



first described. John, in describing the great white throne judgment said that the heavens and the earth “**fled away and there was no place found for them**” (21:11). If there is no place found for them, they no longer exist.

The New International Version reflects a far too materialistic perspective in its rendering this passage “laid bare.” In choosing this rendering it allies itself with the biased Jehovah’s Witness’ New World Translation, ignores the context of the passage, and the full witness of Scripture regarding the fate of the earth. The Christian can have a hope that is tangible and substantial, but that hope does not rest to any degree in this earth, but in “**new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells**” (2 Peter 3:13).

* A detailed and yet concise explanation of this may be found in Bruce Metzger’s *Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971).



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We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

12.2

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

January 10
2010



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Ken Ford
Charles Kelley
Pat Ledbetter

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Pat Goguen
Neil Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Curtis Carwile

“Laid Bare” or “Burned Up”

by Kyle Pope

Second Peter 3:10 reveals in sobering words the fate of the current universe on the Day of Judgment. It declares plainly, “**The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up**” (NKJV). Readers of the New International Version will notice at once a far different promise. Rather than declaring that the earth will be “burned up,” it renders the last part of this passage, “**the earth and everything in it will be laid bare**” (NIV). This leads the reader to imagine that the earth will still exist but be refined by fire and shown in its real essence. This has long been the doctrine preached by Jehovah’s Witnesses, who argue that the earth will not be completely burned up but rejuvenated by fire. This is reflected in their own biased New World Transla-

4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com

tion, which renders this verse, **“and earth and the works in it will be discovered”** (NWT). What is behind such different translations of this phrase, and which reading reflects the true force of this promise?

I recently heard a preacher inaccurately try to explain the issue by saying “burned up” is just a “bad transla-



Olsen Park church of Christ

tion.” That is not the issue! Unfortunately, there are some textual variants of the last word of this verse within the Greek manuscripts which have survived. The majority of manuscripts have the word *katakaio* which does mean “burn up.” This is the same word used in Matthew 3:12, in John’s promise that the Messiah will **“burn up (*katakaio*) the chaff with unquenchable fire.”** Most translations follow this majority tradition and accurately translate *katakaio* “burned up” (e.g. KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NKJV).

The renderings from the New International Version and New World Translation come from a variant found in some manuscripts. Instead of *katakaio*, some have the word *hurisko* meaning “*find, discover, come upon.*” Does that mean that these manuscripts advocate a rejuvenated earth? Not necessarily. Even in those manuscripts which have this variant, its sense is unclear. While the majority of manuscripts (including some early ones) have *katakaio*, those which do not may suggest a much different focus. P72, the oldest papyrus which contains Second Peter uses the word *hurisko* but adds the word *luo* “*to loose, dissolve*” (translated “dissolve” or “melt” in 3:10, 11, 12 as seen below). That means that P72 could be translated that the earth “will be found dissolved.” One early manuscript has an even different word, *aphanisthesontai* meaning, “*will disappear.*”

This is echoed by early Coptic and Syriac translations which use an equivalent of *hurisko* but add the negative “not”—thus claiming that the earth “will not be found.” * Even if we were to accept *hurisko* as the original reading, that doesn’t necessarily mean that the idea is that the true essence of earth is what is revealed. The English Standard Version accepts *hurisko* as original but renders the passage, **“the earth and the works done on it will be exposed”** (ESV). That stresses the idea of judgment of deeds, not the condition of the earth.

What does all this show? It shows that it is not an issue of bad translation but which word to accept. Beyond this, the context helps explain what the last verse is saying. Peter tells us the world that now exists is **“reserved for fire”** (3:7), at which time the heavens will **“pass away”** (3:10a) the **“elements will melt (*luo*) with fervent heat”** (3:10b) thus making it such that **“all these things will be dissolved (*luo*)”** (3:11). This is more than just a refining or rebirth by fire, it is an absolute destruction in which **“the heavens will be dissolved (*luo*), being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat”** (3:12). The hope of the Chris-

tian is not for this place rejuvenated, but **“new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”** (3:13).

The Bible makes it clear that this earth and even the “heavens” (i.e. where the stars and planets are) will **“pass away”** (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:32). We are told what this involves. In Revelation 21:1, after proclaiming a **“new heaven and a new earth,”** John through the Holy Spirit explains **“for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”** Does this just mean that heaven and earth are changed? A few verses before this, this “passing away” was