

The Day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3: End of the Universe or Destruction of Jerusalem?

Oscar Miles

Text: 2 Peter 3:1-15.

Introduction:

I. Abbreviations:

- A. **DOJ** = Destruction of Jerusalem.
- B. **EOU** = End of the Universe.
- C. **I1, I2, and I3** = Interpretation #1, #2, and #3. These are used to differentiate between 1) explanatory subpoints and 2) subpoints as different views of the related point.

II. Format for the study

- A. **Textual analysis of both positions** with copious references for further study. (Note: Occasionally in both the EOU and the DOJ sections I have inserted, rather indiscriminately, interpretations which are not particular to either view but simply of interest in the exegesis of the passage.) I have tried to give mostly a positive interpretation of both sides in this section without too much rebuttal.
 - 1. Related passages from 1 Peter
 - 2. Related passages from 2 Peter
 - 3. Interpretation of 2 Peter 3
- B. **Why I arrived at my own conclusions.**
- C. **Brief summary of both positions** in 800 words, each with just a few cross references.
 - 1. **Appendix 1: Summary of the “End of the Universe” view** taken by amillennialists and dispensationalists.
 - 2. **Appendix 2: Summary of the destruction of Jerusalem view** taken by full and partial preterists.

Body:

I. A textual analysis of both positions

A. End of the Universe (EOU/ Futurist) Analysis

1. Some relevant passages from 1 Peter

a. 1:5.

- 1) **“The ‘last time’** will be when our present Christian dispensation is over, *i.e.*, when Christ returns to earth” (Oberst 27), and “the world shall close” (Barnes 115).
- 2) **“Ready to be revealed”**
 - a) **What it means.** The word “ready” means “prepared, ready ... on the point of being revealed” (Thayer), but “none knows this time ... it could happen at any point” (Hamilton, 18).

- b) **How it should be translated.** It “should be rendered ‘a certain, ready, or already prepared salvation’” (Richard, 44).
- b. **1:20. “In these last times.”**
- 1) **Lit., “the end of the times”** (NASBu footnote; Luther 73; cf. Lenski 66).
 - 2) **Possible interpretations.**
 - a) **No other dispensation will come.** “The prophets, apostles, and Christ himself call it the last hour, not because soon after the ascension of Christ the last day would come, but because, after the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, no other shall come . . .” (Luther 73).
 - b) **“The time immediately preceding Christ’s return from heaven and the consummation of the divine kingdom.”** Thayer on *eschatos* plus *chromos*; Hamilton quotes Thayer approvingly (50).
 - c) **“The last dispensation ... on the earth”** (Barnes 129).
- c. **4:5-6.**
- 1) **Who are “the dead”?** There is much disagreement over the meaning of these verses. Hillyer makes my favorite statement about v. 6: “no satisfactory explanation of this verse has ever been given” (122).
 - a) The “unbelieving” in general. (Luther 177).
 - b) The physically dead preached to while they were living. (Oberst 103; Hamilton, 220; Lenski 185-86).
 - c) The spiritually (alive and) dead. (Oberst 102).
 - d) Idiomatic for “everyone.” (Michaels 235; Richard, 173).
 - 2) **Describes an end of the world judgment.** (Lenski, 186).
- d. **4:7. *The end of all things is at hand.*** Interpretations abound on this verse.
- 1) **Jesus would return in their lifetime.**
 - a) This was expected. “Christians in the early church expected Jesus to return in their lifetime (Rom. 13:12; 1 John 2:18). . .” (Wiersbe 421).
 - b) The real point: “we must all live in expectancy” (Wiersbe 421).
 - 2) **A shorter period of time from Peter’s generation to the EOU than from Creation to Peter’s generation.** (See Luther, 178). Luther sees this verse as so “remarkable” that “if it were not the apostle’s language, we might say it was contradictory.”
 - 3) **Only the Second Coming is left.** “There is nothing more to expect except his second coming” (Lenski, 192).
 - 4) **We are living in the last period of time.** Since the Incarnation, we are living in the last times (Bowman, 148).
 - 5) **“The curtain could fall at any time”** (Grudem, 173).
 - 6) **“Salvation-history nearness”** and not “chronological nearness” (Hoekema, 127).
 - 7) **The end of the Christian age.** (Hamilton, 234, and the five scholars he lists).

-
- a) “At hand” used in a “relative sense” (Hamilton, 235) as in Rom. 13:11; Php 2:30; Jas. 4:8; Eph. 2:13, 17; Heb 6:8; Acts 7:5; Deut 32:35b; Heb. 8:13 referring to the time of Jeremiah 31 (*Ibid.*, 230).
- 8) **The death of each individual.**
- a) It always means “not far off.” (Barnes, 193).
- b) So it must refer to personal death. (*Ibid.*)
- 9) **“The transience of all that pertains to the closing present age”** (Hillyer, 125).
- e. **4:17. “It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God.”**
- 1) **Peter cites OT language.** Jer. 25:29; 49:12; Ezek. 9:6.
- 2) **God chastises Christians.** God was chastising the early Christians with the persecutions they were suffering (Luther, 198).
- 3) **This continues today.**
2. **Relevant passages from 2 Peter**
- a. **1:16-18. Peter’s “specific point in view was the second coming of Jesus”** (Blum, 273).
- 1) **The Transfiguration.** “Peter sees his preaching of the Second Coming as being based on his eyewitness observation of the transfiguration ...” (*Ibid.*).
- 2) **Prove an EOU coming of Jesus.** In the return of Jesus, “the kingdom will be visibly inaugurated in power. The dead will be raised, and judgment will occur” (Blum, 273; *cf.* Bowman, 167).
- b. **2:1. “Swift destruction.”**
- 1) **Certain destruction.** The meaning of “swift” here “probably indicates certainty” (Moo, 93).
- 2) **Imminent means “could come at any time.”** It is possible that it refers to imminence, for the “idea of imminence ... is wide spread in the NT,” but only “in the sense that the last day *could* come at any time” (*Ibid.*).
3. **Interpretation of 2 Peter 3.**
- a. **Verse One. What was the first letter?**
- 1) **1 Peter.**
- a) The subject “does not have to be identical.” (Hamilton, 198).
- b) There are multiple parallels. (Lucas and Green, *passim*).
- 2) **A lost letter.** (Green, 134-35, *et al.*)
- b. **Verse Two.**
- 1) **The “prophets” are the OT prophets.** (The consensus).
- a) This is the normal NT usage. With a few exceptions.
- b) Peter immediately refers to the past events of Creation and the Flood (Lucas and Green, 127).
-

2) **What is the connection with verses 3ff.?**

- a) **I1: They are not connected, simply a general exhortation.** Hamilton believes this refers to OT prophets as in 1 Pt. 1:10-12 (202), but he considers vv. 1-2 a general exhortation not connected with vv. 3ff.
- b) **I2: There is a clear connection.** Most see a clear connection between the OT prophets and vv. 3ff. The OT foretold – either directly or by implication – a fiery end to the universe (Wiersbe, 466).
 - 1] **I1: This means some OT prophecies have not yet been fulfilled.** Hoekema states plainly, “many of the predictions of the OT prophets have not yet been fulfilled, and ... a number of things which Jesus himself predicted have not yet been actualized” (14).
 - 2] **I2: Peter simply drew his imagery from the OT.** Commentators connected with churches of Christ usually see no OT prophecies concerning the EOU. Peter simply drew his imagery from the OT.
- c) **Verse Three.** Jesus had promised to come (John 14:1-4; Acts 1:11), so His delay was “the basis” for the mocking (Hamilton, 207).

1) **Last days.**

- a) **The time period between Pentecost and the EOU.** That is, “the Christian Age” (Robert Turner in Curry, 169; Moo 166).
- b) **Between the first and second Advents.** (e.g., Blum, 284; Green, 137). Lucas and Green define it both ways a) and b) (129).
- c) **Has different meanings.** Oberst: it “sometimes” refers “to the last days of Judah (and Jerusalem) as a nation” and could here, but he opts for a “more general” definition of “*The Christian Age*” in this verse (188).
- d) **Anything that happens during the millennium.** 2 Pt. 3:8 teaches that anything that occurred during the millennium can be said to happen “at the end of time or on the last day” (Augustine in Bray, 158).

2) **Mockers will come.**

- a) **Mockers will come in the future.** As the future tense indicates.
 - 1] **A sign of the end.** The coming of mockers will be “a sure sign that the day will come soon” (Luther, 281; Hillyer, 212).
 - 2] **The EOU is near.** The presence today of so many who mock indicates that “the time is short” (Wiersbe, 469).
- b) **Mockers were present in Peter’s day.**
 - 1] **They are present in verse 5.** So, the future tense is used in an accommodative sense (Lucas and Green, 128-29; cf. Green, 137).
 - 2] **There is precedent in Chapter 2.** The “same shift between the future and present tenses took place in 2:1” indicating “a literary device to underline a warning that is already being ignored” (Michaels, 129).
- c) **Mockers will exist throughout the Christian Age.** As foretold by Daniel 7:25; 11:36-39 (Lucas and Green, 129).

d. *Verse four. Who are the “fathers”?*

- 1) **The church fathers** “who were looking for the Lord’s second coming,” but “have been disappointed” (Hamilton, 209; cf. Barnes, 255).
- 2) **The Jewish fathers** stretching back to Noah (Blum, 285; Green, 27).

e. *Verse five.*

- 1) **God created the physical earth out of water.** v. 5
- 2) **God reformed the physical earth by Flood waters.** v. 6.
- 3) **He will one day completely destroy it with fire.** v. 7 (cf. Bauckham, 298).

f. *Verse six*1) **What is *the world*?**

- a) **The world of men.** The “world” in this verse refers to the men of the antediluvian world (Oberst, 191; Hamilton, 220; *et al.*).
- b) **The physical globe.** The Flood “extended to the whole world ... returning the creation to a watery chaos” as well as all the “living things that were created” (Davids, 271).

2) **Flooded with water.** God has intervened in the universe.

- a) **Was *destroyed* but not annihilated by water.** (Davids, 271).
- b) **Will be *destroyed* by fire.** (Barclay, 338; Hamilton, 214, *et al.*)

g. *Verse seven.* Millennialists are divided on whether this EOU (as we know it) will occur before or after the millennium (Blum, 285).

- 1) **By His word.** By His word He created the physical universe and formed the earth out of watery waste (v. 5), and by His word, He will destroy it by fire.
- 2) **Present heavens and earth.** The “heavens” and “earth” sum up the totality of the physical universe (Hamilton, 222).

a) **Whatever God destroyed with water, He will destroy with fire.**

(Oberst, 193; Lenski, 342; cf. Bauckham, 299).

- 1] **The planet *earth*.** “The ‘earth’ (*ge*) in this passage can only refer to this globe ... and is frequently used to refer to our *planet as a whole*, as opposed to *the heavens* (Matthew 5:18, 35; 6:10)” (Oberst, 192).

a] **In Noah’s day God destroyed “the human world.”** (Lucas and Green, 133).

b] **In the future He will destroy “the whole creation”** (*Ibid.*)

- 2] **The physical *heavens*.** The atmosphere or entire universe. Bede: at least the “earth’s atmosphere” perished “because the Bible also talks about the birds being affected by the flood” (Bray, 157).

b) **This will occur when Jesus returns from the heavens.** (Lenski, 343).

3) **Reserved for fire.**

-
- a) **OT passages connecting *fire* to judgment.** Gen 19:24, 28; Num 11:1; Deut 32:22; Josh 7:25; Psa. 50:3; 89:46; 97:3; Isa 30:30; 34:8-9; 66:15-16; Ezek. 15:7; Dan 7:9-11; Micah 1:4; Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Mal 4:1.
- 1] **The origin of a fiery universal cataclysm.** The idea of a universal cataclysm came from Isa. 66:15-16; Mal. 4:1 and Jewish interpretation of Deut. 32:22; Zeph. 1:18, *etc.* (Bauckham, 300).
 - 2] **Merely borrowing from the terminology of OT prophecies.** OT prophecies were judgments against wicked nations and cities.
- b) **NT passages.** Mt. 3:10-12; 5:22; 13:42, 50; 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7-8; Heb. 6:7-8; 12:29; 1 Peter 1:7; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7; Rev. 21:8.
- 4) ***The day of judgment.*** Mentioned in 2:9 as an EOU judgment.
- h. ***Verse eight.***
- 1) **God views time differently than we do.** Thus, any problem concerning the delay in Jesus' coming is mitigated (Hamilton, 226, 228).
 - 2) **"In God's sight there is no reckoning of time."** (Luther, 283). The "delay may seem *long to man*," but "means nothing to *God*" (Oberst, 194).
 - 3) **All time statements are made on God's not "man's chronological reckoning."** (Bowman, 174).
 - 4) **Millennialists have often taken this literally.** This verse has been fodder for millennialists since the second century (Green, 147). Some have taught that the fiery judgment of v. 7 will last 1,000 years (*cf.* Bauckham, 306-07; Caesarius of Arles and Bede in Bray, 158-59).
- i. ***Verse nine.***
- 1) **God "does not confine himself to concepts of time as do men."** (Hamilton, 230).
 - 2) **His patience may run out soon.** Parallels God's 120 years of patience with the people of Noah's day. Oberst can't resist speculation: "With crime, lust, war, and rebellion everywhere, it is surely difficult to believe that the awful event described in these verses is very far distant" (195).
 - 3) **Precise timing of the Second Coming is unknown.** (Lucas and Green, 140).
- j. ***Verse ten***
- 1) ***The day of the Lord.***
 - a) **A day God judges men.** Isa 13:9; Jer 46:10; Joel 1:15; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2-4; 1 Cor 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Rev. 3:3; 16:15.
 - 1] **National judgments in the OT.**
 - 2] **End of history in the NT.** "The NT writers use the phrase consistently to refer to the end of history" (Moo, 81).
 - b) **The EOU will be the greatest day of the Lord.**
 - 2) ***Like a thief.*** Peter is "borrowing from Paul (1 Thess. 5:2)" (Richard, 381).
 - 3) **What are the heavens?**
-

- a) **The “heavens” the Deluge came from** (Hamilton, 238). Earth’s atmosphere.
- b) **The “heavenly bodies” will then be annihilated.** (Richard, 381).
- c) **“Spiritual forces...influencing evil on earth.”** (Davids, 287, *et al.*)

4) ***The elements.***

- a) **The language comports with OT apocalyptic language.** Isa. 34:4; Joel 2:10.
- b) **But is sometimes meant literally.** As in Mt. 24:29; Mk. 13:24-31; Rev. 6:12-13; 20:11 according to Lucas and Green (142). Here it refers to “a sudden conflagration of the universe” (Lenski, 346).

1] **I1: The heavenly bodies.**

2] **I2: “The component parts of the material world/universe”**

(Barnes, 261; Green, 151; Lucas and Green, 142; BDAG; AG as quoted in Hamilton, 240).

a] **I1: “Approximately equivalent to ... ‘atom’”** (Oberst, 197).

b] **I2: Earth, air, fire, and water.** But only fire and water will be completely destroyed. The rest will be part of the new heavens and earth (Bede in Bray, 159).

5) ***Destroyed with intense heat...burned up***

a) **I1: Consumed by burning.**

1] **The entire space-time continuum will be consumed.**

a] **Every molecule.** “Dissolved or consumed by burning”

(Hamilton, 242; Lucas and Green, 142-43; Green, 151).

b] **No renewed earth.** The wording eliminates the possibility of a revamped heavens and earth though it may remain as “a ball of charcoal” (Oberst, 197).

2] **Perhaps by manmade means.** God may use “atomic energy” or “nuclear weapons” (Oberst, 197-98; Hillyer, 215).

b) **I2: Purified by fire.** The fire of vv. 7, 10 is literal (physical), but fire “*annihilates* nothing,” so the world will be changed not annihilated

(Barnes, 261-62).

1] **I1: The current universe will be remade.** (Lenski, 350, *et al.*).

“Everything in creation was made for our enjoyment, and it will be remade along with us” (Andreas in Bray, 160).

2] **I2: Another physical universe will be created.** “...this great explosion ... will destroy the earth and the atmospheric heavens around it, the universe as we know it; this will make room for the new heavens and earth (2 Pt. 3:13; Rev. 21:1ff)” (Wiersbe, 466).

