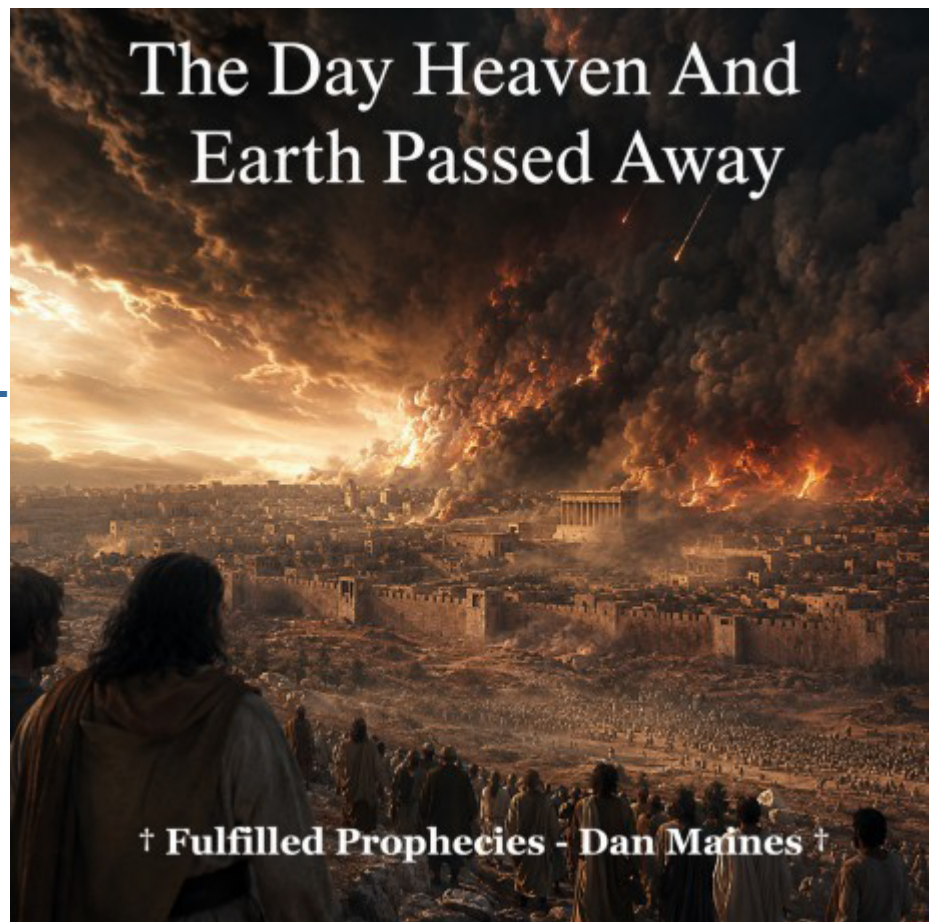


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Heaven And Earth -
The Day Heaven
And Earth Passed
Away



By Dan Maines

The Day Heaven And Earth Passed Away

Introduction

† One of the greatest assumptions in modern Christianity is that the phrase "heaven and earth" always refers to the physical universe. Yet the Bible repeatedly uses this language to describe covenantal orders, nations, and God's relationship with His people.

† The Old Covenant had its own "heaven and earth," established at Sinai. When that covenant reached its end in AD 70, Scripture describes it as the passing away of heaven and earth, not the destruction of the planet.

† This becomes one of the strongest proofs that Matthew 24 and 2 Peter 3 are speaking about the end of the Old Covenant world, not the end of the physical universe.

Isaiah 51:15-16

For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar (the Lord of armies is His name). And I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'

† Isaiah says God planted the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth when He established Israel as His covenant people. This is covenant language, not the creation of the universe. (Isaiah 51:15-16)

† The context is God's redemption of Israel, showing that "heavens" and "earth" can describe the covenant order He established with His people. (Deuteronomy 32:1; Isaiah 1:2)

† If God could plant covenant heavens, He could also remove them when that covenant reached its fulfillment. (Hebrews 8:13)

Haggai 2:6-7

For this is what the Lord of armies says: 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of armies.

† Haggai foretold one final shaking of heaven and earth before God filled His house with greater glory. (Haggai 2:6-7)

† Hebrews 12 quotes this prophecy and explains that the shaking removed the Old Covenant order so that God's unshakable kingdom would remain. (Hebrews 12:26-28)

† The prophecy was never about the destruction of the universe. It was about God's covenant transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. (Hebrews 8:13)

Isaiah 65:17-18

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing And her people for gladness.

† Isaiah connects the new heavens and new earth directly with a new Jerusalem, showing that the prophecy concerns God's covenant people. (Isaiah 65:17-18)

† The emphasis is on God's new covenant relationship, not on replacing the physical universe with another planet. (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24)

† The passing away of the former heavens and earth made way for the everlasting New Covenant kingdom established through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Matthew 24:34-35

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

† Jesus placed the passing away of heaven and earth within the lifetime of His own generation. (Matthew 24:34-35)

† The context is the destruction of the temple, the end of the age, and the judgment upon Jerusalem, not the end of the physical universe. (Matthew 24:1-3)

† Jesus contrasted the temporary Old Covenant order with the eternal authority of His words that established the New Covenant. (Hebrews 12:26-28)

Luke 16:16-17

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John came; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

† Jesus connected the passing of heaven and earth with the fulfillment of the Law, showing they belong to the same covenant framework. (Luke 16:16-17)

