

## The “then world” versus the “now heavens and earth” in 2 Peter 3:6-7: Is Peter saying that “world” equals “heavens and earth”?

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### Introduction

This paper refutes Sam Frost’s position that Peter uses “heavens and earth” and “world” synonymously in 2 Peter 3:6-7. Such a position is critical to Frost’s rebuttal of the basic premise proposed by Tim Martin and Jeff Vaughn, authors of “Beyond Creation Science” (BCS), that the Heavens and Earth to be destroyed in AD 70 was the original creation of Genesis 1:1<sup>1</sup>. Frost’s position is that the “heavens and earth” which were destroyed in AD 70 began at Sinai, and that there existed a previous covenantal “heavens and earth” beginning in Genesis 2:4 and ending with the flood of Noah<sup>2</sup>. According to Frost, neither one of these previous “heavens and earth” had anything to do with the first “heavens and earth” mentioned in Genesis 1:1. That one, he claims, is the physical universe. I have respect for Mr. Frost, and my critique of his position does not mean he is not my brother in Christ and shall not receive my brotherly love. However, the ramifications of my paper are significant, for I believe it will prove that he is wrong on this issue.

My proposition is that the heavens and earth destroyed in 2 Peter 3 are not ones “created” at Sinai (Exodus 19), but rather they are the very same ones we find “in the beginning” (Genesis 1). I plan to show this by: (1) looking at the Greek text of 2 Peter 3, specifically analyzing the adverb “now” in verse 7 and the imperfect verb “were” in verse 5; (2) presenting the context of 2 Peter 3 as it relates to Peter’s argument and line of reasoning; and (3) by presenting a theological analysis of Scripture and the “true preterist” view<sup>3</sup> as it relates to the full significance of the Parousia event in AD 70, reaching beyond the Sinai covenant and extending all the way to “the beginning” in Genesis.

### The Text, the Greek, and the Lexicons

To begin, let’s examine the text of 2 Peter 3:1-7 from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):

1 This is now, beloved, the second letter that I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you 2 that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. 3 First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they

<sup>1</sup> See <http://preterismdebate.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-core-issue?id=4171784%3ABlogPost%3A6317&page=3#comments>, where he made this claim.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 15-20 of Frost’s critique of *Beyond Creation Science*, here: <http://preterism.ning.com/forum/topic/show?id=1632544%3ATopic%3A23791>, for more on this. Martin and Vaughn’s full response to Frost’s critique is available here: <http://planetpreterist.com/news-5557.html>.

<sup>3</sup> “True Preterism” is a term used by Don Preston at the 2009 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend in Ardmore, OK.

were from the beginning of creation!" 5 They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, 6 through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

As Frost admitted in his published critique of BCS, the Greek text is "difficult" and many commentators have "stumbled." I will make a couple of brief observations about the Greek text before I get into the meat of my paper. (I will re-engage the Greek text and a particular argument Frost makes from the Greek later in one of my theological discussion points.)

Recently, Frost has made much ado<sup>4</sup> about the adjectival use of the word "present" occurring before "heavens and earth" in verse 7. Frost claims that Peter intends to make a direct comparison between the "present" heavens and earth of Peter to the "then" world of Noah, and that we should therefore conclude that Noah's "world" was "a heavens and earth" corresponding to Peter's "heavens and earth." As we will see, even with an adjectival use of "now" (Gk. *nun*), Peter's comparison does not prove what Frost says it does. In fact, one of the reasons I chose the NRSV is because it uses *nun* in the way Frost argues it should be used ("present"). The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology says that *nun* is used "frequently" as an adjective. Thayer's Lexicon says that it means "the present" when used with an article. Frost cited Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker (BAGD) in his podcast with Jason Bradfield (referenced above), giving the same definition as Thayer. So on this point, Frost is in agreement with highly respected Greek authorities, which I recognize.

As I searched through the Greek text, the Lexicons, and several translations, I found two credible translations which do indeed use "now" (*nun*) as an adverb, not an adjective, in 2 Peter 3:7. Here is verse 7 from the New King James Version (NKJV):

7 But the heavens and the earth which are *now* preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

And, here is the same verse from the English Standard Version (ESV), on which I will comment momentarily:

7 But by the same word the heavens and earth *that now exist* are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

What is interesting is that the NKJV uses the adverb "now" to modify the verb, "are preserved". I don't know what the translators' reasons were, or which Lexicons they consulted along with their own knowledge of Greek, but for whatever reason they chose to use the adverbial form rather than adjectival. I'm not making a case here, only raising the issue and some doubt.

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<sup>4</sup> In the podcast located here: <http://thereignofchrist.com/off-the-cuff-aka-shooting-breeze-pt-2> .

