

OH, WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN:

AN EXEGETICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST AN ANNIHILATIONIST
INTERPRETATION OF 2 PETER 3:10-13

A Paper

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1. INTRODUCTION

“*When the Saints go marching in*” performed by Louis Armstrong and his orchestra in 1938 is one of the most beautiful renditions of this traditional black spiritual. The unknown author of this hymn manifests an intense eschatological desire to be counted in the number of the saints marching into the new heavens and new earth on the last day. However, one question remains: where are the saints marching towards? What kind of new creation the saints will march into in the last day?

This question is complicated because it involves a prediction of the future and the passages referring to it are difficult to completely comprehend. Nonetheless, Scripture refers to this last day multiple times giving us warrant to interpret what has been revealed to us in God’s word. One place in which this topic is directly addressed is 2 Peter 3:10-13.¹ While exegetically examining this passage, this paper argues against an annihilationist interpretation of 2 Peter 3:10-13 and for a view of purification by the judgment of God and renovation of this world by fire in the Parousia culminating into the new heavens and the new earth as a cosmological renewal.

2. EXEGESIS OF 2 PETER 3:10-13

a. Peter’s argument in context

For accessing Peter’s main argument, it is necessary to set verses 10-13 in context.² The epistle as a whole purports to remind the church of the truth in which they are grounded.³ Peter is not formulating something new or different, but presenting a highly Christological apologetic

¹ Robert L. Webb and Duane F. Watson, *Reading Second Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of Second Peter*, Library of New Testament Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2010).

² Here the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter is assumed. A discussion concerning the authorship of this epistle is beyond the scope of this paper. For further detail, see: Michael J Kruger, “The Authenticity of 2 Peter,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42.4 (1999): 645–71; Michael J Kruger, “2 PETER 3:2, THE APOSTOLATE, AND A BI-COVENANTAL CANON,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63.1 (2020): 5–24; Charles Bigg, *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Epistles Of St. Peter And St. Jude* (Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 232; Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude* Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 50. (Waco, Tex: Word Books, 1983), 161-162; Kurt Aland, “Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 12.1 (1961): 39–49; Bruce Manning Metzger, “Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91.1 (1972): 3–24; Philip Carrington, “The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: Dr Harrison’s Theory Reviewed,” *Anglican Theological Review* 21.1 (1939): 32–39; P N. Harrison, *Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Oxford Univ Pr, 1921), 12-13; Joseph B Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 124; Ben III Witherington, “A Petrine Source in 2 Peter,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 24 (1985): 187–92; Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Tobias Nicklas, “Searching for Evidence: The History of Reception of the Epistles of Jude and 2 Peter,” in *Reading 1-2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students* (Atlanta, 2014), 215–28; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 235.

³ Douglas Karel Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2009), 178-179.

reaffirmation of the eschatological apostolic teaching focused on its ethical dimension.⁴ 2 Peter 3, in particular, is an argument against the false teachers who rejected the Parousia as a historical claim. It is an ethical exhortation for the readers to reject the instruction of false teachers who mocked the notion of Jesus return.⁵ Although the false teachers ridicule the notion of the Parousia, God will certainly fulfil his purposes in judging the world and His day will come suddenly.⁶

2 Pt 3:1-2, remembering the apostolic teaching as a rule of faith, are standard and characteristic body closings of an epistle, set here to reinstate the purpose of Peter in writing.⁷ Peter is giving grounds for his exhortation and, in this sense, keeps the Pauline practice of indicatives preceding imperatives.⁸ In this sense, it is fundamental to emphasize that Peter's argument on chapter 3 does not intend to be a new teaching, but to be a repetition, retrieval, recapitulation of what his audience already knows added with an ethical application.⁹

Contextually, after this transitional statement, Peter identifies the heretics' teachings associated with their immoral lives affirming that they willfully reject that God will intervene to judge the world (3:3-7).¹⁰ The false teachers reject Peter's eschatology based on the apparent lack of divine judgment in the past which Peter refutes with a historical claim of divine judgment in the days of Noah through the flood (3:5-6). The Deluge is, then, a type of the judgment that is to come (3:7) – this picture is also central to comprehend Peter's words in 3:10-13.¹¹ God's reason for the

⁴ There is an inherent difficulty in defining precisely the genre of 2 Peter, but it is noticeable that it starts as a self-described letter (1:1-2), followed by a reminder (1:12-13), exhortation (1:5-11), or warning (2:1), but then suddenly there is a turn to prophetic language or perhaps an apocalypse itself (3:6-13). This drastic change occurs immediately at the point of the author's final engagement with the false teachers' *kerygma* (3:3-4,7). See: Clifford T Winters, "A Strange Death: Cosmic Conflagration as Conceptual Metaphor in 2 Peter 3:6-13," *Conversations with the Biblical World* 33 (2013): 147-61.

⁵ Earl Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 373.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: Holman Reference, 2003), 383-384.

⁷ Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 308.

⁸ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids (MI); Cambridge (UK): Eerdmans, 1997) 253-258. On the subject of 2 Peter dependence on Paul, see: Tord Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society: A Study of 2 Peter* (Lund: LiberLäromedel/Gleerup, 1977), 21-22.

⁹ Peter's intent is to present to his audience a reminder of their "pure understanding," their proper way of thinking (1 Pet. 1:13), that has not been contaminated by the corruption of the false teachers (2 Pet. 2:14 -18). This understanding is simple, untainted, and "wholesome". See: BDAG 234; TLNT 1:420-423; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 370.

¹⁰ This argument is a close parallel to the type of rejection expressed in Rm 1 by Paul. See: Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, vol. First edition of *New Testament Library* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 265-266.

¹¹ Sam Meier, "2 Peter 3:3-7 - an Early Jewish and Christian Response to Eschatological Skepticism," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 32.2 (1988): 255-57; Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 356.

delay in judging the world is then His patience (3:8-10), which leads to Peter's warning that the day of judgment will arrive unexpectedly and cataclysmically conducted in the Lord's providence.¹²

Peter then changes focus on 3:11 towards the application of this conclusion into an ethical imperative.¹³ This new unit begins with a genitive absolute construction with the adverb οὕτως referring back to 3:10 as the grounds for the exhortation.¹⁴ Thus, concerning the flow of the argument, 3:10 is to be understood as a summary statement of 3:1-9: it is the thesis, the indicative, the positive doctrinal articulation obtained from the refutation of the false teachers.¹⁵ 3:10 is a single sentence in which the main verb is ἥξει¹⁶ referring to the central topic of the verse: the day of the Lord. The verb conveys the idea that, despite the apparent delay, this day will certainly and suddenly come. The preposition ὡς presents a comparison of how it will take place (like a thief)¹⁷ and the circumstances of its occurrence are divided in three subordinate clauses (introduced by the relative pronoun ἐν ᾧ) describing three nouns: οὐρανοὶ, στοιχειᾶ and γῆ.¹⁸

Then one question remains: is Peter referring to a purification and renovation of this world by fire or is he articulating a complete annihilation of this present world and the creation of a new

¹² Richard L Mayhue, "The Bible's Watchword: Day of the Lord," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 22.1 (2011): 65–88.

¹³ Craig A Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169.676 (2012): 387–401.

¹⁴ The reading οὕτως instead of οὖν is indeed not supported by the preponderance of authorities, but it is preferable because it (equivalent to: "as has before been stated") is more significant than the reading οὖν. See: Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 369.

¹⁵ The logical progression can be drawn in the following way: (i) 3:4 – the twofold thesis of the false teachers is presented: a. the Lord has not yet returned, therefore never will and b. since nothing cataclysmic happened since the creation, therefore never will; (ii) 3:5-7 – Counter argument to thesis b. God has destroyed the world once in the flood through water and he will destroy again using fire; (iii) 3:8-9 – Christ has not returned yet because in his providence he is reserving an opportunity to repentance; and (iv) 3:10 – Petrine thesis presented: The Parousia is certain at its own appointed time. See: Johnson and Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 2 Peter*, 83. In other words, Peter presents his argument in a chiasmic order: 3:4a referring to time and 3:4b to creation with their respective responses in 3:5–7 (creation) and 3:8–9 (time). Thus, the two responses are: (1) creation witnesses to the end of history as a judgment (3:5–7), and (2) time with God is not the same as time with humans (3:8–9). All summarized in 3:10. See: Scot McKnight, "2 Peter," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1510.

¹⁶ Conjugated in the future, active, indicative, third person, singular from the root ἵκω be present; come; have come. See: Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 306.

¹⁷ The Textus Receptus includes the words ἐν νυκτί which seems to be a conflation with Mt 24 and Lk 12.

¹⁸ The singular form οὐρανός is used most frequently to refer to the skies over the earth, however the plural οὐρανοὶ was used to distinguish the whole firmament (2 Cor 12:2; Eph 4:10). It is difficult to identify the formulaic usage, but Matthew (Mt 6:9) and Mark often uses the plural form (Luke rarely and John uses only in Rev 12:12). In 1 Peter, the singular for is used twice (1:12; 3:22) and the plural once (1:4). In 2 Peter, the singular is used once (1:18) and the plural five times, all in this passage 3:5-13. See: Johnson and Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 2 Peter*, 100-101.

one?¹⁹ The annihilation position interprets 2 Peter 3:10-13 affirming that the new creation will be not merely qualitatively different, but quantitatively different – an entirely different creation with complete discontinuity.²⁰ However, one must understand it in context, with the allusions and language that is proper to its genre, and not importing in hindsight a reading as a modern historiography seeking to find a detailed narrative/description of what will take place on the day of the Lord, since this is not Peter focus. The essential argument concerns the aspect of judgement and the power of God in the terrifying event of the day of the Lord.

b. Peter's Christological perspective of the day of the Lord

The use of the expression “the day of the Lord” is an intentional recovery of an eschatological expression of the Old Testament (“OT”) identifying a moment when God will visit his people,²¹ judge all mankind (living and dead), and pour out his wrath against the rebellious seed of the serpent in due punishment for their sin.²² This final coming/visitation of God guarantees victory against the enemies, deliverance from sin, and peace for His people (Joel 2:21–32; 3:18; Obad. 15–21; Zech. 14:1–21), but it is also portrayed as filled with terror, wrath and judgment shaking the firmament and the earth.²³

Peter's focus is on the terror of this event which is compatible with early Jewish eschatology that understood faith being created in distress and projecting hope forward based on the covenantal

¹⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 385.

²⁰ John MacArthur affirms that “The entire present universe will cease to exist. It will be replaced by a completely new heaven and earth where the righteous will live with God forever (Rev. 22:5)”. John Walvoord says: “‘a totally new heaven and new earth, and not the present heaven and earth renovated’”. See: John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, New edition. (Moody Publishers, 2005), 125; John F. Walvoord, *Revelation*, ed. Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock, New edition. (Moody Publishers, 2011); R Larry Overstreet, “A Study of 2 Peter 3:10-13,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137.548 (1980): 354–71. For a defense of the Annihilation position, see: Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall From Heaven: “Cosmic Catastrophe” in the New Testament and Its World* (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2007); N. T. Wright, *New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of Christian Hope* (Grove Books Ltd, 1999); Mark B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?: The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

²¹ The application of the expression, then, is connected to its original meaning as Yahweh's manifestation, visitation that was celebrated ceremonially. See: Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 457.

²² Instances of the OT with such reference: Isa. 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2. Although the multiple prophetic fulfilling implies that the expression can be used to an immediate historic fulfilling and to an ultimate eschatological consummation, the instances of usage of the Day of the Lord in the OT provide a progressive semantic development in the OT concerning its ultimate eschatological dimension. Such progressive revelation presents a fuller picture in the post exilic prophets appropriating the term not only for immediate national prophecies of destruction but for an end time judgment. See: Mayhue, “The Bible's Watchword: Day of the Lord.”; Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18.”

²³ Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2005), 132-133.

promises of God.²⁴ Israel's unique conception of God as the God of history is the root of such eschatology.²⁵ It was then a two sided coin: a day of calamity but also a day that was the consummation of the future hope of Israel in which God would bring salvation for His people by the realization of the ideal kingship and of his covenantal promises through God Himself appearing in glory as mighty King, Judge and Deliverer. This day becomes a summation for the great historical transformation, a cosmic restauration and an absolute rule over heaven and earth (Amos 5:18; Isa 2:12; Eze 13:5; Joel 1:15; Zeph 1:7). This absolute rule is not annihilatory, but conquering: a complete deliverance, a release from the subjugation through the destruction of enemies culminating into a new kingdom morally and religiously restored. This includes THE transformation of the land, people, cattle, with Jerusalem as the city paradise to where all nations of the earth would come to worship the Yahweh. The OT eschatological hope is a historical expectation and faith in the only true living God so that the coming of Yahweh in His day is the historical end to Israel's distress.²⁶

Peter earlier explicitly told his audience to remember the words of the prophets and the commandment of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, through the apostles. In 3:1-2 Peter is not only pointing back but affirming a complete line of continuity from the OT, Jesus' teaching, and the apostles.²⁷ The concept of the day of the Lord then has not changed but has been clarified.²⁸ What Peter writes alludes to his speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:20-21), speaking as an eyewitness of the

²⁴ The idea of calamity was connected with the hope and faith that were absolute and final on the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord then comes as a type of judgement, calamity, and destruction of the Almighty (Joel 1:15; Isa 13:6) that can be represented as punctiliar or as an extended event, which unfolds through the mobilization of an army and invasion of the land followed by siege and battle (see, e.g., Isa. 13:1-22; Joel 2:1-15; Ezek. 7:1-27; Nahum 2:1-3:19). See: Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18."

²⁵ This historic hope is due to faith in the complete covenantal fulfilling where Yahweh would graciously and definitively let His countenance shine upon His people and proclaim the eschatological year of the Jubilee (Isa 49:8; 61:2). A similar idea is also present in the Deutero-Isaiah with the repetition of the promise of restoration associated with the festival of the Day of Yahweh, which was connected however with political and national aspects. The eschatological conception of early Judaism is then connected with the enthronement festival with direct messianic and kingly expectations. This enthronement is connected with Creation itself as well-being also as a re-enactment of the primordial time by the performance of the victory over the chaos and the deep. Eschatology in this sense could also be seen as a reinterpretation of the myths of origin, which influences can be seen in the Epistle of Barnabas 6:13. See: Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 142-143.

²⁶ Isa 48:17-18 is specially enlightening in the comprehension of the eternal terrestrial continuity concerning God's works of creation and providence in salvation and judgement since Isaiah proclaims: "But Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity. For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the Lord, and there is no other." See: Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 146-152.

²⁷ This reminder, very similar to the one in Jude 18, highlights that the false teachers denying the Parousia are "scoffers", people who violently reject the truth and will of God in both theological and moral ways. See: Scot McKnight, "2 Peter," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1509.

²⁸ Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18."

Olivet Discourse and Jesus' ascension. This continuity is increased in 2 Peter 3:12 by establishing the unity of the concepts of the Parousia with the day of Yahweh: προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας. This construction does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament ("NT"), and it is the only place in which Parousia is used in reference to the day rather than the person whose coming is anticipated. However, in 3:4, Peter uses ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ to refer to the promise of Christ's coming. Therefore here the Parousia is not being used merely as "coming" but it has a specific referent of Christ's coming.²⁹ Context, then, evidences that Peter is connecting the return of Christ in complete identity and continuity with the OT concept of the Day of Yahweh with the purpose of attributing complete assurance and certainty to this event as a recapitulation of the words of the prophets in the OT.³⁰

Peter is also establishing a continuity with the apostolic teaching by explaining that the day of the Lord is the same as "the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6-10; 2:16). In this day, Jesus will come to execute the divine judgment (2 Thess. 1:6-10) and even the comparison of the day of the Lord coming like a thief is a direct quotation of Mt 24:36-44, also presented in Lk 12:39 and used by Paul in 1 Thess 5:2 and by John in Rev 16:15.³¹ Therefore, the unity of the day of Yahweh with Christ's Parousia is a clear claim of Jesus divinity.³²

Hence, the whole unit of 2 Peter 3:1-13 focuses on the subject of "the day of the Lord" and relates to different aspects of this day, which is referred directly in 2:9 and 3:7 as ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας (day of judgment and destruction), 3:10 as ἡμέρα κυρίου (day of the Lord) and 3:12 as τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας (the day of God).³³ The expression τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμέρας in 3:12 shows

²⁹ Johnson and Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 2 Peter*, 106.

³⁰ Peter proclaims that the same ascended Jesus would remain in heaven until the time when all things spoken by the prophets would be fulfilled (Acts 3:21). See: Douglas Welker Kennard, "Petrine Redemption: Its Meaning and Extent," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30.4 (1987): 399-405.

³¹ The point of this simile is expressing the unexpectedness, the element of surprising of this day pointing to the fact that it appointed time is completely dependent only on the providence of God and it is a day that belongs to God (Mark 13:28-37). Later the same metaphor of the thief develops from the vigilance of the head of the household also to the unexpectedness of the coming of the Lord Himself (1 Thess 5:2, 4; Rev 3:3; 16:5) as Jesus being the one coming like a thief in the night. This later emphasis continued in later Christian literature (Did. 16:1; Gospel of Thomas 21). 2 Peter expression of coming as a thief is so close to the wording of 1 Thess 5:2 that scholars suggest that 1 Thessalonians is one of the Pauline letters that the author of 2 Peter knows (2 Pet 3:15-16) with the possibility of it being quoted here rather than a direct quote from a Jesus' saying, which would match with Peter's later comment about Paul's writing. See: Jerome Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First Edition. (New York: Anchor Bible, 1993), 242.