3] **God will dwell in this renovated universe.** (Luther, 285).

c) **Jehovah’s Witnesses.**

1] **The “elements” are everything ungodly.**

-
- a] **Everything opposed to God.** Everything “pagan and against God’s kingdom,” the “parts of this ungodly world” must be burned off in order to “clear the universe for the triumphant entry of a righteous world of new heavens and new earth” (*New Heavens...*, 298-99).
 - b] **The true contrast.** (*Ibid.*)
 - 1} The destruction of elementary (base, ungodly) things of the present heavens and earth.
 - 2} Creation of righteousness in a new heavens and earth.
 - 2] **Foretold by Isaiah and Peter.** Isa. 65:17-18; 2 Pt. 3:13.
 - a] A future end to Satan’s reign on earth.
 - b] The beginning of Jehovah’s reign in complete righteousness. (*Ibid.*, 312).
 - 6) ***Burned up or exposed?***
 - a) Manuscript evidence favors “discovered” over “burned up.”
 - b) Man’s works will be exposed. (Hamilton, 243).
 - k. ***Verse eleven.*** (See Hamilton).
 - 1) *Holy conduct.* 1 Pt. 1:12, 15, 16, 18; 2:5, 9, 12; 3:1, 2, 5, 16; 2 Pt 1:18, 21; 2:7, 21; 3:2, 11
 - 2) *Godliness.* 1 Pt. 1:3, 6, 7
 - l. ***Verse twelve***
 - 1) ***Looking for the day of God.***
 - a) **All Christians of all ages “are to wait for His coming.”** (Hamilton, 247).
 - b) **We should anticipate and eagerly expect Jesus to come at any time.** (Oberst, 198).
 - c) **“Expectation” as “being prepared.”** The “moral side to waiting” (Davids, 290).
 - 2) ***Hastening the day of God.***
 - a) **I1: The *Parousia* can be hastened by prayer, repentance, and evangelism.** Acts 3:19-21; Matthew 24:14; (*cf.* Barclay, 346-47; Lucas and Green, 146).
 - 1] **Jewish tradition.** The Messiah will come when all Israel repents or obeys the Law perfectly for one day (Moo, 198, *et al.*).
 - 2] **Peter reflected this tradition.** Acts 3:19-20; (*cf.* Moo, 198).
 - b) **I2: “Hasten” means “desire earnestly.”**
 - 1] **Holy conduct won’t change the timing of the EOU.** Amillennialists, generally as Lenski, express doubts “whether the holy conduct of Christians can hasten the day of judgment” (348).
-

2] **Secondary meaning for word.** Hamilton concurs with Lenski though he admits the strongest evidence is for the translation “hastening,” but “earnestly desiring” (ASV) also “makes perfectly good sense” (249).

3) *The elements will melt.*

a) “Everything burnable ... *shall be dissolved* ...” (Oberst, 198).

b) **The OT prophets wrote of melting elements** (Isa 34:3-4; 63:19-64:1; Mic 1:4).

1] **I1: Peter and the OT prophets spoke of an EOU.** (Lucas and Green, 147).

2] **I2: Peter adapted language of the OT prophets to refer to the EOU.** Peter broadened and made different application of OT language which spoke of more limited judgments (Hamilton).

m. *Verse thirteen*

1) **Which promise?**

a) **The promise of Jesus.** Jesus’ promise applies to all Christians of all times (Hamilton).

b) **The promise made by Paul.** v. 15, though Paul used “different language” (Hailey in Curry, 163).

c) **The promise made by Isaiah.** Most commentators believe Peter “almost certainly” refers to Isaiah and that Isaiah foresaw the EOU (Moo 199, *et al.*).

d) **The promise of a home after the EOU.** The general “promise of a heavenly home” found in John 14:1-3; Luke 20:34-36 but “especially Isa. 65:17, 22; Rev. 22:1” (200).

2) *New heavens and earth.*

a) **The language of Isaiah 65:17-18 and 66:22.**

1] **I1: Isaiah “glimpsed” this new spiritual dwelling place** which we will enjoy after the EOU (Lucas and Green, 147; *cf.* Blum, 287).

2] **I2: Peter adapts Isaiah’s language to describe an EOU.**

a] **Isaiah’s predictions are now past.** He foretold the new order of the Messianic Era and dissolution of the pagan and Jewish orders (Hailey, 518-521, 528, 538-539; Hamilton, 256).

b] **Peter’s predictions are still future.** Peter adopted Isaiah’s language to describe a still future new order after the ending of the physical universe (*ibid.*).

b) **A completely different creation.** If Peter had wanted to say we would live on a refurbished earth, he would have chosen *neos* (new) not *kainos* (new in form or quality) (Oberst, 200-01).

c) **A refurbished earth.**

1] **Kainos.**

- a] *Kainos* means “**new in nature or quality.**”
 - b] *Neos* means “**new in time or origin.**”
 - c] By using *kainos*, Peter implies “**renewal.**” Of the present heavens and earth (Hoekema, 280; cf. Lucas and Green, 148; Hillyer, 217; see Moo, 200-02 for both sides of this debate).
- 2] **As necessary.** The physical creation will be affected only as much as necessary for the “expunging of evil” (Davids, 157).
- 3] **Creation will share our liberation.** Rom. 8:21; (cf. Davids, 292).
- 3) ***Righteousness dwells.***
- a) **Perfect righteousness.** “All that is sinful and imperfect will have been removed” (Hoekema, 284).
 - b) **Dwells here permanently.** *katoikei* means “dwells permanently;” righteousness will make its “permanent home” here because “all evil will have been destroyed” (Green, 155; cf. Hillyer, 220).
- n. ***Verse fourteen.***
- 1) **Jesus will return one day to destroy and renew.**
 - 2) **So, all Christians of all times should live godly lives.** (e.g., Moo, 207).
- o. ***Verse fifteen.***
- 1) **Peter alludes to Paul’s eschatology.** 1 Thess. 4-5; 2 Thess. 1.
 - 2) **Peter refers to Paul’s teaching on God’s *longsuffering*.** (Oberst, 204).
 - 3) **Peter refers to Paul’s directives to holiness.** In view of the Second Coming (Barclay, 348; Green, 158-59).

B. Destruction of Jerusalem (DOJ/ Preterist) Analysis.

1. Hypothetical scenario:
 - a. What would you say to someone, let’s call him “J.C.,” who tells you when you are 30 years old, “**The Chinese army is coming to invade the U.S. The end is coming in your generation?**”
 - b. Let’s say you consider this for 30 years, but nothing happens. When you reach your 60s, an associate of J.C.’s, says to you, “**The end of all things is near.**”
 - c. What would you think then? Might you mock and say, “**Where is the promise of the Chinese army coming?**”
 - 1) (Hopefully, you would temper your pessimism if this fellow had performed miracles to prove the veracity of his words!)
2. Possible parallel scenario:
 - a. Jesus predicted that He would return in the form of the Roman army and bring about “**the end**” in the generation that heard His Olivet discourse (Mt. 24:6, 14, 34).
 - b. Peter heard this prediction and claimed some 30 years later, “**The end of all things is at hand**” (1 Pt. 4:7).

c. Some began to mock the idea of Jesus returning to punish the wicked, and Peter dealt with them severely in 2 Pt. 3.

3. **Some relevant passages from 1 Peter**

a. **1:5.**

1) **Ready.**

a) **“Ready” carries the idea of imminent.**

1] **On the point of.** “Ready” means: “prepared, ready ... on the point of being revealed” (Thayer).

2] **About to be.** It was “a salvation about to be revealed at the last day ... the moment of its revelation is very near. ... The ‘chosen people’ stand on the threshold of their inheritance; its unveiling is both imminent and certain” (Hillyer, 23, 32).

b) **Jesus’ use of the word.** A feast now “ready” to be served (Lk. 14:17); (cf. BDAG).

2) **To be revealed.** This verse deals with the coming of Christ and not “the death of individual Christians” (Lenski, 36).

3) **The last time has already arrived.** “For Peter ‘the last time’ has already arrived, as in v. 20 he commits himself to the idea that Christ has already been ‘made manifest at the end of the times’ (see also 4:7)” (Bowman, 125).

b. **1:20. In these last times.**

1) **Lit., “who appeared in the last of the ages.”** (Michaels, 67; cf. Richard, 65).

2) **That is, the end of the Mosaic Age.** “The making known of Christ’s redemptive work was *at*, (*epi*, upon, *i.e.*, upon or at the conclusion of) the final stages of some period of history. It seems apparent that the reference can only be to the final times of the Mosaic period” (Oberst, 40).

c. **2:12. “The day of visitation.”**

1) **OT days of visitation were often days of vengeance and mercy.**

2) **Jesus clearly refers to the DOJ as a day of visitation in Luke 19:44.**

a) **The phrase “has an unmistakable eschatological sense”** (cf. Isa. 10:3; Jer. 10:15 ASV); (Richard, 108; Oberst, 59)

b) **Voluntary praise.** The language implies “the voluntary praise of people who have been converted and not ... forced acknowledgement” (Grudem, 117). This better fits the vindication of the saints at the DOJ.

d. **4:5. “Ready to judge.”**

1) **Does not naturally refer to a distant event.** The expression means “having it in readiness to judge,” and “can by no means refer to any but an almost immediate event” (Russell, 304).

2) **Jesus judged the living and the dead at the DOJ.** Mt. 23:29-39; (cf. Preston, 28).

e. **4:6.**

-
- 1) **The gospel was preached to living and already dead Christians.**
 - 2) **Dead Christians were *judged* (condemned) and put to death.**
 - 3) **But the Lord would soon vindicate them.** In the DOJ, God showed that they were righteous, and their Jewish persecutors were wicked.
 - 4) **The end was near.** v. 7.
 - a) **The end of Jewish persecution.**
 - b) **The end of the entire Jewish world.** Mt. 23:34-37; Rev. 6:10-11.
- f. **4:7. *The end of all things is at hand.***
- 1) **The importance to 2 Pt. 3.**
 - a) **Peter refers to 1 Pt. in 2 Pt. 3:1.**
 - b) **1 Pt. speaks of *the end* as *at hand*.**
 - c) **2 Pt. 3 speaks of a cataclysmic end.**
 - d) **This establishes a time frame for 2 Pt. 3.**
 - 1] **The end that was *at hand* in 1 Pt. 4:7.**
 - 2] **So, the end of 2 Pt. 3 was also *at hand*.**
 - 2) ***The end.***
 - a) **A common first century belief.** The author of 1 Peter “subscribes to the traditional, early belief that the end was near, a belief that persisted throughout the first century” (Richard, 178).
 - b) **The end of the Jewish age was near.**
 - 1] **This is “... an announcement of the end of the age ...”** (Michaels, 244).
 - 2] **The only age whose end was at hand was the Jewish Age.** (Guy N. Woods in Hamilton, 111-12; DeHoff, 271).
 - 3) ***Of all things.***
 - a) **To the Jews, AD 70 was the end of all things.**
 - b) **Common hyperbolic apocalyptic language.**
 - 4) ***At hand.*** Proximity of time or space is at least the preponderant use of the word (Most commentators).
 - a) **God communicates to man.**
 - 1] **In human terms not in divine terms.** Many believe this means “near” only in divine terms and use 2 Pt. 3:8.
 - 2] **Or we can’t understand Scripture.**
 - b) ***Engizo* means “near” in place or time.**
 - 1] **This is the meaning of the word.** (All Greek reference works).
 - 2] **This is how the word is used.** Oberst examined all 43 uses in the NT.
-

-
- a] **Engidzo means near.** “in ... place or position, and ... time, as in this instance. When referring to time, it invariably refers to what is imminent or impending” (Oberst, 104).
- b] **No clear exceptions.**
- 1} **Contra other commentators.** Who say “near” doesn’t mean proximity of time in, *e.g.*, Mt. 3:2; Rom. 13:13; Heb. 10:25; Jas. 5:8; Phil. 4:5.
 - 2} **All do or could mean “near.”** *Engidzo* is never “used in this loose sense by any NT writer” Rather “they have *all* been fulfilled” (Oberst, 104-105).
- 3] **A prophet saying “near” of something “far” was a false prophet.** Jesus warned that if a person said His coming was at hand when it was not, he was a false prophet (Luke 21:8).
- c) **The DOJ was near in time.**
- 1] **The EOU was not near.**
 - a] **False teachers believed Jesus said the judgment was near.** (Lucas and Green, 141).
 - b] **He did say so.** Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:34.
 - 1} This specifies a time frame.
 - 2} Which would be drawing near when Peter wrote.
 - c] **Only two conclusions possible.**
 - 1} **Jesus was wrong.**
 - 2} **Jesus did come.** But His coming was not the EOU.
 - 2] **The DOJ was near.** The incipient kingdom came 40 days after His ascension (Acts 2), but “the end” came 40 years later.
 - a] **Jesus said “the end” would come in that generation.** Mt. 24:14, 34.
 - b] **False prophets would say the end was near before it was.** Luke 21:8. The disciples were not to listen to them.
 - c] **If what Peter said was near was really far, Peter was a false prophet.**
 - 1} Luke 21:8; *cf.* Deut. 18:22.
 - 2} **Peter heard Jesus’ warning.** False teachers would say the time was “near” when it was not.
 - 3} **Why would he use the word “near” of something “far”?** Or why use it in a completely different sense, knowing how Jesus had used “near” to warn against false prophets?
 - 4} **Were the scoffers of 2 Pt. 3:3 right and Peter wrong after all?**
-

-
- 3] **The language is justified.**
- a] **The DOJ was very crucial.** “So great was this event, so far-reaching was its influence in the Roman world, that it could be spoken of by the people of that age as ‘the end of all things’” (Oberst, 105).
 - b] **Apocalyptic language hyperbolizes.** In apocalyptic literature, “the end of all things” would not be unusual at all to describe the judgment of a nation or city.
- g. **4:17-18. *It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God.***
- 1) **A DOJ interpretation fits 1 Peter.** 1 Peter says much about saints suffering.
 - 2) ***The house of God.***
 - a) **Refers to Christians.**
 - 1] **In the OT, the “house of God” was the Temple.**
 - a] **“The operative metaphor here.”** (Michaels, 271).
 - 1} **“Not entirely metaphorical.”** “Peter had in mind the actual situation of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in his own day” (*Ibid.*).
 - 2} **A signal of final judgment.** To the Jews there was at least “an awareness of the temple’s destruction” (*Ibid.*).
 - b] **Gives this passage “strongly apocalyptic coloring”** (*Ibid.*).
 - 2] **But now is the true Israel.**
 - a] **By extension.** The “house of God” of Ezk. 9.6 became the true Israel or the church, the saints.
 - b] **Interesting parallels between 1 Peter 4 and Ezekiel 9.** (Grudem).
 - 3) ***Judgment to begin with (lit. from) the house of God.*** Christians also suffer in the judgment of God, as predicted. Suffering began with God’s people, but they would survive whereas the wicked, persecuting Jews would not.
 - a) **The saints are suffering a purifying fire.** (1 Pt. 1:7; 4:12; Mal. 3-4). Therefore, “judgment” has begun with them.
 - 1] **A common OT picture.** “The prophets ... insist that judgment first falls on Israel to purify it ... then on the nations (Isa. 10:12; Jer. 25:29; Mal. 3:1-5; Amos 3:2) (Richard, 197).
 - 2] **Jesus foretold a time of “birth-pangs” for His new kingdom,** so they should not be surprised (v. 12) that this trial and tribulation “has now arrived” (*cf.* Mark 13:8, 19; Matt 24:8, 21; Rev. 3:10; Luke 21:23; Rev 7:14) (Michaels, 270; *cf.* Blum, 249 who sees this as the “birth-pangs” Jesus foretold and as “eschatological”).
 - 3] **These birth-pangs would be a signal that the end was imminent.** “It is a time for judgment, just prior to the ‘end’” (Michaels, 270).
-

-
- a] It would be difficult on the righteous. v. 18; Mt. 24:16-22.
 - b] The unrighteous would not survive. v. 18.
 - b) **It will get worse before it gets better.** Mt. 24:21-22.
 - c) **But how much worse it would be for the Jews in AD 70?** Those who had not obeyed the gospel (read Josephus!).
 - 1] “If the purifying fire of God’s eschatological visitation ... entails, for those united to Christ, such anguish as Peter’s readers are undergoing, what shall the consummation of that purifying divine presence mean for those who have rejected God’s good news – if not a conflagration of utter destruction?” (Grudem, 183).
 - 2] But the “fire” that purifies the saints is metaphoric.
 - 3] So the “fire” of 2 Pt. 3:7, 10 is also metaphoric.
4. **Some relevant passages from 2 Peter**
- a. **1:16-19. The connection between *the powerful coming of the Lord* and the *Transfiguration*.**
 - 1) **Peter clearly established a connection between the “power and coming” of Christ and the Transfiguration.**
 - a) **“The Transfiguration was a view into the future of ... Jesus ... coming with power and glory.”** (Davids, 202). That was the very meaning of the Transfiguration.
 - b) **The Transfiguration was “a foretaste of the triumphant glory” of Jesus’ coming with power.** (Barclay, 310; cf. Bauckham, 222).
 - 2) **The Gospels made the same connection,** for Matthew 16:27-28; Mark 8:38-9:1; Luke 9:26-27 (cf. Davids, 201; Lucas and Green 79; *et al.*).
 - a) **First the coming of Jesus is foretold.**
 - 1] **In glory, with His angels, in judgment, in that generation.** Mt. 16:27-28; Lk. 9:26-27.
 - a] This is “a mysterious promise” to some. (Green, 92).
 - b] But not to those who understand that the DOJ was a coming of Jesus in power. Mt. 24:30; Mk. 13:26; Lk. 21:27.
 - 2] **In power, in glory, with His angels.** Mk. 8:38-9:1.
 - a] Other powerful coming passages. Mt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39 connect Jesus’ coming with “power” (Lenski, 285).
 - b] Yet Matthew 24 refers to the DOJ.
 - b) **Then the Transfiguration.** Mt. 17:1ff; Mk. 9:2ff; Lk. 9:28ff.
 - 1] This establishes a connection in proximity of Scripture.
 - 2] The Message of the Transfiguration establishes a powerful connection with the DOJ. The connection: Jesus’ coming in AD 70 signaled the end of the era of Moses and the prophets in a powerful way.
-

