

Three Worlds in One

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The three worlds in one – the world that *was*, the world that *is*, and the world that *will be* – are described for us in the third chapter of Peter’s second letter:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior; knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, by which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are in it, shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, in which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother, Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3)

Surely we have all been impressed in the past with the advertising of a certain shoe polish which boasts of its product as a “two-in-one” article. We have also noted the claims of a sewing machine oil which goes the shoe polish one better by saying it is a “three-in-one” product. Nevertheless, I dare say that most of us have never realized that we live in a three-in-one world. That is the exact thought in this third chapter of 2 Peter. It is rather three periods of time that we have here. I should like to identify these three worlds.

The World That Was

The first one is mentioned in verses 5 and 6:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, by which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

That is the “world that was.”

In verse 7 we have our next reference:

But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

This is the present world or the “world that is.”

And then we have the third world mentioned in verse 13:

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness.

And this is the “world that will be.” Actually, we have here only one world but three periods of time: The world of the past, the world of the present, and the world of the future.

One World

Now we have been introduced in our generation to the one-world idea, and it has been presented to us as something entirely new. When Wendell Willkie toured around the world and returned to write his book, *One World*, that was probably the first time that this idea was made available for public consumption. At least, it is the first time it came into the limelight for John Q. Public to consider. And the flash of the atomic bomb crystallized this thought to such an extent that after World War II the public demanded an adequate answer to meet this new need of the one-world idea. The United Nations was man’s answer to meet this new problem – and let us be very clear, it was man’s answer and not God’s. Many world-wide movements have come into focus since then, and we hear a great deal today about global politics. But, you know, this is not something new. We have had ecumenical movements in the church for many years. Nevertheless, all of this caused us to coin new mottoes, and we heard new phrases: Unite or Perish, Federate or Disintegrate, Yoke Up or Blow Up. Now these are not God’s movements, and certainly they are not His solutions to the problem. But God does have a global gospel today that was meant for every race and tribe and tongue and nation on top side of this earth. The fact of the matter is that this gospel is going to reach all of these because the day is coming when there will be gathered in His presence out of every nation, tribe, tongue, and condition of mankind those that have been redeemed by this glorious gospel. But this one-world idea – it is about two thousand years old.

Let us look at verses 3 and 4 of 2 Peter 3 and we shall see in it the expression, “the world that was”:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

You see, scoffers were to arise who would ridicule the notion that the Lord Jesus Christ would return. And they present a very specious argument, an argument which lacks logic and has no foundation in fact. They say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." They, of course, want to adopt the doctrine of *laissez faire*, and they are willing to continue the *status quo* because they believe that everything has continued on an even tempo from the very beginning. That may have sounded plausible in Peter's day, and it may sound plausible to some now. But surely it is not true to the facts as we know them today because there was a world that came into judgment, and that world perished. This is the statement we have in verse 6:

By which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

There was a judgment of this world in the past, you see; the world that then existed perished.

Scar Marks of the Water Judgment Upon the Earth

The very interesting thing is that both the heavens and the earth bear scar marks of a past judgment. That is the subject of common knowledge today, and it is needless for me to go into a great many details. However, I would like to mention a few:

We know today that the mountains, especially out here in the western country, have been thrown up by some major catastrophe of the past. I well recall my first trip to Yosemite Valley, listening to the ranger there give his memorized lecture that evidently had been handed to him by some geologist. This ranger made the statement that sometime in the ages past there was a colossal glacier that moved down through that area, cutting out the mighty Yosemite Valley. My, what a chiseler it took to perform such a feat!

Another evidence is found in the presence of seashells on mountain tops. I was speaking several years ago to an oil geologist in Texas – a very fine Christian, by the way – and I was telling him of an experience I had had while squirrel hunting down near the Brazos River. Along the river bank I had noted a strata of rock with nothing but dirt beneath it and nothing but dirt above it. On closer examination of that strata of rock, I found out that it was nothing in the world but crushed seashells cemented together. The geologist made this statement, "It is quite evident that this entire state as well as this western area was at one time under water."

And we are all familiar, I am sure, with the account of the animals which have been found in Siberia in "deep freeze." They have been there through the centuries. Elephants, for instance, have been found with grass in their stomachs – green grass. They evidently were enjoying a tropical climate in that area when all of a sudden, through some major catastrophe, they were put in quick freeze.

In other words, the laws of nature as we know them today were interrupted; something interfered, the *status quo* was disturbed, and a mighty cataclysm came upon this earth. In fact, "cataclysm" is the very word that Peter uses, and he says it was a judgment by water. At that

time a great inundation took place which submerged the civilization of that day beneath watery waves.

In the world as we know it today, three-fourths of its surface is water. It is one of the basic materials. Even the Greek philosophers from the very beginning always considered water one of the basic materials. Thales, an early Greek philosopher, speaks of four basic elements: water, fire, air, and earth. And we know that this water was the destructive force. In other words, there is resident in nature its own destructive force, and there was a judgment of God upon the world at that time by water.

God's Judgment, Not Love, Manifest in Nature

As you look out today at the world of nature, you will not discover the love of God, for the love of God is not revealed in nature at all. You will not find the love of God, as the poets like to speak of it, in the birds and bees and the budding of the trees. Nature today has a bloody tooth and a very sharp claw. As I write, the great drifts of snow out in the Middle West have caused farmers to be isolated and have not only endangered life but actually have caused many to die. The forces of nature which are at work today do not reveal God's love.

You will not find the love of God today except in one place, and that is in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is there God has made the focal point for all His love, and there He showered all His mercy. And if you are to know the love of God, you will have to find it at the cross where He gave His Son to die for you.