I will “now” begin to demonstrate, based on the larger context of the letter and the chapter, that even with “now” being used as an adjective rather than an adverb by Peter, such a contrast of “then” and “now” *does not mean that “world” and “heavens and earth” are equal.*

### **By the Same Word**

It is indeed interesting that the ESV (referenced above) moves the phrase “but by the same word” to the beginning of the verse and also technically renders *nun* as an adverb, though essentially saying the same thing as if it were an adjective (“the present heavens”). The important point, however, is that the ESV does what the NRSV does. It makes Peter’s argument hinge on the same pivotal point: the “scoffers” would deliberately ignore the truth that both judgments (Noah’s and the AD 70 event) were “by the same word.” This is also how the NASB’95, HCSB, NIV and others translate it, putting the emphasis on the same thing. Let’s look at the text again:

5 They deliberately ignore this fact, that *by the word of God* heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, 6 *through which* the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. 7 But *by the same word* the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. (NRSV)

It was *through this word* that: (a) the heavens and earth existed long ago and were formed out of water; (b) the world of Noah’s time perished by water, and (c) the heavens and the earth still present (I will argue) in Peter’s day were being kept for destruction. It is extremely important to see what the scoffers neglected: this was all going to happen *by the same word of God*. These Jewish scoffers were not necessarily ignoring that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water (Genesis 1:6-9), or that Noah’s world perished by water (Genesis 6-8). In fact, I would argue that they knew all these things. What Peter’s generation of mockers were “willfully” ignoring is that *the same God* caused those events to happen *through His word*, and He was going to cause the greatest judgment of all to happen just as promised! What were they saying? “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from *the beginning of creation!*” (vs.4). When kept in context of what the scoffers were ignoring, we see that Peter’s emphasis is not on a similitude between “world” and “heavens and earth,” but rather that these three different acts of God (creation of the heavens and earth, the flood, and the destruction of the heavens and earth) were all *through the same word*. This is Peter’s point.

### **Both the Heavens *and* the Earth**

A big hurdle for Frost, it seems, is to explain why Peter would bother switching terms when comparing the two judgments if “world” does indeed mean “heavens and earth.” Here is an example of what I mean:

7 But *the heavens and* the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (NKJV)

I switched to the NKJV because it translates the article “the” (Gk. *he*), when the ESV and NRSV do not (even though it is there in the Greek text). Frost makes an issue of the terms “world” and “heavens and earth” being paralleled as if it is an apples to apples and therefore synonymous comparison; but actually what we find is that Peter is not only comparing two judgments, but intentionally *contrasting* the way he is describing what or whom is being judged. Notice that in verse 7 he names the earth *and* the heavens.

It is important to notice that there is a distinction in Scripture between God moving or judging the *earth*, and God moving or judging *the heavens and the earth*.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, **26** whose voice *then shook the earth; but now* He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I SHAKE *NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO HEAVEN.*" (Hebrews 12:25-26 NKJV)

Notice that the Hebrew writer says that in the past, when the Law was given through Moses, it was the earth that was shaken, but “now” (AD 65 or so) both the *Heavens and* the Earth were to be shaken. The context here is a comparison of what happened at Sinai with what would happen at the destruction of Jerusalem. The text is clear: *then* it was the earth that was shaken, but *now* it will be *the heavens and* the earth. The pattern is identical to the one Peter uses concerning Noah’s flood. Then it was the “world” that perished, now it is *the heavens and* the earth. This distinction utterly destroys Frost’s position.

Here is the issue: there had to be a “heavens and earth” *already in existence* at Sinai in order for the “earth” to be “shaken.” If Frost’s view is correct, that the first heavens and earth of Revelation 21 is the covenant given at Sinai, then how could there have been a “shaking of the earth” at Sinai? If Sinai was the creation of the first heaven and earth, then there wasn’t yet an “earth” to “shake.” And the Hebrew writer’s argument contrasting two “shakings” would make no sense.

Frost has more than once said that the “covenant creation” framework falls apart based on the Greek text of 2 Peter 3:7<sup>5</sup>. Michael Bennett, co-member with Frost at Sovereign Grace Preterism, has also said the same thing<sup>6</sup>. It would seem that Frost and Bennett are hanging their hat on one small peg that is about to come crashing down, while simultaneously ignoring the preponderance of evidence stacked against them.

Frost’s position, stated again, is that Peter is establishing that a previous “heavens and earth” (which Frost believes began in Genesis 2:4) once existed and in Peter’s day no longer did, and that Peter calls it the “then world” because calling it “the heavens and the earth” would be

<sup>5</sup> See <http://preterismdebate.ning.com/profiles/blogs/local-or-global-genesis-flood?id=4171784%3ABlogPost%3A1896&page=5#comments>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://preterism.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-charge-of-inconsistency-by>

redundant. Frost believes that this “heavens and earth” perished by water in Noah’s flood, and that the “*present* heavens and earth” in Peter’s day is not the same one that previously perished, but a new one which began at Mount Sinai.<sup>7</sup> However, there’s nothing in Peter’s text itself (or the entire Bible, for that matter) to suggest that the (or “a”) “heavens and earth” perished in the flood. The text emphatically says “world.” The burden is on Frost to prove an identical meaning between two different words: “world” and “heavens and earth.” Frost believes he has done so through his analysis of the Greek text, which we will look at next.

### The Imperfect “Were”

Frost and Bennett also believe that “heavens and earth” means “world” based on Peter’s use of “were” in describing the “heavens” in verse 5<sup>8</sup>. Frost argues that since “were” (Gk. *esan*) is an imperfect indicative verb [specifically, of the verb *eimi*, “I am” – JK], that the heavens “once were” [presumably, “in existence” - JK], and by implication, no longer exist when Peter writes. Therefore, according to Frost, Peter’s “heavens and earth” did not exist at the time of Noah. Quoting Frost from Preterism Debate:

The heavens and earth "were" (imperfect tense, past completed action - Greek 101). The temporal adverbs "now" and "then" are contrasted. "heavens and earth WERE" parallel with "the THEN world" ("then" is a past temporal reference, parallel with the past imperfect, "were") in contrast with "the NOW heavens and earth" (the present ones). It would only make sense to add the word "now" if, in fact, they once "were". The "were" is contrasted with the "now."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Typically preterists in general make this argument from Isaiah 51:16. It isn’t the purpose of this paper to analyze every angle, but I’d like to briefly state that Isaiah 51:16 is not discussing Sinai but rather the future new heavens and earth to be established in AD70 as seen later in chapter 65. The entire context of Isaiah 51 is looking forward to the consummation in AD 70 (particularly vs. 3-8, and vs. 14).

