

The Ultimate Disposition of Space Junk

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This unanswered mystery derives from three closely related biblical passages:

- Isaiah 66:22 mentions “the new heavens and the New Earth, which I [the LORD] will make.”
- Peter looked forward to this same event but added details about when” “all these things shall be dissolved” at the “coming of the Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” as we “look for new heavens and a New Earth” (2 Pet. 3:11–13).
- Similarly, Revelation 20:11 and 21:1 has John recapitulating both thoughts, as he records that “the Earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.” “And I saw a new heaven and a New Earth: for the first heaven and the first Earth were passed away.”

So here it is: What will happen to all the space junk (debris) that is scattered throughout the Milky Way? Will God add these things to the lake of fire that purifies Earth (Rev. 20:14)? Leaving the debris in place seems to go against the notion of a totally clean universe, since man-made celestial objects are the result of sinful mankind’s inventions that will serve no function any longer. After all, we read: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean” (GC 678).

I decided to pose the question to Clinton Wahlen, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute. What follows is his reply in an e-mail dated December 4, 2022.

Regarding space junk and the various interstellar probes that have been sent beyond the reaches of our solar system, this is something I’ve thought about from time to time. Of course, we have no direct inspired indication as to what the disposition of these things will be, but I think it is safe to assume the junk orbiting the earth will be vaporized by the brightness of Christ’s coming. That would be important when we are “caught up to meet the Lord in the air,” because I am sure we will not need to worry about dodging any of this space junk as we ascend to heaven!

Regarding space probes, including those that have landed on the moon, Venus, Mars, Titan, and various asteroids, there would need to be a more deliberate clean-up effort. Presumably that would happen sometime during the millennium but how that would happen and whether we would have a part in it is impossible to say until that time arrives.

I found this man’s answer to be quite logical and satisfying. After all, if “the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His Mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8) all the wicked beings, including Satan, then the inanimate objects they have fashioned must also cease to exist.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!