

“Stored with Fire”

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Read, if you have not already done so, the third chapter of the second Epistle of Peter, and see what is his answer to the “scoffers” of whom we were talking this week. You will remember what it is that they say about the coming of the Lord, when His Word shows that it is just at hand: “Where is the promise of His coming?” for “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Peter says that those who say this are “willingly ignorant” of something, or “wilfully forget” it, and that is, what it was that formed the heavens and the earth in the beginning, and causes all things to continue.

It was the Word of God. “In the beginning was the Word,” and God still upholds all things by “the Word of His power.” So Peter says: “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.”

And then he reminds them of something else that they wilfully forgot, that heavens and the earth which God made in the beginning, standing out of the water and in the water, were destroyed by the very Word then brought forth.

In the first chapter of Genesis you will find that it was the Word of God that “divided the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament,” and that gathered the waters together unto one place, and made the dry land appear. And Peter says that it was by this same Word that “the world that then was being overflowed with water, perished.”

God’s Word in the waters in the firmament, and in the earth; and at the time of the flood, that same Word brought the waters together again. “The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened,” and the waters covered the face of the earth, even as they did in the beginning, before they were separated by the Word.

But did the people of that day believe that this flood of destruction was coming? Oh, no; they might have known, for “surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto the prophets.” He sent His servant Noah with a warning message to the world which he faithfully delivered for one hundred and twenty years, while he built the ark in which all who believed the Word of the Lord might be saved.

But in those days there were “scoffers” who said that such a thing as Noah talked of could not be. They reacted just as people do to-day,—that all things had continued as they were from the beginning of the creation. The laws of nature were so firmly fixed that God Himself could not change them. No drop of water had ever fallen

from the sky, the rivers had never overflowed their banks, and the seas had ever kept their decreed place.

But oh, they forgot, they were "willingly ignorant," just as people are now, that these "laws of nature" as they call them, are simply the working of the Word of God, which had gathered the waters, and kept them in their appointed place, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." They did not see in this the hand of Him who "works all things after the counsel of His own will."

So they went on their way, "eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." The Word that was holding back the waters, caused them to rush together, and the earth and its inhabitants were destroyed.

Now another thing Peter tells us. The earth and the heavens before the flood, were, by the Word of God, stored with the water which God used in their destruction. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are stored with fire [Revised Version] against the day of judgment."

Since the time of the flood, and as the result of it, fire has been stored in the depths of the earth; for at that time great forests of trees, and all sorts of vegetation, were buried deep in the ground. These have in the course of ages turned to coal, which, as you know, is dug out of the depths of the earth. These coal beds give quantities of oil, and the coal and oil often catch fire and burn deep in the earth, heating great rocks and stones, and causing loud explosions and volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, as we learned a little while ago.

"When the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil," and as the steam must have an outlet, it forces up the surface of the ground. This is how volcanoes or burning mountains are formed.

In all these things we see evidences of the truth of God's word that the earth is "stored with fire against the day of judgment;" while the lightnings which shook from heaven at times remind us of the day when fire from heaven will unite with the fires which will burst forth from the earth, as did the waters above with the waters below in the days of the flood.

Then "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;" "the earth also; and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which the righteous shall dwell."

Now you see, dear children, that these two things of which we have lately been learning, fire and water, both but different forms of the all-powerful life of God, are used by Him to destroy everything that cannot be brought into perfect harmony with His will. The dreadful curse of sin must be removed and destroyed by His life which swallows up death, and all who will not be "saved by His life," must at last be destroyed by it.