Also relevant to this point is that the Septuagint (LXX) uses the future tense nearly throughout verse 16: “I will put my words in your mouth. And under the shadow of my hand I will shelter you, in which I established the heaven, and founded the earth. And he shall say to Zion, You are my people”. I would argue that even the past tense “established” is a future prophetic past tense – “in” those things which God would do for Israel through the Messiah (put his word and law in their mouth and shelter them) is how the heavens and earth would be “established”.

The Hebrew text (MT, Westminster Leningrad Codex) also has the future tense in the same places as the LXX, yet nearly all translations make it past tense. How might such a change in tenses affect the reader? Instead of looking forward to a new heavens and earth, which is the context of Isaiah 51, some erroneously look backwards and “create” a heavens and earth at Sinai when nowhere else in the Hebrew scriptures is such a concept presented, including the Law, where one would expect to find “heavens and earth” used to describe the creation event of the people of Israel. Granted, several places in the OT call Israel “heavens and earth”, but no such creation event exists using that language other than Genesis 1:1. Could it not be that “heavens and earth” simply mean “God’s people in covenant relationship”, and always have?

<sup>8</sup> Frost and Michael Bennett made this argument on Preterism Debate, October 29, 2009. See:

<http://preterismdebate.ning.com/profiles/blogs/local-or-global-genesis-flood?id=4171784%3ABlogPost%3A1896&page=4#comments>

<sup>9</sup> <http://preterismdebate.ning.com/profiles/blogs/local-or-global-genesis-flood?id=4171784%3ABlogPost%3A1896&page=5#comments>

First, Frost misquotes the text. It is not “the heavens and earth were of old;” it is “the heavens were of old and the earth was formed out of water.” The text uses “were” in direct reference to “heavens,” not “earth” or “heavens and earth.”

Second, is Frost’s conclusion required by the Greek text? Is his conclusion the *only* necessary one from Peter’s use of *esan*? As we next will see, no, it is not.

Machen says the imperfect verb is “the tense which denotes continued action in past time,”<sup>10</sup> which of course Frost would agree with. But how can Machen’s definition of the imperfect verb *demand* that the heavens (and earth?) were no longer in existence when Peter wrote? It is against the rules of grammar concerning the use of the verb “I am” to *demand* that an “existence” in one point of time necessitates “no existence” at the time of writing. For example: *I was... He was... They were... They were what?* The rest of the text and context determines what I or they “were.” Frost is using circular reasoning by demanding the heavens no longer were in existence when Peter wrote. Because he sees that the world of Noah perished and assumes that world = heavens (and earth), he therefore assumes the imperfect “were” speaks of something that *was in existence* and now no longer *is in existence*. Frost is assuming the meaning “in existence” when the context does not require it. One could reasonably argue that the “heavens *existed since* old, and the earth was formed out of water...”

It is at this point one may argue that Peter could have said “the heavens *are* of old” if he wanted to emphasize their existence in his day. True enough. However, was that Peter’s purpose in giving this statement? In writing “were,” he was referring to a past, continuous action (that is the normal force of the imperfect<sup>11</sup>): God’s creation of “the heavens and the earth” from Genesis 1. The progression of thought in verses 5-7 is from the past up to the present, so Peter’s use of the imperfect indeed is “perfect” for his purpose of argumentation.

As we saw earlier, the scoffers (who were Jews) were ignoring that the same power of the word of God used in both the creation of “the heavens and earth” and in the flood of Noah’s world would also be used in the destruction of “the heavens and earth.” This is what Peter is emphasizing:

**3** First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts **4** and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!” **5** They deliberately ignore *this fact* [singular-JK], *that by the word of God* heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, **6** through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. **7** But [or,

<sup>10</sup> Machen, J. Gresham. *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, First Edition, #122 (pg. 65).

<sup>11</sup> Machen, J. Gresham. *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, First Edition, #168 (pg. 81).

“and”-JK]<sup>12</sup> *by the same word* the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. (NRSV)

According to Peter, the heavens were “of old” (or “from old”, Gk. *ekpalai*). Notice what Adam Clarke wrote concerning this verse:

“By the word of God the heavens were of old” - I shall set down the Greek text of this extremely difficult clause: Ουρανοι ησαν εκπαλαι, και γη εξ υδατος και δι’ υδατος συνεστωσα, τω του Θεου λογω· translated thus by Mr. Wakefield: “A heaven and an earth formed out of water, and by means of water, *by the appointment of God, had continued from old time* [emphasis mine – JK].” By Dr. Macknight thus; “The heavens were anciently, and the earth of water: and through water the earth consists by the word of God.” By Kypke thus: “The heavens were of old, and the earth, which is framed, by the word of God, from the waters, and between the waters.” However we take the words, they seem to refer to the origin of the earth... It must be owned that it appears to be the doctrine of Moses: In the beginning, says he, God made the heavens and the earth; and the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. Now, these heavens and earth which God made in the beginning, and which he says were at first formless and empty, and which he calls the deep, are in the very next verse called waters; from which it is evident that Moses teaches that the earth was made out of some fluid substance, to which the name of water is properly given.<sup>13</sup>