-
- a] **Representative figures.**
 - 1} Moses and Elijah represented the OT and Jesus the NT. Luke 9:30-31.
 - 2} God conferred Jesus' new status. (*cf.* Davids, 203-05).
 - b] **Representative end and beginning.**
 - 1} **End to the old covenant.** "The glory of Jesus outshined those two grand spokesmen of the Old Covenant" (Preston, 4).
 - 2} **Beginning of the new.** What a clear message: it was time to leave Moses and Elijah and follow Christ!
 - 3} **When Jesus finished His judgment against Jerusalem, He alone would be standing!**
 - 3] **The OT provides a connection.**
 - a] **"The prophetic word" of 2 Pt. 1:19 was part of the proof of the powerful coming of Jesus.** (Bauckham, 225; Davids, 208).
 - 1} **But the coming foretold in the OT was the DOJ.** If not, see Mt. 5:18.
 - 2} **Therefore the coming of 2 Peter is also the DOJ.**
 - b] **"The day dawns" and "morning star arises" (2 Pt. 1:19) refer to the coming of Christ (Moo, 76; Bauckham, 225-26).**
 - c) **Syllogism:**
 - 1] Major Premise: The coming of Jesus in 2 Peter 1:16-18 is connected with the Transfiguration.
 - 2] Minor Premise: But the coming of Jesus connected with the Transfiguration took place in the first century (Mt. 16:28, *et al.*).
 - 3] Conclusion: The coming of Jesus in 2 Pt. 1:16 took place in the first century. If so, the presumption is that Peter refers to the same first century coming of the Lord in 2 Peter 3 (*cf.* Lenski, 285).
 - b. **2:1. False teachers...bringing swift destruction upon themselves.**
 - 1) **The false teachers in Chapter 2 are the mockers in Chapter 3.**
 - 2) **Their destruction is coming soon.** They were, at that time, "bringing swift destruction upon themselves."
 - a) **Meaning of "swift."** The word "swift" (*taxinos*) "does not mean 'sudden' but 'coming soon, imminent'"; thus "there is no diminution of the sense of eschatological imminence" in 2 Peter (Bauckham, 241; BDAG; Davids, 222).
 - b) **Use of *swift* in 2 Peter.** Peter uses this word of his own imminent death in 1:14. Peter was not expecting to live for millennia or indefinitely.
 - 1] But Peter was expecting to die soon.
-

2] He also expected the false teachers to be punished soon!

5. **Interpretation of 2 Peter 3.**

- a. **Note:** Scholars not quoted in this study who also take a DOJ view of 2 Peter 3 include John Owen, Roderick Campbell, Cornelius Vanderwall, and C. Jonathan Seriah (*cf.* Preston 131, 147). Not all authors quoted in this section take the DOJ view. I quote them as their comments have relevance to this interpretation.
- b. **Verse one.**
- 1) **The first letter is 1 Peter.**
 - 2) **1 Peter deals with the DOJ.**
 - a) **References to the DOJ.** In 2 Peter 3, Peter answers the mockers who scoffed at the imminent DOJ he taught in 1 Peter 1:5, 13; 2:12; 4:7, 17, since it had not taken place.
 - b) **Encouragement to steadfastness.** 1 Peter gives them comfort during persecution by reminding them that the end is near (4:7), so they should maintain their faith during the fiery persecution (1:5-13); (Wright, 9-10).
 - 3) **2 Peter 3 has the same message.**
 - a) **Refers to the DOJ.** Because it was a day they could “look for” and “hasten” (vv. 12, 14).
 - b) **Encouragement to steadfastness.** Peter reminds them to remain steadfast and disregard the false teachers, because God will soon make a judgment in favor of His saints and against their persecutors, bringing in the full-grown kingdom (vv. 7, 12-13; *cf.* 1 Cor. 13:8-13).
- c. **Verse two. “Remember the words spoken...by the holy prophets.”**
- 1) **Peter quotes and alludes to several OT prophetic passages in vv. 3ff.**
 - 2) **The OT prophets foretold “the day of the Lord.”** Peter did not mean his readers should remember the “language” of the OT prophets but their teachings, especially those concerning “the day of the Lord” (Blum, 284).
 - 3) **Peter’s eschatology is the same eschatology of the OT prophets** (Bauckham, 287). Indeed, Peter “appeals” to them “to validate the community’s eschatological beliefs” (Richard, 375).
 - a) **The OT prophets taught the covenant eschatology of OT Israel.** Peter affirms it; the scoffers deny it (Moo, 167).
 - b) **The OT prophets predicted “the full end of the Jewish system (Daniel 9:24-27; cf. Isaiah 10:20-23).”** (Wright, 10).
 - c) **Peter had already taught these truths in Acts 3:18-24.**
 - 1] **The ancient prophets foretold this time.** 2 Pt. 3:2; Ac. 3:18.
 - 2] **Of the utter destruction of the wicked.** 2 Pt. 3:7; Ac. 3:23.
 - 3] **Of the times of refreshing for the saints.** 2 Pt. 3:13; Ac. 3:19.
 - 4] **At the coming of Jesus.** 2 Pt. 3:4; Ac. 3:20.
 - 5] **Until all things are restored.** 2 Pt. 3:13; Ac. 3:21.

d. *Verse three*1) *Last days.*

- a) **Implications of the term.** That it is the last days of something.
- b) **Scripturally**
 - 1] **The period during which Jesus came to earth.** 1 Pt. 1:20. When He spoke to us (Heb. 1:2).
 - 2] **The last days of Israel.** The church was established in the days of the Roman Empire and the last days of Israel's existence (Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:28-45). Davids admits "last days" could refer to the "period of judgment" connected with AD 70 (263).
 - 3] **A time of miraculous gifts.** The Holy Spirit was poured out on men (Joel 2:28ff.; Acts 2:17ff.) in the last days but ceased at AD 70 (Wright 12; Dawson, 6).
 - 4] **A time when there would be "signs."** Peter "sees the appearance of the false teachers as a sign that the last stage of history before the *Parousia* has arrived" (Bauckham, 288).

2) *Mockers will come.*

- a) **And had already come.**
 - 1] **They are the false teachers of the previous chapter.** Even premillennialist Douglas J. Moo understands that this does not refer to "the very end of history ... but ... already being fulfilled ... 1 John 2:18 couldn't say it more plainly" (165).
 - 2] **The future tense here is used as a "reminder."** It is a reminder (v. 1) of what the OT prophets and Jesus had spoken beforehand (v. 2) about what would happen (*cf.* Preston, 7). They said, "Mockers will come" in the last days and now they had come.
 - a] **OT predictions**
 - b] **Jesus' predictions.** Peter "almost surely has in mind such texts as Mt. 24:5" (Moo, 165). In connection with the DOJ, since Peter wrote only a few years before these events, why wouldn't these be the false teachers and mockers he was writing about (Wright, 16)?
 - 1} **Jesus predicted false prophets would arise.** Mt. 24:11.
 - 2} **Men would be willfully ignorant of His coming.** Mt. 24:48.
 - 3} **Some would mock His coming against Jerusalem.** Mt. 24:11, 48; Lk. 17:27-30.
 - 3] **Present tense in v. 5.** Peter's switches tenses in 2:1, 10 also.
- b) **And were persecuting the saints.**
 - 1] **The words *scoffers with their scoffing* "imply physical persecution"** (Hillyer, 212).

2] **This fits well with the emphasis on suffering in 1 Peter.**e. *Verse four*1) *Where is the promise?*

- a) **This is Jesus' promise to come in that generation.** Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:30, 34; *et al.*
- b) **Peter predicted the same** in 1 Pt. 4:7
- c) **Who was right?** The scoffers who scorned Jesus' promises to come against them soon (Hillyer, 212; *cf.* Bauckham, 290), or Jesus and Peter (Preston, 62)?

2) *His coming.*

- a) **His coming is connected with that generation in 1:16-19.** (See notes above.)
- b) **The timing**
 - 1] **A coming during the "last days" (v. 3).**
 - 2] **The "last days" refers to the end time of Israel.**
 - 3] **So, this took place at AD 70.**

3) *The fathers.*

- a) **Possibly the Jewish fathers going back to Noah.** "We can very well imagine them arguing that ever since God began his work of creating a people for his name—ever since the time of 'the fathers' of the biblical people of God—things have gone on much the same" (Moo, 167).
 - 1] **Normal NT usage.**
 - 2] **Reference in the chapter to Noah.**
 - 3] **Following their Jewish forefathers in mocking.** If the mockers are referring to the Jewish fathers, the mockers are also Jewish.
 - a] **Jesus promised to return in their generation.** Mt. 24:34. Then He would destroy Jerusalem (Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24; 26:64; Lk. 21).
 - b] **Later preachers continued this message:** Acts 6:4; Heb. 10:37; Jam. 5:7-11.
 - c] **Thirty years had passed.** Since Jesus made His promise.
 - d] **They began to mock any idea of a judgment coming against them and their beloved city, just like their forefathers.** *cf.* Isa. 28:14-22.
- b) **Possibly the early Christian fathers.** The scoffers pointed to "the death of the early generation of believers as a contradiction of the promise of an imminent return" (Richard, 377).
 - 1] **Their deaths signaled the generation was coming to a close.**
 - 2] **The mockers scoffed at the time frame.**

-
- a] **Jesus had set a time limit.** “The objection of the scoffers was not just that a long time had elapsed since the promise was given, but that the promise itself had set a time-limit within which it would be fulfilled” (Bauckham, 291).
 - b] **Certainly that time limit was running out!**
- 4) *All continues.*
- a) **Just like in the days of Amos/Isaiah.**
 - 1] **God promised a near judgment.** Against Israel in the days of Amos and Isaiah (*cf.* Amos 8:2).
 - 2] **They scoffed at it.** “Tomorrow will be like today, only more so” (Isa. 56:12).
 - 3] **God condemned them** for putting it off (Amos 6:3).
 - b) **This is a close parallel** to “all continues just as it was...”
 - c) **God takes time statements seriously.** When God communicates with man, He does not use time in a relative way (*cf.* Preston 84, *contra* Wayne Jackson).
- f. *Verse five.*
- 1) **I1: A physical illustration of the spiritual truth he is about to reveal.** This is the position most DOJ interpreters take.
 - 2) **I2: Peter is also alluding to the creation of Israel out of the waters of the Red Sea** (1 Cor. 10:1-2; Isa. 63:11).
 - 3) **The point** (*contra* Moo, 178).
 - a) **Is not about the condition of the universe.**
 - b) **But the power of God’s Word.**
 - 1] **Forming the earth.** v. 5
 - 2] **Judging the earth.** v. 6. In the Flood and the DOJ, the wicked were destroyed and the righteous were saved.
- g. *Verse six*
- 1) *The world.*
 - a) **“The globe was not destroyed”** in the Flood but “only its inhabitants and its ordered form” (Blum, 285); *cf.* 2 Pt. 2:5.
 - b) **The antitype is not a destruction of the globe.** Since the Flood is the antitype, there is no reason to take the typical destruction of vv. 7, 10 to refer to the globe. The Flood perhaps changed the earth to some extent, but we live on the same planet under the same skies (Dawson, 7).
 - 2) *Flooded with water.*
 - a) **Jesus paralleled the Flood and the DOJ.** Mt. 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26-27.
 - 1] **Mockers in Noah’s day “saw no cause for alarm.”** (Preston, 61).
-

-
- a] **They went on with their wicked activities as if nothing would happen.**
 - b] **But were destroyed in that generation.**
 - 2] **Mockers in Peter's day "saw no cause for alarm."**
 - a] **They were acting wickedly.** 2 Pt. 2; 3:3.
 - b] **And would be destroyed in that generation.**
 - b) **God delayed the Flood, but not indefinitely.**
 - 1] **The Deluge came in Noah's lifetime.**
 - 2] **Jesus promised His coming in judgment in that generation** Lk. 11:50-51; Mt. 16:27-28; 24:34.
- h. *Verse seven*
- 1) *Heavens and earth.*
 - a) **The context is the judgment and intervention of God not the physical creation.** vv. 5-6. The Creation and the Flood show that God has often intervened in history, not that God will destroy the globe.
 - b) **This is apocalyptic imagery.** "Heavens and earth" sometimes refers to the physical in Scripture, but must here be understood in the framework of apocalyptic imagery.
 - 1] **OT prophecy defines the phrase.**
 - a] **Isaiah.**
 - 1} "Isaiah sets forth the passing of the heathen nations as the end of their world; their earth and heaven would pass away ... (Isa 34:1-4). Thus, their destruction is portrayed as the passing of their heavens and earth. ... Jehovah's own people, the nation of Israel, would, likewise pass away. ... (Isa. 51:4-6). His own political nation should pass away, and this, the Lord describes as the passing away of their heavens and earth ... (v. 6)" (Hailey in Curry, 158).
 - b] **Other OT passages.**
 - 1} These define "heavens and earth" in apocalyptic settings: Isa. 65:17-18 and Haggai 2:6 (quoted in Heb. 12:26-27 which was written near the time of 2 Peter; notice "created things" in Heb. 12:27).
 - 2] **Jesus defines the phrase.**
 - a] **The DOJ would be a worldwide cataclysm.** Affecting nations, kingdoms, "all tribes of the earth ... from one end of the sky to the other," sun, moon, and stars (Mt. 24:7, 29-31).
 - b] **It was the greatest tribulation the earth would EVER know** (Mt. 24:21).
 - 2) *Reserved for fire.*
-

-
- a) **Fire was literally involved in the DOJ.**
 - b) **But here is symbolic** for God's judgment as in Isa. 33:14; Jer. 4:4; Amos 1-2; 5:6; Mal. 3:2; Mt. 3:10-11, *etc.*
 - 1] **Apocalyptic language is highly figurative.** "Jewish prophetic literature is highly metaphoric, hyperbolic, and figurative" (Preston, 12).
 - 2] **Zephaniah 3:8 compares the DOJ to devouring the earth by the fire of God's zeal.**
 - 3] **Moses foretold a future day of fire.** His wrath against Israel would burn the earth and "avenge the blood of His servants" (Deut. 32:22; Mt. 23:33-36); (*cf.* Preston, 36-43).
 - c) **Reserved is similar to Deut. 32:34** which speaks of the DOJ.
- 3) **The day of judgment.**
- a) **OT examples of judgment by fire:** Psa 1:3; Isa. 13:9-13; 29:6, *etc.*
 - b) **2 Pt. 2:9** refers to judgments against the ungodly. *cf.* 2:5-6.
 - c) **Heavens and earth are often judged in God's punishment of the nations.**
 - 1] **Apocalyptic language.** "The whole idea of cosmic conflagration belongs to apocalyptic imagery" (Green, 144).
 - 2] **Focus on men.** The focus of the author is not the physical universe but the "destruction of ungodly men" (*cf.* Davids, 275).
 - d) **"Literalism is always dangerous" in apocalyptic passages.** (Green, 144).
- i. **Verse eight.**
- 1) **A long time to man is not a long time to God.**
 - 2) **Thirty years seemed like a long time.** To man but not to God.
 - a) **Jesus promised to come in their generation:** Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:34.
 - b) **That generation was fast coming to an end.**
 - c) **Where was the promise of His coming?** V. 4. Thirty years did not negate Jesus' promise. He said He would come before that generation had passed away, and He did. The reason for delay is revealed in v. 9.
 - 3) **Consider the context of Psalm 90:4** which Peter quotes. When quoting another passage, "the writer wants us to look at the surrounding passage and not just the words he has quoted" (Lucas and Green, 137).
 - a) **The point of Psalm 90 is not that God wants us to define His time statements in Scripture as He views time.** It is not about the "relativity of time," for if it was, Peter would indeed be guilty of "selling the pass" (Green, 146).
 - 1] **This passage does not give permission to disregard time statements.**
-