The heavens, likewise, bear scar marks of a judgment of the past. I have been very much interested in reading a book by an astronomer concerning the dark nebulae. He holds that these dark nebulae are evidently stellar systems like our Milky Way that are out yonder beyond our galaxy. By the way, these dark spots in the sky are not dark at all, for beyond them there are stars. It is supposed that these dark spots have been caused by some sort of a major catastrophe which took place in the past. Surely new telescopes will flood this subject with new light. Until then, I will have to reserve my opinion relative to this.

The Time of the Water Judgment

Now the question arises: When did this judgment which produced the flood take place on the earth? Let me quote again to you verses 5 and 6 of 2 Peter 3:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, by which the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

It is impossible for us to date the great catastrophe when the world was destroyed by water. There are, however, two possibilities:

The Flood of Noah's Day

I have asked several outstanding Bible teachers what judgment they thought Peter had in mind, and there was some disagreement among these men. Most of them did agree, however, that it referred to the flood of Noah's day. Surely that seems to be the suggestion here.

The antediluvian civilization was destroyed with a flood, and there is abundant evidence for this. The great shaft which was put down at the site of ancient Ur of the Chaldees shows that there were several civilizations destroyed. In the excavation, the archaeologists came to a great deal of sand and silt and quite a bit of sediment that was deposited there by a flood. Then beneath all this, they found that a very high civilization had existed. Personally, I believe that Peter referred directly to the flood of Noah's day, and surely this earth bears abundant evidence of this flood.

The Judgment of the Pre-Adamic World

There was another judgment concerning which we know very little, and this judgment took place in the pre-Adamic world. It is suggested in the very first few verses of the Bible. In Genesis 1:1, 2 we read:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved [brooded] upon the face of the waters.

God created the heavens and the earth, and then we find the earth without form and void, or better still, "It *became* without form, and void."

The literal translation is that it became *tohu-wa-bohu*. In Isaiah 45:18 the prophet says that God did not create this world *tohu-wa-bohu*, which would suggest that something happened that made this world without form and void. In other words, a cataclysm came upon this earth. When God began to move, water was upon the face of this earth. One of the first things that God had to do, after He brought light, was to remove the water from the land and to separate the land from the water.

The view I hold is that there was a great judgment that took place in this pre-Adamic civilization. We know practically nothing about it although it seems that this judgment is in connection with the fall of Satan who was created Lucifer, "the son of the morning," an "angel of light," evidently the very highest creature that God ever created. And we find this mentioned in Isaiah 14:12-14:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, who didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

We have here what was evidently the origin of sin. Sin, here at the very beginning, is connected with the fall of Lucifer. This one, created so high, lifted his will against the will of God. In other words, there was rebellion in heaven against God. And, my friends, this is sin at its very core. I suppose the worst thing that can be said about any man is that which is recorded in Isaiah 53 where it is said that each one has turned to "his own way." That is, we set *our way* over against *the way of God*. That is sin in its inception; that is sin at its blackest; that is sin in its origin. The way all sins begin is by man setting his will over against the will of God. And here we find this creature, the highest creature that God ever created, setting his will over against the will of God.

He did not say he would be unlike God, that he wanted to be different from God. He said, “I want to be like God.” And he tried to lift himself up and set himself up as God and set his will over against the will of God. And that is what rebellious man is doing today. He is setting himself up as his own little god or insisting on his own particular viewpoint of God. Each one is turned to his own way.

This judgment in 2 Peter could refer to this pre-Adamic civilization in which Satan, who evidently at that time was Lucifer, an angel of light, had control. When he rebelled and set his will over against God, then the judgment of God came upon this earth. And it was a water judgment.

God's Messengers to This Present World

God has judged sin in the past. This earth bears scar marks, open wounds that testify that God has moved in mighty judgment against that which opposed Him. And since He has judged sin in the past, He is going to judge sin in the future. You are living in a world that is on its way to destruction. We are going to deal with that in the next section. This world in which we are living today is moving toward a judgment, not by flood, because there hangs over this earth the rainbow of many hues and colors, the rainbow of the grace and patience of God, but the judgment of God is coming. This world will be destroyed. Every time you pick up a popular magazine and read a scientific article about prehistoric creatures who existed upon this earth thousands, even millions, of years ago – for that is quite possible – God is speaking to your heart to let you know that a judgment came upon that civilization because it had turned its back upon God.

God is speaking today; He is speaking to men and women in all walks of life and in many ways. In effect He is saying to them, “In view of the fact that I have judged sin in the past, don't you know that I am going to judge sin in the future?” That is the message which He is trying to get over to this gainsaying world today that seems so dull of hearing and filled with scoffers.

God speaks in many ways. I believe that the snowstorms, floods, and droughts are a judgment from God. I believe that He is using them to speak to America. The dust storms that we had during the Depression, as so many of God's messengers at that time pointed out, were God's warning to America. At that time there was no revival, no turning back to God; but I do believe that if America had heeded God and turned back to Him, we would not have had to send our boys to die in the second World War and on battlefields all over the world.

God also speaks to men personally. The very gray in your hair, the rheumatism and the difficulty that you are having in your physical body – all of these are just messages from God to let you know that you are not going to be in this world too much longer. Signs of aging are merely God's messengers, telling you that you are to be removed from this place. You see, God is not going to take you out in a hurry; He gives you plenty of warning. But having given you the warning, He then moves in.

