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saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." It is to this footstool that Christ Jesus has taught his disciples to pray for God's Theocratic rule to come, saying: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."—Isaiah 66:1; Luke 11:2.

Although many scripture texts indicate there will be a display of much literal fire upon the earth and in the atmospheric firmament about the earth at the final end of "this world", the Scriptures are nonetheless plain that "the earth abideth for ever", and that there will be survivors safely carried through this world catastrophe as surely as Noah and his family were carried through the end of the old world. The ungodly pre-Flood world consisted of the visible earthly organization of humankind and the wicked heavenly organization of demons which controlled corrupt humankind. Such were the "earth" and the "heavens" that made up the "world that then was", and that perished in the flood.—2 Peter 3:6.

The superficial appearance of our literal earth was greatly changed by the addition of the flood from the fallen water canopy, but upon this same earth another visible organization of ungodly men was built up. It dates particularly from the time of the founding of Nimrod's kingdom at Babel, or Babylon, and it has spread over all the earth. This human, visible organization of religion, commerce and politics makes up the symbolic "earth", and men think it will endure just as long as our earthly planet does.

Our planet earth is surrounded by an invisible air mass, which is the "firmament" or expanse of atmosphere extending up about one hundred miles higher than man. In like manner the symbolic "earth" has invisible spirit powers in control of it, namely, the demons under Satan the Devil. This organization of wicked spirits with Satan as their prince is both higher than man and unseen to him. Hence that demon organization constitutes the "heavens" with relation to man's present earthly organization. Man on earth can no more get rid of these demonic "heavens" than man can by airplane or rockets or other means get up above the air envelope which is about our earthly globe and in which man breathes. God alone can and will deliver humankind from such demon powers of control.

The symbolic "heavens and the earth which are now" make up "this world" and its "elements" and "works". Christ Jesus said: "My kingdom is not of this world." He repeatedly called Satan the Devil "the prince of this world". —John 18:36; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

The world's destruction as described by Peter applies to the symbolic "heavens" and "earth". Hence the "fire" which shall dissolve and burn up the invisible and visible parts of Satan's world must be symbolic rather than literal. Since literal fire is destructive of combustible things and purifies away the dross, so the "fire" in which this present world passes away "with a great noise" pictures the destruction which God in his hot wrath brings upon Satan's mighty