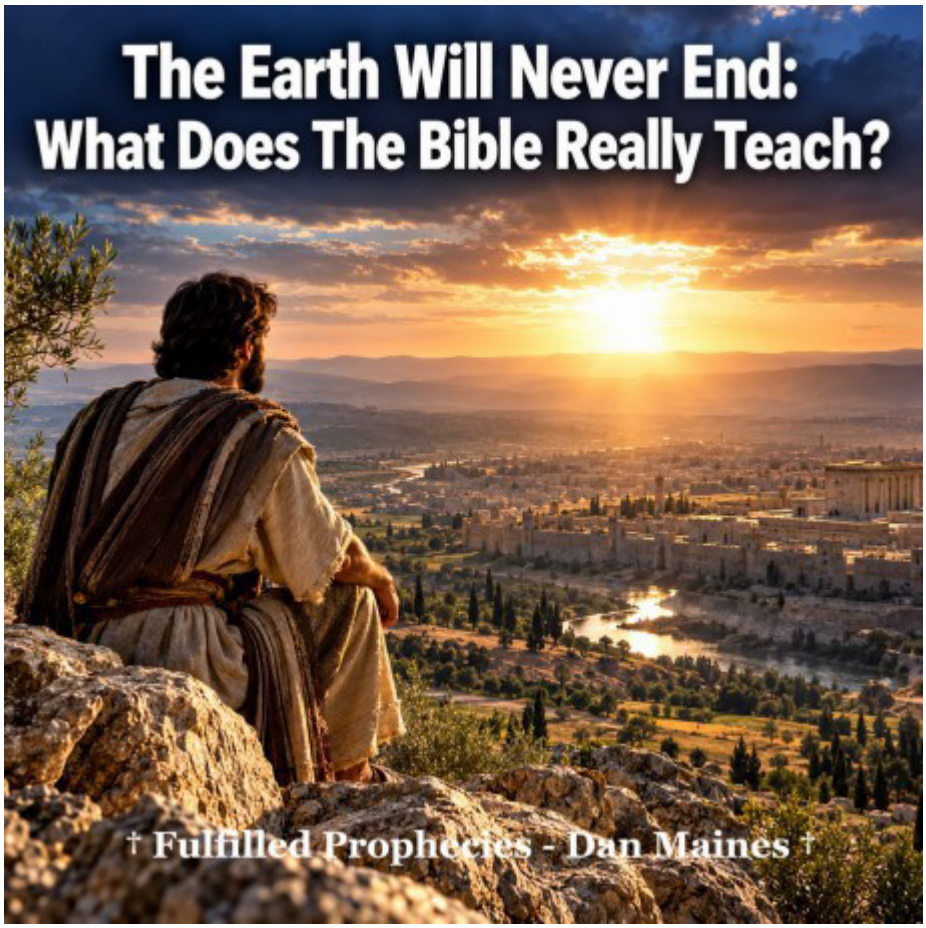
Fulfilled Prophecies

The Earth Will Never End: What Does The Bible Really Teach?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† For generations, Christians have been taught that one day God will destroy the physical earth, burn up the universe, and replace everything with a completely new creation. But is that what the Bible actually teaches? (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Psalm 104:5)

† When we examine Scripture carefully, we discover that God established the earth to endure, while the prophetic language

about heaven and earth passing away often describes the judgment and removal of an established covenant order. (Isaiah 51:16; Hebrews 12:26-28)
† Jesus wasn't predicting the destruction of planet Earth when He announced the passing of heaven and earth in connection with His generation. He was announcing the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets and the judgment that would bring the Old Covenant age to its conclusion. (Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 24:34-35; Luke 21:20-22)
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 marked the end of the Old Covenant world, not the end of the physical planet. The New Covenant kingdom of Jesus Christ remains forever. (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:28)

God Declared That The Earth Remains Forever

Ecclesiastes 1:4
A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever.
† Solomon contrasted the temporary lives of human generations with the continuing existence of the earth. Generations come and go, but the earth remains. (Psalm 104:5)
† The statement isn't about the survival of an Old Covenant system. It's about the earth continuing through successive generations of human history. (Genesis 8:22)
† If we teach that God must eventually destroy the physical planet, we must explain why Scripture describes the earth as enduring forever. (Psalm 78:69; Psalm 104:5)

Psalm 104:5
He established the earth upon its foundations, So that it will not totter forever and ever.
† The psalmist describes the earth as established by God, emphasizing the permanence and reliability of His creative work. (Ecclesiastes 1:4)
† The earth isn't presented as something God created merely to destroy when His redemptive purpose was accomplished.

