

EARTH RENEWED AND RESTORED

- A. Introduction: For several months we have been discussing the soon return of Jesus Christ to this world. His second coming is not a side issue—it's part of the good news of salvation through Jesus (the gospel).
1. Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan for humanity. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him and made the world to be home for Himself and His family.
 - a. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Human beings are guilty of sin and therefore disqualified for sonship, the planet is infused with a curse of corruption and death, and there is an adversarial kingdom in place that is in direct opposition to the Lord. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; II Cor 4:4; I John 5:19; etc.
 - b. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin with His sacrifice at the Cross. Through His death and resurrection, He opened the way for all who believe in Him to be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters of God and restored to the family. Jesus will return to restore the earth to a fit forever home for God and His family. John 1:12-13; Rev 21-22; etc.
 2. We are supposed to encourage each other with the fact that Jesus is coming back. Note what Paul wrote in one of his epistles: Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near (Heb 10:25, NLT).
 - a. Paul made this statement to people who were experiencing hard times due to increasing persecution—including ridicule, beatings, jail, and property loss (Heb 10:32-34). And some had quit gathering together for fear it would bring further persecution. Paul urged them not to do that.
 - b. His point was: We need to get together to encourage each other with the fact that Jesus is coming back. You can't encourage yourself or anyone else with the fact that Jesus will return unless you know why He is coming and what it will mean for this planet. That's our focus in this study.
 3. For the past couple of weeks we've been looking at the Book of Revelation. Revelation is an account of a vision that the Lord gave to John the apostle. Most of the book is a description of increasingly severe events that will take place on earth just before the Lord Jesus returns.
 - a. However, John also saw the completion of God's plan. He witnessed God's ultimate victory over Satan and his kingdom and the removal of all that hurts or harms from this world. John saw the Lord come to earth to live forever with His family in a renewed and restored world.
 - b. Many people needlessly fear the second coming because they wrongly believe that the world is going to be destroyed. But that's not what John saw in his vision. In this lesson we'll consider what John was shown about earth's fate.
- B. Before we look at the end of the Book of Revelation we must first consider the context in which the first Christians heard and understood John's report. Remember that most of the early Christians and their leaders were Jewish, and their world view was shaped by the Old Testament prophets.
1. Consider some things that Peter the apostle said and wrote. He, like John, was born a Jew and was one of the original twelve apostles who walked and talked with Jesus for three and a half years. Peter and John were part of Jesus' inner circle and became leaders in the early church.
 - a. As first century Jews familiar with the writings of the Old Testament prophets, Peter and the other apostles knew that the Lord will one day renew and restore the earth.
 - b. Matt 19:27-29—Not long before Jesus' crucifixion Peter asked Jesus: Lord, we left everything to follow you. What will our reward be?
 1. Jesus told Peter that in the regeneration he and the others will get back over and above (one hundred fold) everything that they gave up to follow Him. The Greek word that is translated regeneration (*palingenesia*) means again birth or new birth.
 2. Note some translations: In the age of the restoration of all things (TPT); in the new age—the

Messianic rebirth of the world (Amp). Note that Jesus didn't have to explain what He meant.