You will recall that Noah preached one hundred and twenty years, and certainly that was long enough to give the people of that day an ample opportunity to decide whether they would turn to God or not. The Lord Jesus, speaking of that in Matthew 24:37-38, said:

***But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be....
They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day
that Noah entered into the ark.***

Now is there anything wrong with eating and drinking? Is there anything wrong with marrying and giving in marriage? Certainly not. Then why did the Lord Jesus mention those things? The reason He mentioned them is that after Noah had preached one hundred and twenty years, telling them of the imminent danger they were in, they were going through these ordinary pursuits of life, such as eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and were paying no attention to the fact that the flood was even then at their doors. God was warning them, and the thing that was wrong was that they were not listening to His messenger at all.

I know that there are many of you who think this sounds old-fashioned – and certainly it is – because in the years gone by God’s messengers had a great deal to say about the judgment of God. And you probably think that I drive around in a Stanley Steamer since I am such a back number in mentioning these things. Or you may think that I am attempting to frighten you. Do not think that. I know that we live in a skeptical and sophisticated age, and I have too much respect for your intelligence to believe that I can frighten you. But, my friend, you and I are living in a world that is moving to judgment. The reason we know it is moving to judgment is that God has judged sin in the past, and certainly sin is prevalent today. No civilization has gotten by with it; eventually God is going to move in judgment.

Let me share with you this little story that came to my attention several years ago while I was doing graduate work in the Dallas Seminary. I was walking down the main street in Dallas one evening after dinner with another student. We noticed a crowd in front of a theater gathered around an automobile that had been in a wreck. The fact of the matter is that I have never seen an automobile that was so completely wrecked. We were told that the passengers had been killed and that their bodies had to be sawed out of that car because they were so tightly locked in it. Upon returning to the seminary, we were telling the fellows there what we had seen. One of them told us this story, for he knew all about it. He taught a Bible class in one of the suburban communities of Dallas, and in that Bible class were quite a few high school students, some of whom had been converted, including several on the football team. However, others had become very skeptical and were ridiculing the Christians. Two boys and a girl went by to get one of the girls that formerly had been running with this crowd. She told them that she would not go with them but that she was going to a Bible class that evening instead, and she tried to persuade them to go. Well, they merely laughed and went on their way. And so every Monday evening they would come by and try to get her to ditch the Bible class and go with them. She tried to plead with them to accept Christ as their Savior; she told them what she had done and the step she had taken. One Monday night they asked if they might take her by the Bible class, which they did. When they let her out, she pleaded with them again to come in just one time. Refusing, they started out in their car again. They had not gone two miles until the accident took place that killed all three of them. This was the car that was there in front of the theater which we had seen.

You know, God is gracious, but after He has given us His message and we turn our backs upon it, there is nothing left but His judgment. Oh! that you and I might be warned to turn to Him while it is called “today”; “now is the accepted time.”

The World That Is

As we come to the “world that is,” I am turning to the Revised Standard Version, reading this chapter over again. It is not that I recommend this version, but I am very much interested in getting at the meaning of some words, and it is well to note the difference from our Authorized translation and any other translation of the Scriptures.

This is now the second letter that I have written to you, beloved, and in both of them I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder; that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation." They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3, REVISED STANDARD VERSION)

False Premises Concerning the Lord's Second Coming

The reason that Peter mentions "the world that was," "the world that is," and "the world that will be" is due to the fact that in the last days scoffers will arise, and they will ridicule the truth concerning the coming of Christ again to this earth. The scoffers in the past based their ridicule on two false premises:

Nothing has happened in the past; therefore, nothing will happen in the future. They base their ridicule on the false assumption that since nothing has happened in the past, nothing will happen in the future. I say it is a false assumption, a counterfeit premise, because, as we have seen, something *has* happened in the past. This world bears scar marks of a past judgment; the very stones cry out, telling the story of a past civilization that was submerged beneath water. They tell us that the cosmos that was then in existence was brought into chaos and that this

present world in which we are living today is built on that chaos. There is every evidence of that, of course.

Before we go on to the second false premise on which scoffers in this present world base their belief that the Lord will not return, I should like to answer some questions which naturally arise in connection with the destruction of this present world: Will it be drowned? Will it be drenched? Will it be put beneath the flood? Verses 7, 10, and 12 answer these questions, and in these three verses we find it definitely stated that the present world will be destroyed by fire, not by water. Let us note, first of all, verse 7:

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

This present order of things is temporary. This present world in which we are living today is moving toward another day of judgment, which is unlike anything in the past. This time it is a judgment by fire. In fact, Peter is very specific in this epistle and in this particular passage, mentioning it three times (verses 7, 10 and 12).

Now let us look at verse 10:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

There you see that Peter not only says that this world will be “dissolved with fire,” but also that it will be “burned up.” How could he be more specific?

The third reference is as follows, in verse 12:

Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!

This is one of the most remarkable passages in the Word of God, especially for the present hour. It is this passage of Scripture which has caused the skeptic of the past to ridicule. If you should consider many of the criticisms that have been made in past ages, one that caused the loudest guffaws was the question: “How can water burn? Most of the world today is water, and it is ridiculous to think that it can burn.” Of course at the present hour that sort of criticism is outmoded because we know today that water is made of two inflammable gases and that it can burn.

Now let us return to the second false premise mentioned above: *the eternity of matter*. This was a premise on which a great deal of the science of the past was based, something which was taught by Plato. You see, they said this passage could never come to pass because matter was indestructible and could not be destroyed; matter was eternal. Not only did the critics ridicule this passage, but also the Bible scholars of the past were puzzled by it. Though they believed it sincerely and humbly, they could not explain it. And I have been very much interested in noting that some of them felt called upon to make some sort of an explanation, one saying that probably this earth will bump into some other heavenly body causing a mighty conflagration. That could be, of course, but it does not seem likely with the information that has come to us and since we know that the thing that is mentioned here in this third chapter of 2 Peter can happen. We not

only know that it can happen, but we also know *how* it can happen. When the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, a flood of light fell on this chapter. The fact of the matter is that this is the only good that the atomic bomb has done so far. It has at least given us a commentary on 2 Peter 3.

