Armageddon’ means in the Bible if we ourselves are confused about the matter at issue?”²⁹⁷ Accordingly, this subsection will research the day of the Lord at Armageddon in two

²⁹⁷ Hans K. LaRondelle, “The Biblical Concept of Armageddon,” *JETS* 28 (1985): 21.

subdivisions: 1) Occasion of the Day of the Lord at Armageddon; and 2) Duration of the Day of the Lord at Armageddon.

Occasion of the Day of the Lord at Armageddon

As part of the sixth bowl of wrath, three demons will influence world leaders to gather “together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty” (Rev 16:14; cf. 16:12–13). John says, “They gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (Rev 16:16 NIV).

Although the preparation for Armageddon begins during the sixth bowl of wrath (Rev 16:12–14), its execution occurs after the seventh bowl of wrath (cf. Rev 16:17). Upon completion of the seventh bowl judgments, the angel will declare: “It is done!” (Rev 16:17; cf. 10:7; 15:1, 7). This will complete the seven trumpets (plagues) and seven bowls of wrath judgments (Rev 8:6; 15:7). What follows will be “the great day of God, the Almighty” (Rev 16:14), the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 19:11–20:3).

Since Scripture teaches that Armageddon will occur at the *end* of the wrath judgments of Revelation, both dispensational and ante-Nicene premillennialists affirm that the occasion for Armageddon will be at the *end* of the final seven years, at the end of the seventieth week (Dan 9:27).²⁹⁸ On the other hand, some expositors, which include preterists and many amillennialists, interpret the seventieth week as being fulfilled in the first century CE or in the time of Antiochus IV.²⁹⁹ Therefore, the seventy weeks prophecy in Dan 9:24–27 needs discussion.

²⁹⁸ Hippolytus, after commenting on the seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (69 weeks) of Dan 9:24–26, he relates that “there will remain only one week, the last [Dan 9:27]” (*Comm. Dan.* 2.22), at the end of which occurs Armageddon (Rev 16:14–16; 19:11–20:3).

²⁹⁹ Richard S. Hess, “The Seventy Sevens of Daniel 9: A Timetable for the Future?,” *BBR* 21 (2011): 324. For additional interpretations of the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24–27, see Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 23, ed. Donald J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 191–197.

Daniel 9:24–27 is another example of a *telescoping* prophecy. In Daniel 9:1–21, the prophet prayed for his people, Israel, and his holy city, Jerusalem (vv. 16, 20). Concerning Israel and Jerusalem, it was revealed to Daniel that “seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and for your holy city” (9:24). Concerning the seventy שְׁבַע, *heptad* or *weeks* of years or *seven* of years³⁰⁰ (cf. Gen 29:27), it was revealed that “from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem [occurred ca. 445 BCE, although ancient chronology is often uncertain]³⁰¹ until the Messiah the Prince [Jesus] there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [totals 69 weeks or 483 years]” (Dan 9:25) at which time “the Messiah will be cut off [killed; occurred ca. 30–33 CE]” (Dan 9:26; cf. Isa 53:8).³⁰² After Dan 9:26 (the sixty-ninth week) the prophet *telescopes* forward thus far almost two thousand years to the last week, the “one week” (Dan 9:27) remaining to be fulfilled (will total 490 years), the *seventieth week* when the antichrist (the beast) will make a covenant with Israel. Although some expositors claim that the seventieth week was fulfilled in the first century CE, the specifics about the “one week” (Dan 9:27) remain unfulfilled. Also, the long gap between the sixty-ninth week (Dan 9:26) and the seventieth week (Dan 9:27) is sometimes called a *parenthesis*, but actually, Dan 9:24–27 follows the pattern of scores of *contextual telescoping* prophecies in the Old and New Testaments that *telescope* distant events in the same context.³⁰³

Since amillennialists, dispensational premillennialists, and ante-Nicene premillennialists maintain that the occasion for Armageddon will be at the *end* of the wrath of the Lamb

³⁰⁰ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, שְׁבַע, BDB 989.

³⁰¹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, K&D 9 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 747.

³⁰² Concerning the date for the crucifixion of Christ, see: Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1977), 37.

³⁰³ Telescoping prophecies, which include Dan 9:24–27, will be discussed in detail in ch. 6.

judgments of Revelation, which dispensational and ante-Nicene premillennialists maintain will be at the *end* of the seventieth week (Dan 9:27), what will be the duration of the day of the Lord at Armageddon?

Duration of the Day of the Lord at Armageddon

Most Bible students equate Armageddon with the apocalyptic battle between King Jesus and His heavenly army with the antichrist and his earthly army; when King Jesus returns to fight for Israel (cf. Zech 14:1–5; Rev 19:11–20:3). Indeed, the first Armageddon episode will be this great battle to defend Israel, which Zechariah foretells: “For I [the Lord] will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations” (14:2–3). Yet, the second Armageddon episode will be King Jesus raining judgment fire on *universal harlot Babylon*, which Isaiah foretells: “The Lord will come in fire. . . . For the Lord will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all [ungodly] flesh” (66:15–16). Consequently, the durations of both episodes must be considered to determine the total duration of the day of the Lord at Armageddon. Therefore, two subheadings will examine: 1) Duration of the Battle of Armageddon to Defend Israel; and 2) Duration of Judgment Fire on Universal Harlot Babylon.

Duration of the Battle of Armageddon to Defend Israel. Zechariah declares, “Behold, a day is coming for the LORD. . . . For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. . . . Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him!” (14:1–5). Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid comment: “The situation looks dire. But then the divine warrior [King Jesus] appears with his heavenly army [cf.

Rev 19:11–14].”³⁰⁴ Zechariah portends: “In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and . . . will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (12:8–9). Hence, at Armageddon, King Jesus will return to earth *with* the church to fight against the beast and the ungodly nations attacking Jerusalem.

Historically, when Israel sinned against the Lord, He would allow the Israelites to be defeated by their enemy (cf. 1 Kgs 8:33, 46). Moreover, at this writing, most Jews are in sinful rebellion against their Messiah, Jesus. Yet, Scripture reveals that numerous Jews will turn in faith to follow Jesus as their Messiah after the resurrection and rapture of the church (cf. Rev 7:4–8; 9:4).³⁰⁵ Consequently, at Armageddon, King Jesus will return to earth to defend the believing Jews in Jerusalem who will be under attack by the antichrist and his armies. When these messianic Jews see Jesus, they will *not* spit on the ground as some do today at the name of Jesus. Instead, these messianic Jews will be so grateful to see Jesus that they will weep for joy over Him. Zechariah prophesies: “They will look on Me [Jesus] whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (12:8–10). They will also ask Him, “What are these

³⁰⁴ Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior: Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 70.

³⁰⁵ In Rev 7:4, John writes: “I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.” The Israelites who will be sealed number δώδεκα (*twelve*) χιλιάδες (pl. *thousands*), which may be a literal or symbolic number. Since the number ‘twelve’ is symbolic of the ‘chosen,’ and since $12 * 12 = 144$ or, symbolically, ‘all of the chosen,’ the 144,000 may be symbolic for ‘all of the chosen thousands’ of Israel, which may be an even larger number. Either way, the 144,000 of Israel who are sealed in Rev 7:4 are the only people Scripture mentions who will be protected during the wrath of the Lamb judgments (cf. Rev 9:4, “They were told not to hurt . . . , but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads”). Evidently, these Israelites will *not* be followers of Jesus Christ before the rapture, and so they will not be raptured, but will become followers of Jesus afterward when they see their Messiah, Jesus, coming on the clouds to resurrect and rapture the church; every eye will see “Him, even those who pierced Him” (Rev 1:7). Accordingly, these Israelites, who will turn in faith to their Messiah, Jesus, will be sealed and protected by King Jesus during the wrath judgments (cf. Rev 9:4). These saved messianic Jews will populate the future biblical millennium in their flesh and will bear children (cf. Isa 11:6–8).

wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘*Those* with which I was wounded in the house of my friends’” (Zech 13:6).

After briefly conversing with these messianic Jews, King Jesus will engage in battle against the antichrist and his armies from ungodly nations who will be attacking Jerusalem (Rev 19:19). “Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations” (Zech 14:3). However, at the battle of Armageddon, omnipotent King Jesus will *not* wage war as humans do with military armaments. Instead, King Jesus will wage the battle of Armageddon by *speaking* (“from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations” Rev 19:15). This verse alludes to Isaiah 49:2 (“He made His mouth like a sharp sword”) and 11:4 (“He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked”).

Consequently, the omnipotent Lord Jesus accomplishes the seemingly impossible by *speaking*. By speaking, Jesus created the heavens and the earth (cf. Gen 1; Col 1:16). By speaking, Jesus calmed (uncreated) a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee within seconds (Matt 8:26). Likewise, at Armageddon, the omnipotent King Jesus will *speak* to execute judgment on “all [ungodly] flesh” (Jer 25:31; cf. Isa 11:4; 49:2; 2 Pet 3:7).

Therefore, when the Lord *speaks* judgment on the antichrist and his armies at the battle of Armageddon, Zechariah reveals what will happen: “All the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth” (14:12). John adds: “All the birds will be filled with their flesh” (Rev 19:21).

Jeremiah also foretells, “Those slain by the Lord on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other” (25:33). Thus, not only will King Jesus slay the antichrist’s armies attacking Jerusalem (Rev 19:19), but He will also slay all antichrist followers throughout the whole world.

Jeremiah adds: “They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground” (25:33; cf. Rev 19:21).

Consequently, since the omnipotent King Jesus will wage the day of the Lord battle of Armageddon by *speaking* (Rev 19:15), the duration of the battle will be finished in hours, if not minutes, certainly less than a human 24-hour day. Yet, in addition to defending Israel, King Jesus at Armageddon will also rain judgment fire on *universal harlot Babylon*.

Duration of Judgment Fire on Universal Harlot Babylon. At Armageddon, the adversaries of the Lord will be the beast and *universal harlot Babylon*. In Rev 17–19:6, John foresaw figurative universal harlot Babylon and said that “she will be burned up with fire” (Rev 18:8; cf. 17:16). Hans LaRondelle adds, “Armageddon and the destruction of universal Babylon are therefore identical.”³⁰⁶ Accordingly, it is necessary to identify the *universal harlot Babylon*.

In Rev 17:1, John identifies the “harlot” as “the great harlot who sits on many waters.” ‘Harlot’ is figurative for spiritual prostitution, the spiritual immoral act of turning away from serving the living God to serve something or someone other than the true God, Jesus Christ, which is idolatry. Beale adds, “The ‘harlot’ metaphor has the essential idea of an illicit relationship, whether that be religious, economic, political, or a combination of these.”³⁰⁷

Yet, John writes more specifically about the identity of the harlot Babylon: “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” (Rev 17:15). George Beasley-Murray comments:

While *the waters* of Babylon were literally meant in Jeremiah’s prophecy (Je. 51:13 . . .), John regards them as aptly symbolizing the people over whom the antichristian [harlot]

³⁰⁶ LaRondelle, “The Biblical Concept of Armageddon,” 23.

³⁰⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids; Carlisle, UK: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1999), 885.

city rules. The returning antichrist with his confederates will *hate the prostitute and bring her to ruin*. . . . No explanation is given why the antichristian ruler turns against the antichristian city.”³⁰⁸

Therefore, in Rev 17–19:6, the *waters* are figurative for apostate peoples in all nations, or *universal harlot Babylon* whom Beale defines as “the apostate world community”³⁰⁹ over whom the antichristian harlot city rules.

Additionally, John identifies the ruling city of the *universal harlot Babylon*, whom he figuratively portrays as “a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. . . . On her forehead a name *was* written, a mystery, ‘BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH’” (Rev 17:3, 5). Who is this woman? John explains that the woman is a *city*: “The woman whom you saw is *the great city*, which reigns over the kings of the earth” (Rev 17:18; italics added). Beasley-Murray adds: “The woman is now identified, at least as clearly as apocalyptic writing allowed, and enough for John’s readers to know of whom he speaks: she is *the great city that rules over the kings of the earth, i.e. in John’s day Rome*.”³¹⁰ In Rev 17:18, there is biblical support for the harlot city Babylon being Rome, as Peter remarked, generally held to be writing from Rome: “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings” (1 Pet 5:13).

However, in Rev 11:8, John identifies another *great city*: “The great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified” (cf. Rev 16:19;

³⁰⁸ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., eds. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 1447.

³⁰⁹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 852.

³¹⁰ Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 1448.

17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21). In Rev 11:8, John seems to identify *the great city* with Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified.

Recognizably, the harlot city Babylon, *the great city*, will be ruled by the beast. Is the beast's *political* rule from the harlot city Babylon, *the great city that rules over the kings of the earth* (Rev 17:18), Rome, and the beast's *religious* rule from the harlot city Babylon, Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified (Rev 11:8)? When the beast/antichrist makes a seven-year covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27), he seems to be representing a government outside Israel. Also, Dan 9:26 identifies the people from whom the beast will come. With a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE and to the prince (beast) who will come during the seventieth week (Dan 9:27), Daniel remarks that "the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Dan 9:26). The people who came and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE were from Rome. Thus, Scripture seems to support the beast's *political* rule from the harlot city Babylon, *the great city that rules over the kings of the earth* (Rev 17:18), being Rome. However, the beast's *religious* rule seems to be from the harlot city Babylon, *the great city* (Rev 11:8), Jerusalem, and the (to be rebuilt) temple. Purportedly, architectural plans based on the dimensions in Ezek 40–47 (cf. Rev 11:1–2) and a scale of 1/50 model of this third Jerusalem temple have already been prepared.³¹¹ In this coming third Jerusalem temple will sit "the man of lawlessness [the beast] . . . , the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess 2:3–4).

Accordingly, the beast's *political* rule from the harlot city Babylon, *the great city that rules over the kings of the earth* (Rev 17:18), may be Rome, and the beast's *religious* rule from

³¹¹ "Architecture," *3rd Temple*, <https://thirdtemple.org/en/architecture/>.

the harlot city Babylon, *the great city* (Rev 11:8), being Jerusalem, where he will “set himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess 2:4 NIV). From these two great cities, he will rule politically and religiously over *universal harlot Babylon*, “the apostate world community.”³¹²

However, the beast’s religious rule will be challenged when he breaks his covenant with the Jews and puts “a stop to sacrifice and grain offering” (Dan 9:27) in the (rebuilt) Jerusalem third temple. Presumably, because temple sacrifices are offered to the holy God in heaven, and because the beast will proclaim himself to be God (2 Thess 2:4), the beast will stop the temple sacrifices. This covenant-breaking act by the beast will signal to many Jews that the beast is not a messiah (cf. John 5:43), or God, after all (cf. Zech 11:10–11). Consequently, many Jews will turn against the beast in much the same way as the Maccabees (168 BCE) turned against the Seleucid King Antiochus IV (reigned 175–164 BCE), who was a type of the beast/antichrist. Opposition against the beast from the people of Israel will cause tribulation of persecution to fall upon them from the beast (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1, 7–12),³¹³ and upon “the rest of her [spiritual Israel’s] children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17).

As the seventieth week progresses, and with many persecuted Jews opposing the beast in Jerusalem, this will prompt the beast and his armies from the nations of *universal harlot Babylon* to gather for war against Jerusalem in “the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (Rev 16:16 NIV; cf. Zech 14:2; Rev 19:19). Consequently, at the end of the seventieth week, at

³¹² Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 852.

³¹³ At this time, these Jews will include those who *neither* follow the antichrist nor Jesus Christ, yet they will turn and oppose the antichrist (comparable to the Maccabees). See previous note about the 144,000 (Rev 7:4–8).

Armageddon, King Jesus will return from heaven *with* the church to execute judgment by fire on the beast and *universal harlot Babylon*. John says, “In *one* day her plagues will come, . . . and she will be burned up with fire” (Rev 18:8, italics added; cf. 17:16; 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12). Isaiah foretells: “The Lord will execute judgment by fire . . . , and those slain by the Lord will be many” (66:16; cf. Rev 19:21).³¹⁴ Jeremiah adds, “Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other” (25:33).

King Jesus will rain judgment fire on *universal harlot Babylon* the same way He will fight the battle of Armageddon to defend Israel, by *speaking* (Isa 11:4; 2 Pet 3:7, “by His word”). When King Jesus rains conflagration on *universal harlot Babylon* at Armageddon, it is concomitant with the Lord deluging the earth’s surface and the earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, cf. Gen 1:8)³¹⁵ with conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12. The conflagration will bring about the “judgment and destruction of the ungodly [*universal harlot Babylon*]” (2 Pet 3:7c NIV; cf. Dan 9:24) as well as cleanse the earth with purifying fire (2 Pet 3:10–12) for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign with His people (cf. Dan 9:24; Rev 20:4–6).

Afterward, “the scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water” (Isa 35:1–2, 7). Christ will even change the earth back to its Edenic state for God’s holy people during the future millennium (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35, “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’”). This coming millennial Edenic earth for Christ’s holy people will have been made possible because of the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, which will cleanse the earth with purifying fire for the millennium (*millennial restoration*).

³¹⁴ When the Lord rains fire on the earth, it should be noted that the 144,000 Jews mentioned in Rev 7:4–8 will not be harmed by the Armageddon fire (“When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” Isa 43:2–3; cf. Dan 3:25–27).

³¹⁵ Earth’s heavens; the first heaven, cf. Gen 1:8, 20.

Consequently, with the Lord waging the battle of Armageddon to defend Israel by *speaking* (Rev 19:15), and with the Lord raining Armageddon conflagration on *universal harlot Babylon* by *speaking* (cf. Isa 11:4; 2 Pet 3:7, “by His word”), the duration of the day of the Lord at Armageddon will likely be finished in a few hours, if not minutes, certainly in less than a human 24-hour day (cf. Rev 18:8).³¹⁶ Therefore, having researched the eschatological days of the Lord occasions and durations, the results will be summarized and compared to the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Summary and Comparison of Eschatological Days of the Lord Occasions and Durations to the Dispensational Premillennial *Long* Day of the Lord for 2 Peter 3:10–13

The occasion for the eschatological “day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) is held by dispensational premillennialists to occur *before* the seventieth week (Dan 9:27), referred to as *the tribulation* but also as the *wrath* (first-phase return of Christ). The occasion for the eschatological day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 16:16, 19:11–20:3) is held by dispensational premillennialists to occur at the *end* of the seventieth week, at the end of the wrath judgments of Revelation. Dispensational premillennialists interpret Scripture to teach that the church will return from heaven *with* Christ at Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3) (two-phase return of Christ).

The durations for the eschatological day of the Lord for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) and the day of the Lord at Armageddon (Rev 19:11–20:3) are revealed in Scripture to be short, ranging from a moment (1 Cor 15:52) to perhaps a few hours, if not minutes, but certainly in less than a 24-hour day. Thus, the brevity of the eschatological days of the Lord call into question the biblical accuracy of the dispensational premillennial *long* day

³¹⁶ Other texts describing the duration of Armageddon as a single human 24-hour day include: Zeph 1:14–16; 18; Zech 14:1–3; 6–7.

of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Having researched the historical and eschatological days of the Lord occasions and durations, it is necessary to assess the biblical basis for the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Assessment of the Biblical Basis for the Dispensational Premillennial
Long Day of the Lord Occasion and Duration for 2 Peter 3:10–13

The study of historical days of the Lord occasions and durations revealed that the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, which extends from after the rapture to the commencement of eternity (Rev 21:1) for a duration of more than one thousand years, has three problems biblically: 1) The *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 lacks historical biblical precedent; 2) The *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 takes 2 Pet 3:8 out of context; and 3) The *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 extends through the future millennium, yet the imagery of 2 Pet 3:10–12 describes *judgment*, which is inconsistent with the peaceful future millennium.

The study of eschatological days of the Lord occasions and durations, namely, “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) for the resurrection and rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:16–17) and the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 16:16, 19:11–20:3) are revealed in Scripture to have short durations ranging from a moment (1 Cor 15:52) to perhaps a few hours, if not minutes, but certainly in less than a 24-hour day. Thus, the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord (more than a thousand years) view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is inconsistent with the brevity of historical and eschatological days of the Lord.

Further, as Blaising noted, modern dispensational premillennialism reinterpreted the day of the Lord for the rapture (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) and the day of the Lord for Armageddon (2

Pet 3:10) as being the *same (long)* day of the Lord.³¹⁷ However, dispensational premillennialism maintains that the rapture of the church is a distinct eschatological event that occurs *before* the seventieth week (Dan 9:27) and Armageddon is a distinct eschatological event that occurs at the *end* of the seventieth week (Dan 9:27). Yet, the *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that extends from the rapture to the re-creation (Rev 21:1) negates this distinction, proving that the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is a *non sequitur*.

Apparently, while maintaining that Scripture teaches a future millennium, evidently some modern dispensationalists felt compelled to force the *long* day of the Lord view on 2 Pet 3:10–13, even though this study has proven that there is no biblical basis historically or eschatologically for the *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Chapter Summary

Contemporary perspectives on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13 maintained by amillenarians and dispensational premillennarians are dissimilar. Therefore, this chapter has researched these contemporary perspectives in two sections.

The amillennial *Armageddon* occasion and duration of 2 Pet 3:10–13 maintains that the occasion of 2 Pet 3:10–13 will be at Armageddon, held to be “the last day” (John 6:39). Amillennialists claim that multiple eschatological events will occur at Christ’s advent on the day of the Lord at Armageddon.

The modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord occasion and duration of 2 Peter 3:10–13 interprets the occasion of 2 Pet 3:10–13 as extending from the rapture to the re-

³¹⁷ Blaising, “The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology, 7–8. Also see, J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 230–31; *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 929 n.1, and 1372–73 n. 5; and John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 271.

creation (Rev 21:1), called the *long* day of the Lord, with a duration of more than one thousand years. Thus, dispensational premillennialism interprets the day of the Lord for the rapture (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2) and the day of the Lord for Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10) as the *same (long)* day of the Lord. However, dispensationalists maintain that the rapture *before* the seventieth week and Armageddon at the *end* of the seventieth week are distinct eschatological events. Yet, the *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that extends from the rapture to the re-creation (Rev 21:1) negates this distinction, proving that the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is a *non sequitur*.

Also, because Scripture reveals short durations for historical and eschatological days of the Lord ranging from perhaps nineteen years (Judah/Jerusalem) to “a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor 15:52), this study has demonstrated that there is no historical or eschatological precedent for the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord (more than a thousand years) view of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Thus, this study has proven that there is no biblical basis historically or eschatologically for the dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord view of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Having presented research concerning contemporary perspectives on the occasion and duration for 2 Pet 3:10–13, it is deemed necessary to present research on centuries held views on the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13, which will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

VIEWS DATING TO THE EARLY CHURCH
ON THE CONFLAGRATION COSMOLOGY OF 2 PETER 3:10–13

Second Pet 3:10–13 concerns “the heavens” (v. 10), “the earth” (v. 10), “the heavens” (v. 12), the “new heavens” (v. 13), and the “new earth” (v. 13). Therefore, the passage pertains to the eschatological future of the universe. Consequently, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is a cosmology “that deals with the nature of the universe.”³¹⁸ Specifically, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is God’s revealed future cosmology that is supported by other cosmologically related texts throughout the Scriptures. More specifically, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is God’s revealed future cosmology involving a conflagration in 3:10–12 and the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth in 3:13.

When the cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was written, there were three firmly established Greco-Roman cosmologies, namely, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Platonism, all of which held *cosmic* conflagration philosophies on the destruction of the world. Octavius, the Christian interlocutor of the African church father and apologist, M. Minucius Felix (d. ca. 250 CE), confirmed that “the Stoics have a constant belief that . . . all this world will take fire, and the Epicureans have the very same opinion concerning the conflagration of the elements and the destruction of the world. Plato speaks, saying that parts of the world are now inundated, and are now burnt up by alternate changes” (*Oct.* 34).³¹⁹ Carsten Thiede explains that in Stoic thinking “the universe was dissolved and renewed periodically, through an ἐκπύρωσις [*conflagration*], which made everything return to the primeval element fire before it could be reconstituted [into a

³¹⁸ Merriam-Webster, “Cosmology,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cosmology>.

³¹⁹ M. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 34 (*ANF* 4.194).

new creation].”³²⁰ Notably, in Stoicism, the term *dissolved* did not mean absolute destruction (annihilation) but “equivalent to change,” explained Eusebius (*Praep. ev.* 15.18.2).³²¹ In Stoicism, “the conflagration is sometimes said to clean out all evil,” notes Long.³²² Concerning how the world will end, the Stoics held that “conflagration brings the present world to an end,”³²³ and then another cycle (new creation) begins.³²⁴

Why is it important to address these three Greco-Roman cosmic conflagration cosmologies that were firmly established when the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was written? To provide cultural background. Similarly, when seminarians study the Mosaic (Sinai) covenant there is also a parallel study of ancient Near Eastern covenants to provide cultural background. Another reason for addressing these three Greco-Roman cosmic conflagration cosmologies is because when tens of thousands of Romans turned to Christ from paganism and were coming into the churches, they did not come with blank slates on cosmology, rather they came with deep-rooted cosmic conflagration cosmological beliefs dating to Zeno, Epicurus, and Plato.

