

THE NEW EARTH

- A. Introduction: Christians have a lot of misconceptions about heaven which rob them of the hope, joy, and strength that comes from knowing our future, from knowing what is ahead for us.
1. Heaven is invisible or beyond the perception of our physical senses. But, it is a real place with real people who do real things -- many of the same things we do on earth.
 - a. Heaven is not other-worldly, ethereal, or wispy. The Bible calls heaven a garden, a city, a country -- all terms which indicate heaven is a real place with qualities and attributes we would recognize.
 1. There are things on earth which are patterned after things in heaven, giving us a glimpse of what heaven is like. Rom 1:20; Heb 8:5; 9:23; Rev 4:4,10,11; 7:9,10;13-17; etc.
 2. There is continuity in heaven. People look like themselves and people retain their memories of their life history and relationships.
 - b. However, heaven as it is now, is temporary. When Jesus returns to this earth, the present heaven will come to earth. In the future, heaven will be on earth. The Bible calls it the new heaven and the new earth. Rev 21:1; II Pet 3:13
 2. We still have more to say about the present, temporary heaven in a later lesson, but in this lesson we want to begin to talk about the new heaven and the new earth and what life will be like on earth when heaven comes to earth, when heaven and earth are one and the same place.
- B. A proper understanding of God's plan for man is key to understanding what heaven on earth will be like.
1. Many of us have the idea that at death we leave this earth and our bodies behind for a spiritual or disembodied existence after this life. Nothing could be further from the truth.
 - a. God did not make men to be disembodied spirits. That is a temporary state and it will be rectified at the resurrection of the dead. Resurrection of the dead is the reuniting of the inward man and the outward man which were separated at death.
 - b. God did not make men to live in an immaterial, spirit world. He made us to live in the physical realm. Resurrection from the dead means the restoration of the physical body to live a physical live in a physical world -- this earth.
 2. God made men for sonship and relationship. God made the earth as the home for Himself and His family. God's plan was and is to dwell with His family on this earth. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18; Ps 115:16; Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3; etc.
 - a. This present earth is not a fit home for God's family -- not since the fall of man. Through Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, sin and death entered the human race and the home God made for His family. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-19; etc.
 - b. When God's creation -- both mankind and the earth -- was damaged by sin, God chose to reclaim what He lost in the fall of man (Luke 19:10). God's plan is called redemption (APOLUTROSIS). Redemption means a loosing away, particularly by paying a price.
 1. God took on flesh. God incarnated, came to earth, and died on the Cross to deliver men from bondage to sin and death and make it possible for God's original plan to be fulfilled -- God dwelling on earth with His family.
 2. Jesus did not come to destroy the world that He created, but to loose it from bondage to corruption, loose it from the works of the devil which have perverted it. He came to reverse the curse. Rom 8:19-23; I John 3:8; Rev 22:3
 3. Col 1:18-20--He was supreme in the beginning and -- leading to 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. (Message Bible)