Atomic Fission Explains the Language of Peter

In atomic fission (when the little atom is split) the tremendous force that is released consumes it. I want us to note the language very definitely in the three verses previously quoted. They speak of the fact that this present order of things will be destroyed by fire. Therefore, let us return to verses 7, 10, and 12, taking them in chronological order, continuing with the Revised Standard Version, verse 7:

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Note that it says that this earth has been stored up for fire. This is a very interesting expression, by the way, and it not only means stored up *for* fire but also stored up *with* fire (that could easily be the translation of it). The suggestion is that there are resident forces present in the world which could destroy it. In other words, this world can commit suicide. This possibility is suggested in this passage. It is not that God is going to rain fire down from heaven – it is not that there is coming in from the outside some medium of judgment – but this earth carries its own judgment. How well we know this today! Now note verse 10:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

There are several expressions here which we want to examine in detail. A loud “noise” (Greek *rhoizeudon*) is a word used by Simon Peter that is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. It is a word that belongs to classical Greek. It belongs to the poets, for the pronunciation carries its own meaning. It is sometimes used to speak of the swish of an arrow, the hiss of a serpent, or the splash of water. Does that not suggest to you the sound of atomic explosion? This is the very word and the only word that I know that could describe such a noise.

“The elements will be dissolved with fire” or “the elements shall melt,” as the King James translation has it, is a very interesting expression and contains two remarkable words: *elements* and *melt*. First let us examine the word *elements*. The word for elements here means the basic materials, and it is the word used to speak of putting building blocks in a row or a series. It is used to speak of the first steps of a child. It is that which is primary, that which is foundational, that out of which a thing is made.

This is much better than our word “atom.” You see, the word “atom” comes from the Greek word *tomao*, which means to cut. An *alpha* (the first letter of the Greek alphabet) gives the opposite meaning when placed at the beginning of a word. So *atomo* (atom) means something which you cannot cut. That is what scientists thought a few years ago about the atom – that it was something that could not be cut. But now it is being cut up like a railroad restaurant pie. The word translated “elements” is a much better word, for it means the basic materials. As one of the

outstanding scientists of the present hour expressed it, "The atoms are the building blocks of the universe." Thus, "elements" suggests the atomic structure of the universe.

"Melt" employs one of the simplest Greek words. It is one that every student of first-year Greek uses as his model in considering all the parts of the verb. It is the verb *luoμ*, and this word simply means "to untie," "to unloose." That is the word translated "melt." This passage says that the atomic structure, or the atoms of the universe, will be untied. That certainly is the way we laymen would speak of atomic fission. We are told that when the little atom is untied, an atomic explosion goes off.

In verse 10, we are also told that the earth and the works are to be burned up. That is the exact language of Peter; that is the total destruction of this universe. And, of course, that is what happens when atomic fission takes place. It means the mass has been converted to energy and tremendous heat has been released. Consider verse 12:

Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!

You will note that the expression in which we are interested in verse 12 is the same expression which we considered in verse 10: "elements shall melt." However, this time we have a different word in the original for "melt." It is not the simple little word *luoμ*, but it is *teukomai*, a word that means actually "wasting away," the wasting away of nature. This could possibly suggest the effects of radioactivity when an atomic bomb goes off.

Please note that in all three of the verses under consideration, the release of intense heat is mentioned. In verse 7 Peter mentions that "the heavens and earth ... have been stored up for *fire*" and in verse 10 that "the elements will be dissolved with *fire*" and in verse 12 that "the elements will melt with *fire*." These references certainly speak of a fervent heat that is to be generated. These are things that cannot escape even the casual reader. And the analogy to atomic action again is striking. Certainly we have here a rather interesting description of atomic fission written about two thousand years ago.

In 1947 a very interesting little brochure was printed relative to the atomic bomb and what the Bible says about it. The writer evidently went to a great deal of trouble to gather quite a lot of information regarding the experiment which was made in Alamogordo, New Mexico. He tells us that he had dinner with a Christian railroad man who lived about one hundred miles from Alamogordo. On the morning of the fateful experiment, this man was preparing breakfast at about five o'clock when suddenly the sky became so lighted up that the fluorescent fixture in his kitchen seemed as if it were dark rather than light. The writer of the book mentioned also a blind girl in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is about one hundred and twenty miles from Alamogordo. She had been waiting on the street for a bus, and when the bomb went off, she exclaimed, "What is that?" We are told that this bomb that was released in Alamogordo weighed approximately four hundred pounds and that it was suspended from a tower built very much like an oil derrick, except that it was not built of any sheer materials but actually of railroad rails which weigh about ninety pounds to the foot. When this bomb, which was just a midget, went off, it dissolved this derrick which went up in a puff of smoke; and for a mile in every direction there was a place at least five feet deep that had been blasted out, and the rocks in the immediate vicinity had become molten.

This gives us a bird's-eye view of what an atomic bomb can and does do. It would seem that men of today have broken into God's treasure house; they have found God's secret, it appears. The fact of the matter is that this is the suggestion in verse 7:

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

This gives the suggestion of being kept in store, and that is the same word that the Lord Jesus used when He told of the man who was laying up treasure. God had been laying up this secret of how He made this universe, and it seems that man has broken into God's secret treasure house and stolen the secret. At least, man has opened a veritable Pandora's box, and today men are frightened.