(Psalm 78:69)
† God's covenant judgments can remove nations, cities, temples, and religious systems without requiring the destruction of the physical creation. (Isaiah 13:9-13; Jeremiah 4:23-28)

Psalm 78:69
And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has founded forever.
† The psalmist compared the stability of God's sanctuary with the earth that God founded forever. The comparison depends upon the earth being understood as an enduring creation. (Psalm 104:5)
† Although the earthly sanctuary could later be destroyed, the earth itself remained. The destruction of a sanctuary didn't mean the destruction of the planet. (Matthew 24:1-2)
† This distinction becomes important when we examine the prophetic language about the passing of heaven and earth. (Isaiah 51:16; Hebrews 12:26-28)

God's Promise After The Flood

Genesis 8:21-22
The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.
While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.
† Following the flood, God established the continuing order of seasons, harvests, and the daily cycle of life. (Genesis 9:11-13)
† The words while the earth remains don't independently declare that the earth can never cease to exist. However, they establish God's promise that the ordinary cycles of earthly life will continue throughout its existence. (Ecclesiastes 1:4)
† When this promise is read alongside the statements that the earth remains forever, the consistent emphasis is on the

endurance of God's creation. (Psalm 104:5)
† God's judgment against wickedness doesn't require the destruction of the entire physical world. The flood itself demonstrates that a world can experience judgment while the earth continues. (2 Peter 3:5-6)

Genesis 9:11-13
I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.
God said, This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;
I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.
† God's covenant with Noah extended beyond one nation or one generation. It included humanity, living creatures, and the earth itself. (Genesis 9:16-17)
† This covenant specifically promises that another flood won't destroy all flesh. It doesn't explicitly address every possible future judgment, but it demonstrates God's continuing relationship with His creation. (Genesis 8:21-22)
† The physical earth remained after the flood, even though Peter described the world of that time as having been destroyed. This distinction helps us understand prophetic descriptions of a world coming to an end. (2 Peter 3:6)

Heaven And Earth Can Describe A Covenant Order

Isaiah 51:16
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.'
† Notice the connection between establishing the heavens, founding the earth, and declaring to Zion that they were God's people. The language is connected with God's covenant relationship with Israel. (Exodus 19:5-6)

† This passage provides an important biblical foundation for understanding heaven and earth as language that can describe a covenant order rather than always referring to the physical universe. (Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22)
† Israel's covenant world included the temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and the Law of Moses. These institutions defined Israel's relationship with God under the Old Covenant. (Hebrews 9:1-10)
† When that covenant order reached its appointed end, its heaven and earth could pass away without the physical planet being destroyed. (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:26-28)

Jesus Came To Fulfill The Law And The Prophets

Matthew 5:17-18
Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.
For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
† Jesus connected the passing of heaven and earth with the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. We must interpret His statement within that covenant context. (Luke 21:22)
† If heaven and earth in this passage meant only the physical universe, we would have to explain why Jesus connected their passing with the completion of the Mosaic Law. (Romans 10:4; Hebrews 8:13)
† Jesus accomplished redemption through His death and resurrection, and the Old Covenant order reached its historical conclusion with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:8-10)
† The passing of the covenant heavens and earth didn't mean that God's physical creation disappeared. It meant the former covenant administration had reached its fulfillment in Christ. (Hebrews 10:9; Hebrews 12:28)

Jesus Identified The Generation Of Fulfillment

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 fulfillment of His prophetic discourse within the lifetime of the generation He was addressing. He didn't identify a generation thousands of years in the future. (Matthew 23:36; Luke 21:32)
† The context began with Jesus predicting the destruction of the temple. His disciples asked when those things would happen. (Matthew 24:1-3)
† His statement about heaven and earth passing away emphasized the certainty of His words, and within the fulfilled perspective it also corresponds to the removal of the Old Covenant order. (Matthew 5:17-18; Hebrews 8:13)
† Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 fulfilled the judgment Jesus announced against that generation. Planet Earth continued because the prophecy wasn't announcing the end of physical creation. (Luke 21:20-22, 32)

Luke 21:20-22
But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
† Luke identifies the approaching judgment in unmistakable geographical terms. Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies, and those in Judea were instructed to flee. (Luke 21:20-21)
† These instructions wouldn't make sense if Jesus were describing the destruction of the entire planet. No mountain could provide safety from the annihilation of the universe.