Importantly, this writer does *not* suggest that Greco-Roman cosmic conflagration cosmologies that were firmly established when the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was written influenced Christian’s interpretation of the passage. However, from the Greco-

³²⁰ Carsten P. Thiede, “A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix,” *JSNT* 8 (1986): 84.

³²¹ Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.18.2, trans. E. H. Gifford, in *Early Church Fathers: Additional Texts*, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/eusebius_pe_15_book15.htm.

³²² Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 272.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 270.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 256–7.

Roman era to the twenty-first century, 2 Pet 3:10–13 has primarily been interpreted as a *cosmic* conflagration that will either burn up and destroy (annihilate) the physical universe or burn for restoration (renew) the physical universe resulting in a new or restored creation for the eternal state (3:13; Rev 21:1).

Hence, there are two deep-rooted majority views on the cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13, namely, *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration, the view that the physical universe will be burned up, annihilated, and replaced with a new creation; and *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration, the view that the physical universe will be burned, not for annihilation, but for restoration, being the restoration of the present old universe for the eternal state. A third minority view evidenced as being held by a few ante-Nicene fathers is *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration (3:10–12) and the *eternal state* (3:13), which is the view that the conflagration in 3:10–12 is not cosmic but is earthly and pertains solely to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (cf. Isa 66:15–16; Rev 19:11–20:3) which will cleanse with purifying fire the earth’s surface and earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 pertains to the telescoped more than a thousand years distant *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1).

Therefore, to gain an understanding of Christian interpretations extending to the early church on 2 Pet 3:10–13, this chapter will discuss conflagration cosmology views of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in six sections: 1) Eternal State Annihilation Replacement Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13; 2) Why the Eternal State Annihilation Replacement Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13 Is Unbiblical; 3) Eternal State Restoration Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13; 4) Why the Eternal State Restoration Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13 Is Unbiblical; 5)

Millennial Restoration Earthly Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–12 and the Eternal State Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:13; and 6) Why the Millennial Restoration Earthly Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–12 and the Eternal State Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:13 Are Biblical.

Eternal State Annihilation Replacement Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13

The *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 interprets the passage as a *single meaning* prophecy teaching that the physical universe will be destroyed (annihilated) by cosmic conflagration and replaced with the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). Barbara Rossing comments on the likely source of this *cosmic* conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

Second Peter makes repeated references to God's plan for a fiery end to the planet, declaring that “the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire” (3:7) and that when the day of the Lord comes the “heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire” (3:12). This epistle draws an analogy between end-times fire and the Genesis flood. . . . Throughout Christian history, 2 Peter’s scenario of end-times burning has spawned a potent legacy that continues today. A whole trajectory that developed from this text, beginning in the second century, continues to influence Christian understandings of the end. . . . The most likely source of 2 Peter’s cosmic conflagration imagery is the Greco-Roman philosophical notion of *ekpyrosis* [ἐκπύρωσις, *conflagration*], or world-destroying fire, a much-discussed topic in ancient pagan philosophical debates dating back to Plato’s *Timaeus*.³²⁵

Accordingly, Rossing notes that the likely source for the *cosmic* conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is the Greco-Roman philosophical notion of ἐκπύρωσις, *conflagration*, or more precise, universe-destroying fire, “dating back to Plato’s *Timaeus*.”³²⁶

³²⁵ Barbara R. Rossing, “‘Hastening the Day’ When the Earth Will Burn? Global Warming, Revelation, and 2 Peter 3 (Advent 2, Year B),” *CurTM* 35 (2008): 366–7.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 367.

Rossing also notes the influence of Stoicism in relation to 2 Pet 3:10–13: “The second-century theologian Justin Martyr, for example, makes reference to the well-known Stoic version of conflagration³²⁷ in delineating his own Christian version of end-times fire.”³²⁸ Interestingly, Jacqueline Lagrée argues that a certain collusion existed between Stoicism and Christianity during the Patristic Age: “The relationship between Stoicism and Christianity. . . . The stage of collusion was the Patristic Age, or more precisely the second century in Africa.”³²⁹

The African church father, Minucius Felix, held the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, confirmed by his interlocutor, Octavius. Since Minucius authored *The Octavius of Minucius Felix*, it is evident that he agreed with Octavius, who argues against the Roman Quintus Caecilius Natalis who did not hold the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

In respect of the burning up of the world, it is a vulgar error not to believe either that fire will fall upon it in an unforeseen way, or that the world will be destroyed by it. . . . The Stoics have a constant belief that . . . this world will take fire, and the Epicureans have the very same opinion concerning the conflagration of the elements and the destruction of the world. Plato speaks, saying that parts of the world are now inundated and are now burnt up by alternate changes (*Oct.* 34).³³⁰

Thus, the early Christian Octavius defended his *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by appealing to ‘the destruction of the world’ cosmic conflagration philosophies of the Stoics, Epicureans, and Plato.

³²⁷ See Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 20 and *2 Apol.* 7.

³²⁸ Rossing, “‘Hastening the Day’ When the Earth Will Burn?,” 367.

³²⁹ Jacqueline Lagrée, “Stoicism and Christianity: From Collusion to Distortion,” trans. Nicholas J. Zola, *PRSt* 45 (2018): 474–5.

³³⁰ M. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 10 (*ANF* 4.194).

In the modern era, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, an amillennialist, advanced the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13: “Peter has spoken of this in his second epistle in the third chapter: ‘We . . . look for new heavens and a new earth . . . (v. 13). . . . Remember that the present earth and heavens will be destroyed. The elements will ‘melt with fervent heat’ (2 Pet 3:10), and there will be a great disintegration [*eternal state annihilation replacement*].”³³¹ Lloyd-Jones also clarified the difference between the two majority cosmic conflagration cosmology views of 2 Pet 3:10–13 (i.e., *eternal state annihilation replacement* and *eternal state restoration*):

People have disagreed about this. Some say that the entire present earth and heavens will be completely and finally destroyed, and that God will create a new earth and new heavens [*eternal state annihilation replacement*]. But others say that what will happen will be that all evil and sin will be burned out of the present earth and heavens and the change will be so profound that it can be described as a regeneration, a new beginning in a sense [*eternal state restoration*]. . . . For those who are interested in the history of the debate, the Lutherans have always taught a new creation of heavens and earth [*eternal state annihilation replacement*], whereas the Reformers have generally taught that the present earth and heavens will be so delivered from evil and sin that they are virtually completely new [*eternal state restoration*].³³²

Thus, Lloyd-Jones advanced the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that has generally been taught by the Lutherans.

John Walvoord, a premillennialist, also held the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

The question has been raised as to whether the earth and the starry heavens as they are today will be destroyed . . . or will be simply restored to a new state of purity. Many references in the Bible suggest that the earth and the heavens, as now known, will be destroyed (cf. Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33; 2 Peter 3:10–13). This is confirmed by the opening statement of Revelation 21, “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” . . . The new heaven and new earth described in chapter 21 has no similarity to the present earth and heaven. . . . That it is a totally new heaven and a new

³³¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Church and the Last Things* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 246–7.

³³² *Ibid.*, 246–7.

earth, and not the present heaven and earth renovated, is supported by the additional statement, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed.³³³

Hence, Walvoord held that the physical universe would be destroyed and replaced (*eternal state annihilation replacement*) with “a totally new heaven and a new earth.”³³⁴

Similarly, John MacArthur, a premillennialist, holds the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

The galaxies consist of billions of burning stars. . . . With the culmination of the final phase of the day of the Lord, the heavens will pass away with a roar [2 Pet 3:10]. . . . Heavens refers to the visible, physical universe of interstellar and intergalactic space. . . . One day—in the relatively near future—this universe will be utterly destroyed. Under the weight of God’s consuming wrath, in final retribution, it will melt away in a final holocaust of unimaginable intensity. . . . In preparation for that day, Peter reiterated that God will destroy the present, sin-cursed universe. . . . That new day will showcase new heavens and a new earth, meaning that God will create an entirely new universe (cf. Ps. 102:25–26; Isa. 65:17; 66:22).³³⁵

Notably, in 2 Pet 3:10, MacArthur defines οὐρανοὶ as the celestial heavens of stars and planets:

“Heavens refers to the visible, physical universe of interstellar and intergalactic space.”³³⁶

Larry Overstreet, a premillennialist, after commenting on the differences between the two majority cosmic conflagration views of 2 Pet 3:10–13, also argues for the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

Regarding the time of the conflagration, one viewpoint is that this will take place prior to the inception of the millennial kingdom, while the other holds it to be at the conclusion of the millennium. . . . Two viewpoints exist as to the extent of the conflagration: that this conflagration will be merely a limited renovation of the earth, or that this conflagration will result in the annihilation of the universe. . . . Peter . . . mentions the heavens and the elements in verse 12. He states explicitly that the heavens shall be dissolved, that is,

³³³ Walvoord, *Revelation*, 982–3.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 983.

³³⁵ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 23o, 23s, 23u–x.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 23s.

annihilated. The elements will also melt and likewise be annihilated. . . . This writer's personal viewpoint is . . . an annihilation after the millennium and a re-creation of the universe.³³⁷

Hence, Minucius Felix, Lloyd-Jones, Walvoord, MacArthur, and Overstreet, argue for the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13. However, the next section will prove from Scripture that the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is unbiblical.

Why the Eternal State Annihilation Replacement Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13 Is Unbiblical

Peter addresses conflagration cosmology in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, which is interpreted in the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a physical universe-destroying conflagration. Yet, Rossing remarks that “cosmic conflagration traditions are not shared by Revelation or any New Testament texts other than 2 Peter.”³³⁸

Schreiner comments similarly in his discussion on 2 Pet 3:7, “The reference to fire is surprising since nowhere else are we told that the world will be destroyed by fire.”³³⁹ Nevertheless, Schreiner relates that “the future catastrophe will be like the original creation in that it will include the heavens and the earth.”³⁴⁰

However, as Rossing remarked regarding 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, “This epistle draws an analogy between end-times fire and the Genesis flood.”³⁴¹ As noted in the previous chapter,

³³⁷ R. Larry Overstreet, “A Study of 2 Peter 3:10–13,” *BSac* 137 (1980): 359, 362, 367–8.

³³⁸ Rossing, “‘Hastening the Day’ When the Earth Will Burn?,” 368.

³³⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 378.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 377.

³⁴¹ Rossing, “‘Hastening the Day’ When the Earth Will Burn?,” 366.

Scripture reveals what portion of “the world [κόσμος, the *universe* and ungodly *humanity*]” (2 Pet 3:6) was destroyed at the Flood: “the earth” (Gen 6:13). “Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh [ungodly *humanity*] has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.’” Accordingly, the celestial heavens of stars, moons, and planets were *not* destroyed at the Flood and are *not* in view in 2 Pet 3:6–7, 10–12, *only* the earthly heavens (the first heaven in Gen 1:8, the atmosphere, often referred to in Scripture as *heavens*)³⁴² associated with “the earth” (Gen 6:13). The celestial heavens of stars, moons, and planets will *not* be destroyed by the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:7; 10–12) because God appointed them “for signs and for seasons” (Gen 1:14) for both for the present time and for the *future millennium*.

Indeed, *after* the day of the Lord at Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10), Scripture confirms that the present *old* earth will still exist. Peter says in plain words in the last phrase of 2 Pet 3:10 that *after* the Armageddon conflagration described in the first part of the verse: “γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὗρεθήσεται,” *the earth and the works done on it will be found*. Bauckham concurs with this literal translation with only a slight variation: “*The earth and the works done in it will be found.*”³⁴³ *The earth. . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d) ‘after’ the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration because planet Earth will still exist, but its surface and atmosphere (earth’s heavens, Gen 1:8) will have been cleansed by purifying fire at Armageddon in preparation for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign (Rev 20:4–6).

³⁴² In Scripture, *heavens* may refer to the earth’s atmosphere, the first heaven (Gen 1:8), which is the expanse or firmament (Gen 1:20) where rain or dew falls and birds fly (cf. Deut 28:12; 33:28; Judg 5:4; 1 Kgs 8:35; 14:11; 16:4; 2 Chr 6:26; 7:13; Job 1:16; 35:5; 38:37; Pss 8:8; 68:8; 78:26; 104:12; Prov 23:5; Jer 4:25; 51:16; Ezek 31:13; 32:4; and Zech 8:12). The destroyed at the Flood and corrupted *heavens* (earth’s atmosphere, Gen 1:8) will pass away in its corrupted state on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12; cf. Rom 8:19–22).

³⁴³ Bauckham, *Jude–2 Peter*, 303.

Yet not only will the present old earth still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12), but the sun and the moon will still exist. The sun is a star that gives light on the earth as does the moon and will do so *after* the Armageddon conflagration, which Isaiah foretells regarding their brightness during the post-Armageddon *future millennium*: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (30:26). Since the sun is a star and will still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration, by implication, so will all the stars, moons, and planets still exist in the billions of galaxies of the infinite physical universe.³⁴⁴

Yet, additional scriptural confirmation that the sun and earth will still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration is because the sun will enable the photosynthesis of plants on the immensely productive millennial earth. Isaiah foretells that the millennial earth “will blossom profusely” (35:2). Amos says the millennial earth will be so productive that “the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine” (9:13). The growing of grapes and other crops requires photosynthesis from the *old* sun. Therefore, Scripture confirms that the stars, moons, and planets, including the present old earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:10d), will still exist *after* the day of the Lord at Armageddon and will *not* be annihilated by the conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12.

Additionally, there is *not* a single verse in the Bible that teaches that the physical universe will be destroyed by a conflagration. Notably, translations of λύω as *destroyed* or *dissolved* (implying annihilation by conflagration of the physical matter of elements) in 2 Pet 3:10–12 are

³⁴⁴ According to physics professor Christopher Baird, “As far as we can tell, there is no edge to the universe. Space spreads out infinitely in all directions,” quoted in Christopher S. Baird, “Where Is the Edge of the Universe,” *Science Questions with Surprising Answers*, <https://www.wtamu.edu/~cbaird/sq/2016/01/20/where-is-the-edge-of-the-universe/>. Hence, when the infinite God created out of nothing the material universe, did he create something characteristic of Himself (infinite)?

mistranslations. It has been scientifically proven that the chemical process of fire does *not* destroy or dissolve physical matter (which explains why Peter did not use terms meaning *destroyed* or *dissolved* in 2 Pet 3:10–12 that he used elsewhere in 2 Peter) but only changes the molecular structure of matter. As Spekker explained: “When a candle burns, the atoms themselves remain unchanged: just the molecules are affected.”³⁴⁵ In other words, fire does not change the atomic structure of matter, only its molecular structure (e.g., into ashes, carbon dioxide), and has the same weight after burning as before. Accordingly, if the ashes (carbon) and fine particulate matter (smoke) were collected from a burnt log, it would have the same weight as the original log, which was proved by Lavoisier³⁴⁶ and is taught in sixth-grade physical science.³⁴⁷ Therefore, the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is a *non sequitur* because if the cosmos, supposedly, burned up it would still exist and have the same weight as before, only it would exist in a different molecular state.

Yet, it may be argued that certain verses teach that the physical universe will be destroyed by a conflagration, such as Ps 97:5, “The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD.” Notably, when something melts it changes from a solid to a liquid. So, at the Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12), should Ps 97:5 be interpreted as meaning that the planet Jupiter and its eighty-three moons will melt like ice cream cones and float around in space as globs of liquid? How much sense does that make? None. Another verse is held to teach that the physical universe will be destroyed by a conflagration, namely, Isa 51:6a, “The sky will vanish like smoke.” Smoke is a figurative illustration of something that vanishes. Yet, Isa 51:6b

³⁴⁵ Spekkens, “How Can a Star Burn with No Oxygen (Beginner).”

³⁴⁶ See discussion in ch. 3.

³⁴⁷ “2.10 Conservation of Mass,” *CK-12 Foundation*, <https://flexbooks.ck12.org/cbook/ck-12-middle-school-physical-science-flexbook-2.0/section/2.10/primary/lesson/conservation-of-mass-ms-ps/>.

explains why smoke in 51:6a is figurative: “The earth will wear out like a garment.” When a garment wears out it is usually discarded, not burned. Isaiah 34:4 adds clarification: “All the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll.” ‘Rolled up like a scroll’ does *not* connote conflagration.

Further, Scripture teaches that *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, the Lord, for His future earthly millennial reign, will transform the earth back to its Edenic state for His holy people: “Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD” (51:3). Ezekiel also prophesies about Israel’s now desolate land that the Lord will transform during the *future millennium*: “They will say, ‘this desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’” (36:34–35).

Yet, another assertion is that the physical universe will burn up post-millennium, at Rev 20:11, as Overstreet argued. However, Rev 20:11 does *not* say, ‘Earth and heaven [ἀπόλοντο διὰ πῦρ, *were destroyed by fire*], and no place was found for them.’ Rather, Rev 20:11 says: “Earth and heaven [ἔφυγεν; φεύγω, *vanished, quickly disappeared, fled away*]³⁴⁸ and no place was found for them.” *Vanished* does *not* connote the long process of conflagration. If John had intended ‘conflagration’ in Rev 20:11, he would have used the noun πῦρ, *fire*, but, instead, he used the verb ἔφυγεν, *vanished*. How did God create the universe in the first place? Did He build a fire, as Heraclitus (the cosmos is “an ever-living Fire” (*Fragments*, B30)³⁴⁹ seems to assert? Indeed, the physical universe will *vanish* and will no longer exist at Rev 20:11 (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 22:5), but to argue that ἔφυγεν, *vanished*, means conflagration in Rev 20:11 forces a deep-

³⁴⁸ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *φεύγω*, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.398.

³⁴⁹ Heraclitus, “The Fragments of Heraclitus.”

rooted presupposition on this text that is biblically untenable and unconvincing. Further, ἔφυγεν; φεύγω, in Scripture is never translated as ‘fire’ or ‘conflagration’.

Therefore, since Peter says in the last phrase of 2 Pet 3:10 that *after* the Armageddon conflagration described in the first part of the verse: “γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται,” *the earth and the works done on it will be found*; since Scripture teaches that the, moon, sun (Isa 30:26), and, by implication, the stars, will still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12; and since in Rev 20:11, ἔφυγεν, *vanished*, meaning ‘conflagration’ is biblically untenable; the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is unbiblical. Alternatively, many scholars argue the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Eternal State Restoration Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–13

The *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 interprets the passage as a *single meaning* prophecy teaching that the physical universe will be burned, not for annihilation, but for restoration, being the restoration of the present *old* universe for the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). Origen (ca. 185–254 CE) held this position.

Origen held that Christ would return to purify the world of wickedness and renew it: “Where is the absurdity in the coming of one who is, on account of . . . wickedness, to purify the world . . . ? For it is not in keeping with the character of God that the diffusion of wickedness should not cease, and all things be renewed [*eternal state restoration*]. The Greeks, moreover, know of the earth’s being purified at certain times by a deluge or a fire” (*Cels.* 4.20).³⁵⁰ Thus,

³⁵⁰ Origen, *Cels.* 4.20 (*ANF* 4.505).

Origen held that Christ would return to purify and renew the world: “God administers correction to the world, in purifying it by a flood or by a conflagration, but in order to prevent the tide of evil from rising to a greater height. . . . It is, then, always in order to repair [*eternal state restoration*] what has become faulty that God desires to amend His work afresh” (*Cels.* 4.69).³⁵¹ He explains that the conflagration will be purificatory: “It is a purificatory fire which is brought upon the world” (*Cels.* 5.15).³⁵² Origen also held that the purificatory fire would be a *cosmic* conflagration: “Owing to the working of a Providence which either preserves earthly things, or purges them by means of floods and conflagrations; and effects this, perhaps, not merely with reference to things on earth, but also to the whole universe [*eternal state restoration cosmic conflagration*] of things which stands in need of purification” (*Cels.* 4.64).³⁵³

Origen also held that in the end all things (creation) will be purified and restored to their original condition: “It now seems to follow that we should specially re-discuss a few points respecting the world itself, i.e., its beginning and end. . . . All things are to be restored to their original condition [*eternal state restoration*]” (*Princ.* 2.1.1).³⁵⁴ As noted, the writer does *not* suggest that that Greco-Roman cosmic conflagration cosmologies that were firmly established when the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13 were written influenced Origen’s or any other Christian’s interpretation of the passage. However, it should be noted that Origen’s view that “all things are to be restored to their original condition” (*Princ.* 2.1.1)³⁵⁵ parallels Stoicism.

³⁵¹ Origen, *Cels.* 4.69 (*ANF* 4.528).

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.15 (*ANF* 4.549).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.64 (*ANF* 4.526).

³⁵⁴ Origen, *Princ.* 2.1.1 (*ANF* 4.268).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The Christian bishop Nemesius of Emesa (flourished 350–400 CE) explains Stoic cosmology: “The Stoics say that when the planets return to the same celestial sign, in length and breadth, where each was originally when the world was first formed, at set periods of time they cause conflagration and destruction of existing things. Once again, the world returns anew to the same condition as before” (*Nat. hom.* 38.3).³⁵⁶ Origen adds: “So then when the end has been restored to the beginning, and the termination of things compared with their commencement [*eternal state restoration*], that condition of things will be re-established in which rational nature was placed” (*Princ.* 3.6.3).³⁵⁷ Thus, Origen’s view that “all things are to be restored to their original condition [*eternal state restoration*]” (*Princ.* 2.1.1)³⁵⁸ closely parallels with Stoic cosmology: “Where each was originally when the world was first formed, at set periods of time they cause conflagration and destruction of existing things. Once again, the world returns anew to the same condition as before [*eternal state restoration cosmic conflagration*]” (*Nat. hom.* 38.3).³⁵⁹

St. Augustine (ca. 354–430 CE) also held the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, “When the [final] judgment is finished, this heaven and earth shall cease to be, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. For this world shall pass away by transmutation [*eternal state restoration*], not by absolute destruction” (*Civ* 20.14.1).³⁶⁰ Notably, ‘transmutation’ also parallels the Stoic view that when the universe

³⁵⁶ Nemesius, *Nat. hom.* 38.3 (London: Miles Fletcher for Henry Taunton, 1636), 535, trans. in modern English quoted from: Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 256.

³⁵⁷ Origen, *Princ.* 3.6.3 (*ANF* 4.345).

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.1.1 (*ANF* 4.268).

³⁵⁹ Nemesius, *Nat. hom.* 38.3, 535, trans. in modern English quoted from: Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 256.

³⁶⁰ Augustine, *Civ.* 20.14.1 (NPNF¹ 2.434).

undergoes cosmic conflagration it will *not* be dissolved or annihilated (absolute destruction) but will undergo a type of natural change, which Eusebius explains: “The term destruction is not properly understood of the great destruction of the world which takes place in long periods by those who hold the doctrine of the dissolution of the universe into fire, which they call conflagration, but they use the term destruction as equivalent to change” (*Praep. ev.* 15.18.2).³⁶¹

Augustine, notes Walvoord, is regarded as “the father of amillennialism.”³⁶² Notably, Augustine’s amillennial eschatology closely parallels Stoic eschatology which held that “conflagration brings the present world to an end,”³⁶³ and then another cycle (new creation) begins.³⁶⁴ Similarly, in amillennial eschatology, the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 brings the present world to an end (along with other intervening eschatological events that include the Gog and Magog war, the resurrection of the good and the evil, the final judgment, and the burning or burning up of the physical universe in Rev 20:11) on one day, interpreted as the last day, and then the new creation begins in 2 Pet 3:13 and Rev 21:1. Hence, the amillennial eschatological timeline goes directly from the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration to the new creation (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1) on one day.

However, the amillennial eschatological timeline that progresses directly from the Armageddon conflagration to the new creation in one day is disproved by Scripture. As noted, at the pre-millennium battle of Armageddon the ungodly dead are *not* buried (Jer 25:33), while at

³⁶¹ Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.18.2, trans. E. H. Gifford, in *Early Church Fathers: Additional Texts*, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/eusebius_pe_15_book15.htm.

³⁶² John F. Walvoord, “Interpreting Prophecy Today Part 1: Basic Considerations in Interpreting Prophecy,” *BSac* 139 (1982): 6.

³⁶³ Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 270.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 256–7.

the *post*-millennium Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–9; Ezek 38–39:24) the ungodly dead *are* buried (Ezek 39:12–13). Ezekiel foretells, “For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them [Gog’s dead soldiers] in order to cleanse the land” (Ezek 39:12), and for seven years they will burn Gog’s weapons (Ezek 39:9). Thus, Scripture records at least 1,007 years between the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the new creation in 2 Pet 3:13 and Rev 21:1. Accordingly, the biblical eschatological timeline does *not* progress directly from the Armageddon conflagration to the new creation on one day, as taught in amillennialism.

Additionally, Paul is clear that the resurrection of the good and the evil does *not* occur simultaneously, as taught in amillennialism. In 1 Cor 15:20–23, Paul discusses the resurrection of the dead. He explains: “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor 15:20–23). Note that Paul says, “Those who are Christ’s [are resurrected] at His coming” (1 Cor 15:23). He does *not* say, ‘Those who are Christ’s [and those who are *not* Christ’s, the ungodly, are resurrected] at His coming” (1 Cor 15:20–23). Additionally, Scripture reveals that those who are *not* Christ’s (the ungodly) at His coming will be killed and sent to the abyss (cf. Rev 19:21; Mal 4:1–3, “The wicked . . . will be ashes under the soles of your feet” v. 3; Isa 24:21–22; Rev 20:5). Therefore, Scripture teaches that the evil dead are *not* resurrected at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor 15:23).