-
- a] **It is not literal.** Does a day literally drag on for 1,000 years to God, while the next 1,000 years pass like one day to Him?
 - b] **Disregarding time statements would “deprive” all “interpretation of prophecy” of any “credibility”** and make everything in prophecy ambiguous (Russell, 321-322).
- 2] **But is a reaffirmation of God’s faithfulness.** “Peter was affirming God’s ability to fulfill his promises no matter how little or how much time passes. ... God’s *faithfulness* is at stake here, not His ability to communicate” time statements (Preston, 85).
- b) **The point concerns the nature of God.**
 - 1] **God is an eternal, creating, judging, saving, and moral God.** (Lucas and Green, 137-38).
 - 2] **Thus he has patiently delayed His promised judgment.** Lk. 11:51.
6. *Verse nine*
- a. *The Lord is not slow.*
 - 1) **God has not forgotten His promise.**
 - a) **He will come in judgment against Jerusalem in a very little while.** Heb. 10:37.
 - b) **Vv. 8-9 do not negate time statements.** Peter “does not say that when the Lord promises a thing for *today* He may not fulfill His promise for *a thousand years: that would be slackness*” (Russell, 322).
 - 2) **God wanted to give as many in that generation as possible the opportunity to repent.**
 - a) **He has never wanted any to perish.** Eze. 33:11.
 - b) **But He will punish the impenitent.** When people refuse to repent, His judgment will come (Lk. 13:3); (Dawson, 10). God was always patient with Israel until the cup of their iniquity finally overflowed.
 - 3) **The gospel had to be preached throughout the world before the DOJ.** Mt. 24:14.
 - b. *God is patient.*
 - 1) **Peter used the same word in 1 Pt. 3:20.**
 - a) **God was *patient* with Noah’s generation for many years.**
 - b) **But His patience did not extend beyond Noah’s generation.**
 - 2) **God had been patient with Jerusalem** for some thirty years.
 - a) **The scoffers were using this as an excuse to do evil.** v. 3; Mt. 24:48.
 - b) **But judgment would come in that generation.** Mt. 24:34, *et al.*
 - c. *All to come to repentance.* See Acts 3:19-21 on repentance and Jesus’ return.
7. *Verse ten*
-

a. *The day of the Lord.*1) **OT prophecies.**

- a) **The Universe Shaken.** In the OT, “the Day of the Lord ... was to be a time when the universe was shaken to its foundations. ... Isa. 13:9... Joel 2:1, 2...Zep. 1:14-18...Joel 2:30, 31...Isa. 13:10-13” (Barclay, 344).
- b) **But not physically destroyed.** “We need not take these pictures with crude literalism” (Barclay, 344).
- c) **They refer to national judgments.** See above. Also Joel 1:15; 2:10, 31ff.; 3:14-17; Zeph. 1:7, 14 which all refer to the DOJ.
 - 1] **The Jews of Peter’s day had never heard such language used any other way.**
 - 2] **If we had received Peter’s letter in the first century, would we have heard it used any other way?**
 - 3] **How then did they (should we) interpret it?**

b. *Like a thief.*

- 1) **As Jesus predicted for the DOJ.** Matthew 24:42-44.
- 2) **Peter’s reference “certainly depends ultimately” on Mt. 24:43.** (Bauckham, 305; Davids, 282).

c. *The heavens ... the earth.*

- 1) **The old heavens and earth were the Jewish world: Isaiah 51:15-16.** And could refer more specifically to “high political powers” (Isa. 14:12ff.); (Wright, 22) and the earth to the rest of the people.
 - a) **God had promised to destroy their heavens and earth if they disobeyed.**
 - 1] Lev. 26:19-20.
 - 2] Isa. 51:4-6; 65-66; Hag. 2:6.
 - a] **Common OT metaphor.** OT descriptions of God’s judgments against nations “sound as if the very creation itself was coming apart” (Preston. 96); (*cf.* Isa. 13:10-13; 34:4).
 - b] **Must be fulfilled before the passing of the Old Law.** Destruction of old heavens and earth fulfilled first: Mt. 5:18.
 - c] Rev. 3:10-11. This also refers to the DOJ as a judgment about to come upon “the whole world.”
 - b) **The Temple represented heaven and earth.**
 - 1] **First century Jews regarded the Temple as representative of the heavens and earth.** (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 3.6.4.123, 126; 3.7.7.181.; *cf.* Preston, 196-98.
 - 2] **Destruction of the Temple was catastrophic.** For the Temple to be destroyed would make Jewish worship impossible, as if “heaven and earth had been pulled apart” (N.T. Wright as quoted in Hanegraaf, 219).

-
- c) **God promised to create the new covenant people upon the ashes of the old.**
- 1] **The prophecy about a new covenant people in Isaiah 62:2 continues through 65:17-18.**
 - 2] **These chapters clearly refer to Jerusalem.** This city is the place for creating a new heavens and earth. The new heavenly Jerusalem would stand upon the ashes of the old Jerusalem!
- 2) **The old Law would stand “until heaven and earth pass away.”** Mt. 5:18.
- 3) **Fulfilled but still predictive.** Hanegraaf believes that “while Peter’s prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, the events of AD 70 and the cosmic language Peter used to describe them point to an even greater day of judgment” (135-36).
- d. **The elements (stoicheia).**
- 1) **Basic definition.** “Basic components of something, elements” (BDAG). Shouldn’t assume the “physical *elements*” are meant as Green (151), *et al.*
 - 2) **NT usage: elemental teaching.** In every other NT passage.
 - a) Heb. 5:12; Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20.
 - b) **John Lightfoot.** The elements of 2 Pt. 3:10 refer to “The DOJ and the whole Jewish state is described as if the whole frame of this world were to be dissolved. ... 2 Pt. 3:10 ... Compare with this Dt. 32:22; Heb. 12:26: and observe that by *elements* are understood the Mosaic elements, Gal. 4:9; Col. 2:20: and you will not doubt that St. Peter speaks only of the conflagration of Jerusalem, the destruction of the nation, and abolishing [of] the dispensation of Moses” (452).
 - c) **Wayne Jackson on Isa. 65:17.** “The former things” of Isa. 65:17 are “the elements of the Mosaic system” (as quoted in Preston, 193). An interesting choice of words.
 - 3) **The celestial bodies.**
 - a) **Peter derived this from Isa. 34:4 where *stoicheia* is used in the LXX.** See Bauckham (316) for extra-biblical use of *stoicheia*.
 - b) **Typical apocalyptic language.** To refer to the destruction of the material components of the universe is typical hyperbolic language associated with apocalyptic and eschatological literature.
 - 1] **Isa. 34:4 does not refer to the literal destruction of these physical bodies but to the wicked of Edom.**
 - 2] **Many Scriptures contain similar language.**
 - a] **Melting mountains, etc.** Fiery destructions, continual burning, shaking of heaven and earth, *etc.* in describing judgments against nations.
 - b] Isaiah 13:13; 34:4; 51:6; Joel 3:16; Amos 9:5; Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:6; Matthew 24:29-32; Luke 21:11, 26; Revelation 6:12-17; *cf.* Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2:19ff.; Haggai 2:6 with Hebrews 12:26-28.

-
- 3] **Thus the celestial bodies melting would be metaphoric.** Such an interpretation would not differ substantially from the above.
- c) **Josephus.** The Temple contained symbols of the planets, the earth, heaven, and even the “four **elements** of the universe” (*Antiquities*, 3.7.7; emphasis mine).
- d) **Jesus.** The Lord also spoke of the DOJ as affecting the sun, moon, and stars (Mk. 13:24-25; Lk. 21:25).
- e. ***Burned up or exposed?***
- 1) ***Burned up.***
- a) **Refining old Israel.** Could refer to the refining fire of Jehovah on Israel (Mal. 3:2-5; 4:1-6; Mt. 3:10-12); (*cf.* Wright, 22).
- b) **Leaving true Israel.** This left only true Israel (the church) standing, purified from the dross of those falsely claiming to be “Jews.”
- 1] Rev. 2:9; 3:9.
- a] Jews were persecuting Christians.
- b] But Jews were not the true Israel.
- c] And God would soon destroy them.
- 2] 1 Pt. 1:7. Testing by fire reveals the true worth of faith in Jesus.
- 2) ***Exposed.***
- a) **The wickedness of the Jerusalem Jews would be laid bare.** All would see this as God came against the city in wrath. God rolled back the heavens, and all the wicked deeds were exposed plainly for Him to punish (*cf.* Bauckham, 319-22; Davids, 286).
- b) **This will prove God’s favor on the church.** Rev. 3:9.
8. ***Verse eleven***
- a. ***Holy conduct and godliness.*** Green concedes that “the apocalyptic imagery ... may or may not be literally fulfilled,” and concludes that “the main point” is “the moral implications” (152), something both sides certainly should agree upon.
- 1) 1 Cor. 7:26-31.
- a) **Remain unmarried if possible because of “*the present distress.*”** v. 26.
- b) **The “*form of this world ... passing away.*”** v. 31.
- c) **But the tribulation would be *shortened.*** v. 29; *cf.* Mt. 24:22.
- 2) 1 Pt. 4:7-17.
- a) **Live to honor God though suffering.** vv. 12-16.
- b) **The end of all things is near.** v. 7.
- 3) 2 Peter 3.
- a) **Live to honor God.** vv. 11, 14.
-

-
- b) **In view of the coming cataclysm.** vv. 7, 10.
- b. *Are being destroyed.*
- 1) **Lit. *is being dissolved.*** “Is in the process of being dissolved” (Amplified).
 - 2) **The historical situation was moving rapidly toward the AD 70 judgment.**
9. *Verse twelve*
- a. *Looking for the day of God.*
 - 1) **The DOJ was a day of the coming of the Lord.** Mt. 24:30, 42.
 - 2) **The DOJ had not taken place when 2 Peter 3 was written.**
 - 3) **Thus, this is the day the pre-AD 70 saints should have been looking for.**
 - b. *Hastening the day of God.*
 - 1) **Meaning of “hasten.”**
 - a) BDAG defines “hasten” (*pseudo*) as “**1) to be in a hurry, hurry, hasten ... a) make haste, hasten ... b) go in haste, hasten ... to someone ... 2) to cause someth. to happen or come into being by exercising special effort, hasten ... 2 Pt. 3:12 ...**”
 - 2) **Use in Scripture.** Hurry: Luke 2:16; 19:5-6; Acts 20:16; 22:18.
 - 3) Acts 3:19-21. Peter is reiterating his earlier teaching here, *viz.*, that the actions of the disciples can indeed “hasten” the coming of the Lord.
 - c. *The elements will melt.* “*Teketai* (melt) occurs in the LXX of Isaiah 24:4” (Blum, 287) in a context which sums up the national judgments of Isa. 13-23.
10. *Verse thirteen*
- a. *His promise.*
 - 1) **Isa. 65:17; 66:22 is the only place to find such a promise.**
 - a) **Isa. 65-66 promises both punishment against Israel and a new beginning.** 2 Peter 3 also contains both destruction and a new beginning.
 - b) **Isaiah refers to the (full) coming of the Messianic Age along with the DOJ.**
 - 2) **Syllogism:**
 - a) Major Premise: The promise Peter refers to “must be” the promise of Isa. 65:17; 66:22 (Bauckham, 326).
 - b) Minor Premise: Isaiah’s promise concerned the Messianic kingdom, *and it had not yet been completely fulfilled* (Isa 66:15, *etc.*).
 - c) Conclusion: Peter referred to the Messianic kingdom.
 - b. *We are looking.*
 - 1) **Who was looking?**
-

-
- a) **“We” infers a first century event.** Peter believed the recipients of his letter should look for this to happen in their life time.
 - b) **Jesus and Peter (1 Pt. 4:7) had predicted the DOJ would happen in their generation.**
 - c) **Why would they be “looking for” anything else?**
- 2) **What were they looking for?**
- a) **Not the establishment of the kingdom.** This happened at Pentecost.
 - b) **But the confirmation of the kingdom.** In Mt. 16:27-28; Lk. 21:31 Pentecost is past but the kingdom is still to come “in power.” AD 70 was when it was “fully confirmed with power” (Wright, 26-27).
 - 1] **There was an infancy and a maturity stage in church development.** 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-16.
 - a] **Miracles continued until the Day of the Lord** (Acts 2:17-21); (*cf.* Preston, 21).
 - b] **The DOJ completely severed old and new Israel.**
 - 1} **Until AD 70, the Way of Christ was often considered just another sect of Judaism.** Acts 28:22.
 - 2} **Even the disciples had a hard time distinguishing the two.** Acts 15; (Wright, 26). The pull of Judaism was very strong on the pre-AD 70 disciples (see Galatians).
 - 2] **They were still receiving the kingdom.** Present active participle in Heb. 12:28.
 - 3] **Daniel 7:18-26 shows the same pattern.**
 - a] **The saints are given a kingdom** (v. 18).
 - b] **This kingdom came under extreme duress** (vv. 19-21).
 - c] **God vindicated the saints who then took (full) possession of the kingdom** (v. 22).
 - d] **The persecutors were annihilated** (v. 26); (*cf.* Dawson, 13).
 - c) **Similar example.**
 - 1] **Jesus was the Son of God before His resurrection.**
 - 2] **But His resurrection confirmed it with power** (Rom. 1:4).
- c. *New heavens and earth.*
- 1) **Not a new physical world.** “This new heavens and new earth were not a new planet and skies, any more than the new heavens and earth after Noah were a new planet and skies” (Dawson, 13).
 - 2) **But the Messianic Kingdom.**
 - a) **Isa. 65:17-18.** This passage refers to the Messianic kingdom as a new heavens and earth but also as Jerusalem.
-

-
- b) **Hebrews 12:22.** This verse speaks of the church as “heavenly Jerusalem” which they were then receiving (v. 28).
 - c) **The OT conjoins destruction of the old with creating of the new.** Isa. 62-66; Joel 2:28-32.
 - 1] **But the destruction of the old is not the destruction of the physical world but of the OT system.**
 - 2] **Therefore, the new heavens and earth is the NT system.**
 - d) **Possible symbols:**
 - 1] **Heavens represent the heavenly nature of the kingdom and the spiritual kingly reign.** (Wright, 25).
 - 2] **Earth denotes its worldwide subjects.** (*Ibid.*)
- d. ***Righteousness dwells.***
- 1) **Righteousness in 1 and 2 Peter.** All refer to righteousness in the new covenant kingdom (1 Pt. 2:24; 3:14; 2 Pt. 1:1; 2:5, 21).
 - 2) **Peter draws from Isaiah 26:9.** This verse foretells the righteousness of kingdom citizens.
 - 3) **Isaiah 51:6-8**
 - a) **This passage gives the “contrast to the passing of the old Jewish order as the removing of the heavens and earth.”** (Homer Hailey in Curry, 158); (*cf.* Isa. 32:16-17).
 - b) **Is the Lord saying “But my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation unto all generations.”** (*Ibid.*)
 - 4) **Righteousness is a key characteristic of the Messianic kingdom.**
 - a) **Righteous citizens rather than citizens by birth.** (Wright, 29); (*cf.* 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:9-11).
 - b) **The Messianic kingdom is righteousness.** Rom. 14:17; Eph. 4:24; Isa. 9:7; 11:4-5, *et al.*
 - c) **Jesus died so that we could have righteousness NOW.** 2 Cor. 5:21; (Wright, 29).
 - d) **Righteousness fully established.**
 - 1] **The saints enjoyed righteousness before AD 70.** Rom. 6, *et al.*
 - 2] **Daniel joins bringing in righteousness with the DOJ.**
 - a] **Daniel 9:24.**
 - 1} **God would fully “bring in everlasting righteousness” after the 70 weeks.**
 - 2} **This included the destruction of the “holy city.”**
 - b] **Daniel 12**
 - 1} **Many are led to righteousness.** Dan. 12:3.
 - 2} **The power of the holy people is shattered.** Dan. 12:7.
-

-
11. *Verse fourteen*
- a. **You look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him.**
 - 1) **They were looking for the DOJ because that was the prophecy closest in fulfillment to their days.**
 - 2) **They were looking for His promised coming and not death.** (Russell, 325).
 - a) **Peter assumes they will see it.** “Like most NT writers, the author of 2 Pt. writes as if his readers will survive until the *Parousia*” (Bauckham, 226).
 - b) **The delay will not be long.** “His recognition of the delay of the *Parousia* (3:8-9) does not ... imply an indefinite postponement and a loss of ‘imminent expectation’” (*Ibid.*)
 - b. **Spotless and blameless.**
 - 1) **Peter is urging them to live holy lives based on the impending DOJ.**
 - 2) **Application for today.** In view of the very nature of the new kingdom, they – and how much more we who have received the fullness of the kingdom – must live holy lives.
12. *Verses fifteen and sixteen.* Peter may be referring to Paul’s eschatology of God’s longsuffering in not destroying the Jews immediately (Rom. 9:22).
13. **Conclusion:**
- a. **A twenty-first century reading** of this chapter “naturally suggests the idea of the total dissolution by fire of ... the material creation” (Russell, 319).
 - b. **But we must study the first century meaning.** “Better acquaintance with the symbolic language of prophecy, will be sufficient to modify such a conclusion” of a physical destruction (Russell, 319).
 - 1) **There was a more immediate cataclysm approaching.**
 - a) **1 Pt. 4:7** predicted its imminence.
 - b) **2 Pt. 3:12, 14.** Peter “described ... an event to be ‘looked for, and hastened unto’ (ver. 12). That “day did come, both *speedily* and *suddenly*” when a “fiery deluge of wrath and judgment overwhelmed the guilty land and nation of Israel, destroying and dissolving its earthly things and its heavenly things, that is to say, its temporal and spiritual institutions” (Russell, 320).
 - 2) **It was Jesus’ promised coming to destroy Jerusalem.** Mt. 24.
 - a) **Jerusalem was crucial in apocalyptic literature.**
 - 1] “Jerusalem ... was at the heart of Hebrew prophecy and expectation for the future ... Most all prophecies of the future of Israel somehow included Jerusalem” (Dan King in Curry, 33-34).
 - b) **This should affect our interpretation.**
 - c. **The DOJ was a great day of the Lord.**
 - 1) “Indeed there was a great day of the Lord coming when Peter penned this notable chapter. And, surely, the consummation of the old Jewish kingdom and the confirmation of the new ... was a great day” (Wright, 29).
-

II. Why I Believe the DOJ Interpretation is Most Consistent with Scripture

A. If I Were to Argue that 2 Pt. 3 Refers to the EOU, I Would Say...

1. **The language is similar, but not the application.**
 - a. Almon Williams believes that “the error” with the DOJ interpretation “is necessarily to equate similarity or identity of language with identity of thought or application.” NT authors may make “use of either stock language for the same type of event or of identity of language for only some type of similarity or thought” (Curry, 230).
2. **God doesn’t count time like we do.** 2 Peter 3:8 shows that there is a difference in the way men and God count time.
3. **Once Peter defined “earth,” he stuck with the same meaning.**
 - a. “Earth” in 2 Pt. 3:5-6 refers to the physical earth.
 - b. The destruction Peter mentions in vv. 7, 10 must be the end of the same physical earth.
4. **They didn’t need to look for the church, it had already existed for thirty years.**
 - a. The kingdom had already been in existence since Pentecost, thirty years earlier. Why then would they be “looking for” the new heavens and earth (2 Pt. 3:13) of Isaiah when it had already existed for three decades?
5. **Why didn’t Peter just say so?** If Peter wanted to discuss the DOJ, why didn’t he simply state what he was talking about?
6. **Peter’s description is too extreme for a national judgment.** The DOJ is simply not sufficient to fulfill such extreme catastrophic language.
7. **The DOJ is a Type of the Final Judgment.** Perhaps Peter was referring to the DOJ in some respects in 2 Peter. 3, but only as a foreshadowing of a much greater judgment as is evidenced by the magnitude of the catastrophe he describes.