- c. Peter later revealed why no explanation was necessary in one of his first sermons given shortly after Jesus returned to Heaven. Peter knew from the prophets that the world will be restored: For he (Jesus) must remain in heaven until the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his prophets (Acts 3:21, NLT). Consider two examples of what the prophets wrote.
1. Isa 65:17—Isaiah the prophet was the first to refer to what will happen to the earth with the term new heavens and new earth. New is translated from a Hebrew word that means to renew. (Heavens refers to the atmosphere around and above us and what we call outer space.)
 2. Other passages in the Old Testament talk about God making “deserts like Eden ... (and) wastelands like the garden of the Lord (Isa 51:3, NIV), stating that “Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up” (Isa 55:13, NLT).
2. Many misinterpret a passage that Peter wrote in one of his epistles to mean that the Lord will destroy the earth with fire in the Day of the Lord (the second coming). Let's read it and see what Peter meant.
- a. II Pet 3:10-12—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**...all these things shall be **dissolved**...the heavens being on fire shall be **dissolved**, and the elements **shall melt** with fervent **heat** (KJV).
 - b. Peter isn't describing earth's destruction. He's describing earth's transformation. The original Greek wording makes this clear.
 1. **Pass away** (v10) is from two Greek words and is used numerous times in the New Testament. It never means cease to exist. It has the idea of passing from one condition or state to another.
 2. **Elements** (v10) comes from a word that means the most basic components of the physical world. We now know those to be atoms, molecules and subatomic particles.
 3. **Shall melt** (v10) and **dissolve** (v11-12) are from a word that means to loose. Jesus used this word when He told people to free Lazarus from his grave clothes after he was raised from the dead (John 11:44). When you loose something, you set it free from or to something.
 4. **Shall melt** (in v12) is a different word. The English word thaw comes from it. When the spring thaw sets in, winter releases its grip. Note that the idea in these words (melt and dissolve) is that something is released or freed from something else.
 5. The phrase **burned up** (v10) is not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts. Instead, they use a word that means found or shown. The idea is exposure of corruption for the purpose of removal: The earth and everything in it will be laid bare (NIV); earth and every activity of man will be laid bare (TPT); the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed (ESV).
 - c. Peter wrote that in connection with the second coming of Jesus the earth will melt (be loosed) with fervent **heat** (v10). The Greek word translated heat means to be set on fire and is used figuratively to describe the attributes and actions of the Lord, including His spoken Word.
 1. God told the prophet Jeremiah: I will give you messages (for my sinful people) that will burn them up as if they were kindling wood (Jer 5:14, NLT); Does not my word burn like fire, asks the Lord. Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes rocks to pieces (Jer 23:29, NLT).
 2. Fire doesn't destroy anything in the sense that fire causes something to cease to exist. Fire causes elements to change form—fire changes wooden logs into ashes.
 - A. Just as God created the heavens and the earth by speaking His Word, He will cleanse and purge the material elements of this physical world with the fire of His Word.
 - B. He will speak and the elements that make up the heavens and the earth will be loosed (freed) from their present state of bondage to corruption.
 3. Note Peter's summary point about the cleansing of this world by God's fire: In view of the fact that all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be? Surely men of good and holy

character, who live expecting and working for the coming of the day of God...but our hopes are set on new heavens and a new earth which he has promised us, in which justice will make its home. (II Pet 3:11-13, J. B. Phillips).

- a. There are several Greek words that can be translated new. Peter used *kainos*, a word that means new in quality or form as opposed to new in time. Paul the apostle used this same word to describe a person who has been born again through faith in Christ—He is a new creature. II Cor 5:17
 1. The new birth doesn't turn us into something that never existed before. It transforms us from sinners to sons of God by flooding our inner being with eternal life.
 2. The present heavens and earth will be transformed by the power of God's Word and made new in quality and superior in character—changed but recognizable, new but familiar.
 - b. When Peter wrote this epistle he knew that he was soon going to be executed for his faith in Christ. Peter died anticipating the new earth. This perspective gave him hope in the face of death.
 - c. Peter is now in Heaven waiting to return to earth to be reunited with His body to live here forever (full salvation). In connection with the second coming of Jesus the present invisible Heaven and this earth will come together. Heaven will be on earth. (For a more complete discussion of this point read my book: *The Best Is Yet To Come: What The Bible Says About Heaven*, Chapter 15.)
4. Rev 21:1—John the apostle actually saw the new heavens and new earth at the conclusion of the vision that Jesus gave him in Revelation. John used the same Greek word for new as Peter did (*kainos*).
- a. The apostle also used *kainos* just a few statements later. John wrote that he heard Almighty God declare: Behold, I make all things new (*kainos*) as opposed to I make all new things Rev 21:5
 1. John called our present world the first heavens and earth and wrote that they had passed away. First is the Greek word *protos* which means first in time or place. We get our English word prototype from the root of this Greek word. A prototype is an original model on which something else is patterned. This current world is a pattern for the one to come.
 2. Passed away is the same Greek word that Peter used when he said that the heavens shall pass away and that Paul used when he wrote that believers in Jesus become new creatures. Remember, the term has the idea of passing from one condition to another.
 - b. When John wrote that there was no more sea he meant no more sea as we know it. As with every part of creation (this present world) the oceans (seas) have been damaged by sin.
 1. We think of the ocean as a place for a beach vacation. But in John's day the sea was a formidable obstacle capable of great destruction. Sailors in wooden boats with no modern navigational equipment risked death every time they sailed away from the shoreline.
 2. Much of our present world is uninhabitable since two-thirds of the globe is covered by residual waters from Noah's flood. And, all our technology can't stop destructive hurricanes.
 3. As with every other part of creation, the oceans will be reclaimed and restored when Jesus returns. The Old Testament prophets revealed that there will be large bodies of water on the new earth. (For more details about the new earth and life on the new earth, read my book: *The Best Is Yet To Come: What The Bible Says About Heaven*.)
5. John witnessed the completion of the plan—full salvation. The redemption (salvation) provided through Jesus is big enough to deliver both humankind and the earth from sin and its effects. This is God's world (Ps 24:1). The Lord will not surrender one atom of his material creation to sin.
- a. Col 1:18-20—He (Jesus) was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross (The Message Bible).