Consequently, two problems have been noted with the amillennial eschatological timeline that progresses directly from Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 19:11–20:3) to the new creation (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1) on one day: 1) At the pre-millennium battle of Armageddon the ungodly dead are *not* buried (Jer 25:33) while at the post-millennium Gog and Magog war (Rev 20:7–9;

Ezek 38–39:24) the ungodly dead *are* buried (Ezek 39:12–13); and 2) According to 1 Cor 15:23, the resurrection of the good and the evil does *not* occur simultaneously and, according to Rev 20:5, the resurrection of the good and the evil are separated by a thousand years. Therefore, the amillennial eschatological timeline that progresses directly from Armageddon to the new creation in one day is deemed unbiblical.

In the modern era, Kim Riddlebarger, an amillennialist, asserts the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, saying that it will purify the creation of human sin and rebellion:

Since the cosmic renewal is depicted as a day of judgment for the wicked and the preparation of the home for the righteous, this too supports the idea that the resurrection, judgment, and re-creation of all things will occur at Christ’s second advent. He will come . . . and purify his creation [*eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration] from all traces of human sin and rebellion (2 Pet 3:10).³⁶⁵

Note that Riddlebarger’s *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, which is claimed will result in ‘cosmic renewal’ and purification of creation, closely parallels that of Origen.

Craig Blaising, a premillennialist, also asserts the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, relating comparable to Origen and Riddlebarger that sin will be eliminated from the cosmos rather than the cosmos being annihilated:

Peter looked more generally at the earth and “the works done on it.” The point is that both describe the day of the Lord’s coming using the imagery of refinement. . . . What will be eliminated in the Day of the Lord [2 Pet 3:10] is not the cosmos or materiality as such, but sin and evil. . . . A fire is coming. It is the glory of the Lord Himself who will return to renew His creation [*eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration].³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 167.

³⁶⁶ Craig A. Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18,” *BSac* 169 (2012): 397–8, 401.

Although Blaising argues the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13, his argument could just as easily apply to the Lord cleansing with fire and renewing the earth on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12) for *millennial restoration*, not for eternal state restoration.

Michael Szigel, a premillennialist, also asserts the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by quoting Methodius, and adds a comment:

Methodius of Olympus, around A.D. 300, wrote: “But it is not satisfactory to say that the universe will be utterly destroyed, and sea and air and sky will be no longer. For the whole world will be deluged with fire from heaven, and burnt for the purpose of purification and renewal.” . . . A majority of writers from the patristic, medieval, and reformation eras advanced a purpose for the new heavens and new earth as cosmic renewal [*eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration] following purifying fire rather than cosmic recreation *ex nihilo* following an annihilating holocaust.³⁶⁷

However, it should be noted that Methodius was a premillennialist; he believed that Christ would return *before* the future millennium. Consequently, Methodius argued that the fire in 2 Pet 3:10–12 was “for the purpose of purification and renewal” of the earth for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*), not for the eternal state. Accordingly, those who advance the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by quoting patristic fathers or specific Scripture passages may argue from works that pertain to the future millennium, not to the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth. Walvoord explains:

Because in some of these passages the Millennium is also discussed, expositors have often confused the eternal state with the Millennium. . . . With the absence of any geographic identification and the absence of a sea, the new earth will obviously be entirely different. By contrast, the sea is mentioned many times in relation to the Millennium (e.g., Ps 72:8; Isa 11:9, 11; Ezek 47:8–20; 48:28; Zech 9:10; 14:8). The evidence is conclusive that the [eternal state] new heaven and new earth are not to be confused with the Millennium.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Michael J. Szigel, “Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition—Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It *Ex Nihilo*?” *BSac* 171 (2014): 402, 417. Also see Methodius, *Res.*, 1.8 (*ANF* 6:365).

³⁶⁸ Walvoord, *Revelation*, 984.

Hence, Walvoord notes the distinctions between the future millennium *old earth* and the eternal state *new earth*.

Craig Blomberg and Sung Chung also try to dispel the confusion between Scripture passages that pertain to the future *millennial kingdom* and those that pertain to the *eternal kingdom*: “The millennial kingdom will be a restoration and fulfillment of the Edenic kingdom on the earth [cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35]. . . . The major difference between the millennial kingdom and the new heavens and earth [2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1] is that the millennial kingdom is not an eternal kingdom whereas the new heavens and earth are eternal in character.”³⁶⁹

Concerning the *eternal state restoration* and *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology views of 2 Pet 3:10–13, Michael Kimbrell perhaps best explains the difference between these two views while arguing for the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

First, there are those who argue that the Bible teaches that the present created order will be annihilated [*eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration]—that it will be so thoroughly destroyed in the fiery judgment described in places like 2 Peter 3:10–13 that there will be literally no part of it remaining after God's judgment is complete. On the other hand, some contend that the universe will undergo indescribably terrible retribution, perhaps to the extent that its most basic building blocks . . . are dissolved and burned. . . . Yet, that destruction . . . will not annihilate the universe. As proponents of this position assert, the “new heaven and new earth” . . . will indeed be new, but they will nevertheless be the product of restoration [*eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration], rather than annihilation of the former *kosmos* and recreation *ex nihilo*.³⁷⁰

Hence, Origin, Augustine, Riddlebarger, Blaising, Svingel, and Kimbrell, argue for the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13. However, the next

³⁶⁹ Blomberg and Chung, eds., *A Case for Historic Premillennialism*, 124.

³⁷⁰ Michael W. Kimbrell, “The Nature of the ‘Passing Away’ of Heaven and Earth: New Creation or Transformation?” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), abstract.

section will prove from Scripture that the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is unbiblical.

Why the Eternal State Restoration Cosmic Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Pet 3:10–13 Is Unbiblical

The *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 interprets the passage as teaching that the physical universe will be burned, not for annihilation, but for restoration, being the restoration of the present *old universe* for the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). At first glance, this view appears to have merit. As noted, following the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration γῆ . . . εὕρεθήσεται, *the earth. . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d). Not only will the old earth still be found, but the old sun and moon will be found: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (30:26). As noted, the *old sun* will be needed to enable the photosynthesis of plants on the immensely productive crop-bearing future millennial earth (cf. Isa 35:2; 9:13). Yet, the Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10–12) will result in the fire cleansing the earth’s surface and the earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*), not for eternal state restoration.

While the old sun and moon will *still exist* after the Armageddon conflagration for the *future millennium*, the old sun and moon will *no longer exist* during the *eternal state*, as Isaiah foretells: “No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the LORD for an everlasting light” (60:16). Concerning the old sun, its *nonexistence* during the *eternal state* is confirmed in Rev 22:5, “There will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them.”

In addition to the *old* sun no longer existing during the eternal state, the *old* rotating earth will no longer exist during the eternal state because Rev 22:5 says, “There will no longer be *any* night.” The rotation of the *old* earth produces the light of day and the darkness of night. No more night means that the *old* rotating earth will no longer exist during the eternal state (cf. Rev 22:5).

Scripture further reveals that the *old* earth and *old* heaven will no longer exist during the eternal state: “Earth and heaven fled away [ἔφυγεν; φεύγω, *vanished*] and no place was found for them” (Rev 20:11). Thus, the *old universe* (the old sun, galaxies, moon, and earth) will *no longer* exist for the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 20:11; 22:5). Therefore, the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that holds that the *old universe* will be restored for the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1) is a *non sequitur* and unbiblical because the old universe will *no longer* exist for the eternal state (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 20:11; 22:5).

Additionally, the features of the *new* earth are not comparable to those of the present *old* earth. New Jerusalem on the *new* earth is said to have a length, width, and *height* of “fifteen hundred miles [σταδίους δώδεκα χιλιάδων, *twelve thousand stadia*]” (Rev 21:16). Therefore, the new earth will be significantly different from the *old* earth. Thus, Walvoord’s argument is plausible, “The new heaven and new earth described in [Revelation] chapter 21 has no similarity to the present earth and heaven. . . . That it is a totally new heaven and a new earth, and not the present heaven and earth renovated.”³⁷¹

Further, Isaiah foretells about the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind” (65:17). If the eternal state of the *new* earth was the *old* earth restored, landscapes

³⁷¹ Walvoord, *Revelation*, 982–3.

of former battles (e.g., D-Day on Normandy's beaches) and graveyards would undoubtedly cause the former things to be remembered and come to mind.

Accordingly, since the *old* universe will *no longer exist* for the eternal state (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 20:11; 22:5); since the features of the *new* earth are not comparable to those of the present *old* earth (cf. Rev 21:16); and since landscapes of former battles and graveyards would undoubtedly cause the former things to be remembered and come to mind (contra to Isa 65:17); the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is unbiblical.

However, the next section will prove from Scripture that the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 is not cosmic but is earthly and will result in the fiery cleansing and Edenic restoration of the earth's surface and the earth's heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*) while 2 Pet 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1).

Millennial Restoration Earthly Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–12 and the Eternal State Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:13

The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 interpret the passage as a *contextual telescoping* prophecy that teaches that the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 will cleanse the earth's surface and earth's heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) for earth's restoration for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*) while 2 Pet 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1). Hence, these views on 2 Pet 3:10–13 will be presented in this section in two subsections:

1) Millennial Restoration Earthly Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Pet 3:10–12; and 2) Eternal State Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Pet 3:13.

Millennial Restoration Earthly Conflagration Cosmology View
of 2 Pet 3:10–12

Numerous Scriptures support the millennial restoration earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12. Additional support for this view comes from Irenaeus, Methodius, and Lactantius, as well as 2 Pet 3:10–13 characterizing a *contextual telescoping* prophecy common in biblical prophetic literature.³⁷² However, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12, argued in the thesis, is not dependent on the views of a few ante-Nicene fathers or the genre classification of 2 Pet 3:10–13, but *sola Scriptura*. Moreover, when the blinders of deep-rooted presuppositions are not forced on 2 Pet 3:10–13, when the passage is interpreted based on its immediate and intertextual context, and when the normal sense of Scripture is applied, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 may be observed as consistent with the whole of Scripture.

As noted, *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration γῆ . . . εὕρεθήσεται, *the earth. . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d). Also, the *old* sun and moon will be found (Isa 30:26). Scripture relates that these celestial bodies will appear brighter during the post-Armageddon conflagration *future millennium*: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (30:26). Because the Armageddon conflagration will cleanse the earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) of its pollutants (e.g., carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particle pollution) the daytime sky will be clearer causing the sun to appear brighter and the nighttime sky clearer causing the starry sky to be a wonder to

³⁷² *Contextual telescoping* prophecies in biblical prophetic literature are discussed in detail in ch. 6.

behold. Lactantius speaks of how brilliant the stars will be during the *future millennium*:

“Throughout that time the stars shall be more brilliant, and the brightness of the sun shall be increased [cf. Isa 30:26], and the moon shall not be subject to decrease” (*Epit.* 72).³⁷³

Accordingly, the cleansed millennial sky and earth will be attributable to the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12. Thus, conflagration does *not* bring the present world to an end.

Rather, planet Earth will be deluged with fire for purification and renewal, as Methodius relates:

The whole world will be deluged with fire from heaven, and burnt for the purpose of purification and renewal; it will not, however, come to complete ruin and corruption. . . . Wherefore the earth and the heaven must exist again after the conflagration and shaking of all things [cf. Hag 2:6, *Armageddon*]. . . . For not “the world” but the “fashion of this world” passeth away. . . . We may expect that the creation will pass away, as if it were to perish in the burning, in order that it may be renewed [*for the future millennium*], not however that it will be destroyed, that we who are renewed may dwell in a renewed world without taste of sorrow; according as it is said, “When . . . Thou shalt renew the face of the earth [Ps 104:30].” (*Res.* 1.8–9)³⁷⁴

Noticeably, Methodius asserts the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 by arguing that the Armageddon conflagration will be “for the purpose of purification and renewal” of the earth so God’s people “may dwell in a renewed world” during the future millennium (*millennial restoration*). Methodius did *not* teach that this renewal is for the eternal state: “For since in six days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, . . . signifies that . . . this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years [*post-millennium*] when God shall have completed the world” (*Symp.* 9.1).³⁷⁵ By asserting that this present world shall be *terminated* after the seventh thousand years

³⁷³ Lactantius, *Epit.* 72 (*ANF* 7:254).

³⁷⁴ Methodius, *Res.* 1.8–9 (*ANF* 6:365–66).

³⁷⁵ Methodius, *Symp.* 9.1 (*ANF* 6:344).

(*post-millennium*) “when God shall have completed the world” (*Symp.* 9.1),³⁷⁶ Methodius infers that this present old world will be annihilated (terminated) post-millennium at Rev 20:11.

As Rossing noted, the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10–12) is analogous to Noah’s Flood: “Everything that is on the earth shall perish” (Gen 6:17). Similarly, at the Armageddon conflagration, most everything “on the earth shall perish” (Gen 6:17; cf. 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12) to include the wicked (as during the Flood) who will be killed and removed to the abyss (cf. 2 Pet 3:7; Rev 19:21; Dan 9:24). What may not perish during the Armageddon conflagration could be objects designed to withstand high heat such as rocket nozzles and heat shields. This is because Scripture says that after the Armageddon conflagration “γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται,” *the earth and the works done on it will be found*. Thus, heat shields and ancient swords buried underground and shielded from the heat may be found (“They will hammer their swords into plowshares” Isa 2:4).

Because the Armageddon fire will cleanse the earth’s surface (analogous to Noah’s Flood that cleansed the earth’s surface) and the earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8), the Lord will proceed to restore the earth for His earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*). “The scorched land will become a pool” (Isa 35:7); the earth will begin to spout vegetation (“for *there will be peace* for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew” (Zech 8:12); the saved of Israel will be given their promised land (Jer 30:3); and the Lord Jesus will establish His earthly millennial throne in Jerusalem (“they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it” (Jer 3:17).

³⁷⁶ Methodius, *Symp.* 9.1 (*ANF* 6:344).

Further, King Jesus will restore the earth to its Edenic state: “Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion. . . . Her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD” (Isa 51:3). “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’” (Ezek 36:35).

During the time of creation’s Edenic earth, the *old* sun existed for the photosynthesis of plants. Likewise, during the time of the millennial Edenic earth, the *old* sun will exist (Isa 30:26) for the photosynthesis of plants on the immensely productive crop-bearing millennial earth (cf. Isa 35:2; Amos 9:13). Additionally, during the time of creation’s Edenic earth, Adam and the animals were at peace (Gen 2:19). Likewise, during the time of the millennial Edenic earth, humans and animals will once again be at peace (“the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion . . . ; and a little boy will lead them” Isa 11:6). What a blessed life is predicted for God’s people following the Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10-12) that will result in the earth’s cleansing and restoration for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*). Irenaeus comments on this predicted blessing:

The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the [millennial] kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead [first resurrection of the righteous, Rev 20:4–6]; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free [Rom 8:21], shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth [Isa 35:1–2]. . . . When prophesying of these times, therefore, Esaias [Isaiah] says: “The wolf also shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall take his rest with the kid; . . . and a little boy shall lead them. . . . It is right that when the creation is restored [Rom 8:21], all the animals should obey and be in subjection to man, and revert to the food originally given by God . . . , that is, the productions of the earth. (*Haer.* 5.33.3–4)³⁷⁷

As Irenaeus affirms, Scripture predicts a marvelous post-Armageddon cleansed by fire and restored Edenic earth (cf. Rom 8:21). Again, all of this will be made possible by the day of the

³⁷⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.33.3–4 (*ANF* 1: 562–63).

Lord Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10-12) that will enable the earth to be restored to its Edenic state for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*). Yet, beyond the millennium the best is yet to come, addressed in the eternal state cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13.

Eternal State Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Pet 3:13

In 2 Pet 3:13, the apostle reminds his disheartened first-century beloved brethren who were concerned over the delay in Christ's return, which Peter addressed in vv. 8–9, that God has promised an even better universe beyond Armageddon and the future millennium, the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth foretold in Isa 65:17–19. Since the book of Revelation had not been written at the time of the composition of 2 Peter, as many scholars hold, Peter reminded his readers of God's promise given to Isaiah: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind" (65:17). In 2 Pet 3:13, Peter instilled hope in his beloved brethren that the best is yet to come: "According to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

Regarding the transition from the future millennium to the promised eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1), Lactantius remarks: "When the thousand years [the *future millennium*] shall be completed, . . . the heavens shall be folded together [Isa 34:4; Rev 20:11]" (*Inst.* 7.26).³⁷⁸ Irenaeus remarks similarly about the transition from the future millennium to the promised eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth:

For after the times of the [millennial] kingdom, he says, "I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, from whose face the earth fled away, and the heavens; and there was no more place for them [Rev 20:11]." . . . And after this, he says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth have passed away; also there was no more sea [Rev 21:1]. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband [Rev 21:2]." . . . Isaiah also declares the very same: "For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and there shall be no

³⁷⁸ Lactantius, *Inst.* 7.26 (*ANF* 7:221).

remembrance of the former, neither shall the heart think about them, but they shall find in it joy and exultation [Isa 65:17–19].” . . . For it is said, “He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new [Rev 21:5].” (*Haer.* 5.35.2)³⁷⁹

Note that Lactantius and Irenaeus *never* mention ‘fire’ being associated with the transition from the future millennium to the promised eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth. Also, note Irenaeus’ reference to Isaiah.

Interestingly, the genre of 2 Pet 3:10–13 parallels that of Isa 65:17–25; two *contextual telescoping* prophecies. In Isa 65:17–25, verses 17–19 address the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth while verses 20–25 telescope back to address the *future millennium*. Likewise, but in chronological order, in 2 Pet 3:10–13, verses 10–12 address the Armageddon conflagration and its cleansing effects for the *future millennium* while verse 13 telescopes forward to address the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth. Walvoord explains telescoping prophecies:

The principle is well established in Scripture that distant events are often telescoped together. Examples of this are Isaiah 61:1–2 (cf. Luke 4:17–19), which speaks of the first and second comings of Christ together, and Daniel 12:2, which mentions the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked together even though, according to Revelation 20:5, they will be separated by a thousand years. Sometimes even the chronological order is reversed, as in Isaiah 65:17–25 (vv. 17–19 refer to the [eternal state] new heaven and new earth whereas vv. 20–25 clearly refer to the Millennium).³⁸⁰

Walvoord notes two distinct eschatological events telescoped in Isa 65:17–25: the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth and the *millennium*. As noted, in 2 Pet 3:10–13, Peter follows the telescoping pattern of Isa 65:17–25, but in chronological order. As Isaiah telescoped from the *eternal state* back to the *millennium*, Peter telescoped from the Armageddon conflagration and its benefits for the *millennium* forward to the *eternal state*, two distinct

³⁷⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.35.2 (*ANF* 1: 566).

³⁸⁰ Walvoord, *Revelation*, 984.

prophecies telescoped together in the same context. Therefore, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is not a *single meaning* prophecy but is a *contextual telescoping* prophecy that telescopes two distinct eschatological events in the same context, as in Isa 65:17–25.

Hence, the conflagration in the distinct event of 2 Pet 3:10–12 pertains solely to the Armageddon conflagration and its cleansing benefits for earth's restoration for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*) while the distinct event of 2 Pet 3:13 telescopes to the distant future (with no conflagration) to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth, two distinct prophecies in the same context.

The next section will explain why the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are biblical.

Why the Millennial Restoration Earthly Conflagration Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:10–12 and the Eternal State Cosmic Cosmology View of 2 Peter 3:13 Are Biblical

The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13, evidenced as being held by a few ante-Nicene premillennial church fathers, is a minority view in the Augustinian West. However, these minority positions do not impinge on their biblical accuracy.

Contra to the two majority perspectives, *eternal state annihilation replacement* and *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology views of 2 Pet 3:10–13, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 interprets the passage based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures. For example, this view recognizes that *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration that γῆ . . . εὑρεθήσεται, *the earth. . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d). Also, the moon, sun, and, by implication,

the stars, will be found (cf. Isa 30:26, “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*.” Thus, Scripture confirms that the celestial bodies will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26).

Consequently, since Scripture records that the earth, moon, sun, and, by implication, other stars, will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration, this challenges the accuracy of popular Bible translations of 2 Pet 3:10–12; namely, the NASB translation of 2 Pet 3:10d, “the earth and its works will be burned up” (NKJV and KJV render comparably); the NKJV translation of 2 Pet 3:12b, “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire”; the NET translations of 2 Pet 3:10c and 12b, “the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze”; the ESV translations of 2 Pet 3:10c, “the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved”; 2 Pet 3:11a, “all these things are thus to be dissolved”; and 2 Pet 3:12b: “the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!”; all of which are deemed mistranslations and unbiblical (cf. Isa 30:26; 2 Pet 3:10d).

On the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12, the heavenly bodies (celestial bodies) will *neither* melt nor burn. They will still exist afterward for the future millennium: γῆ . . . εὐρεθήσεται, *the earth . . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d) and “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (Isa 30:26). In due respect to admirable scholars and translators of Scripture to whom the church is indebted, 2 Pet 3:10–12 demonstrates the forcing of deep-rooted false conflagration presuppositions on the passage that are unbiblical. Counter to deep-rooted Greco-Roman pagan philosophies firmly established when 2 Peter was written, conflagration does *not* bring the present world (or celestial bodies) to an end.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 270.

Conversely, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 does *not* force on the passage deep-rooted false conflagration presuppositions, likely originating from Greco-Roman pagan philosophies widely held at the time 2 Peter was written, but rather interprets the passage based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures. For example, Scripture clearly reveals following the Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10–12) that the millennial earth will be immensely productive with crop-bearing (cf. Isa 35:2; Amos 9:13). Thus, the sun and earth will still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration because the sun will be needed to enable the photosynthesis of plants and trees on the millennial earth. Isaiah foretells that the millennial earth “will blossom profusely” (35:2). Therefore, Scripture confirms that the *old* earth, moon, sun, and, by implication, the stars, will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration (cf. Isa 30:26; 2 Pet 3:10d), and will *not* be burned up as rendered in the Bible versions noted above.

Further, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 does *not* force a biblically untenable conflagration meaning on Rev 20:11: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away [ἔφυγεν; φεύγω, *vanished*], and no place was found for them.” Vanished does *not* connote the long process of conflagration to burn up the infinite physical universe which, even if it did, has been scientifically proven would still exist as a smoke-filled universe that would have the same weight as the original universe. Thus, the question persists, how will the omnipotent Creator transition the physical universe to the eternal state of the new creation (Rev 20:11)?³⁸² Notably, Lactantius

³⁸² The omnipotent Creator (Col 1:16) healed the paralytic by *speaking* (Matt 9:6); will wage the Armageddon battle by *speaking* (Rev 19:15); uncreated a storm on the Sea of Galilee by *speaking*, “Hush, be still” (Mark 4:39); raised Lazarus by *speaking*, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43); and created the universe by *speaking* (Gen 1; Ps 33:6). Rev 20:11 does not say how the omnipotent Creator will transition the physical universe to the new creation, but these verses may *speak* to the method.

(*Inst.* 7.26), Irenaeus (*Haer.*, 5.35.2), and Methodius (*Symp.* 9.1), *never* mention ‘fire’ being associated with the transition from the physical universe to the eternal state new creation foretold in Isa 65:17–19; 2 Pet 3:13; and Rev 21:1.

Regarding the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13, this view also interprets the passage based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures. Since the Book of Revelation had not been written at the time, Peter would have consulted God’s promise in Isa 65:17, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind” (65:17). In 2 Pet 3:13, the apostle encourages his disheartened first-century beloved brethren, who were concerned over the delay in Christ’s return, by reminding them of God’s promise in Isa 65:17–19 of a better world beyond Armageddon and the future millennium: “According to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13).

Further, in 2 Pet 3:10–13, Peter follows the *contextual telescoping* pattern of Isa 65:17–25, but in chronological order. As Isaiah telescoped from the *eternal state* back to the *millennium*, Peter telescoped from the Armageddon conflagration and its *millennium* benefits forward to the *eternal state*, two distinct eschatological events telescoped together in the same context, which is a common literary feature in biblical prophetic literature and is the subject of the next chapter.

Summarizing, the conflagration in the distinct event of 2 Pet 3:10–12 pertains solely to the Armageddon conflagration and its cleansing benefits for earth’s restoration for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*), while the distinct event of 2 Pet 3:13 telescopes to the distant future (with no conflagration) to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth, two distinct prophecies in the same context.