Though Clarke sees a physical creation, he definitely sees Genesis 1 in 2 Peter 3:7, and he sees that Peter understood that the scoffers neglect of God’s actions went all the way back to “the beginning.” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary confirms this:

**5-6** But they “deliberately [*thelontas*, ‘willingly’] forget” the Great Flood, when God intervened in history by destroying the antediluvian world. What they forget is not only the Flood but also God’s prior activity by his word – the existence of the heavens and the watery formation of the earth (Gen 1:2-10)... He does not use the verb *ktizo* (“create”) but says that “long ago by God’s word the heavens existed [*esan*] and the earth was formed [*synestosa*] out of water and with water.<sup>14</sup>

Notice what the commentator sees here. He sees the direct relationship between “were” (*esan*) and “was formed” (*synestosa*). He doesn’t see the direct relationship between “were” and “now,” but rather “the heavens *were* of old and the earth was formed.”

<sup>12</sup> According to Baker Analytical Greek New Testament, the Greek conjunction *de* (“but” or “and”) is a “connecting conjunction” in 2 Peter 3:7 (pg. 718). If Peter wished to make a strong contrast here between two different “heavens and earths”, one might expect a stronger adversative, like *alla*, than *de*. Baker, pgs 835-836: “[connecting conjunctions] occur between arguments that lead to the same conclusion”. (Baker Book House Company, 1981)

<sup>13</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible, 2 Peter 3:5, from E-Sword ( available at [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net))

<sup>14</sup> Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 12. “2 Peter”, Edwin A. Blum, page 285.

The Greek does not demand that the heavens once existed and now no longer do (though that is an optional interpretation of the word “were”); however, the context *does demand* that the reader should see the connection of the ancient formation of the heavens *and* the earth, *by the word of God*. Peter’s argument is masterful. The scoffers willingly ignored the power of the word of God: the heavens *were of old* and the earth *was formed* by the word of God (Genesis 1), and they both *were reserved* for fire and were about to be removed in Peter’s day by the same word of God.

### Physical or Spiritual?

It is important to note that the physical heavens of Noah’s time did not “perish” by water; only the “world” of the ungodly perished according to Peter, and the “land” was covered with water according to Genesis. Whether Frost sees the judgment on Noah’s so-called “*heavens and earth*” as physical (i.e. physical planet earth, but what about the heavens?), or as spiritual (representing people or an arrangement under a covenant jurisdiction by God), or some combination of the two, I am not sure. I am having a hard time following Frost’s assertion that a global flood on “the earth” (or even a local flood if he has changed his views) is a removal of a “*heavens and earth.*” Maybe “heavens” are covenantal but “earth” is literal-physical.

It seems to me that Frost must see “heavens and earth” as at least quasi-physical in its inherent meaning, since he believes both that Noah’s “world” physically perished by water and that “world” = “heavens and earth.” Therefore, “heavens and earth” by Frost’s logic are physical and perished physically. At least that is what his statements seem to suggest. My position, for clarity’s sake, is that “heavens and earth” are God’s people in covenant relationship with Him. The “heavens” represent the consciences of the people of God, and “earth” represents living under a covenant law. This view coincides with how the Apostle Paul understood “the creation” as people in Romans 8:19ff. The substance of “heavens and earth” is people, not planets. If one wishes to explore more on this subject, I can direct them to materials which explain this view.<sup>15</sup>

If the supposed “heavens and earth” of Noah are literal-physical planets and stars, then there is a serious problem with a flood which only destroyed the “earth” and not the “heavens.” I think it’s quite telling that the other times that Noah’s flood appears in Scripture, the phrase “heavens and earth” are *never* used; several times in the Old Testament “earth” or “ground” (erets) is used, but in the New Testament, only “world” (Gk. *kosmos*) is used<sup>16</sup>. In fact, the literal planet earth itself did not even “perish” in the flood<sup>17</sup>; the “ground” was cursed and the

<sup>15</sup> The podcast series on Isaiah by Ward Fenley and Tami Jelinek, specifically chapter 65 part 9, found here: <http://www.newcreationministries.tv/Audio/isaiah65.htm>. See also these articles: <http://www.newcreationministries.tv/Articles/heavensconscience.htm>, <http://www.newcreationministries.tv/Articles/Psalm19p1.htm>, and <http://www.newcreationministries.tv/Articles/heavensandearth.htm>

<sup>16</sup> See Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5; and 2 Peter 3:6.

<sup>17</sup> See chapters 8 & 9 of Beyond Creation Science, where an excellent case is made for a local, not global, flood.



rebellious people and their livestock were destroyed. This is consistent with a “world” or “kosmos” perishing, as seen in Genesis 8:21:

And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again *curse the ground* for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again *destroy every living thing* as I have done;” (NKJV)

It is at this point that I anticipate Frost arguing that “earth” and “world” are sometimes physical and sometimes spiritual or covenantal: “First the physical, then the spiritual,” as he is fond of saying<sup>18</sup>. Many times, he says this in reference to Paul’s usage of natural vs. spiritual in 1 Corinthians 15:44f. In using this argument, he is erroneously redefining Paul’s “natural” to mean “physical,” which in fact it does *not* mean, as even Frost himself admits in his 1 Corinthians 15 lectures<sup>19</sup>, not to mention that this is ripping Paul’s argument out of the context of resurrection and applying it to Genesis 1. However, if this is the course Frost will pursue, to argue for a physical “earth” or “world” being destroyed in Noah’s flood and a *spiritual* meaning of “heaven and earth” (which supposedly means “world”) in 2 Peter 3, then Frost would set himself up into a very weak position when arguing with futurists that Peter didn’t have a brand new shiny planet in mind when he wrote. If “world” equals “heavens and earth” for Noah’s flood and the “earth/world” that was destroyed was physical, then how can one argue it is different in 2 Peter 3:7? This line of reasoning would put Frost, if he were to remain consistent, dangerously close to jumping back into Gentry’s and other reformed views of 2 Peter 3 – a physical conflagration of the planet.