- C. The Old Testament saints had a better understanding of what is ahead for God's people than many of us. They knew that God would one day establish a physical, visible kingdom on this earth and that they would live with Him forever in a physical existence on the earth. Dan 2:44; 7:27; etc.
1. They believed in and expected to be raised from the dead to live on this earth again (Job 19:25-27; Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19). They didn't know how it would happen, but they knew it would happen.
 - a. Jesus came the first time to a people who believed in resurrection of the dead. John 11:23,24; etc.
 1. Jesus went to the Cross and died for our sins. Once the price was paid Jesus rose from the dead -- the first to be resurrected, the first to triumph over death. I Cor 15:23
 2. After Jesus went back to heaven and the disciples went out to preach the gospel, they preached resurrection, the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 1:22; 2:31; 3:15; 4:2; 4:33; 5:30-32; etc.
 - b. Resurrection means giving life to something that is dead, giving it life that has conquered death -- raising that person or thing above and beyond the touch and power of death. Jesus came to bring resurrection to His entire creation.
 2. In Acts 3 Peter and John healed a lame man at the temple through faith in the name of Jesus. When a crowd gathered, Peter preached the resurrection to them. v15
 - a. Then Peter told the crowd to repent and turn to God: So he can cleanse away your sins and send you wonderful times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord and send Jesus your Messiah back to you again. (v19,20--Living Bible)
 1. This is a powerful promise to the Jews that even though they have rejected Jesus, when they turn to Him, He will come back to them. But, we get an important detail about the Second Coming of Jesus as well. It will be a time of restitution. v21
 2. Restitution comes from a word meaning to restore, a restoration of a thing to its former state: Of universal restoration (20th Cent); When all things are put right (Basic); until the whole world is re-created (Rieu); until the final recovery of all things from sin (Taylor).
 - b. Old Testament men were not looking for deliverance from earth, but rather, deliverance on earth.
 1. Through the writings of the prophets they understood that their ultimate home, their ultimate destiny, was to live on this earth, a perfect earth, with the Lord in His kingdom.
 2. Ps 37:11,29--The upright will have the earth for their heritage, and will go on living there forever. (Basic)
 3. The Jews believed that the Messiah would bring heaven to earth. They believed that God would restore Eden or paradise on earth.
 - c. When Peter said there would be a time of restoration or re-creating the earth at the return of Jesus, he knew from the prophets that a new heaven and a new earth was coming. Isa 65:17; Isa 66:22
 3. Peter is also the one who wrote the passage in II Pet 3:10-12 which has led many Christians to believe that God is going to destroy the earth. We have to read these verses in context.
 - a. Peter made these statements in the context of the new earth (v13). New means new in quality and superior in character as opposed to new in point of time. It is the same word used to describe a new creature in Christ (KAINOS). II Cor 5:17
 - b. Peter knew that a time of restoration is coming. He knew that God is going to deliver His material creation from bondage to sin, corruption, and death at the return of Jesus to this earth.
 1. Shall "melt" (v10) and be "dissolved" (v11,12) in the Greek are LUO which means to loose. Elements (v10) means the most basic elements of nature. The atoms that make up the material creation will be loosed from the bondage of corruption at the return of the Lord.
 2. The material creation will be cleansed or purged by the fire of God's word (Jer 23:29). Just as God spoke and created the world in the beginning He will speak and loose and cleanse His creation, restoring it to its original condition.

- c. In II Pet 3:6,7 Peter referred to the flood of Noah and gives us a context for understanding what is going to happen to the earth when Jesus returns.
 - 1. v6 calls what happened to the world at the flood of Noah the world “perishing“. Yet, the earth was not destroyed by the flood. The earth was changed. It cleansed it of evil. And, Noah’s family and the animals in the ark survived to repopulate the earth.
 - 2. There was continuity between the pre-flood earth and the post-flood earth. Flooding did not destroy the mountains (Gen 8:4) or the rivers (at least one of which retained its name, suggesting continuity. Gen 2:14; 15:18)
 - 4. The new earth will be the same earth just as a new creature is the same person -- only transformed.
 - a. There will be continuity between the old earth and the new earth just like there will be continuity between our mortal body and our resurrection body -- the body that died is the body raised up.
 - b. The new earth is the old earth reclaimed, redeemed, restored. Earth will still be earth, familiar, recognizable -- changed, redeemed, restored -- but still earth.
 - c. Earth will not be destroyed. It will be renovated. Earth has been corrupted by man’s sin, but it will be reclaimed, redeemed, restored. Earth will be resurrected -- brought out of bondage to death into life. Heaven, Eden, will return to earth.