³² Green, *Jude and 2 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 315-316.

³³ Edna Johnson and John Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of 2 Peter* (Dallas, Texas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988), 79.

that κυρίου is equivalent to Θεοῦ.³⁴ There is, therefore, a variety of ways to refer to this same day. Nonetheless, it is the day God appointed and Jesus Christ is the Lord of this day.

c. Exegesis of the description of the *Parousia*

Concerning the circumstances, the semantical and syntactical structure of the passage requires a parallel reading of 3:10 alongside with 3:11-13. They are established in apposition so that the summary statement of 3:10 is developed now theologically as the grounds for the ethical exhortation. There are two units presenting the same teaching with different focus, thus they are not contradictory.³⁵ Here follows the parallel reading:

| 2 Peter 3:10 | 2 Peter 3:11-13 |
|--|--|
| οἱ οὐρανοὶ <u>ροιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται</u> | δι' ἣν οὐρανοὶ <u>πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται</u> |
| <u>στοιχεῖα</u> δὲ <u>καυσούμενα λυθήσεται</u> | <u>στοιχεῖα</u> <u>καυσούμενα</u> <u>τήκεται</u> |
| <u>γῆ</u> καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα <u>εὑρεθήσεται</u> | καινοὺς δε οὐρανοὺς καὶ <u>γῆν</u> καινὴν (...)ἐν οἷς <u>δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ</u> . |

In 3:10, all main verbs are in the future establishing in summary what will come to pass in the last day, however 3:11-13 is a new unity applying the symbolic circumstances of that day. For instance, only λυθήσονται in 3:12 is in the future with all other verbs being at the present tense. Also, there is a unit of vocabulary related to the ethical dimension of holy living (ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς in 3:11, εὐσεβείαις in 3:11 and δικαιοσύνη in 3:13); to the elements involved (Τούτων πάντων³⁶ in 3:11 referring by implication to the items in 3:10, οὐρανοὶ 3:10 and 3:12-13; στοιχεῖα in 3:10 and 3:12; γῆν 3:10 and 3:13) and the fire image conveyed (καυσούμενα 3:10 and 3:12; πυρούμενοι 3:12).

³⁴ Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 367.

³⁵ Once again, it is not Peter's purpose to present new information, but to apply the same apostolic teaching for two different purposes. See: Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18."

³⁶ τούτων οὖν πάντων λυομένων] τούτων πάντων refers to all the things before mentioned, and not only to the immediately preceding ἔργα. See: Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 369.

Grammatically, 3:11-13 consists of two sentences: 3:11-12 and 3:13, each with a main clause with dependent participial and relative clauses. Apart from those in the relative clauses, there are only two verbs that are not in the participial form: ὑπάρχειν (present, active, infinitive) and προσδοκῶμεν (present, active, indicative, first person, plural). Thus, the verbs used point to the ethical dimension being the prominent one. Peter is referring to eschatology as a doctrinal argument for the exhortation to a godly living today. This is the main point of the paragraph.³⁷

In 3:10 ἤξει δέ stands first by way of emphasis, in contrast to what precedes.³⁸ The connective δε is used in 3:10 and 3:13 and its precise function is difficult to determine. One option is a contrastive use, such as “but” or “however”, meaning that although a destruction will take place, those who believe have a hope beyond in a new creation. Another option, considering the same use of δε in both instances and considering 3:10 as a summary statement, 3:13 would present an idea of concession meaning that although devastation and judgement will take place in the last day, the purpose and conclusion of this event will be renewal motivating believers into a new life today because they are already inhabitants of the land where righteousness dwells.³⁹ The latter is more viable since the propositional statement in 3:13 would provide an ethical motivation and grounds for the exhortation in 3:11.

In 3:10, οἱ οὐρανοὶ (the subject of the first clause) is predicated by the main verb παρελεύσονται repeating Jesus himself who used the same verb (Matt 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33). The term translated “to pass away” does not mean “to be annihilated” but are referring simply to “going away” or “departing”.⁴⁰ Peter is reaffirming the Olivet Discourse in its

³⁷ The ethical emphasis of the passage is strengthened by the fact that adverbial participles such as the ones used by Peter here, whether preceding or following the main verbs, generally do not indicate their relative time. A participle only follows the time of the main verb or the use of temporal adverbs or conjunctions so that only exegesis can determine if they present antecedent or coincident action. Therefore, just by the mere use of participles is not possible to draw any eschatological conclusions regarding the relative order of events in time, but only in the manner in which the events will take place. See: Robert E Picirilli, “Order and Relative Time in the Participles of the Greek New Testament,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57.1 (2014): 99–110.

³⁸ Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 367.

³⁹ Werner Wiese, “Em Defesa Da Esperança: Uma Análise Exegética de 2 Pedro 3:1-13,” *Vox Scripturae* 8 (1998): 21–32.

⁴⁰ For instance, παρέρχομαι in 2 Cor 5:17 refers to the old things of the believer’s life that have “passed away” drawing similarly on new creation imagery to refer to transformation of a person’s life and character, not an annihilation of the old and replacement by the new. 1 Peter 4:3 uses the same Greek term in a similar sense: “For the time already past (παρέρχομαι) sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles.” The time of former sin has “passed away.” A synonymous term, used in Revelation 21:1, ἀπέρχομαι is used in Revelation 9:12 and 11:4 to refer to the first and second woes that had “passed,” that is, they simply came and went, giving way to a new set of circumstances. And Revelation 18:14 and 21:4 refer to previous conditions of the world that had also passed away. See: Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Cosimo Classics, 2007), 484.

comparison and circumstances as the basic church's expectation regarding the end of this age (Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33; Rev. 3:3, 16:15; 20:11; 21:1),⁴¹ specially that "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:29-35).⁴² Petrine eschatology is not an innovation, but reaffirms the inaugurated kingdom proclaimed by Jesus.⁴³ If 3:8-9 exhort against apathy, 3:10 counters excessive over-realized eschatology: we must leave the time to God, but we must watch today.⁴⁴

παρελεύσονται is modified by the adverb ῥοιζήδον, which is an *hapax legomenon* that implies an onomatopoeic⁴⁵ idea of a "thunder" that accompanies the judgment of God (1 Sam. 2:10; 7:10; Job 40:9; Isa. 29:6; 33:3; Jer. 25:30; Joel 3:16).⁴⁶ The passage then focuses on the sound of God's burning wrath suddenly passing with great force emphasizing that God is a consuming fire. However, the next two descriptions of 3:10 require a more detailed explanation of their meaning which will clarify 3:12 in the parallel reading approach here adopted.

i. What is the meaning of στοιχεῖα?

Thus, there are three essential words that needed to be clarified in context towards a proper comprehension of 2 Peter 3:1-13: στοιχεῖα, εὐρεθήσεται and the verb λύω.

In 3:12 these στοιχεῖα is placed in contrast with οἱ οὐρανοὶ and is often understood as the

⁴¹ When Jesus spoke in the Olivet Discourse of a coming time of trouble as being like the labor pains of the Parousia, He integrated the Day of the Lord description with the structure of Daniel's seventieth week. In the second half of the Olivet Discourse, He referred to that extended narrative pattern as "that day" (Luke 21:34; cf. Matt. 24:36, 42, 50; Mark 13:32). See: Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18."

⁴² Again the language presents direct continuity with the OT teaching and Jewish expectation: Isa. 34:4; 51:6; Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5; 1 En. 91.16; Did. 10.6 and T. Job 33.4: "The whole world will pass away and its splendor shall fade. And those who heed it shall share in its overthrow". See: Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 385-386.

⁴³ Peter reaffirms that date of that day is not known (Mark 13:32) and that we ought not to speculate about it (Acts 1:7), for the coming of the Son of man would be like that of a thief in the night. See: David G Horrell and Wei-Hsien Wan, "Christology, Eschatology and the Politics of Time in 1 Peter," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38.3 (2016): 263-76; D C. (David C) Parker, "The Eschatology of 1 Peter," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 24.1 (1994): 27-32; Ronald Russell, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 Peter," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 47 (1975): 78-84; John Schoneberg Setzer, "Fresh Look at Jesus' Eschatology and Christology in Mark's Petrine Stratum," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24.3 (1972): 240-53.

⁴⁴ E. Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: IVP Academic, 2009).

⁴⁵ It is possible that the word may also refer to the swish of an arrow through the air, or the crackle of flames, or the rushing of mighty waters, or the hissing of a serpent. See: BDAG 907; E. Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*.

⁴⁶ Bauckham thinks it could possibly refer to "the thunder of the divine voice" in 1QH 3:32-36 but the term seems to be associated with physical phenomena. See: Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 316. It has been suggested that Peter chose this ambiguous word to convey multiple horrors simultaneously, even though, from context, fire appears to be the main idea Peter communicates. See: Peter Schott, *The Works of Peter Schott 1460 - 1490: Volume 2 Commentary*, ed. Murray A. and Marian L. Cowe (U. of North Carolina, 1971); David Walls, *Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 John and Jude*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville Tenn: Holman Reference, 1999).

totality of the material aspect of the world.⁴⁷ However, this is a complicated expression that possesses a wide range of possible meanings creating a historical lack of consensus.⁴⁸ This gives occasion for at least three different interpretations of the meaning in 2 Peter 3:10. First, the “elements” may refer to angels or spirits that rule over the natural world, but it does not correspond to the context or Peter’s argument. Second, it may refer to the heavenly bodies (the sun, moon and stars) which is an interpretation that is attested in the early church.⁴⁹ Third, it could refer to the elements from which the world is made:⁵⁰ earth, air, fire, and water.⁵¹

However, these possibilities seek to infuse meaning from sources outside Scripture into the text and do not consider it in context. Additionally, all these options strongly suggest a Stoic/Gnostic cosmology and eschatology that entails the concept of world annihilation.⁵² It is

⁴⁷ This interpretation comes from the fact that στοιχεῖα is derived from στοιχος, meaning a row or series of things, building blocks or basic stuff of which things are made. It could be supported by the construction on 3:7 referring to the cosmos as simply “the heavens and the earth,” corresponding to the “the heavens and the elements” in 3:10. In the final clause of 3:10 Peter also identifies the elements with “the earth.” See: Gordon Haddon Clark, *New Heavens, New Earth* (Jefferson, Md: Trinity Foundation, 1993), 232-233.

⁴⁸ Perhaps no other New Testament expression has divided commentators so evenly. In the ancient church, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Gennadius, perhaps Eusebius appear upon one side opposed to Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Theodoret, Theophylact of Bulgaria. Among medieval and modern scholars, Erasmus, Calvin, Grotius, De Wette, Meyer, Weiss, Lightfoot, Sanday, Schaubach, English-American revision, are opposed to Neander, Schneckenburger, Hilgenfeld, Klöpper, Weizsäcker, Lipsius, Spitta, Everling, and Ritschl. Even those who reject a moral/ethical element in its meaning do not agree concerning the positive meaning of the word. See: Edward Young Hincks, “The Meaning of the Phrase Τα Στοιχεῖα Του Κοσμου in Gal. Iv. 3 and Col. Ii. 8,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 15 (1896): 183–92.

⁴⁹ In this sense, Bauckham argues that Peter may have been depending on a text from the Septuagint, which says that “all the powers of the heavens will melt”. However, the term is too late and technical to be applied in that sense considering the early date of Peter assumed here. See: Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 319.

⁵⁰ In ancient Greek philosophy, it is often common the cosmological reading of στοιχεῖα as being the summation of the four elements in reference to Plato’s original constituents of the world, the four elements of Stoicism in distinction from the eternal and imperishable elements which form a basis of brotherhood in Alexandrian Judaism. The use of religious terms tends to divinize the elements, so that in early Christian works (Aristides or Clement of Alexandria) their autonomy is resisted and stress is laid on their creation and their subservience to the logos. See: Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 1088; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 385. This is also the view of take on the third vision of the Shepherd of Hermas in 13:3. The Wisdom of Solomon, written in the 2nd century BC and probably known to Peter (there has been a possible correspondence suggested between 2 Pet. 2.2 and Wis. 5.6 and 2 Pet. 2.7 and Wis. 10.6), points towards an all-encompassing cosmological meaning, including the four basic elements, but going beyond them to the stars and the great lights in heaven (Wis. 7:17; 19:18; possibly also 4 Macc. 12:13). This meaning also attested by the Sibylline Oracles (3:80–81; cf. 2:206–7; 8:337–39). See: Carsten Peter Thiede, “A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the Octavius of Minucius Felix,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 8.26 (1986): 79–96. Also see: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 998A.20–30; Plutarch, *Mor.* 875C; Philo, *Cherubim* 2.35 §127.

⁵¹ Beyond the idea that earth, air, fire, and water were the basis of the entire cosmos, Stoics thought fire was the chief element into which the others dissolved in periodic cycles. This idea could theoretically correspond with the ending of the first age of creation by water in 2 Pet 3:6 alluding to a variation of Greek thought in which the periodic cycles ended with all dissolving in water. It could also be a parallel to Jesus’ statement in which heaven and earth pass away, not heaven and the elements and pointing to the new heavens and new earth that would follow (2 Pet 3:12). In this conception, 2 Peter would be referring to a total annihilation of creation. See: Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2006), 274–275.

⁵² This annihilation perspective upon biblical literature presenting a final total destruction of the earth by fire (καυσούμενα being translated by burning) extends this interpretation also to other passages in hindsight, such as: Isa. 66:16; Mic. 1:4; Nah. 1:6; Zeph. 1:18; Mal. 3:2, 19 LXX [4:1 Eng.]; Acts 2:19; 2 Thess. 1:7–8; Rev. 9:18; 18:8. This has more in common with the transference of

noteworthy that the plausibility for any proper interpretation of 3:10 is surrounded, at least in the circles of academic criticism, by the assumption that 2 Peter was a late composition under a pseudonym which narrows the possibilities of interpretation of the passage.⁵³ However, when one considers 2 Peter plainly as it stands and in its own context, it is opposed to the teachings of the Gnostics and stoics. Stoic and Gnostic annihilationism was connected with their disregard for the material and the bodily. They expected a platonic νέος κόσμος that was detached from the bodily prison.⁵⁴ 2 Peter however is looking forward to a completely new material creation, a καινός ουρανός καὶ γῆ καινή in 3:13.⁵⁵

Thus, the construction set in context refers to the essential principles of this present world. When we refer back in context to 3:7, for instance, what is “being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” is the heavens and earth that now exist (οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ). 2 Peter’s context is not focused in “earthly” or “natural” outcome, but the final judgment of ungodly human beings. The verb “kept” is the same verb used for the fallen angels in 2 Pet 2:4 and presents the idea that “this present world” (a very similar idea of Rm 12:2 τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ), this state of affairs will be dealt in the Day of Judgment. The condemnation of this judgment is not for creation but for the wickedness of human beings, just as the flood was not about creation but about human evil. Peter is not against creation since God is its Creator and He declared that it is indeed something good. The context of the deluge is informative because then the extent of the fiery purification (καυσούμενα λυθήσεται) will be limited according to the need to wipe out human evil.⁵⁶

meaning from the oracle Sib. Or. 3.75–92 where it is spoken of the destruction of the world by fire when a woman, Cleopatra, rules the world. See: BDAG 946; TDNT 7:670–87 and Green, *Jude and 2 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 317. These interpretations closely associated with gnostic motifs not only impact eschatology but also anthropology, soteriology and current ethics. See: Thiede, “A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the Octavius of Minucius Felix”; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2002), 730.

⁵³ Kruger, “The Authenticity of 2 Peter.”

⁵⁴ This led many leaders Apostolic Fathers and Apologists, Irenaeus and Origen for instance, to hesitate in accepting any prophecy of annihilation or cosmic conflagration because it was so related to Gnostic teaching. See: Robert E Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 10.33 (1988): 57–83. For a summation of the different view on the matter starting in the Apostolic Fathers, please refer to Appendix II.

⁵⁵ Many English translations prefer to keep the word στοιχεῖα as “elements” which is not wrong but may bring the wrong idea in modern context because “elements” carries different senses in English. Peter is not referring to purely physical or chemical elements, nor conveying an idea of a material “melting” or “dissolving” (KJV) that actually is conducive to the option of στοιχεῖα as the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Consequentially, this projected image can point towards the concept of annihilation. See: Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2006), 283–287.

⁵⁶ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2006), 260–268.