### Worlds Collide

We know that the “world” of Peter and John was “passing away” (1 John 2:17). Since “the heavens and the earth” were also passing away, does that mean they are the same? Just because two things are being compared, does that mean they are equal? Peter’s use of “world” in 2 Peter 3:6 to describe Noah’s Flood means what it does the other times it is used in judgment passages<sup>20</sup>: the destruction of the arrangement, organization or “kosmos” of *the ungodly*, not the removal of an entire heavenly administration. Notice 2 Peter 2:5-9:

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.restorationgj.com/id181.htm>

<sup>19</sup> In the outline to Frost’s audio lectures on 1 Corinthians 15, part 7, line 9, he writes: “The ‘natural man’ in contrast with the ‘spiritual man.’ Romans 8, 1 Corin. 2:11-15 (natural man in Greek. NIV uses ‘man without the Spirit’); All men in Adam were ‘the natural man’ and cannot come to God on our own merits and terms. The ‘natural man’ (all in Adam) must be sown and die as a seed into Christ’s death. The natural man, the ‘nature’ of Adam, was also ‘being raised’ (‘transformed, being saved’) in the Second Adam, Christ. Paul is NOT describing the physical ‘flesh’ of hair and toenails [emphasis Frost-JK]. He is describing the NATURE of man as it relates to his standing before God, as one condemned, corrupted, weak, and dishonorable. The Gnostics believed that the material ‘flesh’ was ‘evil,’ but this is not Paul’s view. The ‘dust’ of man’s flesh was ‘good’ according to God. The ‘nature’ of man, however, was ‘evil.’ Paul’s language, then, which is used elsewhere, is describing the same sinful nature inherited from the First Adam, but put to death in the Second Adam.” *Outline written by Sam Frost and dated April 7, 2007, given to me in an email by Sam Dawson.*

<sup>20</sup> I want to make clear that I am not arguing for “world” to only mean “the realm of the ungodly,” but am just using this narrow view of “world” as it fits in this context, especially how Peter uses it. For example, Christians were in the Roman “world,” but in another sense were “not of the world” (see John 17).

5 *if* he did not spare the *ancient world*, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the *world of the ungodly*;  
 6 *if* by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;  
 7 and *if* he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked  
 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);  
 9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue *the godly* from trials, and to keep *the unrighteous* under punishment until the day of judgment. (ESV)

This background text of chapter 2 is fundamental for a correct understanding of chapter 3. Notice Peter's logical "if/then" construction. *If* God punished the *world* of the wicked and preserved the righteous in both Noah's Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, *then* he will do the same at the Parousia. At this point I raise the question: if "heavens and earth" means simply a "world" or God-ordained administration, wouldn't the perishing of that "heavens and earth" be a judgment on both the wicked and the righteous? But this is clearly not the case when "world" is used. Instead, what we find in chapter 2 are the righteous being rescued and the world of the ungodly being kept under punishment, with no hint that the destruction of this "world" means anything more significant than the destruction of the then-living wicked. It was a relevant message to Peter's contemporary audience that fit within the broader context of the whole epistle. Here is my paraphrased summary of the letter:

Remember the things we apostles have been telling you (1:12-21). *God will take care of the false prophets and false teachers who are troubling you (2:1-3:9)*. When He comes, He will remove the ungodly and overturn your covenant with death, which has been here since the beginning, and then we will finally be in the promised inheritance where the righteousness of Christ is imparted to us (3:10-13). Therefore, you should be diligent to be found spotless and blameless when He comes (3:11-18).

Now, the "Jewish world" was certainly going to pass away at the destruction of Jerusalem. The world of the "ungodly" perished both in the flood and the destruction of Jerusalem. But wasn't there more to this judgment in AD 70 than just the destruction of the then-living ungodly? What is unique here is that the passing of the "heavens and earth" represents more than just the "world of the ungodly." The passing of the "heavens and earth" in AD 70 was the overturning of death! It was what hadn't happened in the flood: the resurrection of the dead. No dead persons were judged in Noah's flood.

Don Preston, prolific writer and speaker, wrote about this contrast of "worlds" in Noah's and Peter's day. I have the deepest respect, love and admiration for Don, and consider him far advanced ahead of me in the field of eschatology. Though I disagree with some of Don's analysis here, I believe he makes a valid point about how "world" doesn't mean the planet but the society of people being judged:

Now since the heaven and earth, the physical universe, did not perish in Noah's day, how can it be insisted Peter is saying the physical universe must perish in his (Peter's) day of the Lord? How can one extrapolate from a flood that destroyed a WORLD to the destruction of the cosmos? How can one say that since there was a global flood this proves the coming destruction of the entire created order? Is it not far more consistent to believe that Peter was saying that just as the diluvian WORLD was destroyed by the flood, God is about to destroy the present Jewish WORLD by fire? This would be a consistent parallel and comparison. The traditional view is not.

Notice the comparative chart.