People in All Walks of Life are Frightened

It makes no difference which way we turn today, people in all walks of life – scientists and statesmen, college professors and presidents – are all speaking concerning the awful possibilities of the future, warning that a chain of atomic fission could be set off which might destroy this universe. In other words, it is just like living on a powder keg; we are living on a dynamite dump; we are living on an arsenal. It *can* go off. God's Word says that it *will* go off some day, and informed men of today know that to be true.

Knowledgeable people have been saying some very interesting things about this present hour. Please note that I am not quoting from any preachers but from outstanding people in other walks of life.

Dr. Urey from the University of Chicago, who worked on the atomic bomb, began an article several years ago in *Collier's* magazine by saying, "I am a frightened man, and I want to frighten you."

Dr. John R. Mott returned from a trip around the world and made the statement that this was "the most dangerous era the world has ever known." And he raised the question of where we are heading. Then he made this further statement, "When I think of human tragedy, as I saw it and felt it, of the Christian ideals sacrificed as they have been, the thought comes to me that *God is preparing the way for some immense direct action.*"

Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins, of the University of Chicago, gave many people a shock several years ago when he made the statement that "devoting our educational efforts to infants between six and twenty-one seems futile." And he added, "The world may not last long enough." He contended that for this reason we should begin adult education.

Winston Churchill said, "Time may be short."

Mr. Luce, the editor of *Life*, *Time*, and *Fortune* magazines, addressed a group of missionaries who were the first to return to their fields after the war. Speaking in San Francisco, he made the statement that when he was a boy, the son of a Presbyterian missionary in China, he and his father often discussed the premillennial coming of Christ, and he thought that all missionaries who believed in that teaching were inclined to be fanatical. And then Mr. Luce said, "I wonder if there wasn't something to that position after all."

It is very interesting to note that *The Christian Century* carried an article by Wesner Fallaw (of all journals, this one seems to be the most unlikely in which to read a statement like this) which said, "A function of the Christian is to make preparation for world's end."

Dr. Charles Beard, the American historian, says, “All over the world the thinkers and searchers who scan the horizon of the future are attempting to assess the values of civilization and speculating about its destiny.”

Dr. William Yost, in the *Road to Civilization*, said, “The handwriting on the wall of five continents now tells us that the Day of Judgment is at hand.”

Dr. Raymond B. Fosdick, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, said, “To many ears comes the sound of the tramp of doom. Time is short.”

H. G. Wells declared before he died, “This world is at the end of its tether. The end of everything we call life is close at hand.”

General Douglas MacArthur said, “We have had our last chance.”

Former President Dwight Eisenhower said, “Without a moral regeneration throughout the world there is no hope for us as we are going to disappear one day in the dust of an atomic explosion.”

And Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, ex-President of Columbia University, said, “The end cannot be far distant.”

If men from all walks of life are speaking in this manner, certainly you and I, who have believed the Bible and who have had all these years such a clear statement concerning the judgment that is coming upon this world and the way in which it is to be destroyed, should be alert. Do not misunderstand me, I am not saying that the atomic bomb will be God’s method for the destruction of this world. I am merely saying that man at last has found out that this passage in 2 Peter makes good sense. This is a way that is not only logical but is scientific by which God can destroy this universe.

Notwithstanding, this is something that should not alarm God’s people, and the reason it should not alarm God’s people is that we have a blessed hope.

The Believer’s Blessed Hope

We are not looking for the atomic destruction of this world; we are looking for the Lord from heaven. I am confident that this is the next thing which is in God’s program for His people – we shall have more to say concerning this in the next section. Certainly there is here a warning to the unsaved. If you are without Christ and are living without God in this world, certainly there is a message in this for you.

In verse 9 we read:

The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

It is not God’s will that you should perish. One of the reasons that you have read this message is simply because God does not want you to come into judgment, but He wants you to pass from death unto life.

And you can do that – you can turn to Him and receive the wonderful salvation that He has for you. It is His gift to you, for He says:

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

Did you know that you cannot keep God from loving you? You can reject His love, but you cannot keep Him from loving you. You cannot keep it from raining, but you can raise an umbrella to keep the rain from falling on you. At this moment God's love is falling around you – certainly showers of mercy are falling on this earth – and you can raise the umbrella of indifference, you can raise the umbrella of skepticism, you can raise the umbrella of your own self-will, but you cannot keep God from loving you.

There is a story that comes out of Greek mythology concerning a young man who had a very godly mother, but he fell in love with a very ungodly girl. The ungodly girl hated the boy's mother and could not bear to be in her presence. It was not because the mother rebuked her, but her very character and her very presence were a rebuke to this girl. Nevertheless, this boy was desperately in love with her, for she was beautiful. And finally he pleaded with her to marry him, and she said, "Only on one condition; you must cut out your mother's heart and bring it to me." Well, this boy was so madly in love and so desperate that he descended to the low plane of committing this diabolical deed. He killed his mother, cut out her heart and was taking it to the girl when, on the way, he stumbled and fell. The heart spoke out, "My son, did you hurt yourself?"

My friend, you can slap God in the face, you can turn your back on Him, you can blaspheme Him, but you cannot keep Him from wanting to save you. And He does want to save you, and He will save you if you will turn to Him and receive the salvation that He offers in Jesus Christ.

The World That Will Be

Turning to the twenty-first chapter of the book of Revelation, I want you to notice this language.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:1-8)

Now as we turn to the world that will be, it might be well for us to tie the strings of this message together. We first saw “The World That Was” – that world of the past; then “The World That Is” – this present world; and now “The World That Will Be” – the world of the future. Actually, these are three time periods of the world.