† The Law would remain fully authoritative until every purpose of the Old Covenant was accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18)

† Once the covenant reached its fulfillment, the New Covenant stood as God's everlasting kingdom through Christ. (Hebrews 8:13)

Hebrews 12:26-28

And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may

remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

† The writer explains that both heaven and earth would be shaken so that the unshakable kingdom would remain. (Hebrews 12:26-28)

† He was quoting Haggai to describe the removal of the Old Covenant system that was still standing in his day. (Haggai 2:6-7)

† Believers were already receiving the kingdom that could never be shaken, proving the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant was underway. (Hebrews 12:22-28)

2 Peter 3:10-13

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be discovered.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

† Peter was not introducing a new prophecy. He specifically said he was looking for what God had already promised through Isaiah. (Isaiah 65:17)

† The language of fire, melting, and dissolving follows the same prophetic judgment language used throughout the Old

Testament against nations and covenant systems. (Isaiah 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8)

† Peter expected the arrival of the promised new heavens and new earth, the New Covenant order where righteousness permanently dwells. (Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:1-3)

Isaiah 34:4

And all the heavenly lights will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All its lights will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.

† Isaiah used the same language of dissolving heavens and a rolled-up sky to describe God's judgment against Edom, not the destruction of the physical universe. (Isaiah 34:1-4)

† Peter follows this well-known prophetic language to describe covenant judgment, just as the prophets had done for centuries. (2 Peter 3:10-13)

† Understanding Isaiah's imagery prevents us from reading a literal end of the universe into language that consistently describes divine judgment. (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7-8)

Revelation 21:1-3

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† John did not introduce a new prophecy, he was showing the fulfillment of Isaiah's promise of new heavens, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. (Isaiah 65:17-19)

† The focus is God's dwelling with His redeemed people, not the creation of another physical universe. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

† The passing away of the first heaven and earth made way for God's everlasting New Covenant kingdom and His dwelling with His people. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:1-3)

Historical References

† Josephus described the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 as the complete end of the Jewish nation under the Old Covenant economy. (The Wars of the Jews, Book 6)

† Eusebius recorded that the believers obeyed Christ's warning and fled Jerusalem before its destruction, preserving the church while judgment fell upon the city. (Ecclesiastical History, Book 3)

† Irenaeus affirmed that the apostolic writings belonged to the generation that witnessed the fulfillment of Christ's warnings concerning Jerusalem. (Against Heresies, Book 5)

† Tacitus recorded the devastation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Roman armies under Titus. (Histories, Book 5)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't live waiting for heaven and earth to pass away because that covenant transition has already occurred.

† We live in the unshakable kingdom Christ established through His finished work.

† We are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem now, not people waiting for another covenant to replace this one. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

† Our confidence rests in Christ's fulfilled promises, because not one of His words failed. (Matthew 24:35)

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did Jesus predict the destruction of the physical universe in Matthew 24?

A: No. The context is the destruction of the temple, the end of the age, and events that Jesus said would occur within that generation. (Matthew 24:1-3, 34-35)

Q: What are the new heavens and new earth?

A: They are God's New Covenant order established through Christ, fulfilling Isaiah's promise of a new Jerusalem and an everlasting covenant. (Isaiah 65:17-18; Hebrews 12:22-28; Revelation 21:1-3)

Q: What is the biggest evidence that "heaven and earth" is covenant language?

A: Isaiah says God planted the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth when He established Zion as His covenant people. That shows the phrase can describe a covenant order rather than the physical universe. (Isaiah 51:15-16)

Q: If heaven and earth is the physical universe, why did Isaiah say God planted the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth when He established Zion?

A: Because Isaiah was describing the establishment of Israel's covenant world. If covenant heavens could be planted, covenant heavens could also pass away when the Old Covenant reached its fulfillment. (Isaiah 51:15-16; Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 12:26-28)

Q: Why did Peter use language about the heavens dissolving and the elements melting?

A: Peter was using the same prophetic judgment language found throughout the Old Testament. The prophets used this imagery to describe God's judgment upon nations and covenant systems, not the destruction of the physical universe. (Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8; 2 Peter 3:10-13)

Q: How does Hebrews 12 help explain Matthew 24 and 2 Peter 3?

A: Hebrews quotes Haggai's prophecy about one final shaking of heaven and earth and explains that it removed the things that could be shaken so God's unshakable kingdom would remain. This identifies the passing of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New Covenant. (Haggai 2:6-7; Hebrews 12:26-28)

Q: If the first heaven and earth passed away, what replaced it?

A: God established the promised new heavens and new earth, the New Covenant order where He dwells with His redeemed people in the New Jerusalem. (Isaiah 65:17-18; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:1-3)

Q: Why is this important?

A: Because it explains that Isaiah 51, Isaiah 65, Matthew 24, Hebrews 12, 2 Peter 3, and Revelation 21 all speak consistently about the passing of the Old Covenant and the establishment of

Christ's everlasting kingdom. (Isaiah 51:15-16; Isaiah 65:17-18; Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 12:26-28; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-3)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Isaiah 13; Isaiah 34; Isaiah 51; Isaiah 65; Matthew 5; Matthew 24; Luke 16; Hebrews 8; Hebrews 12; Deuteronomy 32; Haggai 2; Ezekiel 32; Galatians 4; 2 Corinthians 5; 2 Peter 3; Revelation 21

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 5

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