Noah's Day	Peter's Day
1. Heaven and earth kept.	1. Heaven and earth kept.
2. Kept for judgment of ungodly.	2. Kept for judgment of ungodly.
3. Kept by power of God.	3. Kept by power of God.
4. Earth "perished," Genesis 9:11, but not destroyed.	4. Earth to perish in same sense?
5. World perished II Peter 2:5	5. World to perish?

This helps us realize that Peter is speaking of worlds that had/were to perish, not physical creation. One final thought on the word world. William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, The Daily Study Bible Series, Westminster Press, 1976, p.56, commenting on I John 2:15-17 observes:

"We must be careful to understand what John meant by the world, the kosmos....But kosmos acquired a moral sense. It began to mean the world apart from God.' C.H.. Dodd defines this meaning of kosmos: 'Our author means human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles and characterized by base desires, false values, and egoism.' In other words, to John the world was nothing other than pagan society with its false values and its false gods." We understand from Peter that in Noah's day the world, the moral world, or society perished."<sup>21</sup>

The point Don makes is powerful: *"We understand from Peter that in Noah's day the world, the moral world, or society perished."* If the "world" of Noah that was destroyed was physical, then so would the destruction of Peter's heavens and earth be physical. However, I would argue that Don is incorrect to say that the "heaven and earth" were "kept" in Noah's Day. It wasn't the "heavens and earth" that were judged and removed in the flood, but rather it was only the "world" of the ungodly.

<sup>21</sup> From an online article titled: "The World That Perished", found here: [http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=276:the-world-that-perished&catid=34:new-heaven-and-earth&Itemid=61](http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=276:the-world-that-perished&catid=34:new-heaven-and-earth&Itemid=61)

A more accurate chart would look like this:

Noah's Day	Peter's Day
1. "World" kept.	1. <i>Heaven and earth</i> kept (since the beginning - Abel).
2. Judgment of the living wicked.	2. Judgment of <i>all righteous and wicked, dead and alive</i> .
3. Kept by power of God.	3. Kept by power of God.
4. Destroyed by water.	4. Destroyed by <i>fire</i> .
5. Earth perished. Genesis 9:11	5. <i>Heaven and Earth</i> to perish.
6. World of ungodly perished. II Peter 2:5	6. World of ungodly also to perish. I John 2:8, 15-17

This chart shows that while both judgments hinged on being kept by God's word, and both judgments involved the destruction of the living ungodly, they were drastically different in who were being judged and by what means. This is extremely profound.

The point I am making is this: Frost, or anyone forcing a non-covenantal, universal meaning upon Noah's "world" (i.e. a global flood killing all non-covenant men and all plant and animal life), then switching gears to a covenantal one found in 2 Peter 3:7 (the Judaic "Heavens and Earth" founded at Sinai), is not being consistent with their use of "world." As a detailed exposition of 1 John 2 would show, the Hebraic concept of "world" did not mean the physical globe. It was the realm of the ungodly. Peter expected a judgment, in many ways similar to the Flood, on the ungodly of his generation. But that wasn't the full scope of this judgment; as the above chart shows, there was much more to the destruction of the heavens and earth than simply the destruction of the "world" of the ungodly. In fact, *that difference was Peter's whole purpose of contrasting these two judgments.*

### **All the Righteous Blood Shed on Earth**

There is strong Scriptural evidence that the coming judgment on the "heavens and earth" in 2 Peter 3 was a judgment that went beyond (in scope, time, gravity, and magnitude) the judgment of Noah's flood. If it can be shown that the judgment of the "present heavens and earth" was a judgment inclusive of Noah and went all the way to the time of Adam, then Frost's position is falsified. It is falsified because Frost argues that "a" previous "heavens and earth" (beginning in Genesis 2:4) was destroyed in the flood, and that the judgment in 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 is a judgment on the *Mosaic* "heavens and earth" beginning at Sinai and ending at AD70. If such is the case, then we would have to conclude that the "heavens and earth" present in Peter's day did *not* include the "heavens and earth" previously *destroyed*. Remember, Frost's position is that these are two different "heavens and earths."

Notice now the comparison of Matthew 23:32-35 with 2 Peter 3:7:

Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. **33** Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? **34** Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, **35** that on you may come *all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.* (Matthew 23:32-35 NKJV)

But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:7 NKJV)

When the “day of judgment” arrived on Jesus’ generation of ungodly men, it would indicate that all the righteous blood shed on the earth since Abel had been judged; in other words, that the “heavens and the earth” existing since Abel had been judged and removed. Matthew 23 proves that the “heavens and earth” of Peter’s day went all the way back to Genesis. Acts 24:15 and Revelation 20:12-13 also testify that this judgment would include the dead – the righteous and the wicked. This type of judgment is different in scope and purpose than Noah’s flood. We are finding that Peter’s comparison is not an “apples to apples” comparison, but rather an “apples to oranges” comparison. The destruction of Peter’s “present heavens and earth,” then, is a judgment inclusive of Noah and preceding Noah. This is devastating to Frost’s position.

Now notice Hebrews 11:

**4** By faith *Abel* offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. (NKJV)

**7** By faith *Noah*, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned *the world* and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

**39** And *all these*, having obtained a good testimony through faith, *did not receive the promise*, **40** God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (NKJV)

Again, more devastation to Frost’s position. According to Frost, there should be a break in that context; his line of reasoning would have the Hebrew writer saying, “Now this first group of people up to Noah were in that *other* heavens and earth that was destroyed by the flood, so really, I should not even be mentioning them...and then this next group...” But contrary to Frost’s position, the Hebrew writer says “all these,” from Abel to the last prophet, would be made perfect along with the Hebrew Christians, “in a very, very little while” (10:37). That is what judgment on the old heavens and earth accomplished, and it didn’t stop at Sinai.