B. Answers to Seven Objections against a DOJ Interpretation.

1. **Disparate applications for similar language must be proven not assumed.**
 - a. **The assumption goes in favor of continuity.** We should first assume that similar language describes the same events as closely as possible unless there is a compelling reason to believe otherwise.
 - b. **Yet few commentators even discuss this possibility seriously.** Hamilton leaves a crack open: “[Coming] may be used in relation to the coming in judgment or to the second advent of Christ at the end of the world. The primary emphasis in this passage is on the second advent ...” (207). Why “primary emphasis” if there is no other meaning?
2. **God makes time statements we can understand.** There is no way to understand God’s will (Eph. 5:17) if He writes it in celestial language we can’t understand. What other concepts in Scripture are impossible for us to understand?
3. **Physical illustrations often precede spiritual illustrations in Scripture.**
 - a. **The Parables.** The Parable of the Sower (Lk. 8), and just about every other parable in Scripture starts with a physical truth and makes a spiritual application.

-
- b. **Isaiah's description of Israel and the church.**
- 1) **The establishment of Israel.** If Isaiah can compare the establishment of Israel to the establishment of the heavens and earth (51:16), why can't Peter compare the destruction of Israel to the destruction of the heavens and earth?
 - 2) **The establishment of the church.** Isaiah describes the church as a new heavens and earth (65:17; 66:22), the physical illustrating the spiritual.
- c. **EOU advocates switch from 2 Pt. 3:4, 7 to 3:13.**
- d. **Peter may not even speak of physical heavens and earth in this passage.**
- 1) **Isaiah 51:15-16**
 - a) **What it says**
 - 1] Refers to the creation of heavens and earth.
 - 2] And of water (the seas).
 - 3] Which happened during the days of the Jewish fathers.
 - b) **Uses apocalyptic language.**
 - c) **But this refers to the establishment of Israel.**
 - 2) **2 Pt. 3:4-5.**
 - a) **What it says**
 - 1] Refers to the creation of heavens and earth.
 - 2] And of water. *cf.* 1 Cor. 10:1-2; Isa. 63:11.
 - 3] Which happened in the days of the Jewish fathers.
 - b) **Uses apocalyptic language.**
 - c) **Might it also refer to the establishment of Israel?**
4. **They weren't looking for the church, but for the powerful confirmation of God's kingdom.** As is explained above, Jesus, Daniel, and Isaiah spoke of the kingdom in its infancy that was later confirmed in power. See especially Mt. 16:27-28; Mk. 9:1.
5. **Peter did say so.**
- a. **In 2 Pt. 1:16-18.**
 - 1) **Connecting Jesus' coming to the Transfiguration**
 - 2) **The connection concerned a coming in their generation.** Mt. 16:27-17:1ff.
 - b. **Jesus had made many such prophecies concerning the DOJ.** So, there was no need to specify the subject.
 - c. **The context of Peter's first letter establishes a DOJ definitions** 1 Pt. 4:7; 2 Pt. 3:1.
 - d. **The OT prophets gave plenty of precedent.** They often predicted the destruction of cities and nations in terms of a judgment against the whole world (2 Pt. 3:2; *e.g.*, Isa. 13:1, 10-11; 34:4-5).
-

-
6. **Peter's description fits OT descriptions of national judgments perfectly.** See the above point.
 - a. **Isa. 24:3, 4, 6, 18-21; 34:4, 9-10; 51:6; Mic. 1:4, *et al.* are just as catastrophic as 2 Peter 3, and none are physically literal.**
 - b. **Jesus emphasized the importance of the DOJ.** Some believe this view exaggerates the importance of the DOJ. But how many chapters and verses in the Gospels refer to the DOJ?
 - 1) Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 17; 21 are just a few passages.
 - 2) **R.C. Sproul.** "We must take seriously the redemptive-historical importance of Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70" (quoted in Preston, 235).
 - 3) **Burton Coffman.** "The DOJ in A.D. 70 ... was the greatest single event of a thousand years, and religiously significant beyond anything else that ever occurred in human history" (*ibid.*, 237). I think the Cross was significantly more important, but second to the Cross, Coffman may be correct.
 7. **The DOJ as a Type of the Final Judgment.** Perhaps the DOJ foreshadows an EOU.
 - a. **But how would you ever prove it?**
 - b. **What Bible text demands it or even suggests it?**
 - 1) Biblical authors knew how to say, "Just as *this* happened, so *that* will happen" (Mt. 12:40; Lk. 11:30; 17:26; Rom. 11:30; 1 Cor. 5:7; 14:34; *etc.*).
 - 2) Peter did not say, "Just as the DOJ will be, so also will be the EOU."
 - c. **If so, what other unrevealed types are there?**
 - 1) **A greater future sacrifice?** "If the DOJ is a type of a future and final cosmic cataclysm, could it be that Jesus' sacrifice was only a type of a yet future greater, more perfect sacrifice?" (Preston, 127).
 - a) Of course not, because His sacrifice was once for all. Heb. 7:27.
 - b) But the "end of all things" was also "at hand." 1 Pt. 4:7.
 - 2) **Were OT prophecies also predicting an EOU?**
 - a) If Peter was foreshadowing an EOU why not also the OT prophets who used the same kind of language?
 - b) If so, the OT prophecies have not all been fulfilled.
 - c) If that is true, every jot and tittle of the Law of Moses is still binding (Mt. 5:18).
 - d. **It takes more than assumptions to validate an interpretation.**
 - 1) "It will require more than assertion to convince thoughtful men that the figurative language of Isaiah, and Daniel ... is to be literally interpreted when used by Jesus and Paul" and Peter (Milton Terry as quoted in Preston, 192).

C. Why I believe 2 Peter 3 refers to the DOJ

1. **It is more consistent with the OT prophets.**
 - a. **Peter appealed to the OT prophets for his eschatological conclusions** 2 Pt. 1:19; 3:2.

-
- b. **It is crucial for us to understand the OT prophecies behind NT passages.**
- 1) **They are God’s testimony.** “The whole NT gospel rests on the Spirit’s OT testimony that was made through the OT prophets. . . . it was a ministry for all of the future ages, for Peter’s readers as well as for us to this day” (Lenski 49 on 1 Peter 1:10-12).
 - 2) **They contain the code.** The “code breaker” for “apocalyptic passages of the NT,” is usually “found in their OT referents” (Hanegraaf, 230).
 - a) First, we must **learn the code.**
 - b) Then we must **use it to interpret NT apocalyptic passages.**
- c. **OT eschatology is not an EOU eschatology.** Since Peter connects his eschatology with the OT prophets, his must not be either.
- 1) **The NT never redefines apocalyptic language for us as physically literal.**
 - a) In *New Testament Apocalyptic*, Paul Minear argues, “As one recalls OT passages like these, one is forced to conclude that every constituent essential feature in the NT prophecies was an echo of these. No Christian prophet tried to explain the meaning of these references to solar disasters, a fact that suggests that the audience was expected to understand the language. Modern readers, therefore, must compare this idiom not with modern views of the cosmos, but with an ancient outlook within which an intelligible message was conveyed without undue difficulty” (as quoted in Preston, 99).
 - 2) **When we have OT precedent, what justifies the change?**
 - a) N. T. Wright agrees that “the *Day of the Lord* language does not predict the end of creation,” and it would be “crass literalism” to completely change definitions from the OT prophecies and now “refer to the physical collapse of the space-time world” (*Ibid.*).
- d. **An example in Isaiah 62-66.**
- 1) Connects **the destruction of rebellious Israel with the creation of a new heavens and earth and evangelism.** (*cf.* Preston, 133-35).
 - a) God’s **judgment with fire** Isa. 66:15-16.
 - b) The making of a **new heavens and earth** Isa. 66:22.
 - c) There will be **evangelism of the nations** Isa. 66:19.
 - 2) This fits some **premillennial schemes**, but not the **amillennial paradigm**.
- e. **The Importance of Consistency.**
- 1) Example #1:
 - a) **Seeing an unfulfilled EOU in the OT prophecies.** Peter wants his readers to remember the words spoken by the “**OT prophets** . . . and in particular on the subject of the return of Christ” (Hillyer, 209). But to what OT prophecies concerning an EOU does he refer?
 - b) **Then admitting there is no OT precedent.** “The future destruction of the world by fire is mentioned in the Bible only in this verse” (215; also Bauckham, 300; Moo, 172).
-

-
- 1] There are **many judgments of fire**
 - 2] Why would this one alone refer to **the annihilation of the planet**?
 - a] Why wouldn't all the others **refer to the same**?
 - b] Why wouldn't this one **refer to the same kind of national judgments** as all the rest? Surely a more sensible solution.
 - 2) Example #2:
 - a) **Amillennialists and dispensationalists**
 - 1] **Amillennialists consistent on OT prophecy.**
 - a] The difference between amillennialists and dispensationalists, writes Dan King, is that amillennialists “try to be consistent ... spiritualizing the whole of the OT fabric of prophecies about the New Age” (Curry, 36).
 - 2] **Dispensationalists inconsistent on OT prophecy.**
 - a] Dispensationalists, “on the other hand, arbitrarily spiritualize only those elements present which do not fit their theories about the end of time” (*Ibid.*).
 - b) **EOU and DOJ positions on 2 Peter 3.**
 - 1] **The DOJ paradigm consistently interprets OT and NT apocalyptic language.**
 - 2] **Some EOU interpreters spiritualize the OT but literalize the NT.** To “fit their theories about the end of time”? Some seem unsure whether 2 Peter 3 is physical or spiritual (Moo, 189-91).
 2. **It translates apocalyptic language more consistently.** Continues the point above.
 - a. **Apocalyptic language is not (physically) literal.** Green warns against treating the apocalyptic language of 2 Peter 3 as literal, and leaves open the possibility that “Peter intends to speak of the ... impending judgment of ungodly men” (144).
 - 1) **If it was, premillennialism would have some basis.**
 - a) Kenneth Chumbley quotes dispensationalist John. F. Walvoord in *The Millennial Kingdom*: “...it is conceded by practically all parties that the OT presents premillennial doctrine if interpreted literally ... the crux of the whole issue [is] ... should all OT prophecies be understood literally?” (Curry, 5).
 - b) **OT prophecies should not be understood literally.** James Sanders and Daniel H. King argue strongly against a literal hermeneutic in dealing with apocalyptic prophecies (Curry, 12-39).
 - c) **Then why take the same apocalyptic language literally in 2 Peter 3?**
 - 2) **Only the DOJ understanding of 2 Peter 3 presents a consistent interpretation of apocalyptic language.**
 - a) **2 Peter 3 uses OT apocalyptic language of national judgments, especially the DOJ.**
 - b) **We cannot ignore past usage.**
-

-
- 1] “If all of these terms are found in other passages in reference to national overthrow, especially in reference to and predictive of Jerusalem’s fall, then why don’t these same terms, when used by Peter in our text, refer to national overthrow? What principle of hermeneutics will allow one to completely ignore the past usage?” (22; *cf.* Russell, 320).
- c) **Especially in a book written before AD 70.**
- b. **The virtue of consistency.**
- 1) **Premillennialists who literalize apocalyptic language must come to grips with a literal interpretation of 2 Peter 3.**
- a) **Ferrell Jenkins:** “If premillennialists are to hold to their literal interpretation of Scripture, they must also come to grips with passages such as 2 Pt. 3:9-13 which clearly show that this present earth is to be burned up” (Curry, 52).
- b) **It doesn’t fit their theory.** In other words, if premillennialists are going to hold to a literal interpretation of apocalyptic language then what about the literal burning up of the Earth in the apocalyptic 2 Pt. 3?
- 2) **Amillennialists who spiritualize apocalyptic language must come to grips with a spiritual interpretation of 2 Peter 3.** That is, as to why they don’t accept it. How are amillennialists any more consistent on this chapter than premillennialists?
- c. **The circumstances of apocalyptic literature.** Via Rodney Miller, “apocalyptic writing” is a “type of literature ...” (Curry, 60).
- 1) **The pattern**
- a) **“Written during times of persecution.”** (*Ibid.*)
- b) **“To prepare Israel to be faithful in the face of adversity.”** (*Ibid.*)
- c) **Is highly figurative.** “dreams, visions, and symbolic dramas.” (*Ibid.*)
- 1] **Distinguishing the figurative “is of utmost importance.”** (*Ibid.*)
- 2] **Giving physical interpretations is not credible.**
- a] **Yet EOU advocates often use definitive language concerning 1 Pt. 3:7, 10.**
- 1} **Example:** “[T]he only possible picture one can draw from these words is that of a mighty, flaming, searing holocaust, enveloping the earth itself and all the atmosphere about it” (Oberst, 199).
- b] **Though they do not do the same with similar language in the OT.**
- 1} **Isa. 13:10.** Is “the only possible picture one can draw” from Isa. 13:10 that all the stars in the sky will go supernova and there will be a simultaneous eclipse of the sun and moon?
-

-
- 2} **Isa. 34:9-11.** Is “the only possible picture one can draw” from Isa. 34:9-11 that the land and all its waters will turn into permanent burning pitch ruled over by pelicans, hedgehogs, owls, and ravens in their silver fire-proof suits?
- 2) **1 and 2 Peter fit this pattern.** They were also written in “times of persecution” to encourage Christians “to be faithful in the face of adversity.”
3. **It honors the meaning of Isaiah’s prophecy.**
- a. **Of the correlation of old and new.**
- 1) **In Isaiah’s prophecies of a new order, the old passes away at the same time the new is established.**
- a) “Instead of the old which shall have passed away, Jehovah will establish a new heaven and a new earth ... (v. 16). ... Isaiah makes his clearest statement concerning the new order ... (65:13, 14 ... 16, 17). ... This new heavens and new earth shall remain as will the new Israel’s seed and name. All flesh shall come to worship before Jehovah while at the same time they will behold the total destruction and abhorring of all the rebellious who reject Jehovah. This all points to the present order of things, not the final state (66:2-23)” (Homer Hailey in Curry, 159).
- 2) **But since the “total destruction” had not yet taken place when Peter wrote 2 Peter 3, isn’t it highly improbable that the author would choose the language of Isaiah and yet refer to a totally different event?**
- a) If Hailey is correct that “*Isaiah’s prophecy of the new heavens and new earth [were] fulfilled in Christ*” as shown in Acts 3:15-26... (Curry, 159-60). (Compare Peter’s words in Acts 3:15-26 with 2 Peter 3.)
- b) And if Hailey is also correct that Isaiah’s prophecy included the “**total destruction**” of those Jews who rejected the gospel.
- c) Then it makes much more sense for **Peter to be writing of the same destruction.**
- 3) **To sum up:**
- a) Isaiah said God would **create a new Israel** (Hailey).
- b) Isaiah said God will **totally destroy the old Israel** (Hailey).
- c) **Old Israel had not been totally destroyed** when 2 Peter 3 was written (Consensus).
- d) Peter used **Isaiah’s prophecy** (Consensus).
- e) Why would Peter be using this prophetic language in a **different way** before it is even fulfilled?
- b. **Of the Jewish view of time:**
- 1) **Two ages.** (Barclay, 175).
- a) “**The present age** ... wholly under the domination of evil” (*Ibid.*)
- b) “**The age to come**, which will be the golden age of God.” (*Ibid.*)
-