Looking to the other applications of this term in the NT, there is the possibility of στοιχεῖα beginning to refer to spiritual beings, but it is highly debatable if Paul applied it with this meaning in Gal 4:3-9 and Col 2:8 and 20. In both cases, the concept of slavery or captivity to the στοιχεῖα is evident.⁵⁷ In Colossians 2:20, the Christian is said to have died with Christ to the στοιχεῖα, to the ephemeral state of such perishable earthly things.⁵⁸ Thus, the believer, has already entered into that world where Christ lives because being risen with Christ (Col. 4:1), he seeks the things above, not the things on the earth. In Heb 5:12, however, στοιχεῖα has a slightly distinct meaning: it can also be used referring to the basic elements or teachings of the Christian faith.⁵⁹ John Calvin affirms this latter use applied to the natural state of things in this fallen world, to the nature and its foundations, its *principia*.⁶⁰ The meaning than, narrowed to what is essential to this present world, may refer to the core substance of what lies between the heavens and the earth, since 1 John 5:19 also affirms that it is clear that this world lies in the power of the evil one (καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται).⁶¹

στοιχεῖα then has a range of meaning and Peter may be applying it with polysemy. In context, it points to the most severe fiery judgments of the coming Day of the Lord, in which what is above (heavens), what is below (the earth) and the “elements” in between will be object of the pouring out of the wrath of God in judgment, in accordance with Rev 8:1-9:21 and 16:1-21 where fire is used to judge various elements of this world.⁶² This does not mean that Peter is using the term completely apart or ignorant of his Greek philosophical context, particularly considering his likely Roman provenance. This could be an allusion or subversive appropriation of a platonic/stoic

⁵⁷ The phrase τα στοιχεῖα του κόσμου, κόσμος necessarily takes a physical meaning, but the word στοιχεῖα, when used alone in ancient contexts, tend to be influenced by Greek thought and seen as “the elements of nature”. However, the desire for emphasis naturally explains the fullness of expression being essential to insist on the nature of the elements to which the Galatians had been in bondage. See: Hincks, “The Meaning of the Phrase Τα Στοιχεῖα Του Κόσμου in Gal. Iv. 3 and Col. Ii. 8.”

⁵⁸ Dieter T Roth, “What Ἐν Τῷ Κόσμῳ Are the Στοιχεῖα Τοῦ Κόσμου?,” *HTS Theological Studies* 70.1 (2014): 1–8.

⁵⁹ This ethical sense in opposition to Christian ethics is present in the other passages as an elementary teaching, such as the law, which was fitted for an earlier stage of the church in relation to the first principles of religious knowledge among men. In Col. 2:8, it may allude to formal ordinances, while in Heb. 5:12 there might be a connection to the kindred verb στοιχέω meaning to walk, as one carries the idea of keeping in line. Thus, walk according to rule (Gal. 6:16) or walking orderly (Acts 21:24). Also, the compound συστοιχέω only occurs in Gal. 4:25 as one who answered to, literally meaning one who belongs to the same row or column with. The Greek grammarians called the categories of letters arranged according to the organs of speech συστοιχία. See: Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 706.

⁶⁰ For Calvin, the very essential elements of creation by which it is created, structured, and maintained, were and will be used at God’s command – water and fire respectively. See: John Calvin, *Commentary on 2 Peter* (Titus Books, 2012).

⁶¹ Blinzler, J., ‘Lexikalisches zu dem Terminus τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου bei Paulus’, in *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus 1961*, E Pontificio Instituto Biblico, Rome, vol. 2, 429–443.

⁶² Furthermore, regardless the reading adopted, 3:10 and 12 do not say that “all elements” or even “the elements”, but “elements.” The lack of the article may indicate a radical transformation of the contents and quality of the world but does not imply annihilation in toto. See: Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1930), 344.

vocabulary towards a correction to orthodox eschatology: including the possibility of being a “tip of the hat” to the language used by false teachers.⁶³ In this sense, στοιχεῖα may simply refer to all the constituent worldly principles of existence: the present world system.⁶⁴ For Peter, history is linear⁶⁵ and certainly culminating in the eschatological judgement focused on the ungodly, since he has already argued in the previous chapter that God knows how to spare the godly while judging the ungodly. It is then very likely that Peter is using Scriptures and Greek vocabulary apologetically to preach eschatology.⁶⁶

ii. εὐρεθήσεται and Textual Criticism

The *Textus Receptus* has the verb κατακαήσεται instead of εὐρεθήσεται at the end of 2 Peter 3:10.⁶⁷ This substitution is reflected in all Bible translations of the 16th and 17th centuries.⁶⁸ With the rise of modern textual criticism, this reading was rejected due particularly to the discovery and publication of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, both reading εὐρεθήσεται.⁶⁹ However,

⁶³ Peter, living in Rome and surrounded by Greco-Roman way of thinking, may have borrowed this language from such philosophers to affirm the opposite of Seneca or Lucretius' platonic teaching of this world being repetitively alternating in a periodic cycle of destruction through water and then through fire. Peter could also be rejecting Heraclitus' idea that all that exists is matter and matter was based on fire and would return to fire. This would make sense if his opponents were influenced by Epicurean philosophy. See: Donald P. Senior and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: 1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2003), 231-233.

⁶⁴ For this reason, “Paul can assert that the observance of the Law is tantamount to the veneration of τα στοιχεῖα, that enslavement to the Law is no different from enslavement to τὰ στοιχεῖα and thus also that redemption from τα στοιχεῖα του κόσμου was at the same time redemption from the Law”. See: Martinus C de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase Τὰ Στοιχεῖα Του Κόσμου in Galatians,” *New Testament Studies* 53.2 (2007): 204–24.

⁶⁵ Justin Martyr, in his first *Apologia*, similarly argues against this aspect of stoic thinking (the only one mentioned by him). He opposes the stoic doctrine that the universe was dissolved and renewed periodically, through an ἐκπύρωσις, which made everything return to a primeval element of fire, before it was reconstituted. His source is possibly Cicero's *De natura deorum*. In his second *Apologia*, Justin returns to this subject and interprets the stoic ἐκπύρωσις following the order of events in 2 Peter. He presents the second destruction after the Deluge using the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha known from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.318-415. Interestingly, he also assumes a Greek vocabulary and context of the Romans to appeal for the truth revealed in the Scriptures. See: Thiede, “A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the Octavius of Minucius Felix.”

⁶⁶ “Peter is moving within the world of Jewish ideas, not that of Platonic or Stoic ideas. If one were to ask why fire comes after water, he or she should remind themselves that our author has followed the Genesis narratives closely. He is therefore aware of Gen 9:11-16, in which God promises that there will never be another deluge. Yet the prophets speak of judgment by fire. Thus we have here a combination of his knowledge of Genesis and his knowledge of the metaphor of fire as an image of judgment in the prophets and later Jewish tradition.” See: Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 272-273.

⁶⁷ This textual variant is repeatedly referred by the critical scholar Bart Ehrman in his argument that the ancient scribes intentionally altered the words of Scripture and suggests that the original New Testament may have been lost in some instances concluding that God failed to preserve the words of Scripture and, therefore, never inspired it in the first place. See: Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, Updated ed. edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*, (San Francisco Harper: San Francisco, 2005), 211.

⁶⁸ The KJV, for example, renders the clause in which it occurs as follows: “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”.

⁶⁹ εὐρεθήσεται is found in Vatican, Sinaitic, K, some late MSS, and some other parts of the Syriac tradition. All critical editions of the New Testament text since Tischendorf (1872) and Westcott and Hort (1881) adopted εὐρεθήσεται. This verb is also supported by early patristic evidence, such as Origen. It is also attested by P72 (3rd or 4th century) where it reads with a small emendation adding λυόμενα after the verb εὐρεθήσεται, supporting a scribal addition to an intransitive construction. Bruce Metzger, Kurt Aland

modern critical scholars tend to see a great semantical difficulty with εὑρεθήσεται.⁷⁰ If the surrounding vocabulary is understood as a cosmic fiery destruction, an annihilation of all there is, it is incomprehensible a sentence affirming that the works in the very earth that will be destroyed will later be “found” or “exposed”. This is a conundrum because it indicates a type of continuity and survival after the coming day of the Lord in judgment.⁷¹

The suggested alternative is to treat εὑρεθήσεται as a corruption of an earlier original, a view surprisingly proposed by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort: the very men who had first reinstated this reading into the text.⁷² Textual criticism seems in this case to have read into Peter's text features of the Gnostic worldview. Thus, a whole plethora of emendations and conjectures were proposed from the different witnesses.⁷³

This debate is reflected in the diversity of readings in modern English translations. The basic difference between all variations is whether γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα will be destroyed and annihilated like everything else, or if Peter is not referring to a process of complete destruction, but of purification/revealing.⁷⁴ One alternative has been presented by Wolters affirming that the best reading is the plain reading: intransitive idiomatic εὑρεθήσεται. He argues that the confusion on this translation is due to the misguided exegetical-theological assumption that 2 Peter 3 purports to present the coming judgement as a cosmic annihilation.⁷⁵ However, this passage is, in fact,

and other editors agree on this reading. See: Albert M Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 49.2 (1987): 405–13; Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 303.; C. Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Giesecke und Devrient, 1869-1872) 2.315; B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1881).

⁷⁰ “It is hard to make any sense of this reading, so it is not surprising that copyists and translators of ancient versions introduced a variety of changes”. See: Roger L. Omanson, ed., *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators*, Bilingual edition. (German Bible Society, 2006), 500.

⁷¹ Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10.”

⁷² “Yet it is hardly less certain by intrinsic probability that εὑρεθήσεται cannot be right: in other words, it is the most original of recorded readings, the parent of the rest, and yet itself corrupt.” See: B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 280. Metzger later also adopted it. See: Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Revised edition. (Hendrickson Publishers, 2005); Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10.”

⁷³ Please refer to Appendix I for the proposed emendations.

⁷⁴ Εὑρεθήσεται is present at NRSV; HCSB as “will be disclosed”; at the NIV; NET Bible as “will be laid bare” and at ESV; NCV as “will be exposed”. The NLT adopts Bauckham's notion that the verb is expressing the idea that human beings will be found before God to be judged and propose a different reading with “will be found to deserve judgment” followed by REB as “will be brought to judgment”. Some translate from κατακαήσεται (NASU; RSV; NKJV), while one translates from ἀφανισθήσεται (TEV). See: Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 319–20; Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 191; Rick Brannan and Israel Loken, *The Lexham Textual Notes on the Bible*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 2 Pe 3:10.

⁷⁵ “Most commentators insist that a word is required which characterizes the destruction of the earth and of the achievements wrought in it. All the variants and conjectures, with the exception of Nestle's κριθήσεται, point in the same direction, emphasis being placed on the mode of judgment.” See: Frederick W. (Frederick William) Danker, “2 Peter 3:10 and Psalm of Solomon 17:10,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 53.1–2 (1962): 82–86.

presenting the Day of the Lord as a smelting process of judgement, purification and renewal of creation and the verb εὑρεθήσεται here in context has a symbolic connotation.⁷⁶

There is a clear ethical application of this verb in 3:10 pointing to the judicial aspect of the Day of the Lord.⁷⁷ There is then an eschatological continuity of what takes place now into the new heavens/new earth: Peter is saying that our actions today matter in light of what is to come. This is completely in accordance with Pauline eschatology.⁷⁸ This verb εὑρεθήσεται affirms the idea that the righteous deeds “will survive”; “will have stood the test” or “will be proved genuine and true”.⁷⁹ The false teachers have sown doubt about the reality of final judgment. Peter stand against them, declaring that nothing and no one will escape God’s wrath, unless those who embrace the salvation of God (2 Pet. 3:15). “The works” of those who do evil will be discovered. The same idea is presented in 1 Pet 1:7 where the passive of εὑρεθήσεται is used in eschatological context to present the idea of survival after a purification by fire and the joy of the believers that, surviving the present trials, will have their faith confirmed genuine, a faith more precious than gold (notice the metaphoric use again).⁸⁰

Thus, taking εὑρεθήσεται with a plain reading interprets the word meaning “to discover”,

⁷⁶ This solution requires a reading of this verb εὑρεθήσεται in context. 2 Peter 3:14, for instance, registers the passive form of the same verb as “Be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish” See: Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10.” Also: “In the concluding phrase of vs. 10 we anticipate not a verb which describes the mode of judgment, but one which expresses the fact of a judicial process”. See: Danker, “2 Peter 3:10 and Psalm of Solomon 17:10.”

⁷⁷ The word εὐρίσκω occurs frequently in association with moral characteristics. See: Exod. 22:8 [22:7 LXX]; Deut. 22:22, 28; Ezra 10:18; Jer. 50:24 [27:24 LXX]; Ezek. 28:16; Matt. 24:46; Luke 12:37, 23:4; John 18:38, 19:4; Acts 13:28; 16:39, 23:9; 1 Cor 15:16; Rev. 14:5. See: Danker, “2 Peter 3:10 and Psalm of Solomon 17:10.”

⁷⁸ on the Day of the Lord “the fire will test what sort of work each one has done” and only some of it “will survive” (1 Cor 3:13-14). It is the clear apostolic teaching that God will judge the τὰ ἔργα of each, which will become manifest in the final judgment (Mark 4:22; John 3:21; 1 Cor. 3:13; 14:25; Eph. 5:13). See: Michael J. Gilmour, *The Significance of Parallels Between 2 Peter and Other Early Christian Literature* (Atlanta: UNKNO, 2002), 100-105.

⁷⁹ Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10.”

⁸⁰ In both cases, the verb εὑρεθήσεται is used absolutely, without predicate. In 1 Pet 1:7, different translations seek to add a compliment, such as RSV. However, this should not be the case because it is an identical use of the verb and the parallel is precise to the eschatological result of purification towards renewal. Please refer to Appendix II for a similar use employed by the Apostolic Fathers. Also, Strabo speaks of metalworkers who “melted again the old refuse, or dross, and were still able to extract from it pure silver” which corresponds to the process of finding pure silver from impure raw material in a metallurgical sense. See: Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10.” The possibility is further promising because of a Hebraic parallel verb. R. C. Van Leeuwen argues that the common Hebrew verb נָצַח appears to have a closely parallel to this technical metallurgical sense. Its cognates apparently mean to “come out” of the smelting process as refined. See: Raymond C Van Leeuwen, “A Technical Metallurgical Usage of Yִשָּׁ,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98.1 (1986): 112–13. On the other hand, However, Van den Heever rejects Wolters hypothesis because he denies that his parallels between 1 Pet 1:7 and 2 Pet 3:14 have absolute uses of εὐρίσκω, as in 2 Pet 3:10. He claims, “In those contexts the use of εὐρίσκω is perfectly natural, being good idiomatic Greek. That would make 2 Pt 3:10 the only occurrence of the word where it carries the pregnant meaning”. Thomas Schreiner also rejects Wolters’ interpretation because he argues that Wolters’ understanding of 2 Pet 3:14 is inadequate. See: Van den Heever, “IN PURIFYING FIRE: WORLD VIEW AND 2 PETER 3:10”; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude : An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 387.

“to reveal” or “to be found”, paralleling the Hebrew verb (נָצַח) that bears a judicial connotation (Exod 22:8; Deut 22:28; Ezra 10:18). This meaning can naturally fit in the context focusing on the works of men in the earth as being openly and clearly presented before the Lord. God is the center of this verse, and it focuses on our relationship with Him.⁸¹ This same verb can be used to ascertain if someone is “found out” as a sinner or righteous before God.⁸² 2 Peter 3:14 urges his audience to watch and to “be found” in peace, spotless and blameless, an exhortation comparable to Rev 6:15-16 based on Isa 2:19 and Hos 10:8, both describing the wicked trying to hide from God and the worst thing for them is “to be found”.⁸³

Moreover, 2 Peter 3 in context requires this manifestation to be done through the fire, as type of disclosing, manifesting, and revealing that takes place by means of a refining fire. Peter’s nuance in 2 Peter 3:10 is different from Paul’s in that Peter focuses on the positive purpose of refinement: to reveal righteousness.⁸⁴ Neyrey argues that this verb presents a context of judgment, suggesting a holistic and comprehensive forensic investigation of all there is in creation, every work of mankind, in deed and heart, in the fire of his wrath.⁸⁵ Accordingly, Wenham identifies a possible allusion to Jesus’ eschatological parables, where the Lord “finds” his servants to be faithful or unfaithful (Matt 24:46) and maybe also a parallel with 2 Cor 5:3, where some are “being found naked,” understanding that to refer to evil works (cf. Luke 12:36–38; Mark 13:34–36; Rev 16:15).⁸⁶

Douglas Moo and Kelly surprisingly argue that “the works in it” cannot refer to human deeds, but only to the physical earth and things on it, such as buildings. This would be at odds with the ethical sense of the revelation of righteousness, since their category of physical things would

⁸¹ Similarly: Sir 44:17, 20; Dan 5:27; Acts 5:39; 24:5; 1 Cor 4:2; 15:15; Gal 2:17; Phil 3:9; 1 Pet 1:7; Rev 5:4

⁸² 1 Sam 25:28; 26:18; 1 Kgs 1:52; Ps 17:3; Jer 2:34; 50:20; Ezek 28:15; Zeph 3:13; Mal 2:6

⁸³ Bauckham affirms that the verb could be read as roughly synonymous with φανερόν, δηλώσει, or αποκαλύπτεται carrying the idea that it “will be made manifested” (Mark 4:22; John 3:21; 1 Cor 3:13; 14:25; Eph 5:13). See: Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 319.

⁸⁴ In this sense, perhaps 2 Clem. 16:3 represents an early interpretation of 2 Peter: “But you know that the day of judgment is already coming as a blazing furnace, and some of the heavens will dissolve, and the whole earth will be like lead melting in a fire, and then the works of men, the secret and the public will appear.” If Clement was alluding to 2 Peter, which seems likely, he understood it as referring to divine judgment. Please refer to Appendix II to fuller analysis of this text. See: R. E. Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers,” JSNT 33 (1988): 64; A. Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10,” WTJ 49 (1987): 411

⁸⁵ “In light of forensic procedure, ‘being found’ is a plausible and contextually appropriate term. Evidently it implies that something will be revealed, uncovered, and brought to light, which might be goodness to be rewarded or evil to be requited”. See: Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243.