How would people under a supposedly previously destroyed and no longer existent *covenantal* “heavens and earth” (from Adam to Noah) be judged or rewarded at the removal of the supposed *Mosaic* “heavens and earth?” Under what covenantal authority did this take place? Where did *they* go when their “heaven and earth” was judged and removed (according to Frost, at the flood); to a new heavens and earth created for them? If so, where is the scriptural basis for such presumption?

Also, if an *Adamic* “heavens and earth” ended in the flood, and a new one was created at Sinai, where does this leave Abraham since he lived *after* the flood and *before* Sinai? Do we believe that “father Abraham” lived in a completely different “heavens and earth” than all of his children?

Another problem with this view is it puts the identity of Israel as the “people of God” beginning with Moses at Sinai, when clearly they are called the “people of God” before Sinai (Exodus 5:1). When you have a creation of a “heavens and earth,” spiritually speaking, you have the creation of a people of God.<sup>22</sup> Also, think about where the name “Israel” came from. Were Jacob and his twelve sons in a “heavens and earth?” Does this mean that “Israel” (Jacob) was in a different “heavens and earth” than “Israel” (Moses)?

Finally, the absurdity of this view really becomes apparent when the last days of a “heavens and earth” are prophesied in Genesis 49:1, before those supposed “heavens and earth” are even created! It makes more sense to see the covenantal people of God bound under law beginning with God’s covenant with Adam and then coming to front and center stage through the Sinai covenant.<sup>23</sup>

Rather than this convoluted multiple-heavens-and-earths position, with glaring gaps of no “heaven and earth” from Noah till Moses, what Jesus and the Hebrew writer say is that the removal of *their* (Jesus’ and the Hebrew writer’s) “heavens and earth” results in the judgment and rewarding of those all the way back to Abel. Wouldn’t that require that *this* “heavens and earth” goes back at least as far?

### **Back to the Beginning**

Indeed, it does go all the way back to “the beginning”:

And: "YOU, LORD, *IN THE BEGINNING* LAID THE FOUNDATION OF *THE EARTH*, AND *THE HEAVENS* ARE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS. **11** THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY WILL ALL GROW OLD LIKE A GARMENT; **12** LIKE A CLOAK YOU WILL FOLD

<sup>22</sup> This is demonstrated in the articles referenced in footnote 15. A comparison of Psalms 19:1-4 and Romans 10:16-18 shows how “heavens” are the people of God. See also Deuteronomy 31:30-32:1, where the people of Israel were addressed as “heavens and earth”.

<sup>23</sup> In my lectures at the 2009 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend in Ardmore, OK, I demonstrated that the mode of existence “in the flesh” and “under law” began with Adam, not Moses. The audio CD’s can be purchased here: [http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?page=shop.product\\_details&flypage=shop.flypage&product\\_id=98&category\\_id=20&option=com\\_virtuemart&Itemid=213](http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=shop.flypage&product_id=98&category_id=20&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=213)

THEM UP, AND THEY WILL BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT FAIL." (Hebrews 1:10-12 NKJV)

It is profoundly significant that nearly all Christians (except some preterists) see this passage as talking about the Genesis 1 creation. It is because of this text and 2 Peter 3 that futurists look forward to an end of the planet and stars. The popular understanding of the nature of "the beginning" is what determines the nature of "the end," since orthodox Christianity sees these two as necessarily connected, and both as the physical universe.

However, if we see that the second coming occurred in AD 70 and that the prophetic texts are not talking about an end to the universe, but of the end of the *entire Old Covenant*, i.e. the dispensation of sin and death, then we are faced with a conundrum. Did "the beginning" mentioned in Hebrews 1:10-11 start in Genesis 1, or did the real covenantal "beginning" of sin and death start at Sinai?

The prophet Hosea contends that Israel simply reenacted what began with Adam:

*But like Adam* they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. (Hosea 6:7 ESV)

What covenant was Adam under? He transgressed the covenant God gave him – a covenant bound by law ("do not eat") with consequences for disobedience ("in that day you shall surely die"). This is a covenant of law and works. Paul was replete in his letters to the Romans and the Galatians that in Christ, the old covenant of law and works (which *originally* began in Adam and *was magnified through Moses*) was finally being overturned:

**18** For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. **19** Why then the law? It was *added because of transgressions*, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; (Galatians 3:18-19a ESV)

Now the law came in to *increase the trespass*, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (Romans 5:20 ESV)

The final death-knell to Frost's position is that Jesus, John, Peter, and the Hebrew writer all understood "in the beginning" to refer to the same thing: the Genesis 1 creation.

*In the beginning*, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 ESV)

*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1 ESV)

But *from the beginning of creation*, 'God made them male and female.' (Mark 10:6 ESV)

They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were *from the beginning of creation*." (2 Peter 3:4 ESV)

Compare the above passages with Hebrews 1:10-11, quoted again:

And: "YOU, LORD, *IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS*. (11) THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY WILL ALL GROW OLD LIKE A GARMENT;" (Hebrews 1:10-11 NKJV)

There is no exegetical reason to reject Hebrews 1:10-11 as the Genesis 1 creation account. "The beginning" means the same here as it does in the previous three verses. There is no Scriptural basis for arguing otherwise, only presupposition and eisegesis. The connection of the old covenant (ministration) of death going all the way back to Adam and Abel, *preceding Sinai*, has been firmly established.