(Matthew 24:15-16)
† Jesus identified these events as days of vengeance connected with the fulfillment of what had been written. This points to the covenant judgment upon Jerusalem. (Deuteronomy 28:49-57; Daniel 9:26-27)
† The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 brought the temple sacrifices and the Old Covenant priestly system to an end. The physical earth wasn't destroyed. (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 10:9)

Peter's Heavens And Earth Passing Away

2 Peter 3:5-7
For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,
through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.
But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.
† Peter used Noah's flood as a comparison for the judgment he was announcing. The world of Noah's day was destroyed, yet the physical earth continued to exist. (Genesis 8:22)
† The destruction of that world involved judgment upon its inhabitants and the ending of their established order, not the disappearance of the planet. (Genesis 7:21-23)
† Peter's comparison allows us to understand the coming judgment as the destruction of an existing world order rather than automatically assuming the annihilation of physical creation. (Matthew 24:37-39)
† In the fulfilled perspective, the fire of judgment points to the destruction of the Old Covenant world centered in Jerusalem. This is an interpretive conclusion drawn from Peter's comparison and the first-century judgment context. (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 8:13)

2 Peter 3:10
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 burned up.
† This is one of the principal passages used to teach that the physical planet will someday be destroyed. However, the prophetic Scriptures repeatedly use cosmic destruction language when describing judgments upon nations. (Isaiah 13:9-13; Ezekiel 32:7-8)
† The elements can be understood within the fulfilled perspective as the foundational principles and institutions of the former covenant order. The Greek term alone doesn't prove this meaning, so the covenant context must establish the interpretation. (Galatians 4:3, 9; Colossians 2:20)
† Peter's language describes a decisive judgment. The fulfilled interpretation connects that judgment with the removal of the Old Covenant system in AD 70 rather than the future destruction of planet Earth. (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:26-28)
† We shouldn't overlook the seriousness of Peter's language, but neither should we separate it from the prophetic patterns and covenant transition described elsewhere in Scripture. (Isaiah 34:4; Hebrews 10:25-27)

The Shaking Of Heaven And Earth

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 us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;
† Hebrews contrasts what could be shaken and removed with

the kingdom that cannot be shaken. The emphasis is on the permanence of Christ's kingdom. (Daniel 7:14; Hebrews 12:28)
† The surrounding passage contrasts Mount Sinai with Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. This provides a covenant setting for understanding the shaking. (Hebrews 12:18-24)
† The Old Covenant institutions were temporary and destined to disappear, while the New Covenant kingdom would remain. (Hebrews 8:13)
† The removal of the Old Covenant order in AD 70 didn't require the removal of the physical earth. It established the final historical separation between the former covenant administration and Christ's enduring kingdom. (Hebrews 10:9; Hebrews 12:28)

The Old Covenant Was Ready To Disappear

Hebrews 8:13
When He said, A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.
† The writer of Hebrews described the Old Covenant as obsolete and ready to disappear. This language shows that a covenant order was approaching its final historical removal. (Hebrews 9:8-10)
† Jesus had already established the New Covenant through His blood, but the temple and its sacrifices continued operating during the transition period. (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 10:11-18)
† When Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed in AD 70, the Old Covenant sacrificial system lost its earthly center permanently. (Matthew 24:1-2)
† What disappeared was the former covenant administration, not the earth God established. (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Hebrews 12:28)

The New Heavens And New Earth Are Covenant Fulfillment

Isaiah 65:17
For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.
† Isaiah announced a new heavens and new earth as part of God's promise of restoration and blessing. The surrounding prophecy also describes people building houses, planting vineyards, and living within an ordered society. (Isaiah 65:21-23)
† These descriptions are important because they don't require the disappearance of the physical planet. They present the establishment of a new order under God's blessing. (Isaiah 66:22)
† In the fulfilled perspective, the new creation describes the New Covenant order established through Jesus Christ and fully manifested with the removal of the Old Covenant system. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 8:13)
† God's people don't have to wait for the destruction of the universe to enter the blessings of the New Covenant. They are already new creations in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15)

Isaiah 66:22
For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me, declares the LORD, So your offspring and your name will endure.
† Isaiah describes the new heavens and new earth as enduring before God. The emphasis is permanence, not another temporary arrangement awaiting destruction. (Daniel 7:14)
† The New Covenant kingdom isn't another system that will eventually be replaced. Christ's kingdom cannot be shaken. (Hebrews 12:28)
† The covenant world established in Christ endures while the physical earth continues through the generations. (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Ephesians 3:21)

John Saw The New Jerusalem

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, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
† John saw the passing of the first heaven and earth and the arrival of the New Jerusalem. This vision portrays the fulfillment of God's covenant promises through Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 65:17; Hebrews 12:22-24)
† The New Jerusalem represents the covenant dwelling of God with His redeemed people, not the rebuilding of an earthly temple in the Middle East. (Galatians 4:26; Ephesians 2:19-22)
† The disappearance of the sea is understood symbolically within this interpretation, expressing the removal of covenant separation rather than the literal elimination of the world's oceans. (Ephesians 2:13-18)
† The New Jerusalem is the enduring reality of God's presence with His people. Believers already have access to the heavenly Jerusalem through Christ. (Hebrews 12:22-23)
† The fulfillment of this vision in the New Covenant doesn't require the physical earth to disappear. It announces the passing of the former order and the establishment of God's enduring dwelling among His people. (Hebrews 8:13; Revelation 21:3)