⁸⁶ David Wenham, “Being ‘found’ on the Last Day: New Light on 2 Peter 3:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:3,” *New Testament Studies* 33.3 (1987): 477–79.

encompass products of nature, human culture, civilization, art and technology.⁸⁷ In the same way, Fornberg argues that “if the author had had the sinful deeds of men in mind, the unity of the verse would be broken, since it otherwise describes God's creation.”⁸⁸ However, these criticisms do not prosper when associated with the very concept of στοιχεῖα presented above as also an ethical concept corresponding to the essential pillars of this fallen world. Even further, the concept of creation is broader than what is natural and physical, while also being described as being cursed (Gen 3:17), as groaning inwardly waiting eagerly for the last day (Rom 8:23) and being temporally under the power of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19).

Therefore, Wolters understanding of the term in light of “the day of judgment” which is portrayed “as a smelting process from which the world will emerge purified” does not stand in opposition to Bauckham’s concept of a “word with generally judicial overtones” emphasizing in this passive form the divine activity of revealing and discovering: God, the Judge, is the one who will uncover all creation and He is the one who is bringing forth the Parousia. Peter’s argument is a symbolic description of the Day of the Lord centered in God’s activity of judgment of the wicked with a variety of themes interconnected, recapitulating OT and apostolic teaching, and focused in the ethical application of eschatology.⁸⁹ Hence, the notion of refinement is one aspect of the ethical dimension in the imagery used by the prophets about the day of the Lord (Mal 3:2-4; 4:1-3).⁹⁰

iii. Fire image: Prophetic language echoing the OT

The entire passage refers to the day of the Lord that is bringing a holistic historical transformation centered in God’s activity of judgment of the wicked. Thus, Peter’s purpose is to present a prophetic imagery of the eschaton with present ethical repercussions that is not an innovation but a continuation of a prophetic and apostolic teaching, an eschatological application of the OT.⁹¹ In this sense, there are apocalyptic features on Peter’s language as he employs symbols

⁸⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary 2 Peter, Jude*, Annotated edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 1997), 191; Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 364-365.

⁸⁸ Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society*, 75.

⁸⁹ Aaron K Tresham, “A Test Case for Conjectural Emendation: 2 Peter 3:10d,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 21.1 (2010): 55–79.

⁹⁰ Paul speaks similarly in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15: “Each one’s work will become manifest [φανερόν], for the Day will disclose it [δηλώσει], because it will be revealed by fire [ἐν πυρὶ αποκαλύπτεται], and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” See: Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18.”

⁹¹ Green, *Jude and 2 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 332.

and allusions of OT passages to describe the day of the Lord.⁹²

Thus, interpreting Peter literally is literally interpreting what Peter means. 3:10-13 ought to be interpreted according to its intent, style, genre and grammatical structure. The very meaning of the words need to be considered in the overall purpose and intention of the author. If his purpose is to use OT symbols to communicate his message, we need to recover such symbols to interpret him because the interaction of the Old Covenant with the New Covenant is the background of the passage.

Peter then is intentionally showing both continuity and discontinuity with creation and the flood. Peter argues that just as the former world "was destroyed" (ἀπώλετο) in the flood, the same type of "destruction" will be brought upon the present world in the last day. The type of destruction Peter mentions then in 2 Peter 3:10-13 needs to parallel the destruction in Genesis, which is not absolute.⁹³ However, the destruction of Noah's world (ἀπώλετο) is the exemplary picture presented as the precedent for the future destruction (ἀπωλείας in 3:15). Peter uses his opponent's main assumption apologetically to endorse his point concerning the continuity of history.⁹⁴ This line of argumentation is typical apologetics of early Judaism,⁹⁵ which highlights that Peter argues in parallel with the historical example of the flood foreseeing a cataclysm where it is fire, and not water, that devastates. Thus, a kind of scientific detailed description of the circumstances of the Parousia is not the central issue but rather the certainty of judgement and purification.⁹⁶ Peter is affirming that God is consistent with His word and with His own nature which he concludes that

⁹² The symbolism opens apocalyptic to many possible applications and perhaps even many temporal interpretations. (Though each of the seven churches in Revelation had its own historical problem, they all could hear the same apocalypse with their context in mind.) When we attempt to interpret an apocalypse we also bring a host of expectations from other parts of Scripture about what the future holds. Therefore, one of the key hermeneutic assumptions in dealing with apocalyptic language is to treat it as intentionally symbolic and interpret it as such. See: Gale Heide, "What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40.1 (1997): 37–56.

⁹³ It is significant here that language used in the flood narrative describes the whole earth as "corrupt" and "filled with violence" and is one of the explicit objects of God's judgment (Gen 6:13). There is a growing intensity of this destruction, but the next one will be of the same kind as the first. God does not change and His previous acts on heaven and earth (the creation of οὐρανοί and γῆ in 3:5 alongside destruction of the κόσμος 3:6) are paradigmatic for what God is going to do in the future (the destruction of οὐρανοί and γῆ in 3:7 alongside the new creation of οὐρανοῦς and γῆν 3:13). See: Heide, "What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3.,"; Edward Adams, "Creation 'out of' and 'through' Water in 2 Peter 3:5," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Re-Interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (Leiden, 2005), 195–210.

⁹⁴ Mark W Wilson, "Noah, the Ark, and the Flood in Early Christian Literature," *Scriptura* 113 (2014): 1–12.

⁹⁵ This line of argumentation is typical of early Judaism apologetics Meier, "2 Peter 3:3-7 - an Early Jewish and Christian Response to Eschatological Skepticism."

⁹⁶ Peter is speaking of the destruction of ungodly men (την ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων), not of all mankind. See: Thiede, "A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the Octavius of Minucius Felix."

his activity therefore consistent as well. The κόσμος⁹⁷ of Noah's day is comprehended in his definition of οὐρανοὶ, στοιχεῖα and γῆ which is going to receive the fire of the wrath of the Lord on His Day and thus the comparison breaks down if in Noah's day "the world" perished and in the last day the entire physical cosmos is annihilated.⁹⁸ The word of the Lord created the world, that word destroyed it once and that same word is now causing it to be preserved or kept for the fire. As the water did not cause the world to vanish, "by the same word" (τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ) the fire will not cause the world to vanish either.⁹⁹ The flood illustration itself points to an image of cleaning, judgement and renewal, an even more radically purge by fire.¹⁰⁰

Peter's articulation of the Parousia in 3:10 is mirrored in 3:12 so that the expressions ῥοιζήδων¹⁰¹ παρελεύσονται (it will pass away with a rushing noise/roar) and πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται (being refined by fire it will be released) refer to the same occurrence impacting the heavens and καυσούμενα λυθήσεται (being burned will be released) and καυσούμενα τήκεται (being burned will be melted) refer to the same occurrence impacting the elemental principles of creation. This description is a direct application of OT language of the Day of the Lord, particularly the reiterated language present in Deuteronomy 32:22; 33; 2 Samuel 22; 23:7; Psalm 18; 97:3-5; Isaiah 4:4-5; 13:10-13; 19; 24:19; 34:4;¹⁰² 64:1-4; 66:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 7; 30:2-3; 32:7; 38:18-23; Daniel 7:11; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15-17; Micah 1:3ff; Amos 5:20; 7:4; 8:9; Zephaniah 1:14-

⁹⁷ C.H Dodd defines this meaning of κόσμος as "the human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles and characterized by base desires, false values and egoism". It is a pagan society with its false values and false gods, it is the moral world, the fallen all-encompassing state of affairs of a crooked generation. See: William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, 3rd edition. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 56.

⁹⁸ In both Noah's day and in the day of the Lord in Peter, it is said that: Heaven and earth were kept, the world was kept for the judgment of the ungodly and it was kept by the power of God. Gen 9:11 also affirms that the earth perished, but was not destroyed while 2 Peter 2:5 affirms that the world perished. See: Don K. Preston, *The Late Great Kingdom: II Peter 3* (Shawnee Printing Co., 1990), 37.

⁹⁹ "The flood did not annihilate the earth, but changed it; and as the new earth was the consequence of the flood, so the final new heavens and earth shall be of the fire". See: Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament and Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, Fifth edition, vol. 4, part 2 (Guardian Press, 1976), 418.

¹⁰⁰ Wolters, "Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10."

¹⁰¹ (ῥοιζήδων). An adverb peculiar to Peter, and occurring only here. It is a word in which the sound suggests the sense (rhoizedon); and the kindred noun, ῥοῖζος, is used in classical Greek of the whistling of an arrow; the sound of a shepherd's pipe; the rush of wings; the splash of water; the hissing of a serpent; and the sound of filing. See: Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 706.

¹⁰² The portion of Isaiah saying that "All the stars of the heavens will be melted and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree" (a verse which also reappears in the Apocalypse of Peter) refers immediately to the judgment of Edom but is ultimately reapplied to the day of the Lord and conflated with the Parousia. Isaiah 34:4 imagery of the sky being rolled up like a scroll is also central in John's description in Revelation (Rev 6:14; also Heb 1:10-12). See: Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*; Gilmour, *The Significance of Parallels Between 2 Peter and Other Early Christian Literature*.

18; 3:8; Zechariah 14:1ff; and Malachi 3; 4:1ff.¹⁰³

The language of the sun, moon and stars going dark, the earth being shook in its foundations and judged by fire in a cosmic upheaval is repeatedly used as a representation of the visitation of Yahweh in judgment in the OT.¹⁰⁴ The purpose was then symbolic, focusing on a time when Yahweh was going to act. It emphasizes God coming to visit and judge with the entire world responding to His presence and providence. Moreover, this cosmic upheaval could not mean a natural annihilation because Scripture describes creation in a way that is not expecting it to cease to be or to be destroyed.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the term day of the Lord in the OT language was never a universal destruction of creation/physical cosmos, but a symbolic description of God acting in history to judge his enemies, a historical event where no stone was left unturned.¹⁰⁶

The NT writers were Jews and were explaining the introduction of the New Covenant in Christ, including its eschatology, in the Old Covenant terms. There is no warrant from context to infer that Peter is redefining the term “day of the Lord” nor its imagery. The only contrast Peter draws is between water and fire, while fire itself is a constant element in the day of the Lord and is also not unusual within the Jewish apocalyptic literature. 2 Peter 3 presents features of such apocalyptic literature by conflating multiple OT passages and images to communicate ethical applications from eschatological doctrine matching the OT mode of exhortation.¹⁰⁷ The NT broadly also recovers

¹⁰³ The footnotes of the Rahlfs edition of the Septuagint indicates the possibility of an added first line that matches the Hebrew in some of the Masoretic saying: “All the powers of the heavens shall be melted” (τακήσονται πάσαι αι δυνάμεις των ουρανών) where the Hebrew is translated “all the host of heaven shall be dissolved”. This description of Isa 34 in the LXX matches with 2 Peter 3 very closely (also reflecting the vocabulary of Micah 1:4). See: Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 370–371.

¹⁰⁴ This language was applied multiple times to immediate prophecies concerning the invasion of the Assyrians in 721 BC; the sack of Babylon in 648 BC, the destruction of Edom and the exile of Israel in 586 BC, for instance.

¹⁰⁵ In Psalm 148:3-6, all creation is called to praise God and in Psalm 89:36-37 the promise of the eternal covenant with David and his descendants is linked to the eternity of the heavens and earth: the sun, moon, stars, and heavens could not cease to exist without putting in question the faithfulness of God and the reliability of His promises. The Davidic covenant is, in this sense, fulfilled eternally in Christ, the final Davidic King, because He will endure forever in His incarnate state so that the sun and moon, connected with the Davidic promise, must also endure forever. Similarly, God solidifies His promise of everlasting faithfulness to His covenant with Israel by appealing to the continuation of the heavens and earth in Jeremiah 31:35-36; Gen. 8:21-22; 48:4; Psalm 15:5; 119:90; Eccles. 1:4. See: Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Cosimo Classics, 2007), 485-487.

¹⁰⁶ Preston, *The Late Great Kingdom*, 47-51.

¹⁰⁷ Zech 12:6, for instance, presents Judah as the fire which judges the nations and Mal 4:1 affirms that the Day of the Lord will be a furnace. A good witness for this interpretation of Mal 4:1 and Isa. 30:30 is Theophilus (written after 180, since the death of Marcus Aurelius). He claims that Greek poets and philosophers who mention a destruction of the world by fire had only copied the Law and the prophets. He actually quotes Mal 4:1 and Isa. 30:30 verbatim as evidence that the ancients had said the same as the prophets. Unlike Justin Martyr and Minucius Felix, however, Theophilus, writing in Antioch, is rather aggressive in tone against the Greek philosophers. See: Thiede, “A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the Octavius of Minucius Felix.”

this practice as in Mt 3:11; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb 12:29; 1 Pet 1:7 and Revelation. 1 Cor. 3:13-15 and 2 Thess. 1:7-10, particularly, apply the idea of judgement with fire similarly to both OT prophecy and 2 Peter, not implying annihilation, but pointing to God's promise of the just reward of the faithful.¹⁰⁸ Jesus himself applies the same type of language in his Olivet Discourse in Mt 24:29-31. Thus, the NT anticipates a renovation of creation providentially conducted by God's future plan of cosmic redemption (Rm 8:19-22; Acts 3:21; and Matt 19:28).¹⁰⁹

Hence, 2 Pet 3:11-13 usage of the participle *καυσούμενα* reflects this prophetic language with apocalyptic application.¹¹⁰ This coming cosmic judgement coming in "the day of the Lord" (3:10) is described by verbs meaning "to destroy, broken up or release" (*λύω* 3:10, 11 and 12), and "to melt" (*τήκω* 3:12), and "to heat" (*καυσώω*, 3:10 and 12, *πυρόω*, 3:12).¹¹¹ *Καυσώω* is commonly used referring to a state of intense heat.¹¹² *πυρόω* is regularly used of metals being heated in a smelting furnace.¹¹³ Although the literal meaning of the words are such, they are used by the apostle in light of prophetic speech, when the description of the Day of the Lord occurs in terms of cosmic elements. Fire then presents a symbolical meaning referring to the testing of the object of judgment (1 Cor 3:10-15) and Peter uses just such an image of testing fire in his first letter (1 Pet 1:7).¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ One NT passage that is not often considered in these parallels is Heb. 6.8 and its use of *ἐκτύρωσις*. It is a metaphorical passage, and it employs agricultural image of the land producing thorns and thistles (itself an allusion to Gen 3 and the wickedness on the earth with its curse). It concludes with the earth and men facing the forthcoming judgment upon them and the earth (*γη* in Heb 6:7) being burned: *ἡς το τέλος εις καῦσιν*.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation: A Commentary*, First Edition. (Leicester, England : Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Pub Co, 1990), 221-222.

¹¹⁰ The LXX passages mentioning judgment by fire using the same verb *καυσώω* are Isa 4:4; 2 Sam. 23:7 and Dan. 7:11. This language could also be an allusion to non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic sources such as 1 Enoch 1:6ff and 2 Esdr 6:20.

¹¹¹ Although less probable, it is possible that 2 Peter 3 may also be an echo of God's judgement over Sodom and Gomorra. Juza argues that by the time 2 Peter was written, the tradition of Sodom and Gomorra had developed into an archetypal story for eschatological judgment associated with the day of the Lord. The contextual evidence from within 2 Peter itself points to the story of Sodom and Gomorra as the primary conceptual framework behind 3:7-13. The writer of 2 Peter uses a number of key terms, phases, and themes that correspond to essential components of the Sodom and Gomorra tradition. See: Ryan P Juza, "Echoes of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of the Lord: Intertextuality and Tradition in 2 Peter 3:7-13," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24.2 (2014): 227-45. See also: J. A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities: Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (Kampen: Peeters Publishers, 1990).

¹¹² Wolters, "Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10," 408-9. This lexical rendering is contrary to that given in Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 536. They say *καυσώω* means "be consumed by heat, burn up." However, the thought of renewal is consistent with that found in Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 932. The view of Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich implies annihilation, and the view of Liddell and Scott suggests renovation or renewal.

¹¹³ The proper word for burning would be *καίω* and its compounds, which mean "to burn" in the sense of going up in flame. The overall idea is that, as the result of intense heat, it becomes incandescent and melt, but they do not "burn up," as is frequently imagined. See: Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Pub Group, 1987), 340-341.

