

The Destruction of Heaven and Earth

The Fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the Temple and the End of Law in A.D. 70

In **Leviticus 26:14-20**, God warns Israel that she must listen and obey Him in the commandments that He has given them. God uses various terms and expressions in describing what it will be like if they despise His statutes, but notice particularly verse 19: "And I will break the pride of your power, and I will make **your heaven** as iron, and **your earth** as brass." Compare Genesis 1:1 with Leviticus 26:19 and ask yourself the question: Are the terms "heaven and earth" to be understood in the same way? They clearly do not mean the same thing in each verse. *Notice how the character of Israel's disposition in God's view is personalized, "your heaven" and "your earth."* So the terms "heaven" and "earth" belong or relate to Israel, whom evidently constitute a "heaven" and "earth." Israel is "heaven and earth." Of course, the creation itself is called "heaven and earth." One must understand that there is more than one use of "heaven and earth" in the Bible; "heaven and earth" can refer to the created world of the universe, or it can refer to the covenant world of Israel.

Who is God speaking to in **Isaiah 1:1-2** "...Hear, O **heavens**, and give ear, O **earth**"? The physical creation? No, He is speaking to Israel. And who is the witness in **Deuteronomy 4:26**, "I call **heaven and earth** to witness against you this day"? Physical creation or Old Covenant Israel?

Another example of "heaven and earth" being referred to the Covenant World of Israel, and not literal creation, is **Isaiah 51:16**:

"And I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the **heavens**, and lay the foundations of the **earth**, and say unto Zion, **Thou art My people.**"

Notice that God is speaking to Israel. He says He gave them His law, the Old Covenant, the same law Jesus is speaking about in Matthew 5:17-18, to establish heaven and lay the foundation of the earth! Clearly God is not saying He gave the Old Covenant to Israel to create literal heaven and earth! Material creation existed long before Israel was ever given the Old Covenant.

The meaning of this verse is that God gave His covenant with Israel to create their world--*a covenant world with God!* God created Israel's "heaven and earth" by giving them His Covenant. Now if He destroyed that Old Covenant heaven and earth and gave a New Covenant, would He not thereby be creating a New heaven and earth? This is precisely the thought in the New Covenant Scriptures!

This idea is seen more clearly as we look at other passages where mention is made of the destruction of a state and government using language which seems to set forth the end of the world, as the collapse of heaven and earth. In Isaiah 13:1-13, this is not an oracle against the universe or world, but against the nation of Babylon. Notice verse 13, "Therefore I will shake the **heavens**, And the **earth** will move out of her place."

Now remember, God is speaking about the destruction of Babylon, but it sounds like world-wide destruction. The terminology of a context cannot be expanded beyond the scope of the subject under discussion. The spectrum of language surely cannot go outside the land of Babylon. If you were a Babylonian and Babylon was destroyed would it seem like the world was destroyed? Yes! Your world would be destroyed.

This is an historical event that took place in 539 BC. When the Medes destroyed Babylon (Isaiah 13:17), the Babylonian world came to an end. This destruction is said in verse 6 to be from the Almighty, and the Medes constitute the means that God uses to accomplish this task. The physical heaven and earth were still intact, but for Babylon they had collapsed. This is apocalyptic language. This is the way the scripture discusses the fall of a nation. This is obviously figurative language.

In Isaiah 24-27 we see the invasion of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar. He carries them away to captivity. Notice the language that He uses in Isaiah 24:3-6 and Isaiah 24:19-20. What I want you to see in these verses is how God refers to Israel as the earth. He says the earth is "utterly broken down, the **earth** is clean dissolved, the **earth** is moved exceedingly...the **earth** shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again" (Verses 1,3,4,19,20). Notice how many times God referred to **Israel** as the "earth." This is apocalyptic language speaking of the destruction of the people of Israel.

Notice the language that is used in Isaiah 34:3-5 where we have a description of the fall of Edom. "...and **the mountains shall be melted** with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down...For My sword shall be **bathed in heaven**: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of My curse, to judgment." This is Biblical language to describe the fall of a nation. It should be clear that it is not to be taken literally.

In Nahum 1:1-5, the subject of this judgment is Nineveh, not the physical world. "The burden of Nineveh...the LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and **the clouds are the dust of His feet**. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers...The **mountains quake** at Him, and the **hills melt**, and **the earth is burned** at His presence, yea, **the world, and all that dwell therein**." This is the way God describes the fall of a nation. If this language describes the judgment of God on nations, why, when we come to the New Testament, do we make it be the destruction of the universe? It is only because we do not understand how the scripture uses this apocalyptic language.

In Daniel 9:24-27 Daniel was told that 70 weeks had been determined on his people and city, i.e. Jerusalem. Daniel's prophecy then tells of the time when all prophecy would be fulfilled. When would this be? The end of Daniel's vision was the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in 70 AD. See Daniel 9:27 and compare it with Matthew 24:15 where Jesus said the Abomination of Desolation and his coming would occur in his generation (vs.34). Compare Matthew 24:15-19 with Luke 21:20-23; this parallel passage explains this desolation as the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in A.D 70.

Credit: "How Heaven and Earth Passed Away" by David Curtis