Therefore, the following seven reasons affirm *sola Scriptura* the thesis and the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13:

- 1) Scripture confirms that the *old* earth, moon, sun, and, by implication, the stars, will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26; 2 Pet 3:10d) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*);
- 2) Scripture confirms that the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 will cleanse the earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) of its pollutants resulting in a clear sky such that “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (Isa 30:26) (*millennial restoration*);
- 3) Scripture confirms that the sun will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26; 2 Pet 3:10d) to enable the photosynthesis of plants and trees on the immensely productive crop-bearing millennial earth (cf. Isa 35:2; Amos 9:13) (*millennial restoration*);
- 4) The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 interpret 2 Pet 3:10–13 based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures;
- 5) The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 does *not* force a biblically untenable ‘conflagration’ meaning on Rev 20:11;
- 6) Scripture confirms that *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, that King Jesus will restore the earth to its Edenic state for Christ’s future earthly

- millennial reign (cf. Isa 51:3, “Her wilderness He will make like Eden”; and Ezek 36:35, “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’”) (*millennial restoration*); and
- 7) Second Pet 3:10–13, which follows the *contextual telescoping* pattern of Isa 65:17–25 but in chronological order, concerns the Armageddon conflagration with its cleansing benefits for the future *millennium* while 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth; two distinct eschatological events telescoped together in the same context, which is a common literary feature in biblical prophetic literature.

Therefore, as argued in the thesis, the above seven reasons affirm *sola Scriptura* that the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the telescoped *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are biblical. Consequently, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are held to be the author’s intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 and the biblical view.

Chapter Summary

Second Pet 3:10–13 concerns “the heavens” (v. 10), “the earth” (v. 10), “the heavens” (v. 12), the “new heavens” (v. 13), and the “new earth” (v. 13). Therefore, the passage pertains to the eschatological future of the universe. Consequently, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is a cosmology “that deals with the nature of the universe.”³⁸³ Specifically, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is God’s revealed future cosmology that is supported by other cosmologically related texts throughout the Scriptures.

³⁸³ Merriam-Webster, “Cosmology,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cosmology>.

More specifically, 2 Pet 3:10–13 is God’s revealed future cosmology that involves a conflagration in 3:10–12 and the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth in 3:13. To gain an understanding of Christian interpretations dating back centuries on 2 Pet 3:10–13, this chapter has discussed three conflagration cosmology views of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in six sections.

Section one discussed the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 which interprets the passage as a *single meaning* prophecy teaching that the physical universe will be destroyed (annihilated) by cosmic conflagration and replaced with the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). Minucius Felix, Lloyd-Jones, Walvoord, MacArthur, and Overstreet, argue for the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Section two discussed why the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is unbiblical. Since Scripture teaches that the earth (2 Pet 3:10d), moon, sun, and, by implication, the stars (Isa 30:26), will still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, and since in Rev 20:11, ἔφωγεν, *vanished*, interpreted as conflagration is biblically untenable, the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed unbiblical.

Section three discussed the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 which interprets the passage as a *single meaning* prophecy teaching that the physical universe will be burned, not for annihilation, but for restoration, being the restoration of the present *old* universe for the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). Origin, Augustine, Riddlebarger, Blaising, Svingel, and Kimbrell, argue for the *eternal state restoration cosmic conflagration* cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Section four discussed why the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is unbiblical. Since the *old* universe will *no longer exist* for the eternal state (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 20:11; 22:5), since the features of the *new* earth are not comparable to those of the present *old* earth (cf. Rev 21:16), and since landscapes of former battles and graveyards would undoubtedly cause the former things to be remembered and come to mind (contra to Isa 65:17), the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is deemed unbiblical.

Section five discussed the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13. This cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 interprets the passage as a *contextual telescoping* prophecy teaching that the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 will cleanse by fire the earth’s surface and earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) for restoration for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*), while 2 Pet 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1). Irenaeus, Methodius, and Lactantius, evidence holding the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13.

Section six discussed why the *contextual telescoping* interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10–13, namely, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the telescoped *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13, are biblical. The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 interprets the passage based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures. This view recognizes that *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration that γῆ . . . εὑρεθήσεται, *the earth . . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d). Also, the moon, sun, and, by implication, the stars, will be

found (cf. Isa 30:26). Thus, Bible translations quoted in this chapter that render portions of 2 Pet 3:10–12 as heavenly bodies (celestial bodies) burning up and dissolving at the Armageddon conflagration are deemed mistranslations.

Regarding the eternal state cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13, this view also interprets the passage based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures. In 2 Pet 3:10–13, Peter follows the *contextual telescoping* pattern of Isa 65:17–25, but in chronological order. As Isaiah telescoped from the *eternal state* back to the *millennium*, Peter telescoped from the Armageddon conflagration and its *millennium* benefits forward to the *eternal state*, two distinct eschatological events telescoped together in the same context, which is a common literary feature in biblical prophetic literature and is the subject of the next chapter.

Summarizing, this chapter noted seven reasons that affirm *sola Scriptura* that the thesis and the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the telescoped *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are biblical. Consequently, as argued in the thesis, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are held to be the author's intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 and the biblical view.

CHAPTER 6

TELESCOPING IN BIBLICAL PROPHETIC LITERATURE SUCH AS 2 PETER 3:10–13

Jesus employed the rhetorical and literary features of *telescoping*. Six days before the Passover and His crucifixion, on “the Saturday before the Passion Week,”³⁸⁴ notes Harold Hoehner, Jesus arrived in Bethany, near Jerusalem (John 12:1). On Monday (Nisan 10, Exod 12:3) when the Passover (Paschal) lamb is selected, which was four days before the killing of the lamb (Nisan 14, Exod 12:6) and the Lamb’s crucifixion, Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumphal entry (Matt 21:9–10) as Israel’s Passover Lamb to atone for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). The crowd cheered Jesus as He rode into the city on a donkey: “BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.” (Matt 21:9; cf. Ps 118:26). On Wednesday, two days before His crucifixion, Jesus was teaching in the temple before a crowd that included His disciples but also scribes and Pharisees on whom He pronounced eight woes (cf. Matt 21:23; 23:1–39; 26:2). When concluding His teaching in the temple, Jesus prophesied to the crowd: “From now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Matt 23:39; cf. Ps 118:26). Of course, over the next two days, His disciples and opponents saw Jesus, especially on Friday, as He hung on the cross. After Jesus’ resurrection, He appeared to His disciples over the course of forty days, and on one occasion, He appeared “to more than five hundred brethren at one time” (1 Cor 15:6; cf. Acts 1:3). Was Jesus dishonest when He told the temple crowd in the historical setting forty-five days earlier, “From now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Matt 23:39)? No! Instead, Jesus was telescoping His second advent in the sky almost two thousand years distant

³⁸⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1977), 91.

thus far (Matt 24:29–31; 1 Thess 4:16–17; Heb 9:28; Rev 1:7). Thus, Jesus employed the rhetorical and literary feature of *telescoping* a distant event, which will be demonstrated as common in biblical prophetic literature.

The angel Gabriel also employed the rhetorical and literary feature of telescoping (Luke 1:26–38). Gabriel prophesied to Mary about her immaculate conception: “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:31–33). In verse 31, Gabriel told Mary that she would bear a Son and that she was to name Him Jesus, which was fulfilled. In verses 32–33, Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be given the earthly throne of David, would reign over Israel, and would reign over a kingdom with no end, which has not been fulfilled. Likely, Mary interpreted Gabriel’s words to mean that her Son, Jesus, upon maturity, would reign on earth as King over Israel and that His kingdom would never end, which is how most first-century Jews interpreted their coming Messiah. However, since verses 32–33 (Jesus’ reign) remain unfulfilled almost two thousand years later, was Gabriel dishonest in the historical setting when he told Mary about Jesus’ reign? No! Instead, Gabriel employed the rhetorical and literary feature of *telescoping* a distant event, which will be demonstrated as common in biblical prophetic literature.

For expositors (e.g., supercessionists) who interpret Luke 1:31–33 as teaching that Jesus is presently reigning as King over Israel, it should be noted that the prophecy states that “the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:31–33). At this writing, most of the house of Jacob (Israel) rejects Jesus as their Messiah and King. Reportedly, it is common in modern Israel for Jews to spit on the

ground at the mention of the name of Jesus.³⁸⁵ Thus, it could be argued that Jesus is not presently reigning on the earthly “throne of His father David” or “over the house of Jacob” (Luke 1:32–33), many of whom hate Him (John 7:7). However, this rebellious attitude will change at Christ’s advent at Armageddon when Jesus returns to fight for the Jews in Jerusalem, many of whom will have become by that time followers of Him (cf. Rev 7:4). At Armageddon, Zechariah foretells that “they will look on Me (Jesus) whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son” (Zech 12:10). Consequently, following Armageddon, that is, during the future millennium and eternal state, Jesus will assume the earthly “throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32–33). Therefore, Gabriel’s prophecy told to Mary that her Son, Jesus, would be given the earthly “throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32–33), which remains unfulfilled almost two thousand years later, was not a false statement. Instead, Gabriel employed the rhetorical and literary feature of telescoping a distant event, which will be demonstrated as common in biblical prophetic literature.

Hence, when prophesying, not only did Jesus and the angel Gabriel employ telescoping, but it will also be proven that the psalmists, prophets, and apostles Matthew, Luke, Peter, and John also employed telescoping. Consequently, this chapter will discuss telescoping in biblical prophetic literature, such as found in 2 Pet 3:10–13, in five sections: 1) Types of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature; 2) Opponents of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature; 3) Characteristics of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature; 4) The Big Picture Reason for

³⁸⁵ Michael Brown, “Detained for Hours by the Police as Men Spit on the Name of Jesus: My Day in Jerusalem,” *Charismanews*, <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/in-the-line-of-fire/71306-detained-for-hours-by-the-police-as-men-spit-on-the-name-of-jesus-my-day-in-jerusalem>.

Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature; and 5) Eye-Opening Evidence of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature.

Types of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature

God revealed future events to His prophets and apostles that involved *forthtelling*, which are predictions that pertain to the historical setting, that is, the present or *near* future in the historical period. Randall Otto is correct that “biblical prophecy has more to do with ‘forthtelling.’”³⁸⁶ Biblical prophecy also contains *foretelling*, which are predictions given in the historical setting about the *distant* future. When *foretelling* in the historical setting about the *distant* future, it is often referred to as *telescoping*.³⁸⁷ There are two types of telescoping prophecies in biblical prophetic literature: 1) Double Fulfillment Telescoping Prophecies; and 2) Contextual Telescoping Prophecies.

Double Fulfillment Telescoping Prophecies

An example of a double fulfillment prophecy is Ps 22:1, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” In the historical setting, David apparently prayed for God’s help against his

³⁸⁶ Randal E. Otto, “The Prophets and Their Perspective,” *CBQ* 63 (2001): 219.

³⁸⁷ *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* explains *foretelling* and *telescoping*: “How, then, do we interpret ‘foretelling’ (i.e., predictive) prophecies that apparently go beyond the OT period? The simple answer is that we must interpret them in light of the NT. . . . First, the OT prophets understood that *history has two major periods—the present age and the age to come*. . . . Second, it is helpful to understand that the OT prophets have a *telescopic view* of the future. . . . Similarly, the prophets saw the future as a single succession of events . . . , but the NT shows that, in fact, large time gaps intervene between them,” quoted in William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 480. However, George Eldon Ladd referred to the *telescopic view* of the future in which large time gaps intervene between biblical prophecies as the “foreshortened view of the future,” quoted in George Eldon Ladd, *The Theology of the New Testament*, Revised ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 194. Thus, scholarship has not settled on a specific term to describe the large time gaps that intervene between certain biblical prophecies. Yet, the term *telescoping* is often used. See: Henry A. Virkler and Karelyne G. Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes in Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 114. Also, John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 60f. Also, John F. Walvoord, *Revelation*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 984.

enemies but felt that his prayers were not being answered and that God had forsaken him. Yet, Ps 22:1 has a double fulfillment in Matt 27:46 when Jesus from the cross cried this prayer to His Father, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” Richard France adds that Scripture was being fulfilled through Jesus’ death with Matt 27:46 quoting Ps 22:1.³⁸⁸ Notably, the double fulfillment occurs about a thousand years from the historical setting.

Craig Blomberg remarks that an Old Testament prophetic text may point “both to and beyond its immediate historic context. . . . This phenomenon, which I am provisionally entitling ‘double fulfillment,’ emerges particularly prominently in Isaiah.”³⁸⁹ However, Blomberg qualifies his meaning of *double fulfillment*:

The expression “double fulfillment” at times has been a virtual synonym for *sensus plenior*, that is, the idea that an OT text has a straightforward literal meaning and a second, more esoteric or opaque meaning, often understood to be part of the divine intent of the text but not consciously in the human author's mind. That is most assuredly not how I am using the expression. Rather, by double fulfillment, I mean that in a number of texts from the latter prophets cited by Matthew, and especially in Isaiah, the results of an ordinary grammatico-historical exegesis of the OT text point clearly to a referent within the time frame of the OT books. Yet those same passages, especially when read within the context of their immediately surrounding paragraphs or chapters, disclose a further dimension of meaning never approximated by any OT-age event. It seems plausible, therefore, to affirm that the prophetic author consciously looked both for a relatively immediate referent and for a more longer-term eschatological fulfillment.³⁹⁰

Accordingly, Blomberg relates that specific biblical prophecies may have a partial fulfillment historically and a second fuller eschatological fulfillment constituting a *double fulfillment*.

Prophecies with two fulfillments are often referred to with various terms, such as multiple fulfillments, multiple meanings, multiple sense, prophetic compenetration, prophetic perspective,

³⁸⁸ Richard T. France, *Matthew*, in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., eds. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 942.

³⁸⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment,” *TJ* 23 (2002): 19.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

double reference, and double fulfillment, with *double fulfillment* seemingly the most common. Although the writer hesitates to acknowledge double fulfillment prophecies as telescoping, these prophecies are often treated as such since the first partial fulfillment may be separated from the fuller second (double) fulfillment by several centuries. Therefore, technically, double fulfillment prophecies may be regarded as telescoping. Dwight Pentecost explains using the term ‘double reference’: “Few laws are more important to observe in the interpretation of prophetic Scriptures than the law of double reference [double fulfillment]. Two events, widely separated as to the time of their fulfillment, may be brought together into the scope of one prophecy. This was done because the prophet had a message for his own day as well as for a future time.”³⁹¹ Therefore, the Old and New Testaments reflect progressive revelation consistent with the initial prophetic statement.

Another example of a double fulfillment prophecy is Ps 118:26, “BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!” This Psalm was partially fulfilled historically at Jesus’ first advent when the welcoming crowd shouted this phrase to the Messiah as He triumphally entered Jerusalem (cf. Matt 21:9). However, Ps 118:26 will have a fuller double fulfillment at Jesus’ eschatological second advent when He returns in the sky (cf. Matt 23:39; 24:29–31; 1 Thess 4:16–17; Heb 9:28; Rev 1:7). Hence, Ps 118:26 is a double fulfillment prophecy that telescopes from Christ’s first advent (first fulfillment) to His eschatological second advent (second fulfillment); two fulfillments of one prophecy separated thus far by almost two thousand years. Hence, double fulfillment prophecies do not reflect contrary revelation but progressive revelation.

³⁹¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 46.

Kim Riddlebarger, an amillenarian, also acknowledges double fulfillment prophecies: “There are specific instances in the Scriptures when a prophet foretold what appears to be a single future event, but as history unfolded, it became clear that the original prophecy referred to multiple events. Certain prophecies may have double or multiple fulfillments.”³⁹² Yet, even though Scripture contains some *double fulfillment* prophecies, there are numerous *contextual telescoping* prophecies in biblical prophetic literature.

Contextual Telescoping Prophecies

Contextual telescoping prophecies telescope in the same passage (i.e., the same context) one or more distant messianic or eschatological events. William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr., relate that Bible prophecies may telescope prophetic events in the same passage in which “large time gaps intervene between them.”³⁹³ In such prophecies, the prophet *forthtells* in the historical setting but then *foretells* by telescoping forward to some distant messianic or eschatological events(s) and then often telescopes back to the historical setting. For instance, Isa 9:1–8 telescopes in the same context from the historical setting to four messianic and eschatological events (Christ’s first advent, future millennium, Armageddon, and Christ’s second advent and reign), and then telescopes back to the historical setting, covering a period of more than two thousand years in one passage. Specifically, Isa 9:1–8 begins with the historical setting (v. 1):

- 1) Then telescopes to Christ’s first advent (v. 2);
- 2) Then telescopes to the future millennium (v. 3);

³⁹² Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 71.

³⁹³ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 480.

- 3) Then telescopes back to Armageddon (vv. 4–5; cf. Isa 66:15–16);
- 4) Then telescopes back to Christ’s first advent (v. 6a);
- 5) Then telescopes forward to Christ’s second advent and reign (vv. 6b–7); and
- 6) Then telescopes back to the historical setting (v. 8).

Notably, Isa 9:1–8 is not unique in Scripture. Instead, there are numerous *contextual telescoping* prophecies in biblical prophetic literature, as will be demonstrated. In Scripture, Walvoord comments that telescoping is well established: “The principle is well established in Scripture that distant events are often telescoped together. . . . As in Isaiah 65:17–25 (vv. 17–19 refer to the new heaven and new earth whereas vv. 20–25 clearly refer to the Millennium).”³⁹⁴

Even though telescoping is well established in Scripture, this rhetorical and literary feature is not characteristic of contemporary communication. Accordingly, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., explain a helpful way to understand *telescoping* in biblical prophetic literature:

It is helpful to understand that the . . . prophets have a *telescopic view* of the future. From Denver, Colorado, the Rocky Mountains appear on the western horizon as a series of distant peaks close together, though in reality, the peaks are many miles from each other. Similarly, the prophets saw the future as a single succession of events . . . , but the New Testament shows that, in fact, large time gaps intervene between them. . . . Isaiah 9:6–7 (MT 9:5–6) provides a good example: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . He will reign on David’s throne . . . from that time on and forever.” Isaiah foresees the birth of a royal son who will reign on David’s throne forever. The text assumes that the birth and reign occur during the son’s lifetime—that he will succeed his father closely. . . . Unlike Isaiah, who sees the birth and reign of this future Davidic ruler as telescoped (i.e., chronologically close rather than separated), the NT teaches that the present so-called church age comes between Christ’s birth and his future earthly reign.³⁹⁵

Thus, as Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr. noted, the “prophets have a *telescopic view* of the future,”³⁹⁶ which results in large time gaps often intervening between their predicted events,

³⁹⁴ Walvoord, *Revelation*, 984.

³⁹⁵ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 480.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

called *telescoping*. Accordingly, Bible prophecies may contain *double fulfillment* or *contextual telescoping* prophecies in which the fulfillments may be separated by “large time gaps.”³⁹⁷ Yet, some expositors oppose *telescoping* interpretations of biblical prophetic literature.

Opponents of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature

One reason why some expositors oppose double fulfillment and *telescoping* interpretations of biblical prophetic literature is because these interpretations conflict with their allegorical (nonliteral) view of Bible prophecy. Walvoord explains:

Amillenarians . . . usually find the first strong advocacy of amillennialism in the school of theology at Alexandria, Egypt. . . . Amillenarians usually concede that the basic approach of the Alexandrian school was to take Scripture, especially prophecy, in a nonliteral sense. They regarded the entire Bible as one great allegory. . . . Most amillenarians trace their view to Augustine (354–430). . . . Augustine was the father of amillennialism because he discarded the allegorical system of interpretation of the Bible as a whole as advanced by the school of Alexandria in favor of limiting allegorical interpretation to prophetic Scriptures only. . . . Holding that prophecy is a special case requiring nonliteral interpretation. It is this difference with premillennialism which is the basic problem in the continued discussion between premillenarians and amillenarians.”³⁹⁸

Therefore, because some expositors hold that Bible prophecy is a special case requiring allegorical (nonliteral) interpretation, the view that biblical prophecies are often literal and telescoped tends to be opposed.

A second reason why certain expositors oppose double fulfillment and telescoping interpretations of biblical prophetic literature is because they believe that Bible prophecies were fulfilled in their historical settings. Henry Virkler and Karelyne Ayayo comment on this controversy: The “issue, and one about which there is considerable controversy among

³⁹⁷ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 480.

³⁹⁸ Walvoord, “Interpreting Prophecy Today Part 1,” 5–6.

contemporary evangelicals, is whether prophetic passages have single or multiple meanings [i.e., double fulfillment or contextual telescoping meanings].”³⁹⁹

With exceptions, the Antiochian theologian Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428 CE) exhibited the proclivity of interpreting the whole of Bible prophecies as being fulfilled in their historical settings. Robert Hill remarks concerning Theodore of Mopsuestia: “We shall see him desperately trying to root the prophets in historical situations, even when the scenario is thoroughly apocalyptic. . . . Theodore . . . in particular would like to remain at this historical level of meaning, not admitting an eschatological sense.”⁴⁰⁰

Similarly, Otto argues that Bible prophecies were fulfilled in their historical contexts: “Fulfillment within the prophet's time had to be fundamental to the discernment of the validity of his words.”⁴⁰¹ To support his claim, Otto refers to Mic 5:2, which foretells the Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem: “From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” Yet even though Matthew in 2:6 cites Mic 5:2 regarding the foretold birth of the Messiah, Jesus, in Bethlehem, Otto declares that “it should be clear that the prophet Micah did not intend to forecast the birth of Jesus Christ many centuries beyond his chronological period, the eighth century B.C. To say he did so by means of ‘prophetic perspective’ [*telescoping*] violates the nature of prophecy.”⁴⁰² Yet, it seems that Otto’s perspective violates the nature of biblical prophecy. Isaiah remarks that God declares “the end

³⁹⁹ Henry A. Virkler and Karelynn G. Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes in Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 118.

⁴⁰⁰ Robert C. Hill, trans. *Theodore of Mopseustia: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, vol. 108 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, eds. Thomas P. Halton et al. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 13, 103.

⁴⁰¹ Otto, “The Prophets and Their Perspective,” 239.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 236–7.

from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done” (46:10). That is the nature of biblical prophecy—God *foretelling* the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that will happen hundreds or even thousands of years distant (i.e., *telescoping* distant events). Nevertheless, Otto rejects double fulfillment and *telescoping* interpretations of biblical prophecy:

How can it be said that the prophets were indifferent to the ‘element of time’ when they spoke to the exigencies of their day and when the validation of their prophetic callings was largely contingent upon the fulfillment of their predictions within their lifetime (see Deut 18:22)? . . . If it was the prophet’s intention to speak to his own time and situation, is it not illegitimate for subsequent interpreters to take the prophets words out of their original context and assign them to a time and situation many centuries hence? . . . What a prophet predicted was generally expected to occur within his lifetime or generation, not to be deferred into the distant future. . . . ‘Prophetic perspective’ [double fulfillments and telescoping] is an invalid and irresponsible hermeneutical principle because it does not respect the intention and historical perspective.⁴⁰³

To further support his claim that the fulfillment of Bible prophecies occurred in their historical contexts and that interpretations of double fulfillments and telescoping are illegitimate, Otto references Deut 18:22, which is the test for ascertaining a true or false prophet. Deut 18:22 says that if a prophet speaks something that does not come true, the people “shall not be afraid of him.” Yet, Moses, speaking for the Lord, foretold that “God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him” (Deut 18:15). However, Moses’ prophecy was not fulfilled, using Otto’s words, “within his [Moses] lifetime or generation,”⁴⁰⁴ but over a millennia later in the Messiah, Jesus.

Consequently, how should the test in Deut 18:22 for determining a true or false prophet be interpreted? Gordon McConville explains: “The answer in v. 22 is that a false prophet’s words

⁴⁰³ Otto, “The Prophets and Their Perspective,” 220, 228, 240.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

will not come true. This answer posed its own difficulties. Jeremiah faced the problem of recognition acutely, and his words did not come true until many years after he had begun to preach. However, in practice, a prophet's genuineness would in many cases be recognizable over a period of ministry."⁴⁰⁵ Accordingly, Bible prophecies were not always fulfilled in their historical contexts, such as those by Jesus (Matt 23:39), the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26–38), and Moses (Deut 18:15).

Thus, *forthtelling* predictions, unless conditional (e.g., Jonah 3:4), were fulfilled in their historical contexts or the near future. *Foretelling* predictions were or will be fulfilled in the distant future. Some *foretelling* predictions contain *double fulfillment* prophecies (e.g., Pss 22:1; 118:26). Other *foretelling* predictions are grouped in the same context, *contextual telescoping* prophecies (e.g., Isa 9:1–8), such that in the same context, one or more prophecies telescope to and from the distant future, which characterizes telescoping in biblical prophetic literature.

Characteristics of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature

Telescoping by God's prophets to the distant future has long been misunderstood, as exhibited by Martin Luther: "They have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head or tail of them or see what they are getting at."⁴⁰⁶ Indeed, without an awareness of the literary feature of *telescoping* in biblical prophetic literature, it would seem that the prophets ramble from one thing to another.

⁴⁰⁵ J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*, in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., eds. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 217.

⁴⁰⁶ Martin Luther, quoted in Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, Vol. 2, eds. James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsom, and David L. Petersen, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1965), 33. A translation of *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Bd. II, *Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels*, published by Chr. Kaiser Verlag, Munich, in 1960.