¹¹⁴ "According to Origen, the cosmic conflagration like the cosmic deluge is not caused by cycles but by sin, which will be cleansed and purified by deluge or conflagration. The conflagration therefore does not result in annihilation, but in purification. And what

This matches how Malachi pictures the Lord as a refiner purifying metals in the melting pot, but for Peter this image is not only referring to the Israelite priesthood, but, in apocalyptic fashion, the metaphor is given a cosmic application. God is the one who is renewing and purifying all that is, the heavens, the earth and the foundations of the cosmos.¹¹⁵ The background of Mal 3:2-5 is illuminating to the depth of the certain judgment. The conclusion of Malachi is that the judgment will come with God's own presence coming to visit his creation. In Malachi's vision of that Day, the fire will keep burning until the purification is accomplished, until what is "pleasing to the Lord" is "found" (εὕρεθήσεται) at the end of the purifying process.¹¹⁶ The same fire that destroys all unrighteousness could be considered the cleansing agent for the stain of sin upon the earth rather than a means for annihilation (Jer 23:29).¹¹⁷

Nonetheless, perhaps the echo of the book of Isaiah may be even louder. There the Lord formally brought a charge of sin against Israel and exhorted them to repentance. From the start the Lord is clear about what he will do (Isa 1:21ff) and the imagery used is of burning refinement. Jerusalem in its wickedness is pictured as silver that has become dross so that The Lord declares: "I will turn my hand against you and smelt away your dross (...) Rebels and sinners will be broken together and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed (...) and both of them shall burn together with none to quench them" (Isa 1:25-31). The process of refinement is then a clear picture of judgement of sinfulness by burning and smelting. From this purification, the righteous kingdom

is more, according to *Contra Celsum* 4.13, that fire is a figure of speech. The river of fire (Daniel 7.10, one of several OT passages quoted by Origen in this context) is therefore only metaphorical. Celsus, on the other hand, seems to be closer to 2 Peter 3 than we normally give him credit for. Needless to say, his paraphrase is a caricature, but he correctly gives the order of events—after the deluge a conflagration had to follow. This is the sequence of 2 Pet 3.6-7; and as nowhere else in Christian documents prior to Celsus a parallel equally close to his rendering can be found". See: Thiede, "A Pagan Reader of 2 Peter: Cosmic Conflagration in 2 Peter 3 and the Octavius of Minucius Felix."; Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 706-707.

¹¹⁵ In addition, this view is in accordance with an iterist method of hermeneutics for the book of Revelation. For instance, Rev 6:12-16, which some regard as a summary of the final judgment, contains terms and imagery reiterated in 20:11 and 21:1 – which are often the definitive passages for the statements of ultimate destruction of the cosmos. The language used there is focused on judgement coming from God and executed in the last day in a very similar way that Peter applies in 2 Peter 3. See: D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Nottingham, England: Baker Academic, 2007); G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 398-99.

¹¹⁶ A few verses down the prophet expands on this image: "Behold the day comes, burning like an oven," bringing a judgement which will mean destruction for the wicked but healing for the righteous (Mai 4:1-2). See: Dennis E Johnson, "Fire in God's House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter's Theology of Suffering (1 Pet 4:12-19)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.3 (1986): 285-94.

¹¹⁷ "The "fire" renews the heavens and earth—a function unlikely to appertain to literal fire, but which can be metaphorically employed according to the purificatory judgment of God on behalf of his people. At the same time, the fire destroys the elementary teaching (στοιχεῖα) of the false teachers—a task a literal conflagration could not achieve, but which the Final Judgment could (3:7). This reading is justified, primarily, by the diagnostic and hermeneutic presence of seven characteristics of conceptual metaphor: cross-domain mapping, a concrete source domain, an abstract target domain, sufficient cause, systematicity, polysemy, and multiplicity." See: Winters, "A Strange Death: Cosmic Conflagration as Conceptual Metaphor in 2 Peter 3:6-13."

of God emerges in 2:1-4 not only in reference to Israel but extending over all the nations of the earth. Then, the image of judgment and refinement returns in reference to the Day of the Lord: “On that day the Lord will arise in the splendor of his majesty” (2:19-21) a splendor that is described as a consuming holy fire. In 4:2-6 the righteous kingdom of God is composed by the people who have been cleansed “by a spirit of judgment and burning”. This refinement is not done by ordinary fire, but by the fire of God’s own glory which will come consuming all wickedness on the day of the Lord. This imagery reappears in the end of Isaiah (66:15-16), where it leads to the new heavens and the new earth (66:22) so that it forms an *inclusio* marking the bookends of Isaiah (and of the whole prophetic corpus if including Mal 4:1).¹¹⁸

Hence, Peter is merely reaffirming OT and the apostolic teaching against the false teachers, as he clearly affirms in 3:1-2. Even if Peter did not experience a vision directly like John (he gives no indication of such an event), this does not make the passage less apocalyptic because Peter is pointing toward canonical sources for this eschatological doctrine. Peter is quoting/alluding to primary prophetic (Isaiah, for example) and apostolic (Paul) sources in reference to the day of the Lord.¹¹⁹

In this context, the main verb λύω repeatedly used in this portion points towards a dissolution that is not annihilatory, but a “breaking free”, a “release” of the current state of affairs of this world from bondage, a renewal into a new mode of existence.¹²⁰ Peter is more concerned to present the certainty of the future event. All current things are passing away not as a consequence of their nature, but of the will of God as Judge.¹²¹ The fiery release is an expression of the Lord’s direct activity which, associated with the Parousia, implies Jesus Christ as the eschatological agent of

¹¹⁸ The collation of images is seen in Isaiah 66:15-16. The imagery passes from a coming in fire to a military battle. “For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.” One should also note that Peter prepared the reader for an extended day of the Lord by his previous reference to Psalm 90:4 (2 Pet. 3:8-9) and implied that a reason for the extension is to give people opportunity for repentance. This picks up the theme of repentance in many passages on the day of the Lord (e.g., Joel 2:12-17; Zeph. 2:1-3; Zech. 12:10-14; Mai. 4:5-6). Repentance and non repentance appear as themes in the book of Revelation, where they are integrated into the extended sequence of judgments (Rev. 7:9-17; 9:20-21; 16:9, 11; cf. 14:9-11). See: Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18.”

¹¹⁹ Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 304-306.

¹²⁰ For more on the bondage of Creation, see: Jonathan Moo, “Continuity, Discontinuity, and Hope: The Contribution of New Testament Eschatology to a Distinctively Christian Environmental Ethos,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 61.1 (2010): 21-44. Notice, however, that the author conceives 2 Peter 3 and Romans 8 as being opposing positions, at least as regards the means of renewal, but never answer the question why then 2 Peter appeals to the Pauline view directly as if in agreement.

¹²¹ This emphasis comes forward particularly because of the use of the present participial clause establishing that this imagery is the inescapable fate of the subjects. As regards its arrangement, this period, as far as the end of 3:12, is divided by many into two portions, of which the first closes either with ὅμως or with εὐσεβείας and forms a question to which the second half supplies the answer.

judgement.¹²²

Juxtaposed to this participial construction is the word: ποταπούς¹²³ which in the NT is never used as indirect interrogation, but always in exclamation. Consequently, the whole sentence of 3:11-12 has a hortative sense (before which it could be supplied for the sake of clearness: “consider therefore”). The whole purpose of 3:11-12 is to match 3:10 and to connect an ethical imperative with the certainty of eschatology. The sense is: “Consider therefore that, since all will pass away in fiery judgement on the day of the Lord, what type/manner of persons you ought to be”.¹²⁴

Thus, all the above references to a “destruction” of the present heaven and earth need to be considered alongside the promises of redemption of creation as shown in Rom 8:18-25. Although some of these references of apocalyptic symbolism indeed present a type of destructive concept, this does not mean that such language refers to cosmical annihilation, a total obliteration towards re-creation *ex nihilo*.¹²⁵ Peter, like Paul in 1 Cor 15:50-58 or Heb 12:27, would expect some physical change, but this is not his focus. Peter is using apocalyptic visionary language to exhort his audience towards hope and assurance despite their trials. He is encouraging them to look forward to the end, not because everything will be destroyed but because those who endure shall be victorious. God is judging and erasing all sin and wickedness re-formatting the cosmos to be free of sin and death. The Parousia will be a cosmological transformation for the removal of all unrighteousness. The judgment will transform the earth much in the same fashion that God transformed the resurrected body of Jesus (Luke 24:36-43) and will transform our bodies (Phil 3:20-21).¹²⁶

This fiery image of the day of the Lord is then a common thread presented by the prophets,

¹²² Larry R Helyer, “Cosmic Christology and Col 1:15-20,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37.2 (1994): 235–46.

¹²³ ποταπούς (in classical writers generally ποδαπός) is not equivalent to quantity but refers to quails - ἐν ἁγίαις ἀναστροφῇς καὶ εὐσεβείαις. The plural marks the holy behavior and the piety in their different tendencies and forms of manifestation. See: Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 370.

¹²⁴ Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 369.

¹²⁵ This is also why interpreting 2 Peter 3 materially or physically may be a consequence of Platonic presuppositions. If matter is necessarily evil, then it must be destroyed. However, understanding 2 Peter in the genre of Jewish apocalypse rather than Hellenistic philosophy is much more clarifying and provides us with a better interpretive framework. See: Heide, “What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3.”

¹²⁶ “Man's ultimate destiny is an earthly one Man is a creature, and God created the earth to be the scene of his creaturely existence Therefore, even as the redemption of man in the bodily aspect of his being demands the resurrection of the body, so the redemption of the very physical creation requires a renewed earth as the scene of his perfected existence Man never ceases to be God's creature”. See: George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1993), 631.

including the various perspectives and recapitulations of the very same day (a similar feature present in the book of Revelation).¹²⁷ Furthermore, the Petrine and Johannine eschatology are strikingly similar: both affirm a material terrestrial new creation, but their focus seems to be the elimination of evil.¹²⁸ The purpose here then is not to present a detailed visual anticipation of what will precisely take place on the last day, as a “sneak peek” or a “movie trailer” of such events, but to explain clearly what type of event it will be and what this eschatological doctrine implies for us living in the last days.¹²⁹

iv. Revelation, ethics and Eschatology: Eagerly waiting according to the promise.

The day of the Lord is guaranteed by God’s word. Revelation is the foundation for Peter’s eschatology and ethics. It is his hope for the New Heavens and New Earth: according to the word of the promise (κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ).¹³⁰ New heaven is καινὸς because it is contrasted with the former that was fallen (also Rev 21:1).¹³¹ The adjective καινὸν is employed elsewhere to denote new wine in the sense of freshly made (Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37, 38, 39).¹³² In this context,

¹²⁷ The common motif for all of the patterns is the coming of the Lord with destructive judgment or saving deliverance. The extended patterns in Joel 1-3 and in Isaiah 13 present a narrated theophany with the Lord mustering an army, leading them in invasion, and pouring out His judgment in battle slaughter. The twofold pattern of Zechariah extends the narrative further with the Lord judging the wickedness of the Gentile invaders as He descends to reign as King on the earth. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus spoke of the seventieth week of Daniel as a day of the Lord unfolding as labor pains in which the Son of Man is coming, appearing visibly in glory at the end. Since the extended, narrated patterns are extended, narrated theophanies, they can be summarized, as it were, by a simpler theophanic image. And this is what is seen in the image of a rising or descending refining, fiery glory. See: Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18.”; William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, (Baker Books, 1998).

¹²⁸ John A Dennis, “Cosmology in the Petrine Literature and Jude,” in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology* (London, 2008), 157–77; Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 153-154.

¹²⁹ Often interpreters seem to meld apocalyptic into simple prophetic, forgetting that images in the vision are sometimes meant to symbolize rather than represent the details of an event. See: George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1993), 621-622; Heide, “What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3.”

¹³⁰ Peter, then, is affirming the existence of three “worlds”: a world before the flood (3:6), the present world between the flood and the Day of the Lord (3:7), and the future world after the Day (3:13) - each referring to the same heaven and earth in three periods of its history distinguished from each other by two cosmic crises: judgement by water in the flood and the judgement by fire on the Day: both promised and fulfilled (already and not yet) by the word of God. See: Heide, “What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3.”

¹³¹ The young, for instance, who have lately sprung up, are νέοι or νεώτεροι (Luke 15:12, 13). The new garment (Luke 5:36) is contrasted as to quality with a worn and threadbare one. The tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid was καινὸν (Matt. 27:60); in which no other body had lain, making it ceremonially unclean; not recently hewn. In Polybius there is a passage relating a stratagem by which a town was nearly taken, and saying “we are still new (καινοί) and young (νέοι) in regard of such deceits.” Thus, 1 Cor. 5:7, “Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new (νέον) lump;” and Col. 3:10, “Put on the new (νέον) man,” plainly carry the sense of quality. In the New Testament, besides the two cases just cited, νέος is applied to wine, to the young, and once to a covenant. See: Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 138–139.

¹³² That the “new” heavens and “new” earth refer to renewal rather replacement (starting from scratch) is indicated both from the context, which has the earth being laid bare or uncovered, and from the text’s choice of kainos, rather than neos for “new”. See: J

being closely used with the Greek terms for “pass away” in 3:10 (also similarly to Revelation 21:1), it most likely refer to a radical transformation of the quality rather than to its absolute destruction emphasizing the general meaning of *καινός* which “usually indicates newness in terms of quality, not time”.¹³³ Hence, the word “promise” is essential for Peter because of its eschatological implications since it connects the first coming with the second coming of Christ and makes the second coming inseparable from the arrival of the day of God and the new heavens and new earth.¹³⁴

The main locus for promise of a new heavens and new earth is Isaiah 65:17-25 and 66:22 and the immediate context refers to a new quality of the world and not a new world entirely. Isaiah refers to the new heavens and earth as a renewal under the messianic reign followed by a period of judgment by fire. Nothing suggests annihilation and new creation *ex nihilo*. In fact, the fiery judgment described there anticipates survivors and a continuation of the world after the fire (Isa 66:15-22). From this point on, the term becomes inherently associated with Isaiah so that whenever the phrase “οὐρανὸς καινοῦς καὶ γῆν καινὴν” appears in the canon, these subsequent references find their inspiration and point of departure from this original use.¹³⁵

The Apostle John in Rev 21:3-27 recovers this term to refer to the same events of 2 Peter 3. John sees a series of symbolic visions throughout the book; thus, his description must be interpreted accordingly and not doing so threatens an adequate understanding of the text.¹³⁶ The interpretation of this vision must be the decisive factor, not the uninterpreted vision itself. John keeps the same idea of qualitative renewal of Isaiah and Peter, particularly considering the

Richard Middleton, “A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Case for a Holistic Reading of the Biblical Story of Redemption,” *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 11 (2006): 73–97.

¹³³ “The word *νέος* means new in time or origin, whereas the word *καινός* means new in nature or in quality. He looks forward not to the emergence of a cosmos totally other than the present one, but the creation of a universe which, though it has been gloriously renewed, stands in continuity with the present one”. See: Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1994), 280.

¹³⁴ Alexander E Stewart, “When Are Christians Saved and Why Does It Matter?: An Investigation into the Rhetorical Force of First Peter’s Inaugurated Soteriology,” *Trinity Journal* 32.2 (2011): 221–35.

¹³⁵ Michael J Svigel, “Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition--Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It Ex Nihilo?,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171.684 (2014): 401–17.

¹³⁶ Interpreting without considering the symbolism leads the reader to use two different standards to approach the vision of vanishing creation and appearing of new creation and the vision of a seven-headed monster (13:1-8) or a seven-eyed lamb (5:6-14). Beale affirms that “this is probably not a portrayal of a literal new creation but a figurative depiction. In light of the qualitative nature of the contrast between “new” creation and “first” creation, it is likely that the meaning of the figurative portrayal is to connote a radically changed cosmos, involving not merely ethical renovation but transformation of the fundamental cosmic structure (including physical elements)”. See: Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1040.

interpretation of the vision in Rev 21:3-5.¹³⁷ In the word of promise we see God's word providentially sustaining this world and it juxtaposes this old world, that will be judged by fire, with the new heavens and new earth.¹³⁸

2 Peter 3 is then emphatic in the identity and ethics of the believer living in the last days. Peter is urging his audience to live in a holy way, in godliness now in light of the firm word of God in his promises. Thus, προσδοκῶντας in 3:12 affirms that the new heaven and the new earth is the aim of the certain hope of believers because ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ (Isa 65:25; Rev 21:3-27). The righteousness that is the mark of the renewed cosmos is the ethical imperative for the present believer: the identity of the Christian today needs to be conformed to his true identity that is eschatological – in essential continuity.¹³⁹

Peter's proclamation is that eternity has broken in on time so that the final judgment is a call to live a holy and dutiful life today (3:11), knowing that the end is certain and will bring purification and renewal towards a new order. God is the central active player in building this new kingdom which will be characterized by righteousness (3:12–13). Since eternity is righteousness, the true state of creation is godliness so that Peter joins together eschatology and ethics as a counter argument to the heretics' dissolution of the two.¹⁴⁰ His exhortation leads the readers to two ethical

¹³⁷ This is another instance of the correspondence between Petrine and Johannine eschatology: Revelation teaches us that the new heavens and new earth will become a reality with the coming of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1–22:5). At the same time, we are told that “every island fled away and the mountains could not be found” (Rev 16:20) and “Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them” (Rev 20:11). The first verse of Revelation 21 brings both themes together, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Rev 21:1; cf. Matt 19:28). The similitude of language also points to Peter using prophetic apocalyptic language in a very similar fashion with John. See: Scot McKnight, “2 Peter,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1510; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*. It is noteworthy, however, that one of the major interpreters of the annihilation position is John F. Walvoord who interpreted 2 Peter 3 using Revelation 20:11 and affirmed that “The most natural interpretation of the fact that earth and sky flee away is that the present earth and sky are destroyed and will be replaced by the new heaven and new earth”. See: John F. Walvoord, *Revelation*, ed. Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock, New edition. (Moody Publishers, 2011), 317.

¹³⁸ This juxtaposition is also an echo of Peter's own speech in Acts 2:17-36 and 3:19-21 which reveals a continuity in Peter's *kerygma*. There, Peter speaks of the fulfilling of the prophecy of Joel and the inauguration of the new age comprehending elements both in the present and in the future. The fulfillment is partly already realized, namely in the coming, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the consummation belongs partly to the future, since it is also Christ “who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead” (10:42) and it is Christ who would return in the “great and glorious day” (2:20) that all believing heart should eagerly await being the reason for his exhortation to repentance in view of that day. The believer's life and significance are set within this eschatological setting. Peter is consistent with Jewish thought in apologetically presenting the present age wholly under the domination of evil and the new age to come as the age of the Kingdom of God. However, this was not effected by human effort, but demanded direct intervention by God that would take place in the Day of the Lord. See: Jerry Horner, “The Credibility and the Eschatology of Peter's Speech at Pentecost,” *Pneuma* 2.1 (1980): 22–31.