-
- c) “In between came **the day of the Lord** during which ...
 - 1] The world would be **destroyed** and **remade**
 - 2] And **judgment** would come” (*Ibid.*)
 - 2) **This comports with Isaiah 65-66.**
 - a) In Isaiah, the **present age** was **the Mosaic Age**.
 - b) In Isaiah, the **age to come** was **the Messianic Age**. The age in which we are now living, not an age which will appear after the EOU.
 - c) **The day of the Lord** would then be **the DOJ** when both...
 - 1] The old world was **destroyed**,
 - 2] And **judgment** came.
 - 4. **I believe God can tell time, and that he makes time statements humans can understand.**
 - a. *Engus/engizo* (at hand, near).
 - 1) **Unanimity of definition.**
 - a) **Every single Greek lexicon and dictionary.** All I consulted defined *engizo/engus* as “near in space or time, at hand, imminent” (BDAG, Vine, Thayer, Zodhaites, Vincent, *et al.*)
 - b) **Every commentary.** All acknowledge this exact definition.
 - c) **Amillennialists insist on this definition in *some* passages.**
 - 1] **Dispensationalists deny the “at hand” statements of Mt. 3:2; 4:17, etc. mean “soon.”**
 - 2] **Amillennialists emphatically insist that they be taken literally and seriously** (*e.g.*, Miller in Curry, 62).
 - 3] **But Peter used the same language as 1 Pt. 4:7.**
 - a] **Jesus predicted “the end.”** Mt. 24:3, 6, 13.
 - b] **He predicted it’s nearness.** Not when he died but later in that “generation,” when they saw the signs of the DOJ (Mt. 24:33-34).
 - d) **Exceptions?**
 - 1] **There may not be any.** It is quite likely that *engiken* always means “near” in either time or space.
 - 2] **If there are, this does not establish a definition.** Good hermeneutics do not base interpretations on exceptions.
 - 2) **But many commentaries redefined it in several creative ways.** This has to raise suspicions. (See Appendix 3).
 - 3) **Nearness of time is the clear meaning of 1 Pt. 4:7.**
 - a) **Time not place.** We don’t have to guess whether Peter meant nearness of place or time, for v. 17 says, “It is time for judgment to begin ...
-

Literally ... ‘because it is the time of the beginning of the judgment.’ It was something impending upon the church *at that time*’ (Oberst, 114).

- b) **Could not have been the EOU.** Peter could not have meant an EOU judgment, “for he stated ‘the time *is come*’” (*Ibid.*).

b. **The Importance of Consistency**

- 1) **“This generation” means a 1st century generation.**

a) **In Mt. 24:34.**

- 1] “Mt. 24 is interpreted by premillennialists to foreshadow what will happen after the *parousia* which things would include the rapture and the tribulation. Jesus really sounds the death knell to this theory by stating, ... (Mt. 24:34). He is speaking of all the signs he gave. One cannot take these signs and apply these to the end of the world and the consummation of all things, the end” (Hamilton, 347).

b) **But what about Mt. 16:27-28?**

- 1] **It immediately precedes the Transfiguration.** Mt. 17:1ff.
 2] **Peter connects his “powerful coming of the Lord” with the Transfiguration.** 2 Pt. 1:16-18.
 3] **Why wouldn’t Peter’s coming be in that generation?**

- 2) Why doesn’t **“at hand”** signal the **“death knell”** of an EOU eschatology in Peter’s writing? 1 Pt. 4:7.

- a) Why should premillennialists take “this generation” seriously when Hamilton does not take “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pt. 4:7) seriously?

- 3) Consistency in **typology**.

- a) Many think **Peter used** Isaiah’s language of **national judgment** to refer to a **universal judgment**.
 b) Then why can’t **premillennialists use** Jesus’ language of a **national judgment** to refer to a **universal judgment**?

- 4) Consistency in **time statements** in general.

- a) **Premillennialists are consistent** on time statements: they explain them ALL away!

- b) **Amillennialists are often inconsistent.**

1] **At hand.**

- a] **They take Mt. 3:2; 4:17 absolutely.** And also Mt. 24:34.
 b] **But 1 Pt. 4:7 is relative.** It must mean “can happen at any time,” because “the end of all things being at hand” in the first century doesn’t fit our paradigm.

2] **1 Pt. 1:5-6.**

- a] **1:6.** “A little while” means a “brief” time (Hamilton, 20).

b] **1:5.** “Ready,” “on the point of” (Thayer quoted in Hamilton, 18) means “it could happen at any point” (*Ibid.*)

c. **Timing is important.**

1) **1 Pt. 4:7 implies imminence.** Peter expected Jesus to return in his lifetime (Wiersbe, 421).

a) **But timing is not important** (*Ibid.*).

1] **It is only important how we live until He does come.** (*Ibid.*).

2] **We must “live in expectancy.”** John MacArthur, Thomas Ice, and other dispensationalists admit that the first century Christians all expected these apocalyptic events in their lifetime, but explain it away as “living in expectancy.”

a] **Peter did not say, “The end of all things could be near.”** “Peter says this so that you will not be fooled into thinking that judgment is a long way off or even that it will never come. Its timing may be uncertain, as far as we are concerned, but it is sure to come sooner or later” (Bede in Bray, 116). But Peter did not write that; Bede *et al.* did.

b] **He said it WAS near.** 1 Pt. 4:7; *cf.* Jam. 5:7-8; 1 Jn. 2:18; Rev. 22:6; *et al.*; (Preston, 113).

b) **What else is unimportant in Scripture?**

1] **What else can we ignore or redefine?**

2] **Is God deceitful?** Did God indeed “convey a real sense of the nearness of the end,” because He “wanted the church to *think* the end was near,” though in reality, He knew “the end was not truly near” (Preston, 120)?

d. For more on this subject see Appendix 3.

5. **It answers critics of the inspiration of Scriptures.**

a. 1 Pt. 4:7 and many other Scriptures taught an **imminent end, coming, and judgment.**

b. Christians have defined **the end, coming, and judgment** as an **EOU event.**

1) Especially is this true of **dispensationalists.**

2) This has caused a **mixed reaction** throughout history. “Jesus seemed to put his coming before the death of the first generation (Mt. 16:28; 24:34; *etc.*)” but this was “not fulfilled,” (Davids, 266-67). So...

a) “Either one **gave up the faith** due to “**unfulfilled prophecy**” or

b) “One came up with an **explanation** and **got on with life.**” (*Ibid.*).

3) Most have **vastly underestimated** the importance of the DOJ.

c. **Unbelievers accept this definition** of the end, coming, and judgment.

d. Thus critics say, “**Since the EOU has not happened 2,000 years later, the Bible contains false predictions.**”

1) “Christian” commentators:

- a) **Michael Green.** “Doubt must have arisen as the first generation began to die off, in view of Jesus’ words in... Mt. 10:23; 16:28; 24:34” (139).
- b) **Matthew Poole.** “The apostles ordinarily in their epistles speak of the world as nigh to an end in their age, though it has since continued more than sixteen hundred years; which would incline one to think, that they thought it would have been at an end before this time, but had no such revelation from God” (572).
- c) **William Barclay.**
 - 1] **Imminence is taught in the NT.** On 1 Pt. 4:7, imminence is “a note ... struck consistently through all the NT. ... *Rom.* 13:12 ... *Php.* 4:5 ... *Jas.* 5:8 ... 1 *Jn.* 2:18 ... *Rev.* 1:3; 22:20” (249).
 - 2] **This is a problem.** “Such passages are problems” when “taken literally” for that would mean that “the NT writers were mistaken” (249). Sadly, “the early thinkers may have been wrong if they thought that the end of the world was round the corner” (251).

2) Critics and skeptics:

- a) **Bertrand Russell and Albert Schweitzer.** Cite Jesus’ failure to return in the first century as evidence that He was a fraud (Hanegraaf, 82).
- b) **Gerald Sigal.** “No amount of Christian theological acrobatics will ever solve the problems engendered by the historical reality that a promised imminent fulfillment made two thousand years ago did *not* occur as expected by the NT” (as quoted in Hanegraaf, 82-83).
- c) **Bart Ehrman.** He ridicules the first century Christian beliefs that “the end of the world as we know it was already at hand” (*Ibid.*, 106).

e. The simple solution:

1) **Jesus and the NT authors DID predict a first century end, coming, and judgment.** (Passages already discussed in several places.)

- a) **We cannot allow LaHaye and his ilk to redefine Biblical terms.** When the likes of LaHaye take the “soon” of Rev. 1:1 and apply it to 1948, they are making “grammatical gyrations” which “should cause our baloney detectors to go into red alert” (Hanegraaf, 90).
- b) **We must take time statements seriously.** None of the NT writers were “grammatically challenged in the least,” but were perfectly capable of expressing events “in the far-distant future” (90). Surely “at hand” does not express a far distant future!
 - 1] **The NT did expect something important to come soon.** “It has long been the majority view of scholars that Jesus expected God’s reign to break in decisively in his lifetime” (Lucas and Green, 130); (*cf.* Matthew 4:17; 16:28; 24:34; Mark 9:1, *etc.*).
 - 2] **Later Christians had “to reinterpret those texts.”** (*Ibid.*) Many *have* re-interpreted those texts, giving skeptics fuel for their fires.

-
- 2) **It was fulfilled in the DOJ at AD 70.** “So far as the national polity and ecclesiastical system of Judaism were concerned, ‘the end of all things was at hand’” (Russell, 305).
 - a) **Re-examine the assumption of eschatological imminence in the NT?** (Lucas and Green, 130). Sure, but why not also...
 - b) **Re-examine the assumption that the end has not already occurred?**
6. **It has a more Scriptural definition of “last days” and similar expressions.**
- a. **The connotation of “last.”**
 - 1) **Not a dispensation.** A dispensation is not the “last days” of anything.
 - 2) **Not a long period of time.** “‘Last days’ is never used in the Bible of long, drawn-out periods of time“ (Wright, 11).
 - 3) **Credibility is an issue.** When the apostles spoke of living in the “last time” (1 Pt. 1:5), “last times,” (1:20) or “last days” (2 Pt. 3:3) their credibility is at stake. Such terms imply a short period of time. Defining them as a long dispensation is “a most unnatural and forced interpretation” (Russell, 297).
 - b. **Last days**
 - 1) **Refer to the last days of something.** Not a vague or a long period of time.
 - 2) **Refer to Israel’s last days.** Isaiah 2:1-2 and Acts 2:17 reveal that “*last days* ... had very specific reference to the nation of Israel” (Oberst, 40); (*cf.* Isaiah 2:1-2; Acts 2:17-21 with Joel 2:28-32; Mt. 24:29).
 - a) **For Peter to refer to “the last days of the world or Christian age would be anachronistic.** The Jewish system or age had not actually (physically) seen its last days” (Wright, 12), so they would come first.
 - b) **The church was established in the last days of Israel.** Isaiah spoke of “a new order to come ‘in the latter days,’” (Hailey in Curry, 157).
 - 1] **If it came IN the latter days, then the latter days had already begun.**
 - 2] **The new order came during the “latter days” of what?**
 - 3] **Clearly during the latter days of the nation of Israel.**
 - c) **God poured out a miraculous measure of His Spirit in “the last days,”** but not for the entire Christian Dispensation (Acts 2:17ff.).
 - d) **Scoffers would come in the last days.**
 - 1] **Not a general warning for the “last dispensation.”** (*contra* Lucas and Green, 129).
 - a] **One wouldn’t need divine inspiration** to know there will be scoffers in every age (Barnes, 254). (Though Barnes himself then inexplicably defines “last days” as “last dispensation.”)
 - b] **It must refer to “a particular or definite class of men.”** (*Ibid.*).
 - 2] **Jesus told us who they were.** Mt. 24:11-12, *etc.*
-

-
- a] **Scoffers of the last days (2 Pt. 3:3) are the false teachers of 2 Peter 2.** (Hillyer, 214).
 - b] **Scoffers of 2 Pt. 3:3 are those predicted by Jesus and James.** They arose prior to the DOJ (Mt. 24:11; Jam. 5:1-8).
 - c. **“Last times” in 1 Pt. 1:20.**
 - 1) **Cannot refer to the Church Age.**
 - a) **Because Jesus appeared before the Church Age began.** *I.e.*, Jesus was born 30 years before the Pentecost of Acts 2, and began His ministry 3 years prior to Pentecost.
 - b) **Clearly Jesus appeared in the *last times* of the Mosaic Age.** (cf. Grudem 86).
 - 1] **“Last times” and “last days” are equivalent.**
 - 2] **Therefore 2 Pt. 3:3 refers to the last days of Israel.**
 - 2) **Refers to the consummation.**
 - a) **Thayer.** *Eschatos plus chronos* (“last times”) in 1 Pt. 1:20 “refers to ‘the time immediately preceding Christ’s return from heaven and the consummation of the divine kingdom’” (Thayer 253; Hamilton, 50).
 - b) **Translation of 1 Pt. 1:20 using this definition.** “Jesus has appeared (His earthly life) in the time immediately preceding Christ’s return from Heaven.” Interesting.
 - 7. **It doesn’t make sense to “look for” (vv. 12, 14) the EOU before the DOJ.**
 - a. **They knew the EOU couldn’t possibly arrive before the DOJ.**
 - b. **The Mockers would have had no point.** Peter could have said, “Of course the EOU hasn’t come yet. It can’t come until after the DOJ that Jesus prophesied.”
 - c. **You can look for something you can see coming.**
 - 1) **They could see the DOJ coming** because Jesus gave signs.
 - 2) **They couldn’t see the EOU coming because it has no signs.** At least in the amillennial paradigm (*contra* dispensationalism). (cf. Wright 22-23; Dawson, 13-14); cf. Mt. 24, *et al.*
 - d. **They were looking for something they expected soon.**
 - 1) **“Look” is a key word in 2 Peter 3:11-14**, and “it means ‘to await eagerly, to be expectant’” (Wiersbe, 467).
 - 2) **“You find it in Luke 3:15 ... and Acts 3:5”** (*Ibid.*).
 - 3) **It is something to happen soon in all three passages!**
 - 8. **Hastening the DOJ makes more sense.**
 - a. **Implies imminent nearness.** Both “looking for” and “hastening” imply an “imminent nearness” (Russell, 324).
 - b. **Words mean things.** Indeed, “words have no meaning if a statement like this may refer to some event still future, and perchance distant, which cannot be
-

‘looked for’ because it is not within view, or hastened unto,’ because it is indefinitely remote” (Russell, 324).

