
NEW EARTH COMING

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Therefore since all these things are thus to be destroyed, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness. Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for these things, be diligent to be found in peace, without blemish and blameless in his sight.

Second Peter 3:11-14 WEB

Christian eschatology (the study of ends or final things) poses several different interpretations of this scripture passage. Taken at face value it seems to indicate total destruction of both heavens and the earth by fire preparatory to God's new creation of justice and righteousness. Others think it's figurative in that the destruction will not be of the physical earth, but of the evil systems now controlling the earth. And some take a sort of middle road explaining that the destruction will be in the atomic building blocks of the universe in such a manner as to create altered relationships that will allow the kingdom of God to reach full fruition here on earth.

Whatever your view there are some points that we might agree on. First, that massive destruction of earthly systems in some form was promised and is now occurring. Virtually every newscast gives further evidence of this truth as these systems---physical, social, economic, political, and religious---disintegrate into various stages of collapse. Whether this is the Great Tribulation mentioned in Matthew and Revelation I don't know, but I suspect that what we're seeing is at least the beginning of something threatening to worsen into regional conflict, if not world war.

Second, something new is being born out of the ashes of the old. As we've said before, crisis creates opportunity. When it finally becomes clear that institutions and structures of the Old Order have dismally failed, then we might begin to think in terms of new possibilities. Do we really need massive global corporations stronger than most governments and capable of robbing the public of decent wages, retirement, political freedom, and economic justice in all forms? Or could we develop other forms of business organization like worker-owned cooperatives and socially oriented businesses that exist for the benefit of society, not to enrich plutocratic CEOs and owners?

Scripture indicates that what is now being born is the long-awaited Kingdom of God on Earth headed by the returned Jesus Christ. Righteousness and justice, not human hubris and oppression, are key values for this New Age. Humans will have more value than gold and the souls of men will cease to be sold as commodities in the market. It will truly be

"heaven on earth."

Third, there is both peril and promise for all humankind in this paradigm of massive change. I don't believe we have it in us to find our way out of the environmental, technological, and human chaos we have created. So there exists great peril. But there is also opportunity to begin to see things God's way and to operate human institutions like they were intended to be--God's gift for our use and pleasure.

Fourth, puny human effort is worthless unless harnessed to God's will and word. I have little doubt that disaster will transpire if humans alone rule this earth. But God is sovereign and rules in the affairs of men, although he does allow us great opportunity to prove our utter inability to rule ourselves.

There is still opportunity for human change. Scripture contains thousands of passages revealing what we can do to make our lives and our human structures more useful and more meaningful to us and to our society. We could end poverty if we seriously wanted to. We could distribute the wealth of the earth more equitably if we wanted to. And we could turn to God as 2 Chronicles 7:14 says so that God could heal our land. Think on it!