¹³⁹ Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 371–372.

¹⁴⁰ Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*), 325.

qualities: holiness/godliness (3:11) and faithful waiting (3:12-13).¹⁴¹

The believer's calling is God's working, and its purpose is aimed to the future with repercussions on the present (1 Cor 11:26), not the other way around.¹⁴² The transformation of the believing heart now longs for the completion of what has been initiated. Furthermore, the eschatological waiting is also a seal, a mark of this divine work in the new creation who seeks anticipation of what is to come in continuity and not annihilation (2 Cor 1:22; 2 Cor 5:5; Eph 1:14).¹⁴³ Godly lives are related to and grounded in eschatology. The believer eagerly awaits because his identity has already been transformed into sonship and this new conscience looks forward to the moment of complete cosmological reconciliation and restoration.¹⁴⁴

The core of the eschatological present-future dynamic of waiting is both redemptive-historical and existential – and in continuity on both aspects. Those who disregard the future cosmos will not live well in the present one. The term “look forward to” occurs three times in the space of three verses (3:12–14) designating the eager expectation believers should have for the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of God's future promises. The term signifies the same eschatological hope elsewhere (Matt 11:3; Luke 7:29–30; 2 Mac 7:14; 12:44), but a striking parallel is present in Titus 2:13. The Greek word used in the verse is προσδέχομαι,¹⁴⁵ which resembles the word used by Paul in Romans, Galatians and 1 Corinthians.¹⁴⁶ Jude, possibly depending on Peter, uses the very same

¹⁴¹ This concept of waiting is entirely correspondent with the Pauline idea of eschatological waiting as a mark of the identity of the believer in Christ (Gal 5:5; 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 8:23-25; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20 and Titus 2:13). Even further, when Paul and Peter's concept of a “new creation” are compared, we see that for Paul the “new creation” conveys an idea of redemption and renewal rather than annihilation and recreation which dovetails with this symbolic interpretation of 2 Peter 3. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 5:17: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” which affirms that believers have not ceased to exist only to be re-created ex nihilo nor his personal identity has been destroyed, rather salvation is a regeneration, a renewal, a redemption of the old being transformed into something qualitatively new. See: Svigel, “Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition--Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It Ex Nihilo?”

¹⁴² The adoption of sons and the bodily redemption (resurrection) in Rom 8:23-25 must be taken into the context of the work of the Spirit, as it is not something completely reserved for the future, but is something that has already been initiated by Christ resurrection as the inauguration of the new aeon to come. See: Ben Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 1st edition. (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 176-177.

¹⁴³ It is then a fundamentally important moral quality of those who are experiencing injustices and who think God's time to act is now (Matt 24:42–43; 1 Thess 5:6; Rev 16:15). The structures of the world are falling apart and crumbling (1 Cor 7:31) and the soul of the believer cries out “Maranatha!” meaning “Lord, come!” (16:22). See: Grant Macaskill, *Living in Union with Christ: Paul's Gospel and Christian Moral Identity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2019), 66.

¹⁴⁴ Marcus L. Loane, *The Hope of Glory: An Exposition of the Eighth Chapter in the Epistle to the Romans*, 1st Edition. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968), 89-91.

¹⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that this is the same verb used in the end of the Nicene-Calcedonian creed: “προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν, καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος” meaning the eschatological waiting for the resurrection and the new aeon.

¹⁴⁶ This word is also used for those who await God's kingdom (Joseph in Mk. 15:43 and Simeon in Lk. 2:38) and for the Christian expectation of the resurrection (Acts 24:15). The disciples of John also use this verb when they ask Jesus if he is the one they “looked for” or if they should “look for” another. (Matt 11:3). The same verb as in Luke 1:21, of waiting for Zacharias. Cornelius

word for the eager awaiting of Christ's mercy in judgment (Jude 21).¹⁴⁷ Particularly, this word is the same one used by Jesus when telling his disciples to be "as those who wait for their master" (Lk. 12:36).¹⁴⁸ The word carries a religious connotation as a looking forward with a receptive frame of mind, not passively, but being proactive and alert with eager expectation.¹⁴⁹ The concept then is sourced in faith in Christ alone that hopes for His Parousia and outworks in love vertically and horizontally, in worship and ethics.¹⁵⁰

The full expression is then a double participle of manner complementing an ethical call, for the audience to be found in a holy way of conduct and godliness (ὑπάρχειν ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις). Waiting is not defined by present circumstances, but by what God is carrying out through history.¹⁵¹ The second participle σπεύδοντας, also a present participle, is not intransitive here, but with the direct object τὴν παρουσίαν (the object of the previous verb as well) could be translated as "hastening". However, the idea of accelerating the process of burning or causing the day of the Lord to come quicker by helping to fulfil the necessary conditions for it, as some suggested, does not work.¹⁵² God may delay his judgment in His patience waiting sinners to repent (Matt. 6:10; 24:14; Acts 3:19–21), but the day of the Parousia is already settled in God's providence meaning that God is sovereign not only concerning the ends but also the means.¹⁵³

waited (Acts 10:24); the cripple expecting to receive something (Acts 3:5). See: Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 707.

¹⁴⁷ Gilmour, *The Significance of Parallels Between 2 Peter and Other Early Christian Literature*, 86.

¹⁴⁸ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 148.

¹⁴⁹ Its plain meaning is "to receive"; "to wait for", conveying the sense of receiving something in a welcoming manner. See: Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 302. The religious relation implies awareness for what God is doing and a readiness for His calling. See: Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2018), 526.

¹⁵⁰ Winters, "A Strange Death: Cosmic Conflagration as Conceptual Metaphor in 2 Peter 3:6-13."

¹⁵¹ The waiting of the passage is focused on ethical aspects of the present life – an existential implication for the last days that are a consequence of the identity of the believer. A mark of the genuine identity of a believer is an eye in the future with a foot in the present. When Peter writes about the future, it is not detached from the present experience since he is well aware of suffering. Like Paul reminding Timothy and Titus, Peter is arguing for the believer's endurance (perseverance) which is not merely a passive stoic receiving of hardships while ignoring it for a vague transcendental ethereal thought, but it is an intentional concrete effort to trust in the Lord and act accordingly. See: I. Howard Marshall, Christopher M. Tuckett, and Graham I. Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 1st edition. (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 271-272.

¹⁵² Gracia Grindal, "Hastening the Day," *The Christian Century* 113.34 (1996): 1143–1143; Laurențiu Florentin Moț, "HASTENING THE PAROUSIA IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATIONS OF 2 PETER 3:12," *Biblicum Jassyense* 6 (2015): 33–48; Barbara R Rossing, "Hastening the Day When the Earth Will Burn: Global Warming, 2 Peter, and the Book of Revelation," in *The Bible in the Public Square: Reading the Signs of the Times* (Minneapolis, 2008), 25–38.

¹⁵³ A number of Jewish texts similarly speak of the way God will hasten the end (Isa. 60:22; Sir. 36:7; 4 Ezra 4:26; 2 Bar. 20.1–2; 83.1), however God is the one who brings things to pass. See: Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*).

Thus, the proper translation is “desiring with earnestness” or “to expect with longing”.¹⁵⁴ The eschatological waiting is also a constant active movement that accompanies and directs the heart and life of the believer in the present age (Jude 21) in a manner that he becomes recognizable by it.¹⁵⁵ Both participles are complemented by the coming of “the day of God” which is an unusual expression in the NT (Rev 16:14; possible reference to Jer 46:10). When Christ comes, the day of God has arrived for the judgment of the living and the dead and the renewal of entire creation.¹⁵⁶

Believers are to eagerly expect for a future world that is physical: new heavens and earth that are re-formed and not re-created *ex nihilo*. This is our eschatological hope that is to come on the day of God (3:12) as the fulfillment of God’s word. There God’s righteousness will dwell (Isa 32:16, LXX) filling the future world with His glory and beauty. Current godliness is living according to our ultimate purpose in opposition to the words of the false teachers.¹⁵⁷ God alone is the source and guarantor of the reality of the moral law: the ethical vocation and destiny of man. Therefore, all ethics is personal and eschatological.¹⁵⁸ This is why all religion, all philosophy, and all views of life and the world issue in an eschatology.¹⁵⁹ However, only God is creator and

¹⁵⁴ G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 413; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996) 297; Joh. Ed. Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, trans. D. B. Croom and Paton J. Gloag, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 370.

¹⁵⁵ Herman Veldkamp, *Waiting for Christ’s Return: On Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians* (St. Catharines, Ont.: Paideia Pr Ltd, 1975).

¹⁵⁶ The word “coming” in 1:16 and 3:4 refers to the coming of Christ, but the day of God refers to the day of the Father, not the Son. Nonetheless, the coming of God’s day is inseparable from the future coming of Christ. The collocation of “day of the Lord” and “day of God” with the coming of Christ implies Christ’s deity. See: J. M. Starr, “Sharers in Divine Nature: 2 Peter 1:4 in Its Hellenistic Context”, *Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 33* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000), 30.

¹⁵⁷ Living now as we ought to live then marks a cosmic and ethical continuity that bears deep cultural impacts. The word culture indicates cultivation, improvement, and always presupposes an object which must be improved which is called nature. It always consists of something not made by man but offered to him by creation. Culture includes all that human power produces from nature, but also includes the phenomena within man himself. The exercises of the faculties and gifts given to him by God and their products are a means for cultivating the external world. Thus, material goods, such as agriculture, industry, and trade as well as the realization of ideals of the true, the good, and the beautiful, by means of literature, science, and art are culture. See: Herman Bavinck and James P. Eglinton, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto and Cory Brock, Expanded edition. (Hendrickson Academic, 2018), 199-200. Also, for environmental repercussions of such continuity, see: Moo, “Continuity, Discontinuity, and Hope: The Contribution of New Testament Eschatology to a Distinctively Christian Environmental Ethos”; Peter C Phan, “Eschatology and Ecology: The Environment in the End-Times,” *Dialogue & Alliance* 9.2 (1995): 99–115.

¹⁵⁸ “For Scripture teaches that man was originally created after God’s image and bore the moral law in the inmost recesses of his heart; that even in the state of sin, he is still bound to the ideal world by his reason and conscience; and that the dissension which now exists between duty and inclination, according to all experience, is, in principle, reconciled in regeneration and conversion.” See: Bavinck and Eglinton, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 204.

¹⁵⁹ Bavinck shows that This deification of man proves clearly that no eschatology is possible without metaphysics. Bavinck and Eglinton, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 224. He argues that Nietzsche’s eschatology of eternal becoming remains proof that human minds are restless unless creation is heading toward some aim. In other words, Nietzsche’s non-eschatological eschatology, insofar as it denies that the world “only deserves to be destroyed,” remains proof that human hearts are unsatisfied by any truly nihilistic philosophy of history: “The human mind is restless until at the end of world history it finds some satisfaction, if not in a kingdom of God, then in a kingdom of humanity, or in a socialistic welfare state, or if necessary in Nietzsche’s ‘eternal recurrence of all things.’ Logical arguments cannot prove such a belief. It is noteworthy that belief in guidance and purpose in history is ineradicably

redeemer, the sole restorer and renewer of all things. The cross of Christ divides history in the preparation for and the accomplishment of reconciliation. History marches towards renewal.¹⁶⁰

3. CONCLUSION

In Christ we may rest assured concerning the past, the present, and the future. Nothing of any value will be lost in the future: all our works will follow us because Jesus is the one preserving and purifying it. The kings and nations of the earth will bring together into the city of God all their glory and honor (Rev 21:24, Isa 60:11; 65:17).¹⁶¹ Regeneration does not exist in a totally second new creation because God will sustain all things according to His promise: no new substance will be added but He will purify all that He created good. There will be a continuity of self, human nature in all its capacities, and the entire cosmos will be renewed, not in a destruction of this world followed by another creation, but the liberation of the creature that is now subject to futility.¹⁶² It cannot be otherwise because “God’s honor as Savior hinges precisely on his reconquest from the power of Satan of this human race and this world. Christ is not a second creator but a redeemer and Savior of this fallen creation, the Reformer of all things that have been corrupted by sin”. A re-creation is then the removal of sin from creation that does not modify the essence because sin is not part of the essence of creation but an ethical violation to God’s word - it is lawlessness.¹⁶³

Thus, there is hope. When the saints go marching in, in unity and diversity, all will rest in righteousness. Where? Here, in our Father’s world. I look forward to being counted in their numbers and because “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth, after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself, **and my eyes shall behold, and not another**” (Job 19:25-27).

implanted in the human heart and an indispensable component in the philosophy of history. Now if this is the case, we again face here the dilemma: illusion or reality? And thus, in principle, the choice between atheism and theism. And in making that choice it is not the intellect but the heart that clinches it”. See: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2004), 89.

¹⁶⁰ Bavinck and Eglinton, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 240-241.

¹⁶¹ Bavinck and Eglinton, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 245.

¹⁶² It is worth mentioning that Charles Hodge called, in the late nineteenth century, the view of the “renovated earth” the “common opinion”, even though he pointed to post-Reformation Lutheran scholars who defended the interpretation of “absolute annihilation”. See: Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology. Volume 3* (William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 853-854.

¹⁶³ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics : Vol. 4: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Baker Academic, 2008), 92.

APPENDIX I – POSSIBLE EMENDATIONS SUGGESTED IN PLACE OF Εὐρεθήσεται IN 2 PETER 3:10

1. One Sahidic and one Masoretic of Heracleon Syriac version adds the negative before εὐρεθήσεται so that the text reads that the earth and its works “shall not be found.” It attempts to offer a clearer meaning, but there is no adequate textual support for this emendation.¹⁶⁴
2. The early papyrus P72 adds the word λυόμενα so that the verse says that the earth and its works “will be found destroyed/broken up”. The meaning is clear, but poorly attested. It is a probable case of a scribe inserting a verbal form of the surrounding context to provide clarification.¹⁶⁵
3. *Textus Receptus*¹⁶⁶ reads “shall be burned” (κατακαήσεται) and found in many English translations (KJV; NKJV, RSV, NASB). This reading is also present in the Clementine Vulgate and the Heracleon Syriac. If this reading were original, it is difficult to see how “will be found” would have come to be in its place.¹⁶⁷
4. Codex C alone reads “will vanish” (ἀφανισθήσεται). Probably a scribe’s conjecture.¹⁶⁸
5. Scholars also have conjectured several possibilities: adding ἀγρα after έργα (“it will be found useless”, Bradshaw); replacing the verb by ρυήσεται or ρεύσεται (“will run” or will flow, Westcott/Hort); replacing the verb by συρρυήσεται (“will run/flow together”, Naber); replacing the verb by ἐκπυρωθήσεται (“will be burned in fire”, Olivier); replacing the verb by ἀρθήσεται (“will be taken away”, Mayor); replacing the verb by κριθήσεται (“will be judged”, Nestle); replacing the verb by ιαθήσεται (“will be healed”, Chase); and replacing the verb by πυρωθήσεται (“will be burned, Vansittart).¹⁶⁹ These and even other suggestions

¹⁶⁴ This view is adopted by Bigg. See: Bigg, *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Epistles Of St. Peter And St. Jude*, 213. Mayor observes from Ps 37:36 (LXX); Job 20:8 (LXX); Dan 11:19 (Θ); Rev 18:21 that οὐχ εὐρίσκομαι may denote “to disappear”, which would also lean towards annihilation. See: Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter*.

¹⁶⁵ Fornberg affirms that options 1 and 2 affirm the same idea and is in favor of either, despite manuscript support: “It appears impossible to decide which reading is original. Since the introduction to v11 seems to assume that v10 refers to destruction or nonexistence, the wording of P72 and the Sahidic translation must carry a significance akin to that intended before”. See: Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society*, 74–76

¹⁶⁶ Also present in A, 048, 049, 056, 0142, 33, 614, *Byz Lect* syr^h, cop^{bo} and others.

¹⁶⁷ “The repetition of the word εὐρίσκω in 2 Peter is striking. That a scribe should have altered a word like κατακαήσεται or one of the other readings into a more difficult εὐρεθήσεται to secure a sophisticated verbal echo appears extremely improbable, especially in view of the number of the variants which document the efforts made in the direction of a *lectio facilior*. But if εὐρεθήσεται in 3:10 is original, then the echo in 3:14 is intentional and artistically designed, in accordance with the writer’s trend of thought.”. See: Danker, “2 Peter 3:10 and Psalm of Solomon 17:10.”

¹⁶⁸ J W Roberts, “A Note on the Meaning of II Peter 3:10d,” *Restoration Quarterly* 6.1 (1962): 32–33.

¹⁶⁹ Tresham, “A Test Case for Conjectural Emendation: 2 Peter 3:10d.”

have been made, but none with any consistency or corroboration of manuscript evidences.¹⁷⁰

6. Kelly thinks this concluding phrase should be understood as a question, “and the earth and the works it contains—will they be found?” There is no internal or external evidence that a question is intended.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ For instance, G. van den Heever concludes that leaving a literal translation such as “and the earth and the works in it shall be found” is necessarily corrupt and no solution has been plausibly advanced to explain its meaning. For him, the verb is necessarily a corruption because: “If εὑρεθήσεται did make sense, the major part of the tradition would not have found it necessary to change the text into something more intelligible”. See: Van den Heever, “IN PURIFYING FIRE: WORLD VIEW AND 2 PETER 3:10.”