Concerning the world that was – it perished, perished in a judgment of water. The reference here in 2 Peter to that destruction can refer to the flood of Noah’s day (there being ample evidence for that), but it can likewise refer to that period which may be between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 in which the earth became without form and void. During that period, we find water covering the face of this earth and then God moving in, drawing the land out of the water. There may have been a pre-Adamic judgment, concerning which we know very little. We see only the scar marks, and the stones bear mute evidence to the fact that there was a judgment on the earth.

The second time period is “The World That Is.” The world in which we are living is a world which is moving to judgment, not a judgment again by water, not a submerging or an immersing in water, but a judgment of fire. The language of Peter is striking, as we saw in the preceding section. He speaks of the elements; that is, the basic materials, these little rows of blocks, the atoms, being unloosed, being untied. What is known today as atomic fission may be the method God will use to unloose the atoms of this universe.

Do not misunderstand me, I do not know whether man has found out all of God’s secrets or not. We do know this: Man has broken into God’s treasure house where He has put these things in store, and man has found out God’s secret, an awful secret, the method by which this universe *can* be destroyed some day, the method by which God may move in. And man has opened Pandora’s box, turning loose upon this world a veritable plague, putting a fear in the heart of mankind. Men in all walks of life, not just preachers but informed men everywhere are dreading what the future holds. A judgment is coming upon this present world. God’s Word speaks of that.

The best commentary to be found on 2 Peter 3 is the atomic bomb. Atomic fission has thrown more light on this chapter than has any commentary.

Now then we come to “The World That Will Be.”

The Destruction of This Present World

Since this present world is to be destroyed, there are several problems which arise in the mind.

When will it be destroyed? I want to make a rather startling statement: I think we can know the time this is going to take place. Do not misunderstand me. I am not setting dates, and I do not believe we can know the dates. We can know only the chronological order of the events, which seems to me to be the important thing.

Men today visualize this universe of the future devoid of life, a satellite like the moon, with not a vestige of life, either plant or animal, on topside of it because of man’s inhumanity to man.

May I just pause a moment to say this: Premillennialism is under attack today. (I am a premillennialist, and I trust you are.) Premillennialism is a system that presents God’s program, but any man who sets a date for the events of this program removes himself from the realm of the sound teachers of the premillennial school.

Now let us go into the question as to when this present world will be destroyed. Please note carefully the language again, for we are after something else in these verses. Look again at 2 Peter 3:7 (REVISED STANDARD VERSION).

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

When does this destruction of ungodly men and the judgment of ungodly men take place? Well, beloved, it does not take place until after the Millennium. It does not take place until the Great White Throne judgment when, we are told, the dead are raised. To me, that is the most striking language one can find. The Word says that the unbelieving dead are to be raised. If they are raised, are they not alive? No, they are still dead; they are spiritually dead. But they are raised out of the grave to stand before a holy God – these people who thought it was not necessary to seek refuge from their sins in the blood of our Savior, who have been rejecting it down through the ages and have said that they will stand before God on their own merits and by their own works at the time of the judgment. This judgment takes place after the Millennium, when this present earth will be destroyed and when the new earth and the new heaven come into view.

How will the day of the Lord come? We have further means of answering that question in verse 10:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire.

“The day of the Lord” is an expression with which all of us should be familiar. It is an Old Testament expression used by the first of the writing prophets and continuing down through the prophets. It refers to a time of judgment that is coming upon this earth; it refers to the beginning of that awful day known as the Great Tribulation, continuing even through the Millennium and all the way to the Great White Throne of Almighty God. All of this period is “the day of the Lord” because God is moving in to straighten out the affairs of this world.

In connection with the Great Tribulation period, I should like to remind you that this is one period through which you and I, as God’s people, will not have to pass. There is a time of great trouble coming upon this earth, and the world is moving into it just as a boat moves into a tornado or a typhoon at sea. But God’s people are promised that they are going to be delivered from that time of trouble.

We are not looking for the Lord to come as a thief. You know that when you are looking for a thief, you barricade the door, putting extra locks on it to try to shut him out. But, my beloved, for the believer the coming of Christ is a blessed hope. It is something against which the believer does not lock his door – he opens the door and welcomes the day of His coming. But He will come as a thief in the night to an unbelieving world that wants to shut Him out and would shut Him out if it were possible.

We are also looking for a new heaven and a new earth. Will you listen to this language:

But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. (2 Peter 3:13-14)

You and I are looking, not for the Great Tribulation to come or a time of trouble or worldwide nuclear devastation, but for the Lord from heaven. That is still the blessed hope of the church. By the way, keep in mind that all through the Bible the word *church* refers to the whole body of true believers.

The Believer and the Tribulation

We are told repeatedly in the Word of God that God's people are to be delivered from the Great Tribulation. I should like to turn to two or three passages to show you how clear the Bible is on this. In Romans 2:5 we read language like the following:

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Paul here is talking about the judgment that is coming and the day of wrath that is coming upon ungodly men who reject Christ. But notice what he said to those who trusted Christ in Romans 5:9:

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

The blood of Christ, my beloved, is the reason His church is not going through the Tribulation. It is because He paid the price, delivering His church from that awful day. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 we read of the hope which is given to the church:

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

He has delivered His church from the wrath to come, but that day is coming. In 1 Thessalonians 5:9 we read:

For God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why the Believer Does Not Go Through the Tribulation

The Grace of God Would Be Frustrated. If you should ask me for the main reason why the church will not go through the Great Tribulation, I would say to you that for the church to go through the Tribulation would frustrate the grace of God. There are people who say, "If you trust Christ, He will save you; but, of course, you will have to go through the Tribulation, a time of awful trouble here upon this earth." But that is to frustrate the grace of God! If you are saved by grace, you have been saved from all judgment and all wrath, and the grace of God that saves you from sin is the same grace of God that can deliver you from this time of wrath that is coming upon the earth.