- 1) **Blunting the word “*hasten*.”** (Hamilton, 249).
 - a) **Can Christians “*hasten the coming of the day*”?**
 - b) **Some doubt it.** Hamilton, quotes Lenski approvingly for questioning whether Christians can really hasten the Day of the Lord (*Ibid.*).
- 2) **The evidence.**
 - a) **Favors *hastening*.** (*Ibid.*) See also Lenski who doesn’t want us to “labor” the word, but clearly sees the real force of the word (348).
 - b) **Accords with Acts 3:19-21.** (Hamilton, 249).
 - c) **It doesn’t matter?**
 - 1] **I1: Let’s go with the ASV.** “One must admit ... the ASV ‘earnestly desiring’ makes perfectly good sense” (*Ibid.*).
 - 2] **I2: Let’s go with the evidence.** We don’t change definitions when we don’t like where the “weight of the evidence lies.”
- c. **How do you *hasten* the EOU?**
 - 1) **When it is in the indiscernible future?** (Preston, 59-60).
 - 2) **When there was another major event to come first?** There is no room for “*hastening*” the EOU in the traditional amillennial view.
- d. **God promised to *hasten* the coming of righteousness.** He would do so when the time was right. Compare Isa. 60:21-22 with vv. 12-13.
- e. **First century Christians wanted the DOJ to hurry because of the Jewish problem.**
 - 1) **Jewish persecution of the church.**
 - 2) **Disciples apostatizing to Judaism.**
 - 3) **The DOJ would put an end to both.**
9. **The DOJ has close and better contextual connections to the Transfiguration.** See notes above on 2 Pt. 1:16-19.
 - a. **The synoptics connected the Transfiguration with a coming in Jesus’ generation.**
 - b. **The very point of the Transfiguration was the “surpassing of the Old Covenant” glory “by the transcendent glory of Jesus.”** (Preston, 4).
10. **2 Pt. 3:11 states that the destruction was already in progress.**
 - a. **Most translations give future tense.**
 - b. **But it is a present tense verb (participle).** Thus, the heavens and earth were “in the process of being dissolved” (Amplified).
 - 1) **The historical situation was moving rapidly toward the AD 70 judgment.**

-
- 2) **It would be tautological at best to say that the universe is in the process of being destroyed.**
 - a) **If entropy is God’s choice to destroy the universe, that had been going on for long before Peter wrote.**
 - b) **If God will miraculously bring the universe to an end, then nothing is in the process of being destroyed even now.** Rather it will all end suddenly by a cataclysmic and miraculous act of God.
11. **It is in better harmony with Mt. 5:18.**
- a. **Jesus said none of the Law would pass away until all of the Law had been fulfilled.** (This includes the Prophets, Mt. 5:17.)
 - 1) **“Heaven and earth” passing away in this text is an equivalent expression.** In my opinion, there is equivalence between “heaven and earth passing away” and small strokes of the Law “passing away.” This is Hebrew parallelism. This is relevant to the “heavens and earth” of 2 Peter 3.
 - 2) **Therefore if any part of the Law is unfulfilled, the OT is still in force.**
 - b. **The mockers were “denying the truth of the prophetic books”** when they denied “the power and coming of Jesus Christ,” (Wiersbe, 462).
 - 1) **This fits the historical context.** Judaizers in the first century denied that the New was replacing the Old.
 - 2) **Peter affirmed that the old would be totally annihilated.** In 2 Peter 3.
 - c. **If the prophetic books have not been fulfilled, the OT has not passed.**
 - 1) Argument #1:
 - a) **If 2 Peter 3 discusses the EOU**
 - b) **And 2 Peter 3 is based on the OT prophetic books**
 - c) **Then the OT prophets must have foretold the EOU.** Most dispensational commentators repeatedly affirm that certain aspects of the kingdom prophesied in the OT prophets have not yet come to pass. Even amillennial author Bruce Oberst sees Isaiah 65:17, 22 as predicting a heavenly home after the EOU (200).
 - 2) Argument #2:
 - a) **If the OT foretold the EOU.**
 - b) **We know the EOU has not happened yet.**
 - c) **So every iota of the OT must still be in force.** Matt. 5:18.
12. **It sets a better stage for understanding the power of the scoffers.**
- a. **Mocking with a point.** Concerning 2 Pt. 3:3-4, Michaels asks semi-rhetorically, “May not the false teachers have a point when they argue that the long delay they have experienced effectively invalidates the promise?” (128).
 - 1) **An indefinite prediction would engender a different kind of mocking.**
-

-
- a) Perhaps “Anyone can say he is coming back in the indefinite future, but how could we ever check it?” That does not appear to be the point of the mockers, but rather ...
 - b) Peter could have said, “Jesus never said He was coming back SOON!” (cf. Preston, 13).
 - 1] But He had (Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:34)!
 - 2] And so had Peter (1 Pt. 4:7).
 - 3] This was the promise of the Lord’s “coming” they were “scorning.” (Hillyer, 212; cf. Bauckham, 290).
 - c) But their point was: “The delay proves He isn’t coming.”
 - 1] They are not mocking distant-future judgment but a near-future judgment.
 - 2] They didn’t believe the OT would pass or that God would destroy His Jewish people.
 - d) Who would have listened to mockers of a distant judgment?
 - 1] Mocking an indefinite judgment doesn’t make enough sense for anyone to be led astray by such mocking.
 - 2] Yet Peter seems concerned that these scoffers will lead his readers astray.
- 2) A prediction with a time frame would produce just this kind of mocking.
- a) Jesus said He would come in that generation. Mt. 24:34.
 - b) That generation was winding down. Thus the mocking. Bowman sees that the problem Peter discusses relates to “a group in the contemporary Christian community who believed that Jesus had predicted his ‘coming’ as to be fulfilled within the lifetime of ‘the fathers’” (172).
 - 1] Did Jesus make any such prediction concerning “a specific time reference pertaining to the generation of ‘the fathers’” (*Ibid.*)?
 - a] Bowman says “No”! “2 Pt. ... appears equally to imply ... that Jesus had never made any stipulation as to the time of the promise’s fulfillment” (*Ibid.*).
 - b] Scripture says “Yes”! Nothing could be more obvious: Mt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:34, *et al.* Peter was also clear (1 Pt. 4:7).
 - 2] Did Peter imply Jesus’ promise was not time-specific? “2 Pt. accepts by implication the contention that he had made a general promise of his coming...never...the time of...fulfillment” (*Ibid.*).
 - 3] If so, Peter contradicted Jesus and himself.
 - c) So, the mockers had “a point.” But it was incorrect, since that entire generation had not yet passed away.
-

-
- 3) **The question is this: who was right, Peter in 1 Pt. 4:7 or the scoffers?**
(Preston, 62).
 - b. **2 Pt. 3 gives us the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies.**
 - 1) **Jesus predicted false prophets/mockers before the DOJ.**
 - a) **Willfully ignorant false prophets:** Mt. 24:11, 48; Lk. 17:27-30.
 - b) **Immoral, wicked false prophets:** Mt. 24:48-49.
 - 2) **Peter described false prophets in his day.**
 - a) **Willfully ignorant:** 2 Pt. 3:5.
 - b) **Immoral and wicked:** 2 Pt. 2; 3:3.
 - 3) **Why wouldn't these be the same false prophets?**
 - a) **Since Peter wrote only a few years before these events?**
 - b) **Since a distant judgment would not have concerned such scoffers?**
"The day of the Lord had only been forecast to occur in the far off, vague, unknown future, the scoffers would have little upon which to base their skepticism" (Preston, 59).
 - c. **These scoffers repeated the mistakes of their forefathers under the same circumstances.**
 - 1) **Ezk. 12:21ff.**
 - 2) **Isaiah 28:14-22.**
 - a) **A "decisive destruction on all the earth"** (v. 22).
 - b) **But "all the earth" is "Jerusalem"** (v. 14).
13. **It makes more sense that God was giving the Jews every last opportunity to repent.**
- a. **God was patient with His OT people.** Often in the OT, God was longsuffering toward Jerusalem and other cities, but when the cup of iniquity became full, God destroyed the city. God gave the Jews a little more time before utterly destroying their system as predicted by Daniel; Mt. 24; Heb. 8:13; *etc.*
 - b. **If He is delaying the EOU to give an opportunity for all to repent, when can He ever destroy the Earth?** Won't there always be people who need to repent? If so, how will the EOU ever come without destroying the premise that God patiently waits for all men to repent?
14. **The DOJ makes a better parallel with the Flood.**
- a. **The Flood didn't destroy the planet.** "The flood is not even a true parallel of the annihilation of the earth much less the entire cosmos!" (Wright, 16-17).
 - b. **The Flood destroyed the wicked.** (Russell, 318; *cf.* Green 140).
 - 1) **Just as in 2 Pt. 2:5-9.**
 - 2) **Not the universe.** The point of v. 6 is not what God does to the universe but to the wicked.
-

- c. **2 Pt. 3 is a destruction of the wicked, not the planet.** In this case, it was also the end of Judaism (Dawson, 7) which had become utterly corrupt.
15. **It fits the word “new” in v. 13.**
- a. **“New” infers the “old has become obsolete.”** Thus, the old “should be replaced by what is new” (AG as quoted in Hamilton, 255).
 - b. **“In such a case the new is, as a rule, superior in kind to the old.”** (*Ibid.*).
 - c. **This fits the DOJ because it puts a total end to the OT.**
 - 1) **The OT was becoming obsolete.** Heb. 8:13.
 - 2) **The NT was superior.** Heb. 8:6; *et al.*

Conclusion:

- I. **What is the difference in the two approaches?** There are several but 2 main ones are...
 - A. **Treatment of apocalyptic language.**
 - 1. **The EOU position sees a disjunction in OT and NT use of apocalyptic language.** At least in some instances.
 - 2. **The DOJ position sees complete continuity.**
 - B. **Emphasis on a first century context.** In reading many commentaries, it seems to me that DOJ interpreters put much more emphasis on the original recipients of Peter’s letter and the historical circumstances of Peter’s time.
- II. **How do I decide which is more sound?**
 - A. **Not on newness or oldness.** Apparent newness or oldness, orthodoxy or unorthodoxy of an interpretation doesn’t make it right or wrong.
 - B. **But with a Berean attitude.**
 - 1. **Weigh all the arguments.**
 - 2. **Decide where the preponderance of the evidence lies.**
 - 3. **Accept the pain.** Having the Berean attitude (Acts 17:11) can be extremely painful.
 - a. **The pain of hours of study.** “Studying the Scriptures daily” for many years.
 - b. **The pain of changing.**
 - c. **Illustration.** The histories of the Reformation and Restoration movements reveal a many-faceted cost of following the Berean path.
- III. **What practical difference does it make?**
 - A. **In regard to righteous living and judgment.**
 - 1. **Agreement on holiness.** All commentators I read on both views emphasized the necessity of righteous living. My outline does not focus on that aspect of this chapter.
 - 2. **Agreement on punishment of the wicked.** Both agreed that Peter emphasized divine judgment against the wicked which serves as a warning to all the wicked of all times.
 - a. **EOU.** John and Jesus urged repentance because the kingdom was drawing near (Mt. 3:2; 4:17). Repentance was necessary after the kingdom was established.

-
- b. **DOJ.** Those who see 2 Pt. 3 as describing the DOJ similarly teach that Peter's encouragement to righteousness applied both before and after AD 70; moral instruction would not lose its force after a new heavens and earth full of righteousness came with power.
- B. **In regard to interpreting the rest of the Bible.** Each view has ramifications for how we interpret the rest of the Bible.
1. **EOU interpretation affects our view of the prophets.** The EOU view of 2 Peter 3 surely affects how one views similar prophecies in Isaiah, Joel, Micah, *etc.* which in turn influences our interpretation of Mt. 5:18.
 2. **DOJ interpretation affects our view of eschatology.** The DOJ interpretation of 2 Peter 3 certainly demands that we reconsider all other eschatological teachings in the NT.
- C. **In view of the afterlife.** I did not read any views from DOJ advocates on 2 Peter 3 that significantly differ from the EOU view of the afterlife. Full preterists do not believe in a bodily resurrection, but they do believe that when we die, we will immediately answer to God for our earthly lives; the wicked will be punished while the righteous will go to be with the Lord (Php. 1:23).

Oscar Miles
301 Mary Lee Dr.
Florence, AL 35634
scarmile@gmail.com

**Appendix 1:
Summary of the “End of the Universe” View**

V. 1 may or may not refer to 1 Peter. If it does, the “reminder” may refer to a future Second Coming as in 1 Peter 1:5, 13; 2:12; 4:5-7. Or, possibly, the “reminder” is to live a godly life and is not speaking specifically about the coming of Jesus.

The prophets of **v. 2** are the Old Testament prophets. Peter may be urging the saints to remember how the Old Testament prophets foretold the holy character of the new covenant people. While the eschatological language of the Old Testament prophets referred to national judgments, Peter uses it to look forward to a more extensive destruction of the universe. (Most dispensationalists believe some Old Testament prophecies refer to a yet future destruction or purifying of the universe.) Jesus and the apostles foretold a coming of the Lord that is still future, and Peter is calling his readers to remember that teaching (Matthew 24:36-25:46; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4-5).

The last days of **v. 3** refer either to the days beginning with Pentecost (Acts 2:17) or to the period between the first and second comings of Christ (Hebrews 1:2). The last days stretch from the first century AD to the end of the universe described in this chapter. Mockers would come, and Peter gives Christians instruction about how to deal with them. These mockers will come continually during the last days, that is, the Christian Age.

These scoffers would question whether Jesus would ever return again, arguing that the universe had continued to operate normally since the days of the Jewish fathers (**v. 4**). (A few take this to be the early church fathers.) They are forgetting that God intervened in the universe by creating it out of a watery waste (**v. 5**; Genesis 1:2) and later destroyed that same world with a Flood (**v. 6**). These are examples of God intervening dramatically in history. When the scoffers deny Jesus’ Second Coming, they overlook God’s previous catastrophic interventions.

As God stepped in to create the universe and Flood the world, He will also, sometime in the future, destroy this earth with fire (**v. 7**). This will be a day of judgment against the ungodly.

What seems like a long delay to man is nothing to God. A thousand years and a day are the same to Him (**v. 8**); He is not bound by time. (Some dispensationalists believe this means that God does not count time like man, so that statements like “at hand” and “soon” are based on God’s view of time and not man’s. Other dispensationalists and most amillennialists reject this view.)

The reason the Lord has not returned to destroy the universe yet is that God is patient and wants everyone to repent (**v. 9**). He doesn’t want anyone to perish.

The Day of the Lord will come, but it will be completely unexpected, like a thief comes (**v. 10**; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4). No one knows when Jesus will come, just like no one knows when a thief will come; He could have come during the first century, He may come tomorrow, or any day in the future. God wants every generation to live in expectancy of His coming. (Many dispensationalists believe there will be specific signs indicating the nearness of his coming, even using this very text to point to modern mockers as a sign that the Lord’s coming is near.)

When the Lord does come again, the physical heavens and earth will be destroyed (**v. 10**). “The heavens” refers to everything outside the Earth or to the Earth’s atmosphere. The elements of **v. 10** refer to the basic physical (atomic) materials of which the physical universe is made. These elements will all burn up with intense heat. Some believe this will be the annihilation of the physical universe; others believe the fires will purify and re-make the physical universe into a perfect future abode for God’s faithful. (Amillennialists tend toward the former belief and dispensationalists toward the latter, though there are exceptions for both.)

Since the current universe will be destroyed, we ought to live in view of what will last – holiness and godliness (v. 11).

God's people should always be looking for the Lord's Second Coming and the destruction of the Earth (v. 12). Some believe prayer (Matthew 6:10) and evangelism can cause the Lord to come sooner ("hasten" it). Others believe "hasten" means "desire eagerly."

Although the universe will be destroyed, God creates a spiritual dwelling place, a "new heavens and a new earth" (v. 13) for His people. This new home will be a place of perfect righteousness in contrast to the current dwelling place of man which has plenty of unrighteousness.

Therefore, we must live godly lives (v. 14) and to be careful not to abuse God's patience which Paul also taught (v. 15).

**Appendix 2:
Summary of the Destruction of Jerusalem View**

Verse 1 refers to 1 Peter in which Peter clearly revealed that the end was near (1 Peter 4:7) and ready to be revealed soon (1 Peter 1:5, 13; 2:12; 4:5-7). Judgment had begun and was about to consummate (4:12-17)! The only end in sight was the end of the Jewish system which God destroyed with Jerusalem in AD 70.

Verse 2 refers to the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Joel. Isaiah is replete with examples of the type of apocalyptic language in this chapter. This eschatological language is only used for national judgments, and is never literal. (Full preterists do not believe this language ever prefigures the destruction of the universe; partial preterists believe some of it does. Some partial preterists take 2 Peter 3 to refer to AD 70 and others to a yet future end of the universe; some believe the former prefigures the latter.) Jesus and the apostles often foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the imminent end to the old covenant world (Matthew 24; Hebrews 8:13; 10:25-27; James 5:7-8; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:18).

Verse 3 refers to the “last days” of the Old Covenant Age. These last days began either with the ministry of John (or Jesus) or Pentecost (Acts 2:17) and ended in AD 70. Peter informed his first century readers how to deal with those who were scoffing (**v. 5**) at the teaching that the Lord would soon destroy Jerusalem and put an end to their world.

These Jewish mockers questioned whether Jesus would return to punish and destroy, arguing that everything had continued to operate normally since the days of their fathers (**v. 4**). They willfully forgot that God intervened dramatically by creating the earth (**v. 5**; Genesis 1:2) and destroying the wicked in the Flood (**v. 6**). God will intervene again (Matthew 24:21), in Jesus’ own generation (Matthew 24:34). The mockers knew that Jesus promised to come in their generation (*ibid.*) and time was running out, but overlooked the facts of history: God always intervenes just when He says He will, as in the days of Noah.

God would soon judge the ungodly city of Jerusalem, just as He had judged the ungodly in the Flood. The prophets often predicted fiery judgments (**v. 7**) against Israel and other ungodly nations (Amos 2:5; Isaiah 33:14; Jeremiah 4:4). (Jerusalem literally burned, but most do not see that as a primary meaning here.) AD 70 was God’s day of judgment against the ungodly.

What seems like a long delay to man may not seem long to God (**v. 8**). He said it would come in their generation, (Matthew 10:23; 24:34) and it would. The generation of Jesus had not yet completely died out, so there was time for Jesus to return as promised (Matthew 16:28). The Lord delayed judging Jerusalem until the end of the generation, because He is patient and wants everyone to repent (**v. 9**). He never wants to destroy, but His patience runs out when a nation’s cup of iniquity runs over.

The Lord had promised to come against Jerusalem like a thief (**v. 10**; Matthew 24:43): suddenly and unexpectedly to those who were not ready. Those who heeded the signs Jesus gave of the approximate time of His coming (Matthew 24), were ready.