¹⁷¹ “In the Bible ‘find’ or ‘be found’ frequently approximates to ‘be’ or ‘exist,’ and when used in the negative or cast in the form of a question can convey the sense of non-existence.” See: Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 364–66; also R. L. Overstreet, “A Study of 2 Peter 3:10–13,” *BSac* 137 (1980): 358. Fornberg affirms that this solution is “far-fetched” and Bauckham concludes “it is forced”. See: Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society*, 75; Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 318.

APPENDIX II – BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF 2 PETER 3

This appendix intends to complement the exegetical argument above by showing a recollection of historic interpretations of this passage in order to show that the renovation/renewal of the present physical universe is the classic position and that it reflects a better canonical and theological reading of 2 Peter 3.¹⁷² The annihilationist position is then a recent rearticulation of some of the ancient gnostic motifs applied to eschatology.

The relationship of 2 Peter with the Patristics has been an object of debate due to the consensus of the critical academia of the pseudonymity of 2 Peter.¹⁷³ However, one of the earliest apparent parallels/allusions to 2 Peter 3 is the letter of 1 Clement 7:5-8:5.¹⁷⁴ 1 Clement 7:5-6 reads διέλθωμεν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς πάσας καὶ καταμάθωμεν ὅτι ἐν γενεᾷ καὶ γενεᾷ μετανοίας τόπον ἔδωκεν ὁ δεσπότης τοῖς βουλομένοις ἐπιστραφῆναι ἐπ’ αὐτόν. 6 Νῶε ἐκήρυξεν μετάνοιαν καὶ οἱ ὑπακούσαντες ἐσώθησαν and 1 Clement 8:1-2 reads Οἱ λειτουργοὶ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου περὶ μετανοίας ἐλάλησαν, 2 καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ δεσπότης τῶν πάντων περὶ μετανοίας ἐλάλησεν μετὰ ὄρκου· Ζῶ γὰρ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος, οὐ βούλομαι τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ, ὥς τὴν μετάνοιαν.¹⁷⁵ Clement cites Noah as a preacher of repentance alluding to the same idea of 2 Peter 2:5 and affirms that Lord provided an opportunity for repentance for the ones who hear Him which is an echo of 2 Peter 3:9 and the patience of God providing an opportunity to repentance (ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς μὴ βουλομενος τινὰς ἀπολεσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρησαι). Both Clement and Peter are referring as well to Ezekiel 33 in 8:5 with βουλόμενος μετανοίας μετασχεῖν.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Svigel, “Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition--Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It Ex Nihilo?”; Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers.”

¹⁷³ Edwin A. Abbott, “On the Second Epistle of St. Peter”, *The Expositor* 2/3 (1882), 49-63; F.W. Farrar, “Dr. Abbott on the Second Epistle of St. Peter”, *The Expositor* 2/3 (1882), 401-423; “The Second Epistle of St. Peter and Josephus”, *The Expositor* 3/8 (1888), 55-69; Benjamin B. Warfield, “Dr. Edwin A. Abbott on the Genuineness of Second Peter”, *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 34 (1883), 390-445; “The Canonicity of Second Peter”, *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 33 (1882), 45-75; Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter*; Bigg, *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Epistles Of St. Peter And St. Jude*.

¹⁷⁴ A letter from the church of Rome to the church of Corinth; church fathers name Clement of Rome as its author. First Clement can likely be dated around the end of the first century, ca. ad 95–96. First Clement may be the oldest document of the subapostolic age; other possibilities include the Didache and Shepherd of Hermas. See: Matthew A. Wilcoxon, “Clement, First Letter of,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁷⁵ “Let us review all the generations in turn and learn that from generation to generation the Master has given an opportunity for repentance to those who desire to turn to him. Noah preached repentance, and those who obeyed were saved. (...) 8:1 The ministers of the grace of God spoke about repentance through the Holy Spirit; 2 indeed, the Master of the universe himself spoke about repentance with an oath: “For as I live, says the Lord, I do not desire the death of the sinner so much as his repentance.”

¹⁷⁶ Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter*, 157.

Another text that presents a clear reference to 2 Peter 3 is 2 Clement 16:3.¹⁷⁷ There it is found a striking parallel with 2 Peter 3 eschatological language:

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| <p>2 Clement 16:3:</p> <p>Γινώσκετε δέ, ὅτι <u>ἔρχεται</u> ἤδη ἡ <u>ἡμέρα</u> τῆς <u>κρίσεως</u> ὡς <u>κλίβανος</u> <u>καιόμενος</u>, καὶ <u>τακῆσονται</u> τινες τῶν οὐρανῶν¹⁷⁸ καὶ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ ὡς μόλιβος ἐπὶ πυρὶ <u>τηκόμενος</u> καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὰ κρύφια καὶ <u>φανερὰ ἔργα τῶν ἀνθρώπων</u>.</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>But you know that “the day” of judgment is already approaching as a burning oven, and some of the heavens shall melt, and the whole earth shall be as lead melting in the fire, and then shall be made manifest the secret and open deeds of men.¹⁷⁹</p> | <p>2 Peter 3:7:</p> <p>οἱ δε νυν ουρανοι και η γη τω αυτω λογω τεθησαυρισμενοι εισιν πυρι τηρουμενοι εις <u>ημεραν κρισεως</u> και απωλειας των ασεβων ανθρωπων</p> <p>2 Peter 3:10:</p> <p>Ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα Κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ οἱ οὐρανοὶ <u>ροιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται</u>, στοιχεῖα δὲ <u>καυσούμενα</u> λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ <u>τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται</u>.</p> <p>2 Peter 3:12:</p> <p>προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, δι’ ἣν οὐρανοὶ <u>πυρούμενοι</u> λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα <u>καυσούμενα</u> <u>τήκεται</u></p> <p>Mal 4:1 (LXX):</p> <p>Διότι ἰδοὺ ἡμέρα <u>ἔρχεται</u> <u>καιομένη</u> ὡς <u>κλίβανος</u> καὶ φλέξει αὐτοὺς, καὶ ἔσονται πάντες οἱ ἀλλογενεῖς, καὶ πάντες οἱ ποιοῦντες</p> |
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¹⁷⁷ Second Clement is often described as the earliest Christian homily or sermon outside of the New Testament. Its focus is Isa 54. (ca. ad 120–140). It is one of the earliest non-canonical Christian documents to explicitly quote the New Testament as “scripture” in reference to Matthew 19:3. Second Clement is formally anonymous and contains no internal statement of provenance or date. The traditional attribution of this writing to Clement of Rome is suspect; stylistic differences between it and 1 Clement have been observed as early as Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 3.38). See: Kyle R. Hughes, “Clement, Second Letter of,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).; John D. Barry, “Canon, Books in Codices,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁷⁸ Possibly the text is corrupt: Lightfoot’s conjecture would be translated, “the powers of heaven”. See: Joseph Barber Lightfoot and Pope Clement I, *S. Clement of Rome; Volume 2* (Legare Street Press, 2023).

¹⁷⁹ Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1 of *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 155.

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| | ἄνομα, καλάμη, καὶ ἀνάψει αὐτοὺς ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἐρχομένη, λέγει Κύριος παντοκράτωρ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ὑπολειφθῇ ἐξ αὐτῶν ῥίζα οὐδὲ κλῆμα |
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From the comparison, we can observe the same usage of the ἡ ἡμέρα τῆς κρίσεως as the day of the judgement that the audience of 2 Clement is already aware (Γινώσκετε δέ). There is an interpretative movement in substituting καυσώω for καιω, which might be an application of Mt 13:40 or from Rev 8:10; 21:8 to the fire image in 2 Peter 3. Even more clear is the parallel between 2 Clement and Mal 4:1 LXX which is being connected by the author with 2 Pet 3:12.¹⁸⁰ The verbal parallels with 2 Peter 3 are unmistakable (τήκω used twice, the juxtaposition of οὐρανῶν, γῆ and ἔργα, in an eschatological context, with the same tense and ending of the verb).¹⁸¹ Thus, the same verb for “melting” τήκω from 2 Peter 3 is applied to the heavens and the earth, but in connection to the manifestation of the deeds of mankind. Here another important hermeneutic clarification is presented when the author of 2 Clement uses the verb φαίνω instead of εὐρίσκω from 3:10. Since φαίνω most common meaning is “to reveal, make it clear, expound”¹⁸², this hermeneutical move from a very early source favors εὐρεθήσεται as the original reading of 2 Peter 3:10. It also favors a position that is against annihilationism due to the necessary continuity and cleansing of the works of man on the earth.

Furthermore, both 1 Clement 23:3 and 2 Clement 11:2 cite a common unidentified source that is regarded as “Scripture”. Please find the parallel below:

¹⁸⁰ “It is difficult to decide whether the writer of 2 Clement was using 2 Peter here, or if he was depending solely on Malachi and Isaiah. The following points must be considered. (1) Clement's term 'the day of the judgment' comes from the primary verses in neither one; but 2 Pet. 3.7 has, in near context, ἡμέραν κρίσεως and Isa. 34.8, likewise in near context, calls this ἡμέρα κρίσεως κυρίου, so that does not help us. (2) The comparison with a burning furnace/oven (κλίβανος) is not made in Peter, but is in Mai. 4.1, which would tend to suggest that Clement was thinking of that verse. (3) Clement's indication that 'some (things) of the heavens shall be melted' corresponds either to 2 Peter or to Isaiah, but the wording is closer to Isaiah, the strange 'some' (τινες) being unlike either one. (4) Clement's comparison of the whole earth's melting to 'lead' (μόλιβδος) is neither in 2 Peter nor in Isaiah or Malachi. Clement's reference to men's works being manifested is quite close to 2 Peter's 'earth and the works therein shall be found out', but seems to have nothing parallel in Isaiah or Malachi. Perhaps not entirely insignificant is the fact that Clement goes on to say (v. 4), 'Blessed is every one who is found (ὁ εὐρεθείς) full in these things. both 2 Peter and Clement refer, just before the description of this day of the Lord, to the 'opportunity for repentance', whereas neither Isaiah nor Malachi does. Then one may suspect that Clement was familiar with Peter's use of Isaiah, and added the contribution from Malachi”. See: Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers.”

¹⁸¹ James Montague Rhodes, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Hardpress Publishing, 2013), 35.

¹⁸² H.G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 853.

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| <p>1 Clement 23:3:</p> <p>πόρρω γενέσθω ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἡ γραφή αὕτη, ὅπου λέγει</p> <p>Ταλαίπωροί εἰσιν οἱ δίψυχοι, οἱ διστάζοντες ‘τῇ ψυχῇ’, οἱ λέγοντες Ταῦτα ἠκούσαμεν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ ἰδού, γεγηράκαμεν καὶ οὐδὲν ἡμῖν τούτων συνβέβηκεν.</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>Let this scripture be far from us where it says, “Wretched are the doubleminded, those who doubt in their soul and say, ‘We heard these things even in the days of our fathers, and look, we have grown old, and none of these things have happened to us.</p> | <p>2 Clement 11:2:</p> <p>λέγει γὰρ καὶ ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος</p> <p>Ταλαίπωροί εἰσιν οἱ δίψυχοι, οἱ διστάζοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ, οἱ λέγοντες· Ταῦτα πάλαι ἠκούσαμεν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας προσδεχόμενοι οὐδὲν τούτων ἐωράκαμεν.</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>For the prophetic word also says: “Miserable are the double-minded that doubt in their heart, who say, These things we heard long ago and in the time of our fathers, but we have waited from day to day, and have seen none of them.</p> | <p>2 Peter 3:4:</p> <p>καὶ λεγοντες που εστιν ἡ επαγγελια της παρουσιας αυτου αφ ης γαρ οι πατερες εκοιμηθησαν παντα ουτως διαμενει απ αρχης κτισεως</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”</p> |
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In this parallel reference, 2 Pet 3:4 might be the Scriptural source behind since both authors are exhorting their audiences in a very similar manner than Peter against the false teachings or the “mockers”. The vocabulary is identical, except for the common reference to “the fathers”, and the

central the idea is strikingly similar.¹⁸³ Additionally, the same phrase *ἡμεραν ἐξ ημερας* occurs both in 2 Clement 11:2 and 2 Peter 2:8. Donfried provides a structural parallel that reinforces the idea of 2 Peter as a source for 1 and 2 Clement when he argues that: “The elements which precede and follow this section of 2 Clement 11 on doubt about the future are almost identical to a pattern which is found in 2 Peter and 1 Clement: (1) a reference to false teachers (2 Clement 10:5; 2 Peter 2.1ff and 17ff; 1 Clement 21:5); (2) a discussion of the eschatological problem (2 Clement 11; 2 Pet. 3; 1 Clem. 23); and (3) a reference to the nearness of the kingdom (2 Clement 12:1; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Clement 23:5).”¹⁸⁴ Another parallel between 1 Clement and 2 Peter 3 comes from 1 Clement 27:4:

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| <p>1 Clement 27:4:</p> <p>ἐν λόγῳ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ συνεστήσατο τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἐν λόγῳ δύναται αὐτὰ καταστρέψαι</p> <p>Translation: 4 By his majestic word he established the universe, and by a word he can destroy it.</p> | <p>2 Peter 3:5-7:</p> <p>λανθανει γαρ αυτους τουτο θελοντας οτι ουρανοι ησαν εκπαλαι και γη εξ υδατος και δι υδατος συνεστῶσα τῷ του θεου λογῷ 6 δι ὧν ο τοτε κοσμος υδατι κατακλυσθεις απωλετο 7 οι δε νυν ουρανοι και η γη τῷ αὐτῷ λογῷ τεθησαυρισμενοι εισιν πυρι τηρουμενοι εις ημεραν κρισεως και απωλειας των ασεβων ανθρωπων</p> <p>Translation: 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now</p> |
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¹⁸³ “As this passage does not occur in the Old Testament, it must have been taken from some lost apocryphal writing. Some writers indeed have supposed that Clement here, as he certainly does elsewhere is fusing several passages of the Canonical Scripture, such as James 1:8, 2 Pet. 3:4, Mark 4:26, but the resemblances though striking are not sufficient for a conflation.” See: J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Part One, II (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1981), 80. Lightfoot also conjectures that Eldad and Modat was the source, based only on the fact that Hermas also spoke of ‘doublemindedness’ and cited that work. However, there is no evidence for such use. See: Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers”; Dale C Jr Allison, “Eldad and Modad,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 21.2 (2011): 99–131.

¹⁸⁴ Karl P. Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1974), 151.

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| | exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. |
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Both in 2 Peter 3:5-7 and 1 Clement 27:4, the idea that the creation occurred by the word of God is connected to the fact that the same physical world will be καταστρέψαι meaning to be “changed”, “overthrown”, “turned over” by the same word of God. In both their main idea is that the word of God is the bookends of creation, being both the cause of creation and of the purification/renewal in judgment.¹⁸⁵

Another early source that presents a parallel with 2 Peter 3 is the book Sheperd of Hermas.¹⁸⁶ In its first vision (1.3.4) the Shepherd refers to God’s work in creation by His word in a very similar fashion than 2 Peter 3:5. Both passages occur in a similar context of mockers asking why the Parousia is taking so long and insisting that nothing has changed since the dawn of creation. Both appeal to the fact that change and judgment already has taken place before with water. Some identify Psalm 136:6 (135:6 LXX) as the main source, but the description of the antediluvian world in 2 Peter 3:5, although not identical in vocabulary, is closer in the theme of the word of God being the cause for the establishment of heaven and earth and the connection of this establishment with the water:

¹⁸⁵ Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 296-297.