However, the prophets did not ramble; instead, they telescoped from one thing to another, often from the historical (which is not prophetic but may recount a present or past event in the life of Israel or the prophet) to the messianic or eschatological, or to both, then back to the historical. An example is Ps 66:1–6, in which the psalmist in the historical setting (vv. 1–3a) encourages praise towards God:

- 1) Then, in v. 3b, the psalmist telescopes millennia to the eschatological final judgment: “Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You” (cf. Matt 25:32–33; Rev 20:12–15);
- 2) Then, in v. 4, the psalmist telescopes both in reverse and forward to the millennial earth and the eternal state new earth: “All the earth will worship You” (cf. Hab 2:14; Rev 21:3);
- 3) Then, in v. 5, the psalmist telescopes to the messianic: “Come and see the works of God” (cf. John 9:3); and
- 4) Then the psalmist returns to the historical (v. 6).

Thus, even though the predictive prophecy in Ps 66:1–6 seems to be rambling “from one thing to the next,”⁴⁰⁷ it is not rambling but is *telescoping* from one thing to the next. Virkler and Ayayo comment on the different time frames in which predictive prophecy telescopes:

The fulfillment of predictive prophecies involves three different time frames. The majority of the time Old Testament prophecy concerns events in the prophet’s near future. . . . The second time period of prophetic fulfillment is the messianic period. Finally, other prophecy is eschatological and will be fulfilled in the end times. Prophetic statements occasionally telescope all three time periods [e.g., Ps 66:1–6].⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Luther, quoted in Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 33.

⁴⁰⁸ Virkler and Ayayo, *Hermeneutics*, 114.

Hence, Virkler and Ayayo note three different time periods—the historical, messianic, and eschatological—in which specific Bible prophecies telescope. Notably, however, there is no clear distinction between the messianic and the eschatological. For example, Isa 9:6a refers to the Messiah’s birth, and 9:6b refers to the Messiah’s future reign. Thus, the Messiah’s birth and future reign could be considered messianic. Yet, the distinction that Virkler and Ayayo seem to make is in referring to the Messiah’s birth and earthly ministry in the first century CE as being the messianic period and any future prophetic event from that period the eschatological (e.g., Christ’s parousia). Accordingly, *telescoping* between three different time periods—the historical, messianic, and eschatological—characterizes this literary feature in Bible prophecy. George Eldon Ladd further explains the telescoping phenomenon in Scripture:

Jesus spoke both of the fall of Jerusalem and of his own eschatological parousia [cf. Luke 21:20–27]. Cranfield has suggested that in Jesus’ own view the historical and the eschatological are mingled and that the final eschatological event is seen through the “transparency” of the immediate historical. The present author has applied this thesis to the Old Testament prophets and found this foreshortened [*telescoping*] view of the future to be one of the essential elements in the prophetic perspective. In Amos, the Day of the Lord is both a historical (Amos 5:18–20) and an eschatological event (Amos 7:4; 8:8–9; 9:5). Isaiah describes the historical day of visitation on Babylon as though it was the eschatological Day of the Lord (Isa. 13). Zephaniah describes the Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:7, 14) as a historical disaster at the hands of an unnamed foe (Zeph. 1:10–12, 16–17; 2:5–15); but he also describes it in terms of a worldwide catastrophe in which all creatures are swept off the face of the earth (Zeph. 1:2–3) so that nothing remains (Zeph. 1:18).⁴⁰⁹

Consequently, as Ladd explains concerning specific Bible prophecies, citing Cranfield, “the historical and the eschatological are mingled.”⁴¹⁰ Also, as Ladd notes, citing Cranfield, “the final eschatological event is seen through the ‘transparency’ of the immediate historical.”⁴¹¹ However,

⁴⁰⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *The Theology of the New Testament*, Revised ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 194. Also see, C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Mark 13,” *SJT* 6 (1953), 297–300.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

the ability of the ancients to see the final eschatological event through the ‘transparency’ of the immediate historical was frequently not evident until hindsight centuries later. For instance, Isa 9:6 concerning Jesus’ birth and reign. It was not apparent until after the Christ event that Isa 9:6 was a *contextual telescoping* prophecy with the Messiah’s birth (messianic) and His reign (eschatological) telescoped together in one passage by thus far over two thousand years.

Recognizably, telescoping in biblical prophetic literature can frustrate twenty-first-century Westerners unfamiliar with this rhetorical and literary method. As Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr. noted, “Several aspects of the prophetic books probably mystify and frustrate readers.”⁴¹² Therefore, discussing the big picture reason for telescoping in biblical prophetic literature may be helpful.

The Big Picture Reason for Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature

George Eldon Ladd comments on the big picture strategic aspect of Bible prophecy: “The prophets were little interested in chronology, and the future was always viewed as imminent. . . . The Old and New Testament prophets blended the near and the distant perspectives so as to form a single canvas [single scene or big picture].”⁴¹³ Accordingly, on a literary canvas, the prophets used words to paint a portrait with verbal images that often included the historical, messianic, or eschatological, or all three, in the same passage—the big picture.

Yet even though the picture that the prophets often portrayed by telescoping from the historical to the messianic or eschatological may seem big to humans, this does not necessarily mean that the picture is big to God. If a thousand years for humans is for eternal God “like one

⁴¹² Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 474.

⁴¹³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 22.

day” (2 Pet 3:8; cf. Ps 90:4), then Gabriel’s prophecy about the Messiah, Jesus, being born (Luke 1:31) and reigning (Luke 1:33) may be viewed from God’s perspective as encompassing perhaps only two or three days. Thus, all Bible prophecy for the eternal God is imminent, although two thousand years or more may elapse for humans and certainly not seem imminent.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the nature of Bible prophecy, as Rick Byargeon remarks: “In order to interpret prophecy, one must understand its nature.”⁴¹⁴ The nature of Bible prophecy is that it was primarily written from God’s perspective. No human, not even the Hebrew prophets or apostles, could foretell the future with 100% accuracy. Thus, all Bible prophecy was inspired by God “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:21; cf. 2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, God is the Author of Bible prophecy, and He determined its nature; it is written primarily from His perspective.

Thus, for short life span humans for whom 24 hours is one day, it may seem that many prophecies *telescope* prophetic events over long periods of one or two thousand years or more, which they do. Yet, telescoping is from a human perspective, not God’s. From God’s perspective, for whom a thousand years is “like one day” (2 Pet 3:8), all prophecies, unless conditional, will be fulfilled in a few short days. Thus, for the eternal God, all Bible prophecy is imminent!

Accordingly, a biblical prophetic literary portrait may telescope multiple prophetic events spanning two thousand years or more and may be visualized from the human perspective as projecting the big picture. Yet, from God’s perspective, it is not necessarily a big picture but

⁴¹⁴ Rick Byargeon, “Thus Saith the Lord: Interpreting the Prophetic Word,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, 2nd ed., eds. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 273.

covers events “which must soon take place” (Rev 22:6, a telescoping prophecy written almost two millennia ago).

Sandro Botticelli’s *The Mystic Nativity* (ca. 1500 CE) “combines Christ’s birth as told in the New Testament with a vision of His second coming as promised in the book of Revelation [the big picture on a single canvas].”⁴¹⁵ If a masterpiece painting can telescope the big picture (Messiah’s first advent and eschatological second advent) on a single canvas, cannot literature telescope the big picture (historical to the messianic or the eschatological or combine all three) in a single passage? That is precisely what the prophets did under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as demonstrated in eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature.

Eye-Opening Evidence of Telescoping in Biblical Prophetic Literature

Bible prophecy has some *double fulfillment* prophecies (e.g., Pss 22:1; 118:26). However, Bible prophecy has numerous *contextual telescoping* prophecies (e.g., Ps 66:1–6; Isa 9:1–8) such that in the same context one or more prophecies telescope to and from the distant future, as will be demonstrated. Accordingly, this section will present eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature in four subsections: 1) Evidence of Telescoping in the Psalms; 2) Evidence of Telescoping in the Major Prophets; 3) Evidence of Telescoping in the Minor Prophets; and 4) Evidence of Telescoping in the New Testament.

Evidence of Telescoping in the Psalms

Ps 16:7–11. Telescopes from the historical (v. 7) to the messianic ascended Lord (v. 8, “I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand”; cf., Mark 16:19; Acts

⁴¹⁵ “Sandro Botticelli: Paintings, and Biography,” *Masterpieces of Sandro Botticelli*, <https://www.sandro-botticelli.com/the-mystical-nativity.jsp>.

2:25), then telescopes back to the historical (v. 9), then telescopes back to the messianic (v. 10, “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay”), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 11).

Ps 22:1–19. Telescopes from the historical (vv. 1–5; note double fulfillment, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” v. 1; cf. Matt 27:46) to Christ’s first advent (vv. 6–18; “They pierced my hands and my feet” v. 16; cf. Isa 53; John 19:34–37), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 19).

Ps 46:5–10. Telescopes from the historical (v. 5) to Armageddon (vv. 6–8), then telescopes to the future millennium (v. 9; “He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth”; cf. Isa 2:4), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 10).

Ps 69:8–22. Telescopes from the historical (v. 8) to the messianic first advent of Christ (v. 9, “Zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me”; cf. John 2:17), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 10–19), then telescopes to the messianic crucifixion of Christ (vv. 20–21; “They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” v. 21; cf. Matt 27:34), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 22).

Ps 72:6–12. Telescopes from the historical (v. 6) to the future millennium (vv. 7–8; “Peace till the moon is no more. May He also rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth”), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 9–10), then telescopes forward to the future millennium (v. 11, “All nations serve him”), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 12).

Due to numerous telescoping prophecies in the Psalms, the following will not be discussed but are listed for reference: Pss 18:6–16; 50:1–7; 55:19–22; 66:1–6; 68:17–19; 87:3–7; 89:24–30; 96:10–13; 97:2–6; 110:1–7; 118:9–27.⁴¹⁶

There are also telescoping prophecies in the Major Prophets.

Evidence of Telescoping in the Major Prophets

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., explain the telescopic view of the prophets: “The prophets viewed the age to come telescopically as a whole scene without obvious time gaps, our interpretive task is to align the content of OT prophecies with the NT’s perspective. . . . To be specific, while OT prophets saw the coming age as a whole, the NT presents it as having several major phases.”⁴¹⁷ Thus, the prophets often telescope in the same passage (context) several major prophetic phases (*contextual telescoping* prophecies).

Isa 2:1–22. Telescopes from the historical (v. 1) to the future millennium (vv. 2–4, “They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” v. 4), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 5–18), then telescopes to the wrath of the Lamb judgments (vv. 19–21; cf. Hag 2:6; Rev 6:15–16), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 22).

Isa 11:1–16. Begins with the messianic first advent of Christ (vv. 1–2, “A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse. . . . The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on Him”), then telescopes to the final judgment (vv. 3–4a, “He will not judge by what His eyes see” v. 3), then telescopes back to Armageddon (vv. 4b–5, “With the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked” v. 4b; cf. Rev 19:15), then telescopes to the future millennium (vv. 6–13, “The wolf will dwell with the

⁴¹⁶ The listing of telescoping prophecies in the Psalms is not intended to be exhaustive.

⁴¹⁷ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 480–1.

lamb” v. 6), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 14–15), then telescopes to the future millennium (v. 16).

Isa 24:1–25:1. Begins with Armageddon (v. 1, “The LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants”; cf. Isa 13:13; 24:19; Zech 14:10); then telescopes back to the historical (v. 2), then telescopes to Armageddon (vv. 3–6, “The inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left [these few men and women will populate the future millennium]” v. 6; cf. Ps 97:3; Isa 11:6; 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 7–17), then telescopes to Armageddon (vv. 18–22, “The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. . . . They will be gathered together *like* prisoners in the dungeon” vv. 19, 22; cf. Hag 2:6; Rev 19:21; 20:5), then telescopes to the millennial reign of Christ (v. 23, “For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem”), and then telescopes back to the historical (25:1).

Isa 25:5–10. It begins with the historical (v. 5), then telescopes to the future millennium marriage supper of the Lamb (vv. 6–7, “On this mountain; a banquet of aged wine” v. 6; cf. Rev 19:9), then telescopes to the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (v. 8, “He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces”; cf. Isa 65:19; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:4), then telescopes back to Christ’s second advent in the sky (v. 9, “This is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. . . . Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation”; cf. Heb 9:28), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 10).

Isa 26:1–27:7. Begins with the historical (26:1), then telescopes to the eschatological new Jerusalem (v. 2, “Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter”; cf. Rev 21:26); then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 3–13), then telescopes to the final judgment (v. 14, “The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise; therefore You have punished and destroyed

them”), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 15–18), then telescopes to the resurrection of the righteous (v. 19, “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise”), then telescopes back to the tribulation of persecution (v. 20, “Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs *its* course”), then telescopes forward to the second advent return of Christ in the sky and the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb judgments (v. 21, “The LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth”; cf. Rev 6:16–17), then telescopes to the Gog and Magog war when Satan, the dragon, is sent to the lake of fire (27:1, “He will kill the dragon”; cf. Rev 20:10); then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 2–5), then telescopes to the future millennium (v. 6, “Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit”), and then telescopes back to the historical (v. 7).

Jer 23:1–8. Begins with the historical (vv. 1–2), then telescopes to the future millennium (vv. 3–4, “They [Israel] will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified” v. 4), then telescopes back to the messianic first advent of Christ (v. 5a, “*The* days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch”), then telescopes forward to the millennial and eternal reign of Christ (vv. 5b–6, “And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. . . . He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness’”), and then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 7–8).

Ezek 28:24–26. Telescopes from the historical (v. 24) to the future millennium (vv. 25–26, “They will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob. They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely”).

Dan 9:26–27. Telescopes from the first advent of the Messiah, Jesus, and His crucifixion (v. 26a), then telescopes to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (v. 26b), and then telescopes to the antichrist almost two thousand years distant thus far (v. 27).

Due to numerous telescoping prophecies in the Major Prophets, the following will not be discussed but are listed for reference: Isa 4:1–7; 7:13–15; 9:1–8; 13:7–14; 28:4–17; 30:18–31; 31:3–6; 32:1–19; 33:4–23; 34:1–5; 35:1–10; 40:2–12; 42:1–14; 43:1–3; 49:8–13; 50:5–9; 51:2–12; 52:12–15; 53:1–12; 54:8–16; 59:15–21; 61:1–8; 63:1–7; 65:1–26; Jer 25:29a–34; 30:1–11; Dan 12:2.⁴¹⁸

There are also telescoping prophecies in the Minor Prophets.

Evidence of Telescoping in the Minor Prophets

Hos 2:17–23. Telescopes from the historical (v. 17) to the future millennial Israel and the millennial saved Gentile nations (vv. 18–23, “I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety. . . . And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil. . . . And I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ and they will say, ‘*You are my God!*’” (vv. 18, 22–23; cf. Rom 11:17; Eph 2:14).

Joel 2:1–3:2. It begins with the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2:1–11, “The LORD utters His voice before His army. . . . The day of the Lord is indeed great”, cf. 2 Pet 3:10–12; Rev 19:14), then telescopes back to the historical (vv. 12–18), then telescopes to the future millennium (vv. 19–27, “I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil. . . . The vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. . . . Then My people will never be put to shame. Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God” vv. 19, 24, 26–27), then telescopes back to the messianic day of Pentecost (vv. 28–29, “I will pour out My Spirit on

⁴¹⁸ The listing of telescoping prophecies in the Major Prophets is not intended to be exhaustive.

all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy” v. 28), then telescopes forward to the second advent return of Christ in the sky (vv. 30–32a, “The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes” v. 30; cf. Matt 24:29–31; 1 Thess 4:16–17), then telescopes forward to the return of Christ to the earth at Armageddon (vv. 32b–3:2, “For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape. . . . I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat” vv. 32b–3:2; cf. Zech 14:2–5), and then telescopes back to the historical (3:3).

Due to numerous telescoping prophecies in the Minor Prophets, the following will not be discussed but are listed for reference: Joel 3:10–21; Amos 8:9–10; 9:11–15; Obad 1:15–18; Mic 1:3–4; 2:12–13; 4:1–7, 4:11–5:4; Nah 1:5–6; Hab 3:3–6, 12–13; Zeph 1:2–3, 14–18; 3:8–9, 15–20; Hag 2:6–7a, 21–22; Zech 1:8–11; 2:4–5, 10–12; 3:8–10; 6:2–3, 12–13; 8:3–8, 12, 19–23; 9:9–11, 14–17; 11:8–17; 12:2–10; 13:6–9; 14:2–21; Mal 3:1–4; 4:1–3.⁴¹⁹

There are also telescoping prophecies in the New Testament.

Evidence of Telescoping in the New Testament

Matt 23:39. Telescopes from the historical (v. 38) to Christ’s second advent in the sky (v.39, “From now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”); cf. Matt 24:29–31; 1 Thess 4:16–17; Heb 9:28).

Luke 1:31–33. Telescopes from Christ’s first advent earthly birth (v. 31) to Christ’s millennial and eternal reign (vv. 32–33).

Luke 21:8–28. Begins with the eschatological tribulation of persecution (vv. 8–19), then telescopes back to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (vv. 20–24, “Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” v. 24. Based on Matt

⁴¹⁹ The listing of telescoping prophecies in the Minor Prophets is not intended to be exhaustive.

24:15–22, verses 20–23 will have a double fulfillment), then telescopes forward to the second advent return of Christ in the sky (vv. 25–27), then telescopes back to the messianic historical first advent of Christ (v. 28).

2 Peter 3:10–13. Begins with the day of the Lord at Armageddon conflagration (vv. 10–12), and then telescopes more than a thousand years distant to the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (v. 13). Second Pet 3:10–13, the passage under study in this dissertation, demonstrates the same *contextual telescoping* characteristics found in scores of Bible prophecies, referenced above.

As noted in the previous chapter, 2 Pet 3:10–13 follows the telescoping pattern of Isa 65:17–25, but in chronological order. Isaiah 65:17–19 was the only prophetic text that addressed in detail the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth at the time 2 Peter was written. Therefore, Peter would have consulted this important prophecy and even followed Isaiah’s *contextual telescoping* model. In Isa 65:17–25, Isaiah telescoped from the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (vv. 17–19) back to the *millennium* (vv. 20–25). Likewise, in 2 Pet 3:10–13, Peter telescoped from the Armageddon conflagration and its cleansing benefits for the *millennium* (vv. 10–12) forward to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (v. 13), two distinct eschatological events telescoped together in the same context in both Isa 65:17–25 and 2 Pet 3:10–13, which is consistent with the common literary feature of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature.

Consequently, in this section, the eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature demonstrates the existence of some *double fulfillment* prophecies (e.g., Pss 22:1; 118:26) and numerous *contextual telescoping* prophecies in the Psalms, the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets, and the New Testament in which 2 Pet 3:10–13 is just one

example of a *contextual telescoping* prophecy. Yet, most contemporary expositors interpret 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a *single meaning* prophecy which influences conclusions that the physical universe will be burned or burned up for the transition to the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Therefore, an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is needed, which will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

Jesus and the angel Gabriel employed the rhetorical and literary feature of *telescoping* (Matt 23:39; Luke 1:26–38). The psalmists, prophets, and apostles Matthew, Luke, Peter, and John also employed the literary feature of telescoping. Consequently, this chapter has discussed telescoping in biblical prophetic literature such as 2 Pet 3:10–13 in the following five sections.

Section one discussed types of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature. There are two types of telescoping prophecies in the biblical text: *double fulfillment* and *contextual telescoping* prophecies.

Section two discussed opponents of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature. One reason why some expositors oppose telescoping interpretations of biblical prophetic literature is because these interpretations conflict with the allegorical (nonliteral) view of Bible prophecy. A second reason some expositors oppose telescoping interpretations of biblical prophetic literature is because they believe that Bible prophecies were fulfilled in their historical settings.

Section three discussed the characteristics of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature. Characterizing this literary feature is telescoping between three different time periods—the

historical, messianic, and eschatological. As Ladd explained concerning specific Bible prophecies, citing Cranfield, “the historical and the eschatological are mingled.”⁴²⁰

Section four discussed the big picture reason for telescoping in biblical prophetic literature. Accordingly, on a literary canvas, the prophets used words to paint a portrait with verbal images that often included the historical, messianic, or eschatological, or all three, in the same passage—the big picture.

Section five discussed eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature. The eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature demonstrates the existence of some *double fulfillment* prophecies (e.g., Pss 22:1; 118:26) and numerous *contextual telescoping* prophecies in the Psalms, the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets, and the New Testament in which 2 Pet 3:10–13 is just one example of a *contextual telescoping* prophecy. Yet, most contemporary expositors interpret 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a *single meaning* prophecy which influences conclusions that the physical universe will be burned or burned up for the transition to the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Therefore, an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 is needed, which will be presented in the next chapter.

⁴²⁰ Ladd, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 194. Also see, C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Mark 13,” *SJT* 6 (1953), 297–300.

CHAPTER 7

EXEGETICAL EXPOSITION OF 2 PETER 3:10–13

Special revelation has been communicated from God to man through divinely inspired human authors and recorded in the words of holy Scripture. To properly interpret Scripture, the expositor must conduct an exegetical exposition to determine the biblical author's likely intended meanings of significant words and phrases. Accordingly, this chapter will perform an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in three sections: 1) Semantic Study of Significant Greek Words and Phrases in 2 Peter 3:10–13; 2) Proposed Translation of 2 Peter 3:10–13; and 3) Exposition of 2 Peter 3:10–13.

Semantic Study of Significant Greek Words and Phrases in 2 Peter 3:10–13

To achieve accuracy in translation and interpretation, a semantic study will be conducted in this section to determine the biblical author's likely intended meanings of significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13. Following in bold type are significant words and phrases that will be studied in the Greek text of 2 Pet 3:10–13:

¹⁰ ἥξει δὲ **ἡμέρα κυρίου** ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ οἱ οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζήδον **παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.**

¹¹ Τούτων οὕτως πάντων **λυομένων** ποταποῦς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις,

¹² προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς **τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας**, δι' ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι **λυθήσονται** καὶ **στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται.**

¹³ καινοῦς δὲ **οὐρανοῦς** καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ.⁴²¹

Accordingly, this section will perform a semantic study of the following significant words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13: 1) Ἡμέρα Κυρίου (v. 10) and τοῦ θεοῦ Ἡμέρας (v. 12); 2) Οὐρανοὶ (vv. 10, 12) and Οὐρανοῦς (v. 13); Οὐρανός; 3) Παρελεύσονται (v. 10); Παρέρχομαι; 4) Στοιχεῖα

⁴²¹ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3:10–13.

(vv. 10, 12); Στοιχεῖον; 5) Καυσούμενα (vv. 10, 12); Καυσόω; 6) Λυθήσεται (v. 10); Λύω; 7) Καὶ Γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν Αὐτῇ Ἔργα Εὐρεθήσεται (v. 10); 8) Λυομένων (v. 11) and Λυθήσονται (v. 12); Λύω; and 9) Τήκεται (v. 12); Τήκω, and will argue the contextual meanings of these significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Ἡμέρα Κυρίου (v. 10) and τοῦ θεοῦ Ἡμέρας (v. 12)

The phrases ἡμέρα κυρίου, *the day of the Lord* (v. 10), and τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, *the day of God* (v. 12), are set in the context of fire and burning (καυσούμενα, v. 10, πυρούμενοι and καυσούμενα, v. 12; cf. πύρ, 2 Pet 3:7). Fire and burning are explicit references to the day of the Lord at Armageddon (cf. Isa 66:15–16; Mal 4:1–3; Rev 16:14–16; 19:11–12). The phrase *day of God* is only found in Rev 16:14 and 2 Pet 3:12 in reference to Armageddon. Accordingly, the phrases ἡμέρα κυρίου (v. 10) and τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας (v. 12) refer to *the day of the Lord* and *the day of God*, two expressions with the same meaning, at Armageddon.

Οὐρανοὶ (vv. 10, 12) and Οὐρανοῦς (v. 13); Οὐρανός

The accurate interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 hinges on the author’s intended meanings of pl. οὐρανοὶ (vv. 10, 12) and pl. οὐρανοῦς (v. 13); οὐρανός, *heaven, sky, air*.⁴²² The NASB, ESV, NET, NKJV, and KJV translate οὐρανός in 2 Pet 3:10, 12–13 as *heavens* while the NIV translates οὐρανός as *heavens* in vv. 10 and 12 and *heaven* in v. 13. Still, what *heavens* are in view in 2 Pet 3:10–13? There are four options. In Scripture, *heavens* (οὐρανός) may refer to: 1) the celestial *heavens* or *sky* of the stars and planets (Gen 15:5); 2) the earth’s *heavens, sky, or air* of earth’s atmosphere where birds fly, also called the *first heaven* or earth’s expanse (Gen 1:8; cf.

⁴²² Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, οὐρανός, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.288.

1:20; 7:11; Matt 6:26; Luke 17:24); 3) the *heavens* of God's abode (Ps 11:4); and 4) the eternal state of the *new heavens* (Rev 21:1).

In 2 Pet 3:13, the meaning of *heavens* (οὐρανοῦς; οὐρανός) is easy to discern. The heavens in this verse refer to option number four, the eternal state of the “new heavens.” This is easily understood because the text explicitly states the identity of οὐρανοῦς (οὐρανός) as the καινούς, *new*, οὐρανοῦς, *heavens*; the eternal state of the “new heavens.” Thus, 2 Pet 3:13 could be interpreted in isolation without even examining the context because the verse explicitly states the meaning of οὐρανοῦς. However, this is not the case with the *heavens* (οὐρανοὶ; οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12.