### No More Death

The ultimate significance of the removal of the "heavens and earth" created in the beginning is that in the new "heavens and earth," there is no more death:

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. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** 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, **4** and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any *death*; there will no longer be any *mourning, or crying, or pain*; the *first things* have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4 NASB'95)

Some translations say "former" rather than "first." In fact, this argument is used repeatedly by Michael Bennett to say that "first" doesn't mean "first" but can just mean "former."<sup>24</sup> This actually proves my point: the removal of the "former" heavens and earth is equated to the "former things" of it which passed away, namely, *death*. If the overturn of the "present heavens and earth" only goes to Sinai and no further, then how is death (which originated with Adam and is one of the *first or former things* to pass away) overturned? Wouldn't "first things" (death in Adam) belong to the "first heavens and earth" (found in Genesis)? Contrary to Frost, "The first heaven and earth" and "the death" both originated in Genesis, not at Sinai.

The removal of Peter's heavens and earth resulted in the removal of the veil cast over all the "earth," people and nations (Isaiah 25:7-8), the veil which covered Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, David and the prophets (per Hebrews 11). Therefore, the removal of the

<sup>24</sup> See <http://preterism.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-charge-of-inconsistency-by>, and [http://preterismdebate.ning.com/profiles/blog/show?id=4171784%3ABlogPost%3A7039&commentId=4171784%3AComment%3A7045&xg\\_source=activity](http://preterismdebate.ning.com/profiles/blog/show?id=4171784%3ABlogPost%3A7039&commentId=4171784%3AComment%3A7045&xg_source=activity)



*first* heavens and earth (Revelation 21:1) = the removal of the veil (death) over the people and nations of God since Adam (Revelation 21:4). It was *through* the judgment of the first heavens and earth of the natural man (Adam) that the second, new heavens and earth of the spiritual man (Christ) could arrive. Hence, the heavens and earth that Peter saw soon to be burned was the *first one, the one Adam was in (and therefore, also Noah)*.

An important point that Don Preston often makes is that the unique thing about the judgment on Israel in AD 70 is that it was through judgment and destruction that she would be *saved*<sup>25</sup>. And of course, as we just saw, it wasn't just Israel that was going to be judged and destroyed, but all the wicked all the way back to Cain and Abel. The same is the case with salvation – it wasn't just Israel that was going to be saved with the removal of the old heavens and earth, it was all those under the death of Adam (Romans 5:12ff; 1 Corinthians 15:22), which includes Gentiles as well. In fact, according to Jesus, Old Testament Gentiles would be present at the coming judgment<sup>26</sup>. How is this possible if the passing away of Peter's "heavens and earth" is limited to that which began at Sinai? The Law was not given to Gentiles, but to Israel! Frost's model, *by defining the Old Covenant merely as events initiated by Sinai*, results in an Israel-only eschatology which is at odds with the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles. Contrary to the implications of Frost's paradigm, it was through the judgment of "all nations" (Matthew 25:32), of the Jew and the Greek (Romans 2:9-16), that salvation came to Israel and the nations. A judgment and salvation which went all the way back to "the beginning."

There are many books, study Bibles, and commentaries that point out the parallels between Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 20-22. Consider:

Heavens and earth created	Heavens and earth destroyed and recreated
Evening and morning	No more night
Sun and moon created	Sun and moon no longer needed
River waters the land	The River of Life waters the land
The Death enters	Resurrection from the Death
The Sin enters	The Sin is banished
Satan victorious	Satan defeated
Curse given	Curse removed
Pain in childbirth	No more pain
Tree of life lost	Tree of life regained
Guilt and shame	Face to face fellowship

It is absolutely perplexing that one would claim the "heavens and earth" removed in Revelation 21:1 went no further back historically than Mount Sinai, based exclusively on Peter's use of "the present." Frost believes the Greek text to be his "ace of spades," so-to-speak, in what has been shown to be a "house of cards" case against "covenant creation," as every time he places that

<sup>25</sup> I was unable to locate the specific reference where Preston says this, but I know he frequently teaches this point.

<sup>26</sup> See Matthew 10:15; 11:24; 12:42, and Luke 11:31-32 for examples.

card, his whole house crumbles to the ground because it is without a comprehensive Scriptural foundation.

### **Conclusion**

I have demonstrated from the Greek text and overall context of 2 Peter that even with the adjectival use of “now” (which is far from universally agreed upon among translators and commentators), “world” does not equal “heavens and earth.” I demonstrated that the imperfect “were” does not require the non-existence of a subject at the time of its writing; instead, the overall context is about the scoffers and their neglect of the word of God, rather than a comparison of two different “heavens and earths.” I pointed out from Hebrews 12 that there wasn’t a “heaven and earth” event at Sinai, but rather an “earth only” event, and I briefly noted in footnote seven that Isaiah 51:16 is not talking about Sinai due to the context and the future tense of the verbs in that text. I proved how the only “beginning” where we have a “heavens and earth creation” in Scripture is Genesis 1, falsifying Frost’s premise that God created *a* “heavens and earth” at Sinai. Lastly, we saw how this all ties in with God overturning the death which began in Adam and how Genesis 1-3 is the parallel of Revelation 20-22.

I suspect that just as it is difficult to understand resurrection in Christ without a proper understanding of its nature, so too our understanding of the “nature” of the Genesis creation causes us to stumble over what should be very clear and understandable once all the biblical pieces of the puzzle come together.