

# The New Earth

*Message #4 in a series of 4 on Bible Prophecy*

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January 30, 1983

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Tonight we want to look at the coming New Heavens and New Earth. I am also including in that a look at the millennial kingdom which is not part of the new heavens and new earth but leads to it. Therefore, it is a part of the prophetic picture.

I hope most of you have noticed in your reading, in your exposure to life, in listening to people, that there lies very deep in the human heart a longing for a golden age on earth. You will find it expressed in the promises of politicians. Every election year they promise us, often in eloquent terms, that they have been called of God to bring this nation into the golden era of prosperity. That political promise has appeal to us because it strikes at this deep cord of hope that lies in human beings everywhere. You can hear it in the dreams of poets and of authors of literature.

Many books have been written depicting a utopia, a time of freedom from struggle, from famine, from death and hurt and wars, etc. Many groups have, from time to time, actually tried to produce this utopia. If you have read the writings of the Russia author Leo Tolstoy, you will remember he tried to organize a utopian colony in Southern Russia. Others have tried this too. David Henry Thoreau advocated that kind of thing in the woods of New England. Many have sought to do this. This is what lies behind the hope and dreams of Communism and the writings of Lenin. He captured the imagination of many with the hope that Communism would be the means of producing a worker's paradise, a utopia upon the earth. These longings are evident in just the expressions of many people's heart and the speculations of philosophers. All through the history of our race this hope has blazed forth from time to time with the anticipation, born of a deep inherited hunger within us, of a time when earth would be at peace and at rest, a golden age. This, of course, is exactly what our Lord himself taught us to pray for. When you pray the "Lord's Prayer" and say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is what you are praying for, that the conditions of heaven will be found at last on earth. This is the proper expectation of the people of God as they are taught of the Spirit through the Word of God.

This dream finds its expression in many beautiful passages of Scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testaments. It is very prominent in certain of the prophets, largely, for instance, in the prophet Isaiah. He with his glib and eloquent tongue describes in many passages the beauties of that time when a golden age will come to earth at last. Let me read some of those passages.

Let me begin with the 11th chapter of the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,

[Jesse, you know, was the father of David, and "a shoot from the stump of Jesse" is a reference to the Lord Jesus who was the Son of David.]

and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

[Zechariah calls Jesus "the branch." Jeremiah does as well, so many of the prophets combine in this]

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

[This is clearly a reference to that time of trouble which we looked at last Sunday night where the Lord himself shall at last return and the wicked, those who have opposed and turned away from the truth of God, shall be put to death. This prophecy goes on.]

Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

[What a beautiful picture. Enmity is taken away from the animal creation. The ferocity of the beasts, of the carnivores, ended. All these beasts lying down together, and a little child leading them]

The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

[The lion even changes his food style. He no longer eats meat but eats straw.]

The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, [The poisonous snake will not bite.] and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

You cannot read a passage like that without it awakening a sense of longing in your heart for this beautiful time when peace and righteousness shall cover the earth.

Isaiah had spoken of this earlier, too. If you go back to chapter 2. The first four verses of this chapter have a word about this.

Isaiah, chapter 2, verse 1:

The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Those words have fascinated people for centuries. Men have tried desperately in many ways to bring those conditions to pass upon the earth, but they have never, never once been remotely achieved in human history.

Look on to chapter 4 in Isaiah, beginning with verse 2, and you get another view of this.

Isaiah, chapter 4, verse 2:

In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, every one who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night;

[Remember this was the condition that prevailed in the wilderness during the journey of Israel when the tabernacle moved among the people. In this day, this shall be restored, Isaiah says.]

...for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion. It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

There are many other passages in the prophets. Isaiah 35 is a beautiful chapter, almost entirely descriptive of this day. The theme comes in again so strongly in the prophet's message that in the close of his book, in the last two chapters, you see him returning to it at the end of his message.