The *heavens* (οὐρανοὶ; οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 are set in the context of fire and burning motifs. Since oxygen-consuming earthly fire does not affect the spiritual heavens of God's abode, which apparently exists in another dimension not far above the earth (cf. Gen 28:12; Acts 1:9–11), the *heavens* in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 do *not* refer to option number three, the *heavens* of God's abode. Technically, oxygen-consuming earthly fire also does not affect the moons, stars, and planets outside Earth because celestial space is oxygen deprived, and earthly fire requires oxygen. As Andrew Scott et al. remark, “Earth is the only planet known to have fire. . . . Removal of oxygen leads to extinguishing a fire.”⁴²³ Nevertheless, further research is needed to determine if οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 refers to option number one, the celestial *heavens* or *sky* of the stars and planets (Gen 15:5), or to option number two, the earth's *heavens*, *sky*, or *air* of the atmosphere, also called the first *heaven* (Gen 1:8)? Consequently, it is necessary to re-examine the contextual analysis of the immediate and intertextual context of

⁴²³ Scott et al., *Fire on Earth*, xiii, 65.

these verses that was performed in chapter three, the important findings of which will clarify the author's intended meaning of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12.

As Rossing remarked regarding 2 Pet 3, “This epistle draws an analogy between end-times fire and the Genesis flood.⁴²⁴ In the immediate context of 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, the apostle reveals what happened at the Flood: “The world [κόσμος (*cosmos*)] at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water” (2 Pet 3:6). Scripture reveals what portion of the cosmos was destroyed at the Flood: “the earth” (Gen 6:13). “Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth’” (Gen 6:13).

Accordingly, the celestial heavens of stars, moons, and planets were *not* destroyed at the Flood and are *not* in view in 2 Pet 3:10–12, *only* the earth's heavens, the atmosphere or first heaven (Gen 1:8), often referred to in Scripture as the *heavens*.⁴²⁵ Peter foretells that the earth's “heavens will pass away” (2 Pet 3:10). Further, the intertextual context of Scripture reveals that the celestial *heavens* do ‘not’ pass away in 2 Pet 3:10–12 but will still exist for the post-Armageddon future millennium: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (Isa 30:26). Since the celestial heavens include the moon and sun, which is a star, by implication, all the stars, moons, and planets in celestial space will still exist and will *not* pass away at 2 Pet 3:10–12. Further, the sun will still exist after the 2 Pet 3:10–12 conflagration to provide photosynthesis for plants on the immensely productive post-Armageddon millennial earth (cf. Isa 35:2; Amos 9:13).

⁴²⁴ Rossing, “‘Hastening the Day’ When the Earth Will Burn?,” 366.

⁴²⁵ In Scripture, *heavens* (רָקִיעַ, οὐρανός) may refer to the earth's atmosphere, the first heaven (Gen 1:8), which is the expanse or firmament (Gen 1:20) where rain or dew falls and birds fly (cf. Deut 28:12; 33:28; Judg 5:4; 1 Kgs 8:35; 14:11; 16:4; 2 Chr 6:26; 7:13; Job 1:16; 35:5; 38:37; Pss 8:8; 68:8; 78:26; 104:12; Prov 23:5; Jer 4:25; 51:16; Ezek 31:13; 32:4; Zech 8:12, Matt 16:2–3; Luke 4:25, James 5:18, and Rev 6:14).

Therefore, Scripture is clear that the heavens (οὐρανός) in view in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 are earth's heavens, the atmosphere, or first heaven (Gen 1:8), *not* the celestial heavens. Earth's heavens, which were destroyed at the Flood (cf. Gen 6:13; 2 Pet 3:6), produce today's *breaking news* of devastating hurricanes, deadly tornadoes, blinding sandstorms, and parched earth famines. Earth's present heavens, which were destroyed at the Flood and are presently corrupted (cf. Rom 8:21) "will pass away" (2 Pet 3:10) by cleansing fire on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12) so Christ can restore the earth's surface and atmosphere (first heaven) to its Edenic state (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ's future earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*).

Having established from Scripture that the meaning of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is earth's heavens, the atmosphere or *first heaven* (Gen 1:8), how should οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 be translated? As noted, five modern Bible translations render οὐρανός in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 as *heavens*. *Heavens* is a good word-for-word rendering of οὐρανός in these verses. However, millions of Christians interpret *heavens* to mean the celestial heavens of stars, planets, and moons, which have been proven by Scripture are *not* in view in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12.

Therefore, the suggested approach to translating οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is to utilize the approach of the *New International Version* translators who pursued accuracy in translation and "its faithfulness to the intended meaning of the biblical writers. This has moved the translators to go beyond a formal word-for-word rendering of the original texts. . . . Accurate communication of the meaning of the biblical authors demands constant regard for varied contextual uses of words."⁴²⁶ Therefore, since Scripture proves that the author's intended

⁴²⁶ The Committee on Bible Translation, *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), preface.

meaning of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is *only* earth's heavens, the atmosphere or *first heaven* (Gen 1:8), the best translation to express the author's intended meaning for οὐρανοὶ; οὐρανός in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is *first heaven*.

Παρελεύσονται (v. 10); Παρέρχομαι

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven*⁴²⁷ *παρελεύσονται*.

W. Bauer et al. explain that *παρελεύσονται* (παρέρχομαι) means “to come to an end and so no longer be there, *pass away, disappear* [Matt 24:34; Luke 16:17].”⁴²⁸ NASB translates *παρελεύσονται*, *will pass away*, and NIV, *will disappear*. Both are good translations of *παρελεύσονται* in 2 Pet 3:10 but *pass away* is favored.

Concerning *pass away* in 2 Pet 3:10, Neyrey asks an astute question: “In 3:10, the author says that only ‘the heavens’ will pass away. What about Earth?”⁴²⁹ Neyrey is correct. Peter only says that the *first heaven* will *pass away*; the earth does *not* pass away on the day of the Lord at Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10–12). Afterward, *γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται*, *the earth and the works done on it will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d, proposed).

Since the old earth will not pass away at the Armageddon conflagration, why does the *first heaven* (Gen 1:8) “pass away” (2 Pet 3:10b)? The first heaven, and everything on the earth's

⁴²⁷ *Heavens* is the best word-for-word rendering of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12. However, millions of Christians interpret *heavens* to mean the celestial heavens of stars and planets which are not in view in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, because they will still exist after the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26). The heavens in view in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 are earth's heavens, the atmosphere where birds fly, called the *first heaven* (Gen 1:8). Therefore, to convey the author's intended meaning of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, the best thought-for-thought translation for οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is *first heaven*.

⁴²⁸ W. Bauer et al., *παρέρχομαι*, *BDAG*, 776.

⁴²⁹ Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243.

surface, was destroyed at Noah’s Flood (cf. Gen 6:13; 2 Pet 3:6). After creation, when God declared that His handiwork “was very good” (Gen 1:31), it is given that He did not create the first heaven (the atmosphere) such that it would produce deadly tornadoes like the one that struck Joplin, Missouri, in May 2011, killing 158 people⁴³⁰ and destroying a significant area of the city. The earth at creation was an Edenic earth, about which paleontological evidence indicates had a global mild climate with large herds of animals grazing on soft ground with abundant vegetation in northern Siberia.⁴³¹ The original earth and first heaven were created for a holy people (Gen 1:26). The present earth and first heaven, destroyed at the Flood (Gen 6:13), are for sinful people among whom many hate God (John 7:7) and worship Satan.⁴³²

However, on the day of the Lord at Armageddon, when the Lord slays all the wicked on the earth (cf. Rev 19:21; Isa 13:9; Zech 14:12; “Mal 4:3, “the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing”) and sends them to the abyss, King Jesus will be alone once again with His holy people on the earth. The Lord will then proceed to restore the earth to its Edenic state (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*), and the first step to accomplish this will be the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration (2 Pet 3:10–12). The intense heat will burn up the junk in the atmosphere (first heaven) and most everything on the earth’s surface. It will be analogous to what happened at Noah’s Flood but with fire. Then, Christ will restore the first heaven (atmosphere) and the earth’s surface to its Edenic state: “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’” (Ezek 36:35).

⁴³⁰ “The 25 Deadliest U.S. Tornadoes,” *NOAA’s National Weather Service*, <https://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/killers.html>.

⁴³¹ Discussed in ch. 3.

⁴³² Church of Satan, <https://www.churchofsatan.com/>.

Therefore, on the day of the Lord at Armageddon, the conflagration (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12) will deluge the earth’s surface and the atmosphere (*first heaven*) causing the destroyed and corrupted first heaven to *pass away*. Consequently, in the context of 2 Pet 3:10, following is the suggested translation of παρελεύσονται (παρέρχομαι): *will pass away*.

Στοιχεῖα (vv. 10, 12); Στοιχεῖον

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and στοιχεῖα.*

Στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖον) is used twice by Peter (2 Pet 3:10, 12), four times by Paul (Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20), and once by the writer of Hebrews (5:12). Στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖον), translated in 2 Pet 3:10, 12 as *elements* (NASB, NIV, NKJV), is one of the most debated words in Scripture. Thomas Schreiner remarks that “the meaning of the word ‘elements’ (στοιχεῖα) is fiercely debated.”⁴³³ Consequently, this section will perform a diachronic and synchronic word analysis of στοιχεῖα and will argue the meaning of this word in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12.

Diachronic Word Analysis of Στοιχεῖα; Στοιχεῖον

Diachronic word analysis of στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖον) will examine three uses, namely, classical (900–330 BCE), LXX, and Hellenistic nonbiblical usage.⁴³⁴ In classical usage, Henry Liddell and Robert Scott relate that στοιχεῖα was “*connected with the elements, . . . Eust. 35.24.*”⁴³⁵

⁴³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, in Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 267.

⁴³⁴ Darrell L. Bock, “Lexical Analysis,” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 156.

⁴³⁵ Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *στοιχεῖα*, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, eds. Henry S. Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dstoixeiako%2Fs>.

In LXX usage of στοιχεῖα, as noted in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, this term is found in Wis 7:17; 19:18; and 4 Macc 12:13 where it is defined as “elemental substances, (four basic) elements.”⁴³⁶ *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNTT) adds, “In the LXX [στοιχεῖον] *stoicheion* occurs only in the Apocr. (3x, always pl.). In Wis. 7:17; 19:18, it means ‘elements of the universe’ or ‘matter’.”⁴³⁷

In Hellenistic nonbiblical usage, Eckhard Plümacher explains that στοιχεῖον “refers to ‘that which belongs to a series,’ in linguistic theory, the individual constituent parts of a syllable or word, its ‘smallest constituent parts,’ in music the individual tone. This leads to the meanings ‘principles of something’ (Xenophon *Mem.* ii.1.1).”⁴³⁸ He also notes that the term στοιχεῖα was common in Stoic philosophy of the four elements of the cosmos (earth, water, air, and fire).⁴³⁹ Notably, Plümacher adds: “Celestial bodies also belong to the realm of the elements (Philo *Spec. Leg.* ii.255) . . . though they were probably called στοιχεῖα only after the NT.”⁴⁴⁰

Plümacher’s explanation that the *celestial bodies* also termed the *heavenly bodies*, “was probably called στοιχεῖα only after the NT”⁴⁴¹ is significant because, in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, the NET Bible translates στοιχεῖα as *celestial bodies* and the ESV as *heavenly bodies*, but these meanings for στοιχεῖα are not found before AD 100,⁴⁴² which Gerhard Delling explains:

⁴³⁶ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, στοιχεῖα, -ων, LEH.

⁴³⁷ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, στοιχεῖον, *NIDNTT: Abridged Edition*, 541.

⁴³⁸ Eckhard Plümacher, στοιχεῖον, ου, τό, *EDNT*³, 277.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² Gerhard Delling, στοιχέω, συστοιχέω, στοιχεῖον, *TDNT*⁷, 682.

A connection between elements and stars arises from the fact that stars are composed of fire, the chief and finest element (also called ether). . . . Acc. to Som., I, 135 each star is supposed (λέγεται) to be the purest νοῦς [mind, intellect]. . . . In later antiquity, στοιχεῖον can come to mean “star” or “constellation.” . . . A certain connection between basic materials and stars (as factors influencing man’s life) may be seen in Vett. Val., for whom the four elements with the planets replace the ancient gods; he adjures his pupil Marcus by them, VII, 5 (p. 293, 25–27). . . . He calls the elements στοιχεῖα in VII, 5 (p. 293, 27), cf. ἀθάνατα στοιχεῖα in IX, 7 (p. 343, 33 f.). But in his fairly full astrological discussions, he does not use στοιχεῖον for star, etc. (2nd cent. A.D.). . . . Hipp. Comm. in Daniele, I, 8 (GCS, 1, 1, p. 15, 5) (204 A.D.) calls the sun and moon στοιχεῖα, and Theophil. Autol., II, 15 cf. I, 6 speaks of the course of the στοιχεῖα. The known instances are not before 100 A.D.”⁴⁴³

Notably, the traditional date for the composition of 2 Peter is between AD 64–65. Accordingly, Bible translations of 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 that translate στοιχεῖα as *celestial bodies* or *heavenly bodies*, meanings for στοιχεῖα not found before AD 100, demonstrate that such Bible translations are forcing a deep-rooted presupposition on στοιχεῖα in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 that is not exegetically defensible.

It is also worth commenting on Delling’s insightful explanation of the ancient theory that gave rise to elements (στοιχεῖα) being associated with the stars: “A connection between elements and stars arises from the fact that stars are composed of fire, the chief and finest element.”⁴⁴⁴ As ancient philosophers in their ignorance taught, stars are not on fire but are undergoing, says Márcio Catelan and Horace Smith, “nuclear fusion reactions in their interior.”⁴⁴⁵ In Scripture, literal fire is never associated with the celestial bodies of stars, moons, and planets catching on fire. This is because fire requires oxygen and deep space where stars and planets are located is oxygen deprived. As noted, Andrew Scott et al. explain that the “earth is the only planet known

⁴⁴³ Delling, στοιχέω, συστοιχέω, στοιχεῖον, *TDNT*⁷, 679, 681–82.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 679.

⁴⁴⁵ Catelan and Smith, *Pulsating Stars*, 125.

to have fire. . . . Oxygen is an important part of one of the fire triangles. . . . Removal of oxygen leads to extinguishing a fire.”⁴⁴⁶ Modern scholars need to move past ancient cosmology and fire theories when translating and interpreting Scripture. Having completed a diachronic word analysis, a synchronic word analysis of στοιχεῖα will be performed.

Synchronic Word Analysis of Στοιχεῖα; Στοιχεῖον

Synchronic word analysis of στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖον) will examine two uses; namely, the ways στοιχεῖα is used in the NT and the way Peter used στοιχεῖα. Στοιχεῖον is used in Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8; Heb 5:12; 2 Pet 3:10 and 12. The *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* relates that στοιχεῖον is used by the writer of Hebrews and Paul “as a religious technical term *elementary doctrines, fundamental teachings, basic principles* (Heb 5:12; perhaps Col 2:8, 20 and Gal 4:3, 9).”⁴⁴⁷ Concerning 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, the *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* relates that στοιχεῖον is used “in relation to the natural world (*basic*) *elements, natural substances*.”⁴⁴⁸ Having completed diachronic and synchronic word analyses of στοιχεῖα; στοιχεῖον, an argument will be presented for the meaning of στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖον) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12.

Argument for the Meaning of Στοιχεῖα; Στοιχεῖον in 2 Peter 3:10, 12

In classical usage (900–330 BCE), Liddell and Scott remark that στοιχεῖα was “*connected with the elements*.”⁴⁴⁹ In LXX usage of στοιχεῖα, as noted in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, this term is found in Wis 7:17; 19:18; and 4 Macc 12:13 where it is defined as

⁴⁴⁶ Scott et al., *Fire on Earth*, xiii, 65.

⁴⁴⁷ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *στοιχεῖον, ου, τό, Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.357.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Liddell and Scott, *στοιχεῖα, A Greek-English Lexicon*.

“elemental substances, (four basic) elements.”⁴⁵⁰ In Hellenistic nonbiblical usage, Plümacher explains that στοιχεῖον has the meanings of “principles of something.”⁴⁵¹ He also notes that στοιχεῖα was common in Stoic philosophy of the four elements of the cosmos (earth, water, air, and fire).⁴⁵² Notably, Plümacher adds: “Celestial bodies also belong to the realm of the elements (Philo *Spec. Leg.* ii.255) . . . though they were probably called στοιχεῖα only after the NT.”⁴⁵³ Delling affirms that the meanings for στοιχεῖα of celestial bodies and heavenly bodies are *not* found before AD 100.⁴⁵⁴

Accordingly, in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, elements in matter are in view, *not* celestial or heavenly bodies, because the celestial or heavenly bodies will still exist after the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26). Since στοιχεῖα (στοιχεῖον) in classical usage was “*connected with the elements*,”⁴⁵⁵ and in LXX usage was connected with “elemental substances, (four basic) elements,”⁴⁵⁶ the most accurate translation of στοιχεῖα in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is *elements*.

⁴⁵⁰ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, στοιχεῖα, *LEH*.

⁴⁵¹ Plümacher, στοιχεῖον, *ου, τό*, *EDNT*³, 277.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ Delling, στοιχέω, συστοιχέω, στοιχεῖον, *TDNT*⁷, 682.

⁴⁵⁵ Liddell and Scott, στοιχεῖα, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

⁴⁵⁶ Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, στοιχεῖα, *LEH*.

Καυσούμενα (vv. 10, 12); Καυσώω

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements καυσούμενα (vv. 10, 12).*

Liddell and Scott define “καυσώω, *heat*, Ptol.*Tetr.*18:—Pass., *burn with intense heat*, 2 Pet 3:10, 12.”⁴⁵⁷ Six Bible translations render καυσούμενα (καυσώω) in 2 Pet 3:10, 12 as: “with intense heat” vv. 10, 12 (NASB); “by fire” v. 10 and “in the heat” v. 12 (NIV); “will be burned up” v. 10 and “as they burn” v. 12 (ESV); “in a blaze” vv. 10, 12 (NET); and “with fervent heat” vv. 10, 12 (NKJV, KJV). Based on the definition by Liddell et al. of καυσώω, *heat, burn with intense heat*, the most accurate translation in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 for καυσούμενα is *by intense heat*.

Λυθήσεται (v. 10); Λύω

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements by intense heat λυθήσεται (v. 10).*

Λύω is used three times in 2 Pet 3:10–12: λυθήσεται (v. 10); λυομένων (v. 11); and λυθήσονται (v. 12). Since the phrase, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται (v. 10), informs the meaning of τούτων οὕτως πάντων in v. 11, which informs the meaning of λυομένων in v. 11 and λυθήσονται in v. 12, the latter forms of λύω in 2 Pet 3:11–12 will be briefly examined but will be defined in a separate subsection.

⁴⁵⁷ Liddell and Scott, *καυσώω*, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

The *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* defines λύω: *loose, release, untie, set free, destroy, tear down, break up, and disperse*,⁴⁵⁸ explaining that λύω is “from a basic meaning *loose*, translated with a variety of meanings from the specific contexts; . . . as freeing someone or something tied or bound *loose, untie, set free, release* (Mark 1:7; Acts 22:30) . . . *disperse* (Acts 13:43)”⁴⁵⁹ In a more exhaustive analysis, the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* explains the usage and meanings of λύω in different New Testament literary and theological contexts:

Λύω appears 42 times in the NT. . . . a) Λύω appears with the basic meaning *loose* (opposite of → δέω, “bind”) with an appropriate obj. in Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27 (sandal thong); Rev 5:2 (seal of a book); Mark 7:35 (ligament of the tongue). b) Acts 22:30; Rev 9:14, 15; 20:3; John 11:44 speak of the *setting free* of a prisoner. . . . According to Rev 20:7, Satan is *loosed* from his prison after the millennium. Acts 7:33 and 13:25 speak of the *loosing* of the sandals of the feet (gen.). . . . c) Λύω appears in the temple saying in John 2:19 with the meaning *destroy* (Mark 14:58 has καταλύω in the fut.). One finds a similar meaning in Eph 2:14 (“he *tore down* the dividing wall”). The same meaning is found in Acts 27:41 (the stern of the ship); 13:43 (an assembly); 2 Pet 3:10, 11, 12 (the cosmic elements in the apocalyptic fiery judgment of fire). 1 John 3:8 speaks of the *destruction* of the works of the devil. . . . d) Binding and *loosing* are spoken of in Matt 16:19.⁴⁶⁰

Accordingly, the meanings of λύω in different New Testament contexts need to be compared to λύω in the context of 2 Pet 3:10–12.

Before beginning, the following are renderings of λυθήσεται (v. 10); λυομένων (v. 11); and λυθήσονται (v. 12) in six Bible translations: “destroyed” vv. 10–12 (NASB); “destroyed” vv. 10, 11 and “destruction” v. 12 (NIV); “dissolved” vv. 10–12 (ESV); “melt” vv. 10, 11 and “dissolve” v. 12 (NET); and “melt” v. 10 and “dissolved” vv. 11–12 (NKJV, KJV). The question

⁴⁵⁸ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, λύω, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.250.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Karl Kertelge, λύω, *EDNT*², 368–9.

is, are these renderings of λυθήσεται (v. 10); λυομένων (v. 11); and λυθήσονται (v. 12) the most accurate English translations of λύω in the context of 2 Pet 3:10–12?

After reviewing λύω in the more recognized scholarly Greek lexicons and dictionaries, the rendering of λύω as *melt* is not a good translation and will not be considered. By translating λύω as *melt*, it seems that the NET, NKJV, and KJV translators were forcing the meaning that the elements in matter (the physical universe) will melt and dissolve, implying annihilation, which is a false presupposition concerning 2 Pet 3:10–12. It should also be noted that when matter melts (e.g., lead), the lead changes from a solid to a liquid and still exists and has the same weight, although it exists in a different state. Likewise, when frozen water (ice) melts, the water changes from a solid to a liquid and still exists and has the same weight, although it exists in a different state. Similarly, if the moon, supposedly, melted like green cheese, it would simply change from a solid moon to a liquid moon and would still exist and have the same weight, although it would exist in a different state. As noted, *melt* is not a good translation of λύω and will not be considered.

Consequently, are the renderings of λυθήσεται (v. 10); λυομένων (v. 11); and λυθήσονται (v. 12) as *destroyed*, *destruction*, and *dissolved* the most accurate English translations of λύω in the context of 2 Pet 3:10–12? To answer this question, a semantic study of Greek words related to *destroyed*, *destruction*, or *dissolved*, specifically, ἀπόλλυμι, φθείρω, ἀπώλεια, and φθορά, is needed. Consequently, this subsection will present the following research: 1) Semantic Study of Ἀπόλλυμι, Φθείρω, Ἀπώλεια, and Φθορά; and 2) Καυσόω and Στοιχεῖα Inform the Meaning of Λυθήσεται in 2 Peter 3:10.

Semantic Study of Ἀπόλλυμι, Φθείρω, Ἀπόλεια, and Φθορά

This semantic study will assess the Greek words ἀπόλλυμι, φθείρω, ἀπόλεια, and φθορά that Peter used in either 2 Pet 2 or 3.

The most common Greek word in the New Testament meaning *destroy* is ἀπόλλυμι (Matt 2:13; 10:28; 12:14; 22:7; Mark 1:24; 3:6; 9:22; 11:18; 12:9; Luke 4:34; 6:9; 17:27, 29; 19:47; 20:16; John 10:10; Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 1:19; James 1:11; 4:12; 1 Cor 10:9, 10; 2 Cor 4:9; 2 Pet 3:6; and Jude 5). Louw and Nida define ἀπόλλυμι as *destroy, ruin, destruction*.⁴⁶¹ The *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* defines ἀπόλλυμι as *destroy, ruin, bring to nothing*.⁴⁶² Luke used ἀπόλλυμι in 17:27, “The flood came and [ἀπόλλυμι] destroyed them all,” and in 17:29, “It rained fire and brimstone from heaven and [ἀπόλλυμι] destroyed them all.” Peter used ἀπόλλυμι in 2 Pet 3:6, “The world at that time was [ἀπόλλυμι] destroyed, being flooded with water.” Another word that Peter used was φθείρω, meaning *destroy*, in 2 Pet 2:12, “Like unreasoning animals, . . . will . . . also be [φθείρω] destroyed.” Bauer et al. define φθείρω as *destroy, ruin*.⁴⁶³

The most common Greek word in the New Testament meaning *destruction* is ἀπόλεια (Matt 7:13; Rom 9:22; Phil 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 6:9; Heb 10:39; 2 Pet 2:1, 3; 3:7; Rev 17:8, and 11). Bauer et al. define ἀπόλεια as *destruction, annihilation, waste, and ruin*, commenting, “the destruction that one experiences, *annihilation*.”⁴⁶⁴ Paul used ἀπόλεια in Phil 3:19, “Whose end is [ἀπόλεια] destruction”; and 2 Thess 2:3, “the man of lawlessness . . . , the son of [ἀπόλεια] destruction.” Peter’s favorite word for *destruction/annihilation* was ἀπόλεια

⁴⁶¹ Louw and Nida, ἀπόλλυμι, L&N 20.31, 1.231.