The Church Would Have No Intercessor. The second reason the church will not go through the Tribulation is that during the Tribulation period Christ leaves the throne of intercession and becomes the Judge. If the church were still on the earth, this would mean that the church had no Intercessor in heaven. The very minute that the Lord moves from the place of intercession, He has in that minute taken the church to be with Him. The reason that the Lord is in heaven at the right hand of God this very moment is to make intercession for those who are His own.

The Tribulation Saints Pray for Revenge. The Tribulation saints, those who trust Christ during that awful period, pray for revenge, and their prayer is answered. But the church is never asked to pray for revenge. We are told definitely *not* to pray for revenge, but rather to leave that in the hands of God and to pray for those who spitefully use us.

If the church were to go through the Great Tribulation, the edge of the blessed hope would be dulled. But we do not go through that awful time; we are looking for the Lord from heaven – that is the great pulsating hope for the church.

Order of Events

This time of great trouble which is coming upon the earth is spoken of in the Word of God as being unparalleled in the history of the world. The Lord Jesus called it the Great Tribulation. He said there had been nothing like it before and there would be nothing like it afterward. That is the reason I know we are not now in the Tribulation – we are not in a period of trouble that we could not match somewhere else in history. When the world gets into the time of the Great Tribulation, nobody will ask, “Are we in it?” Brother, they will know it!

After that, the Millennium takes place, which is the thousand years’ reign of Christ over the earth. Immediately following the Millennium, the devil is released for a little season – the reason I do not know. Someone once went to Dr. Chafer, saying, “Dr. Chafer, after God puts the devil down in the bottomless pit, why in the world would He turn him loose again?” Dr. Chafer said in reply, “Well, that is a problem, but if you will tell me why God turned the devil loose in the first place, I will tell you why God will turn him loose in the second place.”

God is going to turn him loose again for a little while, and at that time he will gather together all those who are in rebellion against God. Then the judgment comes, the Great White Throne judgment, after which the new heaven and the new earth come into view, because this earth and the present heaven are to be destroyed.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

Now let us turn to Revelation 21 which we quoted at the beginning of this section, and we shall look for some very specific things concerning the new heaven and the new earth. However, our first reference is in 2 Peter 3, verse 13:

“Righteousness dwells.” It is interesting, is it not, that in the world that was, righteousness was a possibility? In this present world righteousness is provided for those who trust Christ. In the millennial world righteousness will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But in the new earth that is to appear, righteousness will be at home. It will dwell. It will never leave. To be in a world where everything is right will be wonderful!

This earth is not the dwelling place of righteousness now, in spite of what a great many people are saying. The fact of the matter is there is nothing right in this world. Shakespeare put it, “The times are out of joint.” Browning was wrong in his “Pippa Passes” when he made the statement, “The lark’s on the wing, the snail’s on the thorn, God’s in His heaven and all is right with the world.” God is in His heaven, but all is not right with this world. In fact, everything is all wrong.

But there is coming a new earth in which everything is going to be right. The righteousness of God will have its abode there as it never has in the past. Now you talk about a platform for a new order for the Democrats or for the Republicans or for the Communists. I want to give you

the platform for this new earth – mere man cannot match what God has in mind for this earth. The first thing that is going to be true is that God will be here:

He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Revelation 21:3)

That is going to be a glorious day! Although God is here now through the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ would like to make Himself real to you, He is not dwelling on this earth now. God is *going* to dwell on this earth. What a program – what a glorious program that will be!

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4). Is that not a wonderful platform? He is going to wipe away all tears. Think of the heartache today in this world. Think of the broken hearts and the frustrated lives on topside of this earth. Things are not right down here, but some day God is going to make them right. He is going to wipe away all tears. What a glorious and wonderful day that is going to be yonder in the future!

“There shall be no more death” (Revelation 21:4). Death is the last enemy that is going to be put down. Death is going to occur in the Millennium – there will be people who will die during the Millennium because the last enemy to be destroyed will be death; but in this new earth, death will not be present. Thank God for that! Death is the great enemy of mankind; death is *your* great enemy. My friend, death is stalking you, and one of these days, if the Lord tarries, he will get you. Death is moving up and down this earth. He is the one that is getting the victory – he is the one that got the victory over Hitler, he is the one who got the victory over Mussolini and Joe Stalin. Death will stop every man one of these days. Death is the great enemy of all mankind. But, thank God, there is a day coming when we will not have to go to the cemetery any more. The day is coming when we will never have to put a loved one in the grave. In the new earth, death is to be removed.

“Neither shall there be any more pain” (Revelation 21:4). Think of the suffering that is on the topside of this earth. In the new earth which is coming some day, there will be no pain, no more hospitals, no more suffering.

“I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). We have been stressing the fact that the earth which comes into being after the present one is destroyed is to be new, and here we are told that all things will be made new. I would like to refer you also in this connection to Isaiah 65:17:

... Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

This new earth is going to be so wonderful that we are going to forget all about this earth on which we now live. Some of us have had the experience of looking at the new automobiles, and when we look at a new model and then get back into our old car, it looks worse than we had thought. It is very discouraging to drive off with the old paint job, the same old jalopy, after looking at the new models. Someday there will be a new earth. God has this new model earth which will be coming into view. The thing that characterizes it is newness. I know nothing about it, but I have done a great deal of speculating. I think there will be so many changes that we will not recognize the new earth when we see it in that day.