¹⁸⁶ The Shepherd was mentioned and well known by the early church fathers: Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Origen were especially ardent supporters of the work. Only Tertullian seems to be against this work. The Muratorian Canon depicts Shepherd as not authoritative, but still useful for private reading. The Shepherd of Hermas was likely written in or around Rome and quite possibly over a stretch of time ranging from the late first century ad to the middle of the second century ad. The work is difficult to date due to varying references, including a mention of a Hermas in Rom 16:14, Vision 2.4.3’s reference to Clement of Rome within the work, and its mention in the Muratorian Canon as being composed “recently” during the bishopric of Pius in Rome (around the 140s). The Shepherd of Hermas is divided into three separate sections joined thematically: 5 Visions, 12 Mandates, and 10 Similitudes. These Five visions—consisting of a vision of a woman, Rhoda; two visions of the Church as a woman and messages of judgment; a vision of the building of a tower and its meaning, which bears on the Church; and a vision of a great beast, which is an eschatological reckoning. See: Charles Meeks, “Shepherd of Hermas,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

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| <p>Shepherd of Hermas 1.3.4:</p> <p>Ἰδοῦ, ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων, ὃ ἀγαπῶ, δυνάμει κραταιᾷ καὶ τῇ μεγάλῃ συνέσει αὐτοῦ κτίσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ τῇ ἐνδόξῳ βουλῇ περιθεὶς τὴν εὐπρέπειαν τῇ κτίσει αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ ἰσχυρῷ ῥήματι πῆξας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ θεμελώσας τὴν γῆν ἐπὶ ὑδάτων καὶ τῇ ἰδίᾳ σοφίᾳ καὶ προνοίᾳ κτίσας τὴν ἁγίαν ἐκκλησίαν αὐτοῦ, ἣν καὶ ἠύλόγησεν, ἰδοῦ, μεθιστάνει τοὺς οὐρανούς, καὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ τοὺς βουνούς καὶ τὰς θαλάσσας, καὶ πάντα ὁμαλὰ γίνεται τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ἀποδῶ αὐτοῖς τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, ἣν ἐπηγγείλατο μετὰ πολλῆς δόξης καὶ χαρᾶς, ἐὰν τηρήσωσιν τὰ νόμιμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ᾧ παρέλαβον ἐν μεγάλῃ πίστει.</p> <p>Translation: Behold, the God of Hosts, Who by His invisible and mighty power and by His great wisdom created the world, and by His glorious purpose clothed His creation with comeliness, and by His strong word fixed the heaven, and founded the earth upon the waters, and by His own wisdom and providence formed His holy Church, which also He blessed-behold, He removeth the heavens and the mountains and the hills and the seas, and all things are made level for His elect, that He may fulfill to them the promise which He promised with great glory and rejoicing, if so be that they shall keep the ordinances of God, which they received, with great faith</p> | <p>2 Peter 3:5:</p> <p>λανθανει γαρ αυτους τουτο θελοντας οτι ουρανοι ησαν εκπαλαι και γη εξ υδατος και δι υδατος συνεστωσα τω του θεου λογω</p> |
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In the fourth vision of Sheperd of Hermas (4.3.4), there is a reference to a cosmic conflagration:

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| <p>Shepherd of Hermas 4.3.4:</p> <p>2. Ἄκουε, φησὶν· τὸ μὲν μέλαν οὗτος ὁ κόσμος ἐστίν, ἐν ᾧ κατοικεῖτε· 3. τὸ δὲ πυροειδες, ὅτι δεῖ τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον δι' αἵματος καὶ πυρὸς ἀπόλλυσθαι· 4. τὸ δὲ χρυσοῦν μέρος ὑμεῖς ἐστε οἱ ἐκωυγόντες τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον. ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ χρυσίον δοκιμάζεται διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ εὐχρηστον γίνεται, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς δοκιμάζεσθε οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν αὐτοῖς. οἱ οὖν μείναντες καὶ πυρωθέντες ὑπ' αὐτῶν καθαρισθήσεσθε. ὥσπερ τὸ χρυσίον ἀποβάλλει πᾶσαν λύπην καὶ στενοχωρίαν, καὶ καθαρισθήσεσθε καὶ χρήσιμοι ἔσεσθε εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ πύργου. 5. τὸ δὲ λευκὸν μέρος ὁ αἰὼν ὁ ἐπερχόμεός ἐστιν, ἐν ᾧ κατοικήσουσιν οἱ ἐκλεκτὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι ἄσπιλοι καὶ καθαροὶ ἔσονται οἱ ἐκλελεγμένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. 6. σὺ οὖν μὴ διαλίης λαλῶν εἰς τὰ ὦτα τῶν ἁγίων. ἔχετε καὶ τὸν τύπον τῆς θλιπνεως τῆς ἐρχομένης μεγάλης. ἐὰν δὲ ὑμεῖς θελήσητε, οὐδὲν ἔσται. μνημονεύετε τὰ προγεγραμμένα.¹⁸⁷</p> | <p>2 Peter 3:6:</p> <p>δι' ὧν τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο</p> <p>2 Peter 3:7:</p> <p>οἱ δε νυν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσιν πυρὶ τηρουμένοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρισεως καὶ απωλειας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων</p> <p>2 Peter 3:10:</p> <p>Ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα Κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ οἱ οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.</p> <p>2 Peter 3:12:</p> <p>προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, δι' ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται</p> <p>2 Peter 3:13:</p> <p>καινοὺς δε οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ.</p> |
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¹⁸⁷ Translation: 2. "Listen," said she; "the black is this world in which ye dwell; 3 and the fire and blood color showeth that this world must perish by blood and fire; 4 and the golden part are ye that has escaped from this world. For as the gold is tested by the fire and is made useful, so ye also [that dwell in it] are being tested in yourselves. Ye then that abide and pass through the fire will be purified by it. For as the old loses its dross, so Ye also shall cast away all sorrow and tribulation, and shall be purified, and shall be useful for the building of the tower. 5 But the white portion is the coming age, in which the elect of God shall dwell; because the elect of God shall be without spot and pure unto life eternal. 6 Wherefore cease not thou to speak in the ears of the saints. Ye have now the symbolism also of the tribulation which is coming in power. But if ye be willing, it shall be nought. Remember ye

The Shepherd parallel is then more interpretative than linguistic. The author affirms that this world must be destroyed by blood and fire, which may be a symbolic interpretation following 2 Peter 3. It also connects the fiery image repeatedly with purification, not only of the world but also the elect. By the burning aspect, both are being tested while the dross is being eliminated – which may also be an echo to Malachi. This fire will produce a community without spot and pure unto eternal life. Finally, it refers to these association of words as a symbolism, as a type (τύπον) for the tribulation which points to a symbolic interpretation of Peter as well as apocalyptic literature. Additionally, Hermas's acquaintance with 2 Peter becomes obvious, however, in the very next verse, where he alludes to 2 Pet 2.20.

In addition, later in Sim. 8.11.1 there is a clear reference to 2 Pet 3.9:

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| <p>Sim. 8.11.1:</p> <p>Καὶ μετὰ τὸ συντελέσαι αὐτὸν τὰς ἐπιλύσεις πασῶν τῶν ῥάβδων λέγει μοι· Ὑπάγε καὶ πᾶσιν λέγε, ἵνα μετανοήσωσιν, καὶ ζήσονται τῷ θεῷ· ὅτι ὁ κύριος ἔπεμψέ με σπλαγχνισθεὶς πᾶσι δοῦναι τὴν μετάνοιαν, καίπερ τινῶν μὴ ὄντων ἀξίων διὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν· ἀλλὰ μακρόθυμος ὢν ὁ κύριος <i>θέλει</i> τὴν κλῆσιν τὴν γενομένην διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ σώζεσθαι.</p> <p>Translation: And after he had completed the interpretations of all the rods, he saith unto me; "Go, and tell all men to repent, and they shall live unto God; for the Lord in His compassion sent me to give repentance to all, though some of them do not deserve it for their deeds; but being long-suffering the Lord willeth them that were called through His Son to be saved."</p> | <p>2 Pet 3.9:</p> <p>ου βραδυνει κύριος της επαγγελιας ως τινες βραδυτητα ηγουνται αλλα μακροθυμει εις υμας μη <i>βουλομενος</i> τινας απολεσθαι αλλα παντας εις μετανοιαν χωρησαι</p> |
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the things that are written beforehand." See: J. B. Lightfoot, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. CrossReach Publications (Independently published, 2017).

The resemblance to 2 Peter 3:9 is very close since both passages arguing by associating together the same concepts and vocabulary: the Lord's longsuffering, his desire (βούλομαι in 2 Peter) that men be saved, and the opportunity of repentance he provides.¹⁸⁸

It is noteworthy that 1 and 2 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas share a common provenance attributed to Rome. This could explain their deep awareness of 2 Peter since Peter very likely wrote it from Rome in the middle of the first century (mid 60's). The shared vocabulary may point out to a similar use of the Greek or even to a common scribal/amanuensis type of practice existent in Rome and that might have influenced the writing of these letters (1 Peter 5:12 explicitly mentions Silvanus as Peter amanuensis, for instance).

The Epistle of Barnabas¹⁸⁹ also shows allusions to 2 Peter 3 when it refers to o Jesus as One who came to fulfill “the promise made to the fathers” (ἵνα τοῖς πατράσιν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἀποδῷ), a grammatical construction that is very close to 2 Peter 3:4 and the accusation of the mockers. Moreover, Barnabas 15:4 is a very curious passage because it quotes Genesis and the creation taking place in six days and concludes that the Lord will make an end of everything in six thousand years: προσέχετε, τέκνα, τί λέγει τὸ συνετέλεσεν ἐν ἑξ ἡμέραις. τοῦτο λέγει, ὅτι ἐν ἑξακισχίλοις ἔτεσιν συντελέσει κύριος τὰ σύμπαντα· ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρα παρ’ αὐτῷ σημαίνει χίλια ἔτη. αὐτὸς δέ μοι μαρτυρεῖ λέγων· Ἰδοὺ, ἡμέρα κυρίου ἔσται ὡς χίλια ἔτη. οὐκοῦν, τέκνα, ἐν ἑξ ἡμέραις, ἐν τοῖς ἑξακισχίλοις ἔτεσιν συντελεσθήσεται τὰ σύμπαντα.¹⁹⁰ It is clear that the author is quoting (due to the presence of the γὰρ and the λέγων) but his source is disputed. The closest known source in language and meaning is 2 Peter 3:8 (even more than Psalm 90): μία ἡμέρα παρά κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἐτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Picirilli, “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers”

¹⁸⁹ The Letter of Barnabas was composed sometime after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in ad 70, likely in Greek, though the location of origin is unknown. It is an allegorical exhortation of Scripture that claims to explain and justify the cessation of several Jewish practices in light of the work and words of Christ. Letter of Barnabas concludes with an exhortation of the “Two Ways” (the way of light and the way of darkness). Letter of Barnabas is contained in the Codex Sinaiticus, along with Shepherd of Hermas, but follows Revelation, signifying that it may have been viewed as a type of appendix. Clement of Alexandria is the first to mention the epistle, so it must date to earlier than the end of the second century. See: Charles Meeks, “Barnabas, Letter of,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁹⁰ “Notice, children, what is the meaning of “He made an end in six days”? He means this: that the Lord will make an end of everything in six thousand years, for a day with him means a thousand years. And he himself is my witness when he says, “Lo, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years.” So then, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything will be completed.” See: Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1 of *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 395.

¹⁹¹ Mayor finds the same quotation in Irenaeus (c. 180) and Justin Martyr (c. 145). Later, Methodius (late third century) named 2 Peter as the source for this quote. See: Mayor, *Jude and Second Peter*, 121-122.

This same Epistle of Barnabas may support the reading and interpretation of the verb εὐρεθήσεται where we read: γίνεσθε δὲ θεοδιδάκτοι, ἐκζητοῦντες τί ζητεῖ κύριος ἀφ’ ὑμῶν, καὶ ποιεῖτε ἵνα εὐρεθῇτε ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως. (21:6) - "act in order that you may be found in the day of judgement." The parallel with 2 Pet 3:10 is so close (the same absolute use of εὐρεθήσεται, the same eschatological context, the same link with ethical exhortation) that it looks like an explicit verbal echo.

Later, Ignatius presents another parallel with 2 Peter 3 his Letter to the church of Smyrna. There he urges them to return to soberness "seeing we yet have opportunity to repent toward God (καίρὸν ἔχομεν εἰς θεὸν μετανοεῖν – 9:1) which is a similar wording of 2 Pet. 3:9 (πάντες εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρήσαι). In his Letter to the Ephesians (11:1), he references the same "longsuffering" of God while exhorting his audience to fear God and avoid His judgement. Nonetheless, a clearer allusion is found in the same Letter to the Trallians (13:3) where he exhorts them to "be found blameless" (εὐρεθείητε ἀμωμοί) employing a similar use of εὐρεθήσεται of 2 Peter 3:10 and imitating Peter's exhortation in 2 Peter 3:14: διο ἀγαπητοὶ ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδασατε ἀσπίλοι καὶ ἀμωμητοὶ αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ.¹⁹²

Contrary voices in favor of an annihilationist view in the period of the mid to late second century and into the third come mostly from the Gnostic heretics.¹⁹³ The majority of the early testimony of the Church, however, has been against it. In the end of the second century, Irenaeus wrote against the Gnostic/Stoic position: "Neither is the substance, nor the essence of the creation annihilated (for faithful and true is he who has established it), but 'the fashion of the world passes away' (1 Cor. 7:3). But when this present fashion of things passes away, and man has been renewed, and flourishes in an incorruptible state, so as to preclude the possibility of becoming old, then there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, in which the new man shall remain continually, always holding fresh converse with God".¹⁹⁴

Similarly, early in the third century, Origen wrote concerning 1 Co 7:31 and Psalm 102:26: "For if the heavens are to be changed, assuredly that which is changed does not perish, and if the

¹⁹² Bigg, *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Epistles Of St. Peter And St. Jude*, 209.

¹⁹³ *On the Origin of the World* (NHL II, 5 125.32-127.17), in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 3 ed. James M. Robinson (New York: HarperOne, 1990); Blaising, "The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18."

¹⁹⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.36,1, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, Mich: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 1887), 566-567.

fashion of the world passes away, it is by no means an annihilation or destruction of their material substance that is shown to take place, but a kind of change of quality and transformation of appearance. Isaiah also, in declaring prophetically that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, undoubtedly suggests a similar view. For this renewal of heaven and earth, and this transmutation of the form of the present world, and this changing of the heavens will undoubtedly be prepared for those who are walking along the way”.¹⁹⁵

In the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo defended the same interpretation in favor of an amillennial eschatology: “For when the judgment is finished, this heaven and earth shall cease to be, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. For this world shall pass away by transmutation, not by absolute destruction. And therefore, the apostle says, ‘For the figure of this world passeth away. I would have you be without anxiety.’ The figure, therefore, passes away, not the nature. And by this universal conflagration the qualities of the corruptible elements which suited our corruptible bodies shall utterly perish, and our substance shall receive such qualities as shall, by a wonderful transmutation, harmonize with our immortal bodies, so that, as the world itself is renewed into some better thing, it is fitly accommodated to men, themselves renewed in their flesh into some better thing”.¹⁹⁶

This very analogy between the renewal of the world and the resurrection of the godly was first drawn by Ambrose of Milan, which may have influenced Augustine due to their close connection: “If the earth and heaven are renewed, why should we doubt that man, on account of whom heaven and earth were made, can be renewed?”.¹⁹⁷ The same position is also defended by John of Damascus in the eighth century: “Wherefore it has been said, They will perish, but Thou dost endure: nevertheless, the heavens will not be utterly destroyed. For they will wax old and be wound round as a covering, and will be changed, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth”.¹⁹⁸

The patristic theme of renewal has been a common thread not only during the medieval time

¹⁹⁵ Origen, *First Principles* 1.6.4, in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part 4; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts 1 and 2: Cross-Linked to the Bible*, trans. Philip Schaff, vol. 4 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 262.

¹⁹⁶ Augustine, *City of God* 20.14, 16, in *St. Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff (Hendrickson Pub, 1995), 434-435.

¹⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* 2.87, vol. 10 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff, 188.

¹⁹⁸ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 2.6, in *Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, vol. 9 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff, 22b.

but also during the Reformation.¹⁹⁹ Anselm of Canterbury, for instance, later wrote: We believe that the corporeal structure of this world is to be renewed for the better, and that this will neither take place before the number of elect men is completed and the blessed city perfected nor be postponed beyond its perfection. From this we can infer that from the beginning God intended to perfect both together”²⁰⁰ Thomas Aquinas stated a similar understanding in his *Summa Theologica*: “Hence those bodies also will need to receive a greater inflow from the Divine goodness than now, not indeed so as to change their species, but so as to add a certain perfection of glory: and such will be the renewal of the world. Wherefore at the one same time, the world will be renewed, and man will be glorified.”²⁰¹

During the Reformation, Martin Luther, commenting on 2 Peter 3:13, wrote: “God has promised by the prophets, here and there, that he would create new heavens and a new earth. How that is to pass away we cannot know, except that the promise is, that such a heaven and earth are to be, wherein no sin, but righteousness only, and the children of God shall dwell.”²⁰² John Calvin argued against annihilation in his commentary of Isaiah 65:17-18 while referencing Romans 8:20 and Acts 3:21 saying: “Let us remember that these things take place in us so far as we are renewed. But we are only in part renewed, and therefore we do not yet see a new heaven and a new earth. But when we shall be perfectly renewed, heaven and earth shall also be fully renewed, and shall regain their former state. And hence it ought to be inferred, as we have frequently remarked, that the Prophet has in his eye the whole reign of Christ, down to its final close, which is also called the day of renovation and restoration.”²⁰³ Later commenting on 2 Peter 3:10, Calvin affirms: “Of the elements of the world I shall only say this one thing, that they are to be consumed, only that they may be renovated, their substance still remaining the same, as it may be easily gathered from Romans 8:21, and from other passages”.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Svigel, “Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition--Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It Ex Nihilo?”

²⁰⁰ (Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 1.18, in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. Eugene R. Fairweather, The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry p. Yan Dusen (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1956), 130)

²⁰¹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Part 3 [Supp.] Q. 91, Art. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, English Dominican Province Translation edition. (New York: Christian Classics, 1981).

²⁰² Martin Luther, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands, 1904), 365.

²⁰³ John Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Ravenio Books, 2012).

²⁰⁴ João Calvino, *Epístolas Gerais*, ed. Tiago J. Santos Filho and Franklin Ferreira, trans. Valter Graciano Martins, Primeira Edição, Série Comentários Bíblicos (São José dos Campos, SP: Editora FIEL, 2015), 350.

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