⁴⁶² Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, ἀπόλλυμι, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.69.

⁴⁶³ W. Bauer et al., φθείρω, BDAG, 1054.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., ἀπόλεια, BDAG, 127.

using it in 2 Pet 2:1, “False teachers . . . bringing swift [ἀπόλεια] destruction upon themselves”; in 2:3, “their [ἀπόλεια] destruction is not asleep”; and, in reference to the Lord’s return at Armageddon with fire, in 3:7, “the day of judgment and [ἀπόλεια] destruction of ungodly men” (cf. Isa 66:15–16; Mal 4:1–3). One word that Peter used that means *destruction* or *dissolution* is φθορά in 2 Pet 2:12, “The [φθορά] destruction of those creatures.” The *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* defines φθορά as *destruction, dissolution, ruin, and subjection to decay*.⁴⁶⁵ Louw and Nida define φθορά as “a state of ruin or destruction, with the implication of disintegration.”⁴⁶⁶ Bauer et al. define φθορά as *destruction, dissolution, and deterioration*.⁴⁶⁷

Notably, these Greek words ἀπόλλυμι (*destroy, destruction*), φθείρω (*destroy*), ἀπόλεια (*destruction, annihilation*), and φθορά (*destruction and dissolution*) were used by Peter in 2 Pet 2 or 3 but *not* in 2 Pet 3:10–12. Likely, if Peter had intended to communicate in 2 Pet 3:10–12 the term *destroyed*, he would have used the common Greek word ἀπόλλυμι he used in 2 Pet 3:6 as *destroyed*. Or, if he had intended to communicate in 2 Pet 3:10–12 the terms *destruction* and *annihilation*, he would have used the common Greek word ἀπόλεια he used in 2 Pet 2:1, 3 meaning *destruction* and *annihilation*. Or, if Peter had intended to communicate in 2 Pet 3:10–12 the term *dissolved*, he would have used the Greek word φθορά he used in 2 Pet 2:12 that means *dissolution*. Since Peter did *not* use any of these Greek words, namely, ἀπόλλυμι, φθείρω, ἀπόλεια, and φθορά meaning *destroyed, destruction, or dissolved*, which he used in 2 Pet 2 or 3 in 2 Pet 3:10–12, it should be apparent that the author’s change of terms in 2 Pet 3:10–12 to λυθήσεται (v. 10); λυομένων (v. 11); and λυθήσονται (v. 12) means that Peter did not intend to

⁴⁶⁵ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, φθορά, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.399.

⁴⁶⁶ Louw and Nida, ἀπόλλυμι, L&N 20.38, 1.232.

⁴⁶⁷ W. Bauer et al., φθορά, *BDAG*, 1054–55.

convey the meanings of *destroyed*, *destruction*, or *dissolved* in 2 Pet 3:10–12. Moreover, *καυσόω* (*intense heat*) and *στοιχεῖα* (*elements*) inform the meaning of *λυθήσεται* in 2 Pet 3:10.

Καυσόω and Στοιχεῖα Inform the Meaning of Λυθήσεται in 2 Peter 3:10

In antiquity, the ancients held that there were four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. Modern scholarship holds that 118 elements comprise all matter.⁴⁶⁸ “All matter is made up of substances called elements, which have specific chemical and physical properties and cannot be broken down into other substances through ordinary chemical reactions [fire].”⁴⁶⁹ Combustion [fire] . . . is an exothermic chemical oxidative reaction.”⁴⁷⁰ Thus, fire *cannot* break down or destroy (annihilate) elements. Lindsay Biga et. al add: “An element . . . cannot be created or broken down. . . . They must come from the environment [original creation].”⁴⁷¹

Since elements cannot be broken down or destroyed or dissolved (annihilated) by fire, what happens when *καυσόω* (*intense heat*) is applied to matter which contains one or more elements? Lavoisier’s diamond experiment demonstrates this.⁴⁷² When *καυσόω* (*intense heat*) from the sun was focused on a diamond in a sealed glass container, the diamond, comprised of the element of carbon, burned and disappeared. Yet, afterward, the sealed container weighed the same as before, leading to the conclusion that the intense heat caused the element of carbon, in essence, to be (*λυθήσεται*; *λύω*, *released*, *loosed*, *set free*) from the diamond (its original

⁴⁶⁸ Emsley, *Nature’s Building Blocks*, 12.

⁴⁶⁹ “Matter, Elements, and Atoms,” *Khan Academy*, <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/ap-biology/chemistry-of-life/elements-of-life/a/matter-elements-atoms-article>.

⁴⁷⁰ Scott et al., *Fire on Earth*, xiii, 65.

⁴⁷¹ Lindsay M. Biga et al., “2.1 Elements and Atoms: The Building Blocks of Matter,” *Oregon State University*, <https://open.oregonstate.edu/aandp/chapter/2-1-elements-and-atoms-the-building-blocks-of-matter/>.

⁴⁷² See ch. 3 for discussion on Lavoisier’s experiment.

compound of matter) and combined with the element of oxygen in the container forming carbon dioxide. Thus, the experiment proved that intense heat causes elements in compounds of matter to be λυθήσεται (λύω), *released* from matter. Accordingly, καυσόω (*intense heat*) and στοιχεῖα (*elements*) inform the meaning of λυθήσεται in 2 Pet 3:10 because καυσόω (*intense heat*) causes στοιχεῖα (*elements*) in matter to be *released*.

Consequently, if all matter on the earth's surface and in the atmosphere (first heaven) burned on the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration, the elements would be *released* from their compounds of matter (e.g., buildings, cars, trucks, asphalt, trees, and grass), which would burn and disappear, while the elements *released* from the burning matter would either remain in the atmosphere (e.g., gaseous elements of oxygen and nitrogen) or be absorbed into the soil. Therefore, καυσόω (*intense heat*) does *not* destroy or dissolve (annihilate) elements but rather *releases* στοιχεῖα (*elements*) from matter.

The term λυθήσεται is only found three times in the New Testament, in 2 Pet 3:10, 12 and Rev 20:7, “When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be [λυθήσεται] released from his prison.” Therefore, in the context of 2 Pet 3:10, the most accurate translation of λυθήσεται in 2 Pet 3:10 is, *will be released*. The other uses of λύω (λυομένων and λυθήσονται) in 2 Pet 3:11–12, respectively, will be defined after completing a semantic study of the phrase in 2 Pet 3:10d, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.

Καὶ Γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν Αὐτῇ Ἔργα Εὐρεθήσεται (v. 10)

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements by intense heat will be released, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.*

The two keywords in this last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10 are γῆ and εὐρεθήσεται, the latter of which is only found in the New Testament in 2 Pet 3:10. Yet, before exegeting these two words, following are the renderings of 2 Pet 3:10d (καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται) in six Bible translations: “and the earth and its works will be burned up” (NASB); “and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare” (NIV); and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (ESV); “and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare” (NET); “both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (NKJV); and “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (KJV). Concerning these six renderings of καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται, the NASB, NKJV, and KJV translations are rejected because εὐρεθήσεται does *not* mean ‘burned up’. It appears that the NASB, NKJV, and KJV translations are forcing on this phrase a centuries-held false presupposition.

Regarding the two keywords in this last phrase of 2 Pet 3:10 (γῆ and εὐρεθήσεται), the most significant word is εὐρεθήσεται; εὐρίσκω. The *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* defines εὐρίσκω as *find*; to find after searching *discover, come on* (Matt 7:7), and *be found* (Acts 8:40).⁴⁷³ Similarly, W. Bauer et al. define εὐρίσκω as *find, discover, come upon* (Matt 7:7; Luke 11:9).⁴⁷⁴ Thus, renderings in 2 Pet 3:10 of εὐρεθήσεται as “will be laid bare” (NIV, NET); and “will be exposed” (ESV) are thought-for-thought meanings of εὐρεθήσεται. However, the best literal English translation of εὐρεθήσεται is, *will be found*.

Regarding γῆ, the *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* defines γῆ as “*earth*; (1) as receiving seed or rain *soil, ground, earth* (Matt 13:5); (2) as a place to lay a foundation

⁴⁷³ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, εὐρίσκω, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.180.

⁴⁷⁴ W. Bauer et al., εὐρίσκω, *BDAG*, 411.

ground (Luke 6:49); (3) *land* (Mark 4:1), . . . ; (4) *earth* (Matt 5:18).⁴⁷⁵ Similarly, W. Bauer et al. define γῆ as the “surface of the earth as the habitation of humanity, *earth*. . . . Dry land as opposed to sea, *land*. . . . *Ground* Matt 10:29. . . . Ground for agricultural use *soil*.”⁴⁷⁶ Thus, renderings of γῆ as *earth*, *land*, *ground*, or *soil* are accurate but the favored translation of γῆ in the context of 2 Pet 3:10 is *earth*.

Accordingly, the following is the best literal English translation of the last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10: καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται, *and the earth and the works done on it will be found*. Bauckham concurs with this translation with only a slight variation: “*and the earth and the works done in it will be found*.”⁴⁷⁷

However, the last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10, *and the earth and the works done on it will be found*, creates problems for expositors who hold the long-held false presupposition that the celestial heavens (stars, moons, and planets), as well as the old earth, will burn up in 2 Pet 3:10–12 so the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth can be created (Isa 65:17; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). The last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10 confirms that the old earth does *not* burn up in the conflagration on the day of the Lord at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:10–12). Further, Scripture confirms that the celestial bodies also do *not* burn up at the Armageddon conflagration but will still exist for the post-Armageddon *future millennium*: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (Isa 30:26). Thus, the Bible confirms that all things do *not* consummate at Christ’s coming on the day of the Lord at Armageddon.

⁴⁷⁵ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, γῆ, *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* 4.98.

⁴⁷⁶ W. Bauer et al., γῆ, *BDAG*, 196.

⁴⁷⁷ Bauckham, *Jude–2 Peter*, 303.

However, for expositors holding the long-held false presupposition that the celestial heavens (stars, moons, and planets), as well as the old earth, will burn up in 2 Pet 3:10–12, the last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10 (καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται, *and the earth and the works done on it will be found*) is deemed by many scholars to be nonsensical. The NET Bible adds a text-critical note concerning εὐρεθήσεται, transliteration “(*heurethēsetai*), which enjoys by far the best support . . . is nevertheless so difficult a reading that many scholars regard it as nonsensical.”⁴⁷⁸ Schreiner also comments on the last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10 and the meaning of εὐρεθήσεται:

Some scholars despair of finding any meaning. We are not surprised to discover that textual variations and even conjectural emendations exist, as scholars try to discern the meaning of this last phrase. We can say immediately that the external evidence decisively favors “shall [will] be found,” but alternates have been pursued because, as Metzger notes, the text as it reads “seems to be devoid of meaning.”⁴⁷⁹

The reason why the literal translation of εὐρεθήσεται, *will be found*, in 2 Pet 3:10 seems to be devoid of meaning is because many Bible scholars mistakenly assume that 2 Pet 3:10–12 refers to the burning of the physical universe for *eternal state restoration* or the burning up of the physical universe for *eternal state annihilation replacement*, both views of which have been proven from Scripture to be unbiblical.⁴⁸⁰ Rather, the immediate and intertextual context of 2 Pet 3:10-12 teaches that the earth’s surface and the first heaven (the atmosphere) will be burned to cleanse the earth and the atmosphere to enable their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*).

⁴⁷⁸ *The NET Bible*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2019), 2 Peter 3:10.

⁴⁷⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 385.

⁴⁸⁰ See discussion in ch. 5.

Therefore, the following is the best literal English translation of the last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10: *καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται, and the earth and the works done on it will be found.* Having established the meaning of this last phrase in 2 Pet 3:10, the meanings of forms of *λύω* (*λυομένων* and *λυθήσονται*) in 2 Pet 3:11–12 can now be researched.

Λυομένων (v. 11) and *Λυθήσονται* (v. 12); *Λύω*

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements by intense heat will be released, and the earth and the works done on it will be found.* ¹¹ *Since all these things λυομένων* (v. 11); and *λυθήσονται* (v. 12).

Returning to Peter's use of *λύω* in 2 Pet 3:10–12, the meaning of *λυομένων* (v. 11) is informed by the phrase *τούτων οὕτως πάντων* (v. 11).

Τούτων Οὕτως Πάντων Informs the Meaning of Λυομένων in 2 Peter 3:11

The apostle introduces 2 Pet 3:11 by referring to the things foretold in 2 Pet 3:10, using the phrase: *Τούτων* (*this, these things*) *οὕτως* (*in this way*) *πάντων* (*all*) *λυομένων*, or *since all these things in this way λυομένων*. What are *all these things* that Peter foretells in 2 Pet 3:10? There are three things in 2 Pet 3:10 that the apostle foretells will happen on the day of the Lord at Armageddon:

1) The postdiluvian first heaven (earth's atmosphere, Gen 1:8) corrupted with harmful substances (dioxins, chemicals, and elements, e.g., lead), which the World Health Organization (WHO) says causes "cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and cancers,"⁴⁸¹ *will pass away* (2 Pet 3:10a). Thus, in its present corrupted state (cf. Rom 8:21), the first heaven *will pass away* (2

⁴⁸¹ "Ambient (Outdoor) Air Pollution," *World Health Organization*.

Pet 3:10a). The first heaven will not *pass away* in the sense of annihilation but will be restored to its Edenic state. Concerning the first heaven, the Lord may even restore the water canopy: “Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke [possibly fig. for water vapor] by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy” (Isa 4:5 NIV; cf. Ps 18:11). How will this happen? By the second thing foretold in 2 Pet 3:10;

2) *The elements by intense heat will be released* (2 Pet 3:10b). The intense heat from the Armageddon conflagration will cause elements in compounds of matter on the earth’s surface (e.g., buildings) and in the atmosphere (the first heaven) to be *released* and burned either to gas or ashes (cf. Mal 4:3). The burning will have a cleansing effect on the earth’s surface and atmosphere. Concerning the atmosphere, Dougal Drysdale comments that a “fire plume causes air to be entrained from the surrounding atmosphere. . . . Not only does this provide air for combustion . . . , but it dilutes and cools the fire products as they rise. . . . In the open . . . , this will clear air.”⁴⁸² After the Armageddon conflagration has cleansed the first heaven causing it to *pass away* from its corrupted state (cf. Rom 8:21), and most everything on the earth’s surface has been burned to ashes (cf. Mal 4:1–3), under former edifices γῆ . . . εὐρεθήσεται, *the earth. . . will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d).

3) *The earth and the works done on it will be found* (2 Pet 3:10d). The earth over its entire surface will be cleansed by the Armageddon fire (cf. 2 Pet 3:7). Interestingly, the burning of fields produces *potash*, which is an excellent fertilizer with the result that the millennial earth will blossom “like the crocus, it will burst into bloom” (Isa 35:1–2 NIV).

⁴⁸² Dougal Drysdale, *An Introduction to Fire Dynamics* (Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 149.

Therefore, the above three things foretold in 2 Pet 3:10 will λύω (*set free*) the earth from its postdiluvian corrupted state back to its Edenic paradisiacal state for the future millennium (cf. Rom 8:21, “the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption”). Thus, τούτων οὕτως πάντων, *since all these things in this way will set free* “the creation” (Rom 8:21), the most accurate translation in 2 Pet 3:11 of λυομένων is, *set free*.

Accordingly, in context, the following is the best translation in 2 Pet 3:11 for the phrase: Τούτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων, *Since all these things will be set free in this way*. Second Pet 3:12 also explains how the first heaven (the atmosphere) will be *set free* because the phrase οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι (v. 12) informs the meaning of λυθήσονται (v. 12).

Οὐρανοὶ Πυρούμενοι Informs the Meaning of Λυθήσονται in 2 Peter 3:12

Peter’s third use of λύω is λυθήσονται in 2 Pet 3:12, the meaning of which is informed by οὐρανοὶ (the first heaven) and πυρούμενοι (to burn). As discussed, the corrupted first heaven (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) by burning *will be set free*. Therefore, the best translation in 2 Pet 3:12 of λυθήσονται, and the phrase (οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται) in which it is set, is: *the first heaven by burning will be set free*. This leaves one significant Greek word, τήκεται, in 2 Pet 3:12 to exegete.

Τήκεται (v. 12); Τήκω

Proposed translation thus far of 2 Pet 3:10–13: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements by intense heat will be released, and the earth and the works done on it will be found.* ¹¹ *Since all these things will be set free in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,* ¹² *looking*

for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the first heaven by burning will be set free, and the elements by intense heat τήκεται; τήκω.

W. Bauer et al. define τήκω, “to cause something to become liquid, *melt*.”⁴⁸³ W. Bauer et al. also define τήκω, *dissolve*, referencing Philo (ca. 15 BCE–50 CE) of Alexandria and his *Works* (Aet. M. 110 of the earth).⁴⁸⁴ Philo held the ancient belief that fire dissolves or melts away (annihilates) physical matter, rendering the elements in matter nonexistent,⁴⁸⁵ which was proven an ancient false theory in the eighteenth century. Accordingly, this section will discuss: 1) The Ancient Theory of Fire and Matter; and 2) The Implications of Τήκεται; Τήκω in 2 Pet 3:12.

The Ancient Theory of Fire and Matter

John Emsley notes that the ancients saw different forms of a primordial element which Heraclitus (ca. 540–480 BCE) thought “was water, while others suggested air, fire, or earth. Empedocles (who also lived in the fifth century BCE) combined them and said that there were four elements, and this view was developed by . . . Aristotle (384– 322 BC).”⁴⁸⁶ Concerning this ancient theory that fire, water, air, and earth are elements, Emsley explains that the theory seemed reasonable based on “observations such as what happens when a stick burns in a fire. It can be seen to break down into the four elements: *fire*, steam [*water*], gases [*air*], and ash [*earth*].⁴⁸⁷ Thus, a stick burning in a *fire* emitting *water* vapor, gases such as carbon dioxide that float away into the *air*, and finally, the carbon residue of ash (*earth*) seemed to validate

⁴⁸³ W. Bauer et al., τήκω, *BDAG*, 1001.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ See: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.7.1 (*ANF* 1.325).

⁴⁸⁶ Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, 675.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Aristotle’s theory that fire dissolves (annihilates) the elements of matter into nonexistence. Emsley notes, “For 2,000 years, Aristotle’s ideas were accepted in Europe, almost without question, until the dawn of modern science in the seventeenth century.”⁴⁸⁸ As discussed in Chapter three, Lavoisier’s diamond experiment in the eighteenth century proved that fire does *not* annihilate, destroy, dissolve, or melt away matter as the ancients believed.⁴⁸⁹

Nevertheless, Aristotle’s theory on fire and elements continues to influence the translation and interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10–12, resulting in renderings in vv. 10–12 of λύω as *destroyed, destruction, dissolved, or melt away* (NASB, NIV, ESV, NET, NKJV, KJV) and τήκεται; τήκω as *melt away* (2 Pet 3:12 NET), implying the annihilation of matter (elements) into nonexistence. As noted, Bible scholars need to move past false ancient theories lest their interpretations of Scripture appear ludicrous and the Bible irrelevant. As noted, it is taught in sixth-grade physical science that fire does *not* destroy, dissolve, melt away, or annihilate matter, rather fire changes the molecular structure of matter with the result that the new composition has the same weight as before.⁴⁹⁰

Regarding τήκεται; τήκω in 2 Pet 3:12, since the ancient theory that fire *dissolves* or *melts away* the elements of matter into nonexistence has long been proven false, *melt away* or *dissolve* are not accurate translations of τήκεται; τήκω. Instead, the most accurate translation in 2 Pet 3:12 for τήκεται; τήκω is *melt* or, in context, *will melt*, which does not imply annihilation because when something melts (*will melt*) it simply changes from a solid to a liquid.

⁴⁸⁸ Emsley, *Nature’s Building Blocks*, 675.

⁴⁸⁹ See ch. 3 concerning Lavoisier’s discovery.

⁴⁹⁰ “2.10 Conservation of Mass,” *CK-12 Foundation*, <https://flexbooks.ck12.org/cbook/ck-12-middle-school-physical-science-flexbook-2.0/section/2.10/primary/lesson/conservation-of-mass-ms-ps/>.

Therefore, the best translation in 2 Pet 3:12 of τήκεται; τήκω, and the phrase (στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται) in which it is set, is: *the elements by intense heat will melt*. Consequently, there are implications concerning τήκεται; τήκω in 2 Pet 3:12.

The Implications of Τήκεται; Τήκω in 2 Peter 3:12

Peter foretells that *the elements by intense heat will melt* (2 Pet 3:12, proposed). Most of the 118 elements⁴⁹¹ on the periodic table will melt. For example, the element of iron (Fe) melts at 1,535°C/2,795°F and sublimates into a gas at 2,750°C/4,982°F.⁴⁹² Steel, which is not an element but is a mixture of iron and different alloys to produce different types of steel (e.g., stainless, carbon steel), has a melting point of ca. 1,370°C/2,498°F.⁴⁹³ Notably, when elements in matter melt or change into a gas, the elements are not annihilated but still exist and have the same weight as before; only the elements exist in different states.

Some elements, notes Emsley, have low melting points (e.g., hydrogen at -259°C/-434°F),⁴⁹⁴ and some have high melting points, such as carbon (diamond, ash) at 3,550°C/6,422°F which sublimates into a gas at 4,800°C/8,672°F.⁴⁹⁵ Emsley has documented the melting and boiling points of elements.⁴⁹⁶ The difference between the melting point and the boiling point is: the change from a solid to a liquid is the melting point, and the temperature at which a liquid

⁴⁹¹ Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, 12.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 279.

⁴⁹³ Brian Kross, "What's the Melting Point of Steel?," in *JLab Science Education*, [https://education.jlab.org/qa/meltingpoint_01.html#:~:text=Steel%20is%20just%20the%20element,C%20\(2500%C2%B0F\)](https://education.jlab.org/qa/meltingpoint_01.html#:~:text=Steel%20is%20just%20the%20element,C%20(2500%C2%B0F)).

⁴⁹⁴ Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, 252.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28–673.

sublimes into a gas is the boiling point (e.g., solid purified ice melts at 0°C/32°F and boils into a gas water vapor at 100°C/212°F at sea level).⁴⁹⁷ The element with the highest boiling point (becomes gas) is tungsten (W) at 5,700°C/10,292°F.⁴⁹⁸ Hence, most elements, as the *USCB Science Line* explains, “go through all three phases of matter (solid, liquid, and gas) as the temperature is varied. . . . Each element melts at a different temperature. . . . As the temperature is increased still further, each element will boil and become a gas.”⁴⁹⁹ Accordingly, what can be concluded from this information for accurately interpreting Peter’s prophecy that στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται, *the elements by intense heat will melt* (2 Pet 3:12, proposed)?

If the Lord deluges the earth’s surface and atmosphere (first heaven) with fire intensely hot enough to melt iron (1,535°C/2,795°F), that would mean that almost half of all elements on the periodic table will have exceeded their boiling points and turned to gas. Relatedly, how hot was the fire at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24)? The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah warred against four kings (Gen 14:8–9). Did they use swords made of iron? Iron and bronze forging occurred before the Flood (Gen 4:22), and Noah and his sons likely passed along this technique. Emsley comments that “iron articles have been found in Egypt dating from around 3500 BC.”⁵⁰⁰ If there were iron objects at Sodom and Gomorrah, were they turned to gas in the fire? At this writing, this is not known. If there were iron objects at Sodom and Gomorrah and they were turned to gas in the fire, this would mean that the fire was hot enough to boil iron

⁴⁹⁷ Emsley, *Nature’s Building Blocks*, 22, 255.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 608.

⁴⁹⁹ USCB Science Line, *University of California Santa Barbara*.
<http://scienceline.ucsb.edu/getkey.php?key=92#:~:text=As%20the%20temperature%20is%20increased%20still%20further%2C%20each%20element%20will,it%20is%202%2C750%20degrees%20Celsius.>

⁵⁰⁰ Emsley, *Nature’s Building Blocks*, 275.

(2,750°C/4,982°F), turning it into gaseous iron. Gaseous iron would have settled back into the soil leaving no visible trace of the former iron. At the temperature to turn iron into a gas (2,750°C/4,982°F), all but five elements on the earth's surface and in the atmosphere around Sodom and Gomorrah would have melted.

Since Peter foretells about the fire at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12) that στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται, *the elements by intense heat will melt* (2 Pet 3:12, proposed), for the Lord to *melt* 'all' elements on the earth's surface and in the atmosphere (the first heaven), this will require intense heat equal to that needed to melt carbon (diamond, ash) at 3,550°C/6,422°F; the highest melting point among the elements. However, the highest melting point among a mixture of elements is the combination of hafnium (used in microchips and control rods for nuclear reactors)⁵⁰¹ and tantalum (used in high-temperature applications in rocket nozzles, heat shields, and nose caps for supersonic aircraft),⁵⁰² which “has the highest melting point of any known material: 4,215°C [7,619°F].”⁵⁰³

Regarding the question about the temperature of the fire at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24), Peter says the Lord “condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes” (2 Pet 3:6). Since ashes remained on the ground, this would mean that the temperature of the fire at Sodom and Gomorrah would have been less than the temperature to melt carbon (ashes) at 3,550°C/6,422°F, or perhaps a lower temperature of around 3,538°C/6,400°F, which is still intensely hot.