There will be no evil there:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators [sexually immoral], and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. (Revelation 21:8)

There is a very definite reason for it. We find it revealed in the record of Lot and his wife fleeing Sodom. When she left that city of Sodom, she left all of her interests there. She loved “Lot,” but it was a *lot* of Sodom that she loved. She had her heart wrapped up in the things of Sodom. I think she belonged to the bridge clubs; she belonged to the Shakespeare club; she belonged to all the important clubs in the city of Sodom. She was in society. Her sons and daughters had married into Sodomite society – in fact, they had married Sodomites. Awful thing! And she lost most of her children – she left all of them back there but two. When she left the city, she turned around and looked back. Do you know why she looked back? Because she did not believe God would destroy the city. There are a lot of people today who do not think that there is a judgment coming upon this world. Mrs. Lot did not believe it either. She could not imagine that the wonderful culture of Sodom was so God-dishonoring that a holy God was going to destroy it. And so she turned and looked back.

I wish we had a picture of her when she looked back. I think you would have seen tragic longing in the face of that woman. Her children were back there and that is where her interests were. And I will tell you, she died when she moved out of Sodom – her heart turned to stone and her body to salt.

My friend, how do you feel toward this world? You do not have to withdraw to a monastery. You do not have to build a fence around yourself. The Lord Jesus said to the Father, “I pray that you keep them in the world.” He wants to keep us in the world down here, but He doesn’t want the world in us. It ought to lead us to holy living as we see these things happening around us today and read of events that are coming to pass.

And then there is something else I would like to say. These things ought to have an effect on those who are without God and without hope in this world. It ought to make them very solemn and very serious. Perhaps in the past you have ridiculed this Bible and you have disbelieved its prophetic warnings and you have not enjoyed reading about the hour of doom that is coming upon this earth. But, my friend, men from all walks of life – editors, educators, scientists, statesmen – look out at this world and view the future with alarm. Winston Churchill called it “the awful unfolding scene of the future.” Dr. Adolph Keller, probably the best-informed man in Europe as far as the church is concerned, said, “We don’t understand in Europe what you people are talking about when you speak of building a new order. We know in Europe that an old order has come to its death. It is dying; it is on the way out.” And then he made this statement: “It’s five minutes to twelve in the history of the world.”

Judgment for the Unbeliever

My beloved, if men from all walks of life are talking in this manner, what should be the attitude of an unbeliever who has turned his back upon God? In view of the fact that we are moving into impending judgment, what should be your attitude? Do not let the patience of God deceive you. Hear Him again.

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness; but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

God is very patient. God has plenty of time. Do you know the reason He is not moving forward today? It is because He has eternity behind Him and eternity ahead of Him. He is not crowded for time – He is not rushing to catch a train – He is not rushing to keep an appointment at a certain time. God has eternity, and He is in no hurry. And then again, He is very patient. And the patience of God deceives many. An Old Testament writer said it like this:

Because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

Because God does not move immediately, do not be deceived. He is going to move in time, and that is His message for this present hour.

You remember that when Paul went into that decadent city of Athens which was then living on past glory, the glory that had been Greece, the Athenians were skeptical and cynical as they listened to the gospel. And Paul told them there:

The times of this ignorance God overlooked; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30)

That is His message today, my friend, because of His impending judgment.

And when Paul went in to talk with Felix, he reasoned with that man concerning righteousness and temperance and judgment to come. That is part of the program of God. You may feel that I am old-fashioned myself, that I am outmoded and a back number to be talking about these things, but this is the Word of God. God is patient and it is not His will that any should perish but that all should come to know Him.

In a southern city a very prominent judge was out for lunch. As he started to cross the street, he saw a young man step in the pathway of an oncoming truck. This judge made a leap and grabbed the young man, throwing him out of the pathway of that truck. When he took him out of the way, the people around heaved sighs of relief, and the young man thanked him profusely. The judge went on his way. Weeks passed and even months went by. Then this young man was arrested for a very serious crime. He was brought into the court of this judge. When he came into the presence of the judge, he recognized him and was just waiting for his opportunity to speak. When that time came, he said to the judge, “You know me, Judge. You know me.”

The judge replied, “Young man, I don’t think I do.”

He said, “Yes, you know me. Don’t you remember? One day at the corner of (and he identified the spot) you rescued a young man. Well, I was the young man. Can’t you help me today?”

The judge looked down at this young man who had committed the awful crime, and there was silence in the courtroom. Finally, the judge said, “Young man, the other day I was your savior. Today I am your judge.”

Today the Lord Jesus Christ is your Savior. Tomorrow He will be your Judge.

May I close with this little story? Dr. Harry Rimmer told it. It concerns the water supply of Los Angeles. They tell me that it costs \$25,000,000 to turn on a spigot in order to get a drop of

water here. There was a dam built over here in the mountains not far from us without proper tests being made. The dam was anchored to the rock on the side, but it was the kind of rock that crumbled when it was saturated with water. After the dam was filled, as time went on, it began to give way without being detected. One night the night watchman in making his rounds came off the dam and was just coming into the powerhouse when he heard an awful, awful crash. He turned to see the dam going out and a great wall of water rushing down. He knew that below were multitudes of people who would be destroyed. He rushed to the telephone and called one town after another, warning them that the destruction was on the way. When the word was brought to a little town down in the pathway of the water, the sheriff there went out and there in the very bed of this river was camped a group of migrant workers. They were there to pick fruit and had a regular little tent town. They laughed and refused to believe that a flood could come. They looked at the moon and said, "How could there be a flood? The moon is shining." The sheriff continued to warn them, but they refused to listen. Finally he had to move on to warn others. It is said that many of their bodies were washed two and three miles out to sea when the deluge came to their little tent town.

And multitudes at this moment are looking around them saying, "The moon is shining" or "the sun is still shining. The deluge is not coming." My friend, it is coming. Today He is your Savior. Tomorrow He will be your Judge.