When the Lord came again, the elemental teachings of the Jewish system (heavens and earth) were destroyed (**v. 10**; Hebrews 5:12; Galatians 4:3, 9; Colossians 2:8, 20). The entire Jewish religion, political system, and national identity were utterly destroyed. Such cataclysmic language is highly hyperbolic and describes God’s judgment against nations (*cf.* Isaiah 34). Jesus Himself described the destruction of Jerusalem with similar apocalyptic images (Matthew 24:29), as did John (Revelation *passim*, *cf.* 3:10-11).

Since the Old Covenant world would soon be destroyed, they should live in view of what will endure – the holiness and godliness (**v. 11**) of which the New Covenant world consists.

Those who received Peter's letter could "look for" the coming of the Lord and the destruction of ungodly men in their lifetimes (v. 12) and even hurry it along by prayer (Matthew 6:10) and evangelism (Matthew 24:14).

The old heavens and earth of God's old covenant people were utterly destroyed. With that end, God fully brought to fruition a new spiritual dwelling place, a "new heavens and earth" (v. 13). The new covenant was inaugurated on Pentecost, but remained in its infancy until AD 70 when the old was destroyed, the new revelation was completed, and God had shown definitively that His people now dwell only in the church – the new heavens and earth. Under the old kingdom, physical requirements made one a Jew; the new kingdom is a place of righteousness (Romans 14:17).

Therefore, we must live godly lives (v. 14) and be careful not to abuse God's patience which Paul also taught (v. 15).

Appendix 3: The End of All Things is At Hand, 1 Peter 4:7

The outline has much to say about Peter's statement in 1 Pt. 4:7 that "the end of all things is at hand." But to keep it from becoming egregiously long, I have put the following information in essay form in this appendix.

Engiken Implies Imminence

On the use of "at hand" in 1 Pt. 4:7, Hamilton, concedes, "One must admit that many of these uses, with 1 Pt. 4:7 and Jas. 5:8 being possibly among the exceptions, refer to what is very near or immediately approaching" (227-28). Hamilton, further admits this is the preponderant use of the word. He mentions several passages which he believes could refer to extended periods of time, but none of them need mean anything but "near" or "about to happen" with reference to time.

Hamilton, finds it necessary to take nine pages describing why "at hand" doesn't mean "near in time" in this particular verse, but there is no reason except pre-conceived doctrine to take it otherwise: no lexical evidence, no verses that must be understood as implying a long period of time, and no proof that this particular verse should be an exception to the admitted definition. When Hamilton, states, "Peter is not revealing that the time is at, immediately approaching, or near **the end** but rather that all that remains in the plan of God is the culmination of the redemptive age" (233-34), he is simply redefining a word that has a consistent usage.

It seems to me that Hamilton, only digs himself in deeper by citing Mt. 21:34; 26:45; Rom. 13:11; James 5:8 because they all deal with things about to take place. The best argument Hamilton has is from Deut. 32:35 where the Babylonian captivity is said to be "near" though hundreds of years away. But this is a case of "projected imminence," and is made clear by the context. When Israel sinned in the future (v. 29), then, when their foot slipped (v. 35a), their end would be near (v. 35b). There is no such context for 1 Peter 4:7. Hamilton, contends that no one "knows when this point of **the end** is, but it could be at any time" (233). Peter DID KNOW. He knew it was "at hand."

I do not know Rodney Miller's position on 1 Peter 4:7, but he has made his position on the word *engizo* exceedingly clear. Forgive the lengthy quote.

"If the kingdom was not established following the ministry of Jesus Christ, and is yet to be established, there are some major problems. The greatest problem is the personal credibility of Jesus Christ himself, for he told us in the beginning of his ministry that the 'kingdom was at hand' (Mt. 4:17 and Mark 1:15). The term, 'at hand,' *engizo* as A.T. Robertson says, 'means very near, so near that one could see the signs and proof.' In the passage in Mark 1:15, He tells us that 'the time is fulfilled, the kingdom is at hand.' How could this possibly mean some 2,000 or 3,000 years yet future? ... His statment [*sic*] that the 'kingdom is at hand' becomes extremely important because it cannot mean some 2,000 or 3,000 years yet in the future and still be true. Notice how the term, *engizo* is used in other passages and see if a 'ball park figure of 2,000 or 3,000 miles or years, as the case may be, will make good sense in any of these pertinent passages. (1) In Mt. 21:34, Matthew said the harvest time was at hand. Does he mean that it is 2,000 years in the future? (2) In Lk. 18:40 Jesus commanded the man be brought near to him. Again, did he mean somewhere in the neighborhood of about 2,000 miles? (3) In Lk. 19:41, Jesus came near to the city. Does this mean that he came within 2,000 miles of the city? (4) In Lk. 21:1, the Passover drew near. Is 'near' simply within 2,000 years of the Passover? (5) In Lk. 24:15, Jesus drew near to the men walking to Emmaus. Was he 'only 2,000' miles away from them? If the millennialist is correct in his timing of the kingdom, *then when* Jesus said the 'kingdom is near,' what he really meant to say was

that it would be established at his second coming which would be at least some 2,000 years in the future. Thus 'near' actually meant at least a 2,000 mile or 2,000 year range of space or time. Of course, to do and say such is to make a mockery of the statements [*sic*] of the Lord. When Jesus said near, he meant near" (Curry, 62).

I couldn't agree more. Now what did Peter mean when he said, "The end of all things is near" (1 Peter 4:7)?

Redefinition #1: Living in Expectancy

Lenski objects, "To charge Paul or Peter with false prophecy for saying 1900 years ago that the end is near, is to treat them unfairly. They, as we, had to live in constant expectation of Christ's sudden return" (193).

Then Jesus Himself is unfair, for it was He who said that those who claim something is near when it is not near are false prophets (Luke 21:8). If "the end of all things" has not yet come to pass (1 Pt. 4:7), Jesus calls Peter a false prophet. If *engiken* does not mean "near," what could Jesus possibly have meant in Mt. 24:33?

Redefinition #2: Close at Hand

Michaels correctly hears echoes of Mt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15 and James 5:8 in 1 Pt. 4:7 but then tries to mitigate the force of all these time statements by contending that "in a sense the end-time events are under way; the 'end of all things,' although still in the future, is very close at hand" (245). What does this mean? Perhaps Michaels means close in distance. I recently heard a preacher say Peter meant the same thing as he did when he asked, "Do you have a fire extinguisher *at hand*." This means "Is there a fire extinguisher nearby," that is, close in distance, so that it is readily accessible. But (1) where in Scripture is this term used to mean "readily accessible"? (2) Does the context mentioning "time" (1 Pt. 4:7, 17) mean nothing?

Redefinition #3: Already But Not Yet

Commentators understand that 1 Pt. 4:7 has the idea of imminence, but seek to circumvent it in some way. Here is a typical attempt by Leonhard Goppelt: DEFINITION #1: 1 Pt. 4:7 has "... reference to the imminent end of the world" (294). DEFINITION #1 AGAIN: "*engiken* is an early Christian technical term coming from the Jesus tradition and indicating the chronological nearness of the *eschaton* (cf. Mk. 1:14; Mt. 4:17; cf. 3:2; 10:7; Lk. 21:31; Rom. 13:12; cf. Phil 4:5; Lk. 21:38; Rev. 1:3; 22:10)" (294-95). DEFINITION #1 A THIRD TIME: "1 Pt. advocates the expectation of the imminent *parousia* in as emphatic a manner as Revelation (1:3; 22:30)" (295). REDEFINITION: "Its essential content consists of more than just the concept of a brief time-frame, which was, at any rate, disproved in the first generation by the delay of the *parousia*. ... the idea of nearness ... corresponds to the 'already' and 'not yet' of the *eschaton* in history" (*Ibid.*). So, according to Goppelt, the language clearly reveals the "expectation of an imminent *parousia* ..." (*Ibid.*), but the fact that the end hasn't come for 2,000 years doesn't really matter because Peter meant to convey *more than* nearness in time.

Here are the two problems with Goppelt's reasoning. First, it redefines a word in a way that makes no sense. We would then translate Mt. 4:17, "The kingdom of heaven is already but not yet." 1 Pt. 4:7 becomes "The end of all things is already but not yet." *Engiken* means "near," which is almost the opposite of what Goppelt states, for he would have it mean, "Already, but not for at least 2,000 years."

Second, Goppelt conceded that Peter meant to convey imminence, but "more than" imminence. However, if the language includes the idea of a "brief time frame" AT ALL, Peter was wrong and thus a false teacher!

Redefinition #4: The Last Thing To Come

Lenski admits *engiken* in 1 Pt. 4:7 means the end “‘has come near’ and thus ‘is near,’” but then explains “is near” as “since Christ’s first coming there is nothing more to expect except his second coming to judgment” (192)! Blum likewise equates “has drawn near” to “all is in readiness” (246). Grudem also argues that this simply means that “all the major events ... have occurred, and now all things are ready for Christ to return and rule” (172).

The first problem with this interpretation is that “near” does not mean “next in line.” The second problem is that the EOU was NOT the next in line! If 2 Peter was written before AD 70, that falsifies this interpretation completely.

Redefinition #5: Our Death is Near

Barclay sees the problem with 1 Pt. 4:7 and other passages implying the imminence of the end and coming of Jesus in the NT. He suggests 4 possible views: (1) they were mistaken; (2) the end really has come because in Jesus “the prophecies were all fulfilled ... 1 Cor. 10:11 ... Acts 2:16-21”; (3) “near” could be taken relatively; (4) death is truly always near to every man⁽²⁴⁹⁻²⁵¹⁾. Barclay does not commit fully to (1) or (4) but he sees (2) and (3) as untenable. He seems to lean toward (4), concluding that the NT authors “left us with the warning that for every one of us personally the end is near; and that warning is as valid today as ever it was” (251).

The problem is that while “end” could certainly refer to our death, the “coming of the Lord” would not. Jesus said they would see signs that revealed that He was “near, right at the door” (Mt. 24:33). These signs (false prophets claiming to be the Christ, the abomination of desolation, war, *etc.*) are not the signs of a person’s death but of the DOJ (Mt. 24:16).

The Timing is Unimportant?

Concerning 2 Pt. 3:8, Hillyer wrote, “God’s word is his bond. The timing of its being carried out must be left to him” (216). So, God’s promises of WHAT will happen are unimpeachable, but His promises of WHEN He will fulfill them is relative (impeachable?). What else is “relative” in Scripture?

Does 2 Pt. 3:8 “tell us that God can’t tell time and that words like ‘shortly come to pass’ or ‘time is at hand’ don’t really have any meaning? Such is not the case! God can tell time, and there are passages that demonstrate exactly what ‘shortly come to pass’ means... Daniel 8:1, 26...” (Rodney Miller in Curry, 65).

In Ezek. 7, God repeatedly said Judah’s end was near. When some came along and said, “It’s not really near,” God became rather upset (Ezek. 12:21-28). (This is exactly what the mockers of 2 Peter 3 were saying, “God is not really coming to judge US!”) How is this any different from the commentators who say, “1 Pt. 4:7 says the end was near, but it wasn’t really near” or “Near doesn’t mean *near*”?

Overestimating the Importance of the DOJ

Almon Williams contends that AD 70 was “certainly not *the end of all things!*” (Curry, 207; cf. Hamilton, 233). What he means of course, is that AD 70 was the end of Jerusalem but not the end of everything. However, for Peter to claim that “all things” were about to come to an end harmonizes well with hyperbolic apocalyptic language describing God’s judgment on a specific people (Isa. 13:10, 13; 24:1-6; *et al.*). Jesus said the DOJ would be the greatest tribulation the world had ever or would ever know (Mt. 24:21). In any case, whatever “all things” Peter said were to “end” in 1 Pt. 4:7, their end was near when he wrote it!

When Grudem contends that “all the major events ... have occurred, and now all things are ready for Christ to return and rule” (172), he makes the DOJ a non-major event. Jesus hardly treated the DOJ as a non-major event in Mt. 24; Lk. 17; 21; Mk. 13, *etc.*

Similarly, Moo says, “imminence, defined biblically, means that the return of Christ and the culmination of history are always impending. The *Parousia* is the next event in salvation history” (194). The problem of course is that the EOU was not next. Jesus specifically told them that the next event to expect and look for was the DOJ (Mt. 24; 2 Pt. 3:12, 14).

What Does “Not Near” Mean?

Balaam saw the Messiah as a “star” that was “not near” (Num. 24:17). Scripture connected the coming of Christ and the rising of the “morning star” to the Transfiguration. The Synoptics connect the Transfiguration to a first century coming of the Lord (Matthew 16:27-28ff.; Mark 8:38-9:1ff.; Luke 9:26-27ff.). Interestingly, “almost all commentators agree, there is” in the phrase “the morning star arises” (1 Pt. 1:19) “an allusion to Num. 24:17” (Bauckham, 226). To Balaam the coming of the Messiah was “not near.” But His coming (again) was near to Peter.

Furthermore, if “near” (as in 1 Pt. 4:7) can mean “many centuries in the future,” what does “not near” mean? When Balaam saw the Messiah “but not near” (Num. 24:17) did he see Jesus “not many centuries in the future?” (Preston, 81-82). Or, if “near” can mean “can happen at any time” or some equivalent as many EOU commentators suggest (Grudem, 173, *et al.*), then does “not near” mean “cannot happen at any time”?

Slipping into the Language of Peter

The imminence of the Day of the Lord is so clear and frequent that EOU advocates themselves often slide into terminology such as “impending judgment,” “a little while,” “imminence of the divine judgment,” and “the present order of things will soon come to an end” (Michaels, 245; Lenski, 36; Bowman, 148 on 1 Pt. 1:5; 4:7). Hillyer on 1 Pt. 1:20, states, “Peter’s generation is privileged to be living **in these last times**, at the momentous stage in the unfolding of God’s salvation plan” (50). “The statement that the divine judge stands **ready** to act is in line with . . . the whole letter: the imminent return of Christ in power and great glory (4:7)” (Hillyer, 122 on 1 Pt. 4:5). Again, Hillyer on 1 Pt. 4:17, “Judgment is imminent. The last times are here” (133).

They might well use such language, for it is the language of Scripture. Milton Terry in writing on hermeneutics is quite blunt about this: “When a writer says that an event will shortly and speedily come to pass, or is about to take place, it is contrary to all propriety to declare that his statements allow us to believe the event is in the far future. It is a reprehensible abuse of language to say that the words *immediately*, or *near at hand*, mean *ages hence*, or *after a long time*” (as quoted in Hanegraaf, 160).

Selected Bibliography

- Barclay, William, *The Letters of James and Peter* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976).
- Bray, Gerald, ed. and Thomas C. Oden, gen. ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Vol. XI* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
- Blum, Edwin A., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Vol. 12, 1 & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).
- Bowman, John Wick, *The Layman's Bible Commentary: Hebrews – 2 Peter* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1962).
- Curry, Melvin D., ed., *The Doctrine of Last Things: Florida College Annual Lectures, 1986* (Temple Terrace, Florida: Florida College Bookstore, 1986).
- Davids, Peter H., *Pillar NT Commentary: The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006).
- Dawson, Samuel G., *II Peter 3: Destruction of the Universe or Destruction of Jerusalem* (Puyallup, Washington: Gospel Themes Press, 1997).
- Hillyer, Norman, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992).
- Goppelt, Leonhard, *A Commentary on I Peter* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963).
- Green, Michael, *Tyndale: 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987).
- Grudem, Wayne, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press: 1988).
- Hailey, Homer, *A Commentary on Isaiah: With Emphasis on the Messianic Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985).
- Hamilton, Clinton D., *Truth Commentaries: I Peter* (Bowling Green, Kentucky: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1995).
- Hamilton, Clinton D., *Truth Commentaries: 2 Peter and Jude* (Bowling Green, Kentucky: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1995).
- Hanegraaf, Hank, *The Apocalypse Code: Find Out What the Bible Really Says About the End Times and Why It Matters Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).
- Hoekema, Anthony A., *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979).
- Lenski, R.C.H., *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966).
- Lightfoot, John, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica: Volume 3, Luke-John* (Hendrickson Publishers; 2003 reprint of 1859 original).
- Lucas, Dick and Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995).
- Luther, Martin, *Commentary on Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1990).
- Michaels, J. Ramsey, *World Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1988).
- Moo, Douglas J., *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).
- Oberst, Bruce, *Bible Study Textbook: Letters from Peter* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1962).
- Poole, Matthew, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Volume III: Matthew – Revelation* (Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.).
- Preston, Don K., *The Elements Shall Melt With Fervent Heat: A Study of 2 Peter 3* (Aardmore, Oklahoma: JaDon Productions LLC, 2006).
- Richard, Earl J., *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2000).
- Russell, James Stuart, *The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming* (Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 2003 reprint [originally published in 1878]).
- Wiersbe, Warren, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Volume 2* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot Victory Publishing, 1989).
- Wright, Gerald, *Second Peter Three: Jewish Calamity or Universal Climax?* (Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible Tract & Corp., n.d.).