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, described the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, famine, and the suffering of the Jewish people in The Jewish War, Books 5-6. His account provides historical evidence of the judgment Jesus announced against Jerusalem. (Luke 21:20-24)
† Josephus also described the destruction of the temple by fire

in AD 70. This historical event brought the temple-centered sacrificial system to its final end. (Matthew 24:1-2; Hebrews 8:13)
† Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in the fourth century, recorded the tradition that Christians in Jerusalem departed for Pella before the city's destruction. His Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5, connects the escape of believers with the warnings given before Jerusalem's fall. (Luke 21:20-21)
† Neither Josephus nor Eusebius independently establishes the fulfilled interpretation of every prophetic passage. Their historical accounts support the reality and significance of the first-century events to which this interpretation points. (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32)

How It Applies To Us Today
† We don't have to live in fear that God has scheduled the destruction of the physical earth as the final act of biblical prophecy. The fulfilled perspective recognizes the first-century completion of the covenant judgments announced by Jesus. (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32)
† We can trust that Christ's kingdom is already established and cannot be shaken. We aren't waiting for another kingdom to replace it. (Hebrews 12:28; Daniel 7:14)
† We don't need another earthly temple, another sacrificial system, or another national covenant arrangement. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the redemptive purpose of the Old Covenant. (Hebrews 10:10-18)
† The New Jerusalem isn't merely a future destination after the destruction of the planet. Through Christ, believers have already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. (Hebrews 12:22-24)
† We should care for God's creation and live faithfully within it, knowing that our responsibility is to serve Christ and demonstrate His love to others. (Genesis 2:15; Galatians 5:13-14)
† The world continues, generations come and go, and the gospel of Jesus Christ remains the message of salvation for

every generation. (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Matthew 28:18-20)
† We aren't waiting for another Day of the Lord to complete the Old Covenant judgment. That judgment belongs to the first-century fulfillment, while Christ's everlasting kingdom continues today. (Luke 21:22, 32; Hebrews 12:28)

Q & A Appendix

Q: Doesn't the Bible say the earth will be burned up?
A: Yes, 2 Peter 3:10 uses that language. The fulfilled perspective interprets it through the prophetic judgment language of Isaiah 13:9-13 and the first-century covenant transition described in Hebrews 8:13. It refers to the judgment of the former covenant order rather than the destruction of the physical planet.

Q: Doesn't Genesis 8:22 say only while the earth remains?
A: Yes. That verse promises the continuation of earthly cycles while the earth exists. Ecclesiastes 1:4 and Psalm 104:5 provide the additional statements describing the earth as enduring forever.

Q: Didn't Jesus say heaven and earth would pass away?
A: Yes. Matthew 24:35 says this, but Matthew 24:34 places the events of His discourse within that generation. The fulfilled perspective understands the passing of heaven and earth in connection with the end of the Old Covenant order.

Q: What happened to the Old Covenant heavens and earth?
A: They passed away as the Old Covenant system reached its historical conclusion in AD 70. The temple, priesthood, and sacrifices no longer governed access to God. Jesus Christ is our eternal High Priest and Mediator. (Hebrews 8:6-13; Hebrews 10:19-22)

Q: Are we already living in the New Heavens and New Earth?
A: Yes, in the fulfilled covenant understanding. The New

Covenant creation is established in Christ, and believers already belong to the heavenly Jerusalem. (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:1-3)

Q: Does the New Jerusalem exist today?
A: Yes. Hebrews 12:22 says believers have come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. Galatians 4:26 identifies the Jerusalem above as our mother, and Ephesians 2:19-22 describes believers as God's dwelling in the Spirit.

Q: Will there be another destruction of the world on a future Day of the Lord?
A: The fulfilled perspective teaches that the prophetic Day of the Lord associated with Jerusalem's covenant judgment was fulfilled in AD 70. Jesus placed that judgment within His generation. (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-22, 32)

Q: If the earth continues, what is our hope?
A: Our hope is eternal life in Jesus Christ, fellowship with God, and participation in His unshakable kingdom. Our salvation doesn't depend upon the destruction of the physical universe. (John 11:25-26; Hebrews 12:28; Romans 8:38-39)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Ecclesiastes 1:4; Psalm 104:5; Psalm 78:69; Genesis 8:21-22; Genesis 9:11-13; Isaiah 51:16; Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 24:34-35; Luke 21:20-22; 2 Peter 3:5-7; 2 Peter 3:10; Hebrews 12:26-28; Hebrews 8:13; Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22; Revelation 21:1-3
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter

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