

There are, however, some passages on this subject as literal and as precise in their meaning as language can be. Now, it is one of the rules for interpreting language, that, where a work contains several accounts of the same event, the description which is most simple and literal ought to be made the index for obtaining the meaning of those passages which are figurative, or, on any account, obscure. I shall, therefore, select the passage of Scripture which all acknowledge to be most plain and definite, respecting the future destruction of the earth, and the new heavens and earth that are to succeed, and first inquire into its precise meaning; after which, we shall be better prepared to ascertain what modification of that meaning other passages of sacred writ demand.

It needs but a cursory examination of the Bible to convince any one that the description in the Second Epistle of Peter of the future destruction and renovation of the earth and heavens, is eminently the passage first to be examined, because the fullest and clearest on this subject. It is the apostle's object directly and literally to describe these great changes, apart from all embellishments of language.

“There shall come,” says he, “in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in