b. Rev 21:1-4—Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever’ (NLT).

C. Conclusion: Keep in mind that the Book of Revelation was first sent to real people—not as information for an end times seminar—but to people John knew and loved, living in Asia Minor. Even though Jesus didn’t return in the lifetime of any of those first readers, Revelation would have been an encouragement to them.

1. Not only does the book end with the completion of God’s plan for a family on earth renewed and restored, it assured them that Jesus hadn’t forgotten them and that all will ultimately be made right.

a. Before John was shown the events leading up to the second coming, Jesus gave John messages for seven churches in Asia Minor at that time (Rev 2-3). Note some details from those messages.

1. Rev 2:1—To the church in the city of Ephesus Jesus said: I hold the seven stars (the pastors of each church) safe in my hand and I walk among the seven lamp stands (the churches). In other words, I am right there with you.

2. Rev 2:8-10—To the church in the city of Smyrna Jesus said: I know your suffering and your poverty. I know you are being slandered. Don’t be afraid of what you’re about to suffer.

Stay faithful even when facing death and you will receive the crown of life (reward). What did reward mean to them? The same kind of reward Jesus promised Peter in Matt 19:27-29.

3. Rev 2:12-13—To the church in the city of Pergamos Jesus said: I know where you live, where Satan sits enthroned, yet you’ve remained faithful to me in the face of persecution.

A. This city was the center of Roman Emperor worship and had three temples dedicated to worshipping the emperor. There was also a throne-like altar to the Greek god Zeus on a cliff overlooking the city. It was one of the wonders of the ancient world.

B. Jesus mentioned one martyr by name—Antipas. He’s believed to have been a bishop in Pergamos, and one of Jesus’ first disciples. Tradition says that he was burned to death.

C. Later in his vision, John saw martyrs in Heaven and multitudes who have died through the centuries—alive and well (Rev 6:9-10; Rev 7:9-15). What comfort and encouragement this would have been to men and women facing the harsh realities of life in a fallen world.

b. All these unnamed people faced hardship, persecution, and death looking forward to what is ahead. They knew that God would get them through whatever life in a sin cursed earth brought their way.

2. The apostle Paul, like Peter, also found himself a prisoner awaiting certain execution. Note what he wrote to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, in his last epistle.

a. (I suffer in prison) but I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return (II Tim 1:12, NLT); The Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly Kingdom (II Tim 4:18, NLT).

b. This is not escapism. This is seeing the big picture and living with the awareness that the inevitable pain and heartache of life in a sin damaged world is temporary and that all will ultimately be made right. This perspective gives us hope in the midst of it. It helps us deal with painful losses and the feelings of unfairness and regret that we all experience.

c. Live or die, we will be part of His kingdom—first in Heaven and then on earth. Jesus is coming back to make things right—both people and the planet. We need to encourage ourselves with this reality as we see the day of Jesus’ return approaching (Heb 10:25). Much more next week!!