- D. When we talk about Eden being reestablished on this earth it can give the idea that we’ll go back to wearing fig leaves, picking fruit off of trees, and sleeping on pine needle beds on the ground. That is not accurate.
 - 1. Just as there is continuity in the present heaven, just as there is continuity between a new creature and an old creature, there will be continuity between the old earth and the new earth.
 - a. Rev 11:15 says the kingdoms of this world will become the Lord’s. Jesus is not going to destroy the kingdoms of this world, He is going to take control of them, putting down all counterfeit rulers, and He will put His men, His under-rulers, in charge (Matt 25:21; Dan 7:27; Rev 5:10; etc.)
 - b. Jesus is going to purify the kingdoms of this world and make them His own. Matt 13:41-43; etc.
 - 2. Isa 60 describes the new earth. Although the term new earth is not used, the language is similar to Rev 21 and 22 which describe the new heaven and earth (Rev 21:25-27; Isa 60:11;19).
 - a. Notice, Isa 60 mentions nations, rulers, civilizations, and culture on the new earth. It speaks of cultural products: riches of the seas and nations (v5), ships of Tarshish (v9), trees of Lebanon (v13), camels of Midian and Ephah (v6), gold and incense of Sheba (v6), flocks of Kedar (v7).
 - b. In Rev 21:24 John saw rulers, kings, of this world, visiting the capital city of the new earth, New Jerusalem, coming to worship the Lord and to bring “their splendor” (Berkeley), the best of their cultural output to the King of kings.
 - 1. Culture is not evil. Creativity which produces culture is part of the image of God that men still bear even in their fallen condition. When God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle it was God who gave men the ability to build it and make it a work of art. Ex 31:1-11
 - 2. God is not going to destroy human culture. He is going to purify it so that it does what it was always supposed to do -- glorify God.
 - c. We will not “start over from scratch” on the new earth. The new earth will be filled with the sum total and best of God-glorifying culture.
 - 3. A quick note: Keep one thing in mind as we read the prophets. They did not see everything clearly so it is not unusual to find several prophetic events mention in one passage. For example, Isa 9:6 makes reference to both the first and second coming of Jesus.
 - a. Some Old Testament passages about the future kingdom of God on earth make reference to both the millennium (thousand year reign of Christ on earth prior to the establishment of the new heaven and earth) and the new heaven and new earth in the same passage.

- b. Some of the events described will be partially fulfilled in the millennium and completely fulfilled in the new heaven and new earth.
 - c. The millennium is a picture or shadow of the new earth. It is not “more” or “better” than the new heaven and new earth. It is a precursor of heaven on earth.
4. We know much about life on the new earth because many Old Testament passages describe it.
- a. Isa 11:6-9--This passage refers to both the millennium and the new earth. It describes animals, children, and the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth.
 - b. Isa 25:6-8--This passage refers to both the millennium and the new earth. It describes the Lord holding a feast for the people on earth. That means food, eating and drinking, laughter, conversation -- a party.
 - c. Isa 65:17-25--This passage refers to both the millennium and the new earth. Notice, it describes people living as people always have -- building and living in houses, planting vineyards, and harvesting crops.
 - 1. v17 does not mean we will not be able to remember anything from our life on the old earth. Note the context: v16. It does not mean God can't remember something. It means He chooses not to remember past sins and failures (Jer 31:34; etc.).
 - 2. On the new earth we can choose not to remember the troubles and failures of this present life.
 - d. Isa 66:22,23--This passage refers to both the millennium and the new earth. It describes people traveling to Jerusalem to worship the king, and weeks and months.
5. As part of the revelation given to John by Jesus Christ of the events connected to His return to earth, John was permitted to see the new heavens and the new earth (Rev 21,22). As we read, don't get caught up in imagery that triggers preconceived ideas (like streets of gold in glory).
- a. John saw New Jerusalem coming down from heaven and he was told that God's home is now on earth with men.
 - 1. Notice, John was told: I am making all things new (not destroying everything and starting over).
 - 2. Notice, John watched these events from a mountain top (not THE mountain, but A mountain, suggesting that there are other mountains). v10
 - b. New Jerusalem, capital city of the new earth, has walls, gates, and a foundation. They can't be transparent because John can distinguish various stones. The walls of the city are inlaid with stones found on earth: jasper, sapphire, emerald, etc.
 - c. Notice all the things he sees with which we are familiar: a city, a throne, a mountain, walls, gates, foundations, streets, people coming and going, a river with water, trees with fruit that will heal (not destroy) the nations.
- E. Conclusion: We have much more to say about life on the new earth (heaven on earth) and also about the present heaven, but consider these points as we close.
- 1. The apostle Paul, who actually visited heaven (II Cor 12:1-4) said that to die is gain (Phil 1:21-23). If anything in your picture of heaven makes you think this life is more than what is heaven, makes you think that you will lose out on something when you go to heaven -- your picture is not biblical.
 - 2. There will be continuity between the old earth and the new earth. The best of earth as it is in its fallen condition gives us a fleeting glimpse of what is ahead for us when heaven comes to earth.