⁵⁰¹ Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, 226.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 553.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 227.

Peter foretells about the day of the Lord at Armageddon, Ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ ὁ οὐρανὸς ῥοιζήδον παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται, *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements by intense heat will be released, and the earth and the works done on it will be found* (2 Pet 3:10, proposed). With the intense heat at Armageddon of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F, all elements except carbon (ashes) τήκεται, *will melt* (2 Pet 3:12). Malachi foretells about Armageddon that “the wicked . . . will be ashes under the soles of your feet” (4:3).

Thus, at Armageddon, an intensely hot fire of 3,538°C/6,400°F would allow high melting point items (e.g., ashes of the wicked in Mal 4:3, microchips, rocket nozzles, heat shields, and supersonic aircraft nose caps) to be found on the ground. This is consistent with what Peter foretells: στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται, *the elements by intense heat will be released, and the earth and the works done on it will be found* (2 Pet 3:10, proposed). After the Armageddon conflagration, *the earth* (under burnt edifices) *and τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα, the works done on it* (e.g., high melting point items such as microchips, rocket nozzles, heat shields, and supersonic aircraft nose caps) εὐρεθήσεται, *will be found*. Therefore, what Peter foretells in 2 Pet 3:10–12 when accurately translated, aligns perfectly with modern science but not with the ignorance of ancient theories. Accordingly, one implication of τήκεται; τήκω in 2 Pet 3:12 means that at Armageddon, the intensely hot conflagration of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F will melt, pulverize, and obliterate most everything on the earth’s surface (e.g., skyscrapers, houses, and casinos) reducing them to ashes under which earth εὐρεθήσεται, *will be found*.

A second implication of *τήκεται; τήκω* in 2 Pet 3:12 pertains to the rivers, lakes, and oceans that will rapidly evaporate and, as a result, will be cleansed. As known, the boiling point of water is 100°C/212°F, at which point it becomes a gas (steam). When steam is heated beyond the boiling point, Carey Merritt remarks that this “is usually known as ‘dry saturated steam’.

This is steam which has been completely evaporated so that it contains no droplets of water [dry steam]. . . . If heat energy is added to dry steam, the steam temperature will rise. The steam is then called ‘superheated’.”⁵⁰⁴ Steam turbines may use superheated steam for power generation.⁵⁰⁵ Hence, the intense heat at Armageddon (2 Pet 3:7, 10–12) of possibly 3,538°C/6,400°F will rapidly evaporate the water in rivers, lakes, and oceans into superheated dry steam that will rise high in the atmosphere. At the same time, the intense heat will turn eighty-three percent of the elements in these water bodies into gas, which will also rise into the atmosphere, cleansing the rivers, lakes, and oceans of their pollutants (e.g., plastics, motor oil from sunken oil tankers, radioactive waste such as that from the Fukushima damaged nuclear reactor,⁵⁰⁶ detergents, and pesticides).

A third implication of *τήκεται; τήκω* in 2 Pet 3:12 pertains to the atmosphere (the first heaven). The intensely hot Armageddon conflagration of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F will melt and turn to gas harmful elements and substances in the atmosphere, cleansing the earth’s heavens.

⁵⁰⁴ Carey Merritt, *Process Steam Systems: A Practical Guide for Operators, Maintainers, Designers, and Educators*, Second ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2023), 46, 49.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁰⁶ “Incineration can be an effective method for radioactive waste disposal, but it does have some drawbacks related to managing and storing the ash produced. Incineration combusts or oxidizes wastes at high temperatures, forming ash,” quoted from *Lancs Industries*, “The Process of Radioactive Waste Incineration,” <https://www.lancsindustries.com/blog/radioactive-waste-incineration/#:~:text=Incineration%20of%20Radioactive%20Waste%3A%20How,ash%2C%20flue%20gas%20and%20heat.>

The top ten elements in the atmosphere, which will not melt because, at normal temperatures, they exist as gases are: nitrogen, oxygen, argon, neon, helium, krypton, hydrogen, xenon, radon, and chlorine.⁵⁰⁷ However, earth's heavens, ruined at the Flood (cf. Gen 7:11, 2 Pet 3:6) and even more so during the Industrial Revolution, contain harmful elements and substances (pollutants) that the World Health Organization (WHO) says "was estimated to cause 4.2 million premature deaths worldwide per year in 2019."⁵⁰⁸ Pollutants in the earth's heavens include carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, formaldehyde, radon, and lead.⁵⁰⁹

Concerning carbon monoxide (CO), Emsley comments that it can kill within minutes, but, fortunately, it can oxidize to nonpoisonous carbon dioxide (CO₂) at low temperatures.⁵¹⁰ Concerning lead, Emsley explains, in essence, that lead is a cumulative poison that deteriorates health and kills over time.⁵¹¹ Lead will melt at 334°C/633°F and sublime to gas at 1,740°C/3,164°F. Accordingly, the intensely hot Armageddon fire of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F will melt and turn to gas harmful elements (e.g., lead) and substances in the atmosphere, cleansing the first heaven. Thus, the third implication of *τήκεται; τήκω* in 2 Pet 3:12 is that the intensely hot Armageddon conflagration will cleanse the atmosphere and, as a result, *οἱ οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζήδον παρελεύσονται*, 'the first heaven [in its corrupted state, cf. Rom 8:21] will pass away with a roar' (2 Pet 3:10, proposed).

⁵⁰⁷ Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, 22.

⁵⁰⁸ "Ambient (Outdoor) Air Pollution," *World Health Organization*.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, 124, 221.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 300–303.

Yet, the second and third implications of τήκεται; τήκω in 2 Pet 3:12 will have a combined beneficial effect. As noted, the intensely hot Armageddon conflagration of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F will rapidly evaporate the rivers, lakes, and oceans, causing superheated dry steam to rise high in the atmosphere. However, when the Armageddon fire subsides, the steam will cool and condense into rain. Merritt notes that steam when cooled will condense “into water. . . . The process is the exact reverse of the change from water to steam.”⁵¹²

Thus, when the Armageddon conflagration stops, the atmosphere (the first heaven) will begin to rain and rain oceans of water back onto the earth, further cleansing the atmosphere of harmful gases and causing melted elements to be absorbed into the soil.⁵¹³ The result will be a cleansed first heaven and earth’s surface for Christ’s earthly millennial reign with His people. Then “the scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water” (Isa 35:7). Then, “the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom profusely” (Isa 35:1). Accordingly, 2 Pet 3:10–12 when accurately translated and interpreted, is one of the most marvelous texts in Scripture concerning how the Lord will prepare the earth (the earth’s surface and the first heaven, the atmosphere) for the future millennium (Rev 20:4–6) (*millennial restoration*).

⁵¹² Carey Merritt, *Process Steam Systems*, 35.

⁵¹³ The Armageddon conflagration and the subsequent oceans of rain (steam changing back into water) will have the same effect that the Flood had on the Old World when “the world at that time was destroyed (*ἀπόλετο*, *ruined, destroyed*) being flooded with water” (2 Pet 3:6). After the Armageddon conflagration, the earth’s surface and atmosphere (first heaven) will be completely cleansed by intense heat and rainwater (from the superheated steam condensing in the atmosphere). The wicked will also be removed to the abyss (Rev 19:21; cf. Dan 9:24; 2 Pet 3:7), as happened at the Flood. Basically, God’s principle will be accomplished once again; that is, when people become wicked, as is increasingly evident in modern times, God simply removes them from the land (cf. Gen 6:5–7; Lev 18:25, 28; Jer 6:8; 24:10). Then, the Lord’s people (analogous to Noah and his family after the Flood) will have returned from heaven to a cleansed land for the future millennial reign of Christ (Rev 20:4–6). The cleansed millennial earth “will blossom profusely” (Isa 35:2). “There will no longer be a curse” (Zech 14:11). The Lord’s people “will build houses and inhabit *them*; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. . . . My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands” (Isa 65:21–22).

Therefore, the best translation in 2 Pet 3:12 of *τήκεται; τήκω*, and the phrase (*στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται*) in which it is set, is: *the elements by intense heat will melt*. Having completed this semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13, a translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 that more accurately aligns with the author’s likely intended meaning of the passage will be proposed.

Proposed Translation of 2 Peter 3:10–13

The following proposed translation of 2 Peter 3:10–13 is based on the semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Peter 3:10–13.

¹⁰ Ἡξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ οἱ οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζήδον παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὑρεθήσεται.

¹¹ Τούτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων ποταποὺς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις,

¹² προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, δι’ ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται·

¹³ καινοὺς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ.⁵¹⁴

¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the first heaven⁵¹⁵ will pass away with a roar and the elements by intense heat will be released, and the earth and the works done on it will be found.*

¹¹ *Since all these things will be set free in this way,⁵¹⁶ what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

¹² *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the first heaven by burning will be set free, and the elements by intense heat will melt.*

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

⁵¹⁴ Holmes, ed., SBLGNT, 2 Pet 3:10–13.

⁵¹⁵ *Heavens* is the best word-for-word rendering of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12. However, millions of Christians interpret *heavens* to mean the celestial heavens of stars and planets which are not in view in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, because they will still exist after the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26). The heavens in view in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 are earth’s heavens, the atmosphere where birds fly, called the first *heaven* (Gen 1:8). Therefore, to convey the author’s intended meaning of οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12, the best thought-for-thought translation for οὐρανοὶ (οὐρανός) in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12 is *first heaven*.

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Rom 8:21.

To convey the meaning of the proposed translation of 2 Peter 3:10–13, an exposition of the passage will be performed.

Exposition of 2 Peter 3:10–13

Based on the semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13, the following is an exposition of the proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

(3:10a): *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.* When the Lord returns from heaven to earth *with* the church (Rev 19:14) at the end of the seventieth week (Dan 9:27) on the day of the Lord at Armageddon, the Lord’s return will be unexpected, like a thief.

(3:10b): *In which the first heaven will pass away with a roar.* On the day of the Lord at Armageddon, the Lord will return to execute “judgment by fire” (Isa 66:16). In all Old Testament fire imagery, literal fire is limited to the earth’s surface and the atmosphere (the first heaven). When the Lord deluges the first heaven with fire, the fire will burn up all the corrupting elements in the atmosphere, causing it to *pass away with a roar*. This cleansing of the first heaven by fire will aid in fulfilling Rom 8:21, “The creation itself also will be *set free* from its slavery to corruption.” Thus, the first heaven *will pass away* in its present corrupted state (cf. Rom 8:21) but will not be annihilated but will be cleansed and restored to its perfect Edenic state for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign (Rev 20:4–6).

(3:10c): *And the elements by intense heat will be released.* Lavoisier, considered the father of modern chemistry, in his work with a diamond, proved in the eighteenth century that the burning of physical matter causes elements in compounds of matter (e.g., a log of wood) to be *released* from the material compound changing the molecular structure of the original material compound (e.g., into smoke and ash) but with the result that the weight of the new

molecular structure is the same as before, proving that fire does not annihilate matter but *releases* the elements in matter.⁵¹⁷

(3:10d): *And the earth and the works done on it will be found.* Some scholars assert that this last phrase in 3:10 is nonsensical. The reason why the literal translation of εὑρεθήσεται, *will be found*, in 2 Pet 3:10 seems to be nonsensical is because many Bible expositors mistakenly assume that 2 Pet 3:10–12 refers to the burning of the physical universe for either *eternal state restoration* or the burning up of the physical universe for *eternal state annihilation replacement*, both views of which this study has proven from Scripture are unbiblical. Instead, 2 Pet 3:10–12 refers to the burning of the earth’s surface and atmosphere (the first heaven) which will cleanse them to permit their restoration to an Edenic state (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 34:35) for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign (Rev 20:4–6) (millennial restoration).

(3:11): *Since all these things will be set free in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.* Life as we know will change dramatically at Christ’s advent at Armageddon. As a result of the cleansing Armageddon conflagration, “The creation . . . will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). *Since all these things will be set free in this way*, Christians should live holy and godly lives while looking forward to Christ’s return.

(3:12): *Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the first heaven by burning will be set free, and the elements by intense heat will melt.* The ‘day of God’ is a phrase associated with Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:14). At Armageddon, the *first heaven by burning will be set free* from its corruption by intensely hot fire of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F which will melt and turn to gas harmful elements in the earth’s atmosphere. On the earth’s

⁵¹⁷ See ch. 3 concerning Lavoisier’s discovery.

surface, the intensely hot fire will *melt* most elements, with the known exception of carbon (ashes) since afterward “the wicked . . . will be ashes under the soles of your feet” (Mal 4:3).

Yet, such intense heat of perhaps 3,538°C/6,400°F will cause most elements to not only *melt* but turn to gas. However, when the Armageddon fire subsides, and the high-in-the-atmosphere gas of superheated steam from the rivers, lakes, and oceans cools and condenses into rain, the atmosphere (the first heaven) will rain oceans of water back onto the earth. The vast amount of rain will be analogous to Noah’s Flood. Notably, the intense heat of the Armageddon fire will have already killed all the wicked that were on the earth’s surface after which their spirits will be removed to the abyss, so there is no conflict with the rain and Gen 9:11. Moreover, the intense rain from condensing superheated steam will further cleanse the atmosphere of harmful gases (elements) and the earth’s surface by causing melted elements to be absorbed into the soil. The result will be a cleansed atmosphere and earth’s surface for Christ’s earthly millennial reign.

The cleansed atmosphere will also cause the celestial (heavenly) bodies to appear brighter: “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (Isa 30:26). The cleansed atmosphere (first heaven) restored to its Edenic state will also provide a better climate for crop-bearing on the millennial earth: “The plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed” (Amos 9:13). Melted elements (e.g., potassium, calcium, phosphorus) from the Armageddon conflagration that will be absorbed into the soil will also likely contribute to the millennial earth blossoming “like the crocus it will blossom profusely (Isa 35:1–2). So profound will be the change from the present corrupted earth to the post-Armageddon conflagration millennial earth that “they will say, ‘this desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’” (Ezek 36:35).

Hence, 2 Pet 3:10–12 reveals marvelous truths concerning how King Jesus will use the day of the Lord at Armageddon conflagration to cleanse the earth’s atmosphere (the first heaven) and the earth’s surface for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*). Yet, the future biblical millennium is only temporary as it is “a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb 4:9). However, the new heavens and the new earth will be eternal (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Hence, in 2 Pet 3:13, the apostle telescopes from the day of the Lord at Armageddon more than a thousand years distant to the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Isa 65:17–19).

(3:13): *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* At the time of the writing of 2 Peter, only Isa 65:17–19 provided detail about the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth. Consequently, Peter reminded his readers of God’s promise given to Isaiah: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind” (65:17). Peter even follows the telescoping pattern of Isa 65:17–25, but in chronological order. As Isaiah telescoped from the *eternal state* back to the *millennium*, Peter telescoped from the Armageddon conflagration and its benefits for the *millennium* forward to the *eternal state*, two distinct prophecies telescoped together in the same context, which is common in biblical prophetic literature.

In 2 Pet 3:13, by using the terms καινούς; καινός, *new* and καινήν; καινός, *new*, Peter establishes with clarity that he is referring to the promised eternal state of the *new* heavens and the *new* earth (Isa 65:17–19). Accordingly, in 2 Pet 3:13, Peter *telescopes* beyond the future millennium (Rev 20:4–6), beyond the Gog and Magog war after which God’s people spend seven months burying Gog’s dead to cleanse the land (Ezek 39:12) and seven years burning Gog’s weapons (Ezek 39:9), and beyond the final judgment (Rev 20:12–15), to the promised new creation (Isa 65:17–19). Thus, Peter instilled hope in his first-century beloved brethren who were

disheartened by the delay in Christ's return (2 Pet 3:8–9) by reminding them of God's promise that will one day be fulfilled: "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13). Jesus said, "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . . shall be satisfied" (Matt 5:6). Accordingly, righteousness will characterize the distant *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; 2 Pet 3:13).

Therefore, this exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 has demonstrated that 3:10–12 pertains to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will cleanse the earth's surface and atmosphere (first heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ's earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 telescopes to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1); two distinct prophecies in the same context separated by more than a thousand years, which is consistent with the literary feature of telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has performed an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in three sections. In section one, a semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13 was conducted. This semantic study argued the contextual meanings of significant Greek words and phrases in the passage. In section two, a proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was offered based on the semantic study. In section three, to convey the meaning of the proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13, an exposition of the passage was performed. The exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 demonstrated that 3:10–12 pertains to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will cleanse the earth's surface and atmosphere (first heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ's earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13

telescopes to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1); two distinct prophecies in the same context separated by more than a thousand years, which is consistent with the literary feature of telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature.

Having proven the thesis *sola Scriptura*, this dissertation will be summarized and concluded in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION TO RETHINKING 2 PETER 3:10–13

The thesis of this dissertation challenges about 1,600 years of scholarship on 2 Pet 3:10–13 in the Augustinian West. Typically, when a prevailing opinion is challenged it is met with resistance. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) encountered resistance when he published his book, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, and argued a position once advocated by Aristarchus and followers of Pythagoras “that the earth is *not* standing still at the center of the universe,”⁵¹⁸ which was counter to the established Aristotelian view.

Therefore, the thesis of this dissertation will also likely meet resistance, but *not* from Scripture. Although modern science and writings by Irenaeus, Methodius, and Lactantius, have added support to the thesis, the thesis of this dissertation has been argued *sola Scriptura* and proven over the course of seven chapters, recapped below, to be biblical.

Chapter one articulated the thesis, the strategy, the significance of this research on 2 Pet 3:10–13, the research goals for 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13, provided cited works of prior research affecting the current research on 2 Peter and 2 Pet 3:10–13, and offered a synopsis of the research chapter by chapter.

Chapter two concentrated on establishing the canonical credibility of 2 Peter by performing an historical and literary analysis of the epistle.

Chapter three performed a contextual analysis of 2 Pet 3:10–13 by researching the immediate and intertextual context for interpretive light on the passage.

⁵¹⁸ Maurice A. Finocchiaro, *Defending Copernicus and Galileo: Critical Reasoning in the Two Affairs*, in vol. 280 of *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, eds. Robert S. Cohen, Jürgen Renn, and Kostas Gavroglu (New York: Springer, 2010), xiii.

Chapter four researched and assessed the biblical basis of contemporary perspectives on the occasion and duration of 2 Pet 3:10–13. Consequently, this chapter researched the amillennial *Armageddon* occasion and duration perspective of 2 Pet 3:10–13, and the modern dispensational premillennial *long* day of the Lord occasion and duration perspective of 2 Pet 3:10–13.

Chapter five researched views dating to the early church on the conflagration cosmology of 2 Pet 3:10–13, namely, two majority views and one minority view. The first majority view researched was the *eternal state (annihilation) replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Peter 3:10–13. This view interprets 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a *single meaning* prophecy teaching that the physical universe will be destroyed (annihilated) by cosmic conflagration and replaced with the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). However, since Peter says in plain words in the last phrase of 2 Pet 3:10 that *after* the Armageddon conflagration described in the first part of the verse: “γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται,” *the earth and the works done on it will be found*; since Scripture teaches that the moon, sun (Isa 30:26), and, by implication, the stars, will still exist *after* the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, and since in Rev 20:11, ἔφωγεν, *vanished*, meaning conflagration is biblically untenable; the *eternal state annihilation replacement* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was deemed unbiblical.

The second majority view researched was the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13. This view interprets 2 Pet 3:10–13 as a *single meaning* prophecy teaching that the physical universe will be burned, not for annihilation, but for restoration, being the restoration of the present *old* universe for the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth (3:13; Rev 21:1). Indeed, Scripture teaches that the *old* sun and moon

will still exist after the Armageddon conflagration for the future millennium (cf. Isa 30:26), but *not* for the eternal state. Scripture teaches that the *old* sun and moon will *no longer exist* during the eternal state (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 20:11; 22:5). Therefore, since Scripture proves that the *old* universe will *no longer exist* for the eternal state (cf. Isa 60:16; Rev 20:11; 22:5), since the features of the *new* earth are not comparable to those of the present *old* earth (cf. Rev 21:16), and since landscapes of former battles and graveyards would undoubtedly cause the former things to be remembered and come to mind (contra to Isa 65:17), the *eternal state restoration* cosmic conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was deemed unbiblical.

This chapter also researched the minority view of 2 Pet 3:10–13 which is the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13. This view interprets the passage as a *contextual telescoping* prophecy that teaches that the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:10–12 will cleanse the earth’s surface and earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*), while 2 Pet 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the *eternal state* of the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1); two distinct prophecies in the same context separated by more than a thousand years, which is consistent with the literary feature of telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature. Moreover, this chapter noted the following seven reasons that affirm *sola Scriptura* the thesis and the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13:

- 1) Scripture confirms that the *old* earth, moon, sun, and, by implication, the stars, will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26; 2 Pet 3:10d) for the future millennium (*millennial restoration*);

- 2) Scripture confirms that the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 will cleanse the earth’s heavens (the atmosphere, Gen 1:8) of its pollutants resulting in a clear sky such that “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*” (Isa 30:26) (*millennial restoration*);
- 3) Scripture confirms that the sun will still exist *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12 (cf. Isa 30:26; 2 Pet 3:10d) to enable the photosynthesis of plants and trees on the immensely productive crop-bearing millennial earth (cf. Isa 35:2; Amos 9:13) (*millennial restoration*);
- 4) The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 interpret 2 Pet 3:10–13 based on its immediate and intertextual context and the normal sense of the Scriptures;
- 5) The *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 does *not* force a biblically untenable ‘conflagration’ meaning on Rev 20:11;
- 6) Scripture confirms that *after* the Armageddon conflagration in 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12, that King Jesus will restore the earth to its Edenic state for Christ’s future earthly millennial reign (cf. Isa 51:3, “Her wilderness He will make like Eden”; and Ezek 36:35, “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden’”) (*millennial restoration*); and
- 7) Second Pet 3:10–13, which follows the *contextual telescoping* pattern of Isa 65:17–25 but in chronological order, concerns the Armageddon conflagration with its cleansing benefits for the future *millennium* while 3:13 telescopes post-millennium to the

eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth; two distinct eschatological events telescoped together in the same context, which is a common literary feature in biblical prophetic literature.

Therefore, as argued in the thesis, the above seven reasons affirm *sola Scriptura* that the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the telescoped *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are biblical. Consequently, the *millennial restoration* earthly conflagration cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:10–12 and the *eternal state* cosmic cosmology view of 2 Pet 3:13 are held to be the author’s intended meaning of 2 Pet 3:10–13 and the biblical view.

Chapter six researched the phenomenon of telescoping distant events in the same context, which is common in Bible prophecies such as 2 Pet 3:10–13. This chapter demonstrated two types of telescoping in biblical prophecies; noted opponents of telescoping interpretations; furnished characteristics of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature; addressed the big picture reason for telescoping in biblical prophetic literature; and exhibited eye-opening evidence of telescoping in biblical prophetic literature.

Chapter seven performed an exegetical exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 in three sections. In section one, a semantic study of significant Greek words and phrases in 2 Pet 3:10–13 was conducted. This semantic study argued the contextual meanings of significant Greek words and phrases in the passage. In section two, a proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 was offered based on the semantic study. In section three, to convey the meaning of the proposed translation of 2 Pet 3:10–13 derived from the semantic study, an exposition of the passage was performed. The exposition of 2 Pet 3:10–13 proved *sola Scriptura* that 3:10–12 pertain to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will cleanse the earth’s surface and atmosphere (the first

heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ's earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*) while 3:13 telescopes to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19).

Accordingly, the thesis of this dissertation was proven *sola Scriptura* to be biblical, and is re-stated as follows: This dissertation has employed elements of traditional exposition and has successfully argued *sola Scriptura* that 2 Pet 3:10–13 is not a *single meaning* prophecy that pertains entirely to the eternal state as commonly interpreted but is a *contextual telescoping* prophecy with 3:10–12 pertaining to the day of the Lord Armageddon conflagration which will cleanse the earth's surface and atmosphere (the first heaven, Gen 1:8) for their Edenic restoration (cf. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) for Christ's earthly millennial reign (*millennial restoration*), while 3:13 telescopes to the *eternal state* of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17–19; Rev 21:1); two distinct prophecies in the same context separated by more than a thousand years, which is consistent with the literary feature of telescoping common in biblical prophetic literature.

In conclusion to *Rethinking 2 Peter 3:10–13: An Exposition of This Millennial Restoration and Eternal State Telescoping Prophecy*, with the thesis of this dissertation proven *sola Scriptura*, it confirms that a bright future awaits God's people when the events of 2 Pet 3:10–13 are fulfilled—a cleansed by fire earth's surface and atmosphere (the first heaven) for their Edenic restoration for Christ's earthly millennial reign and a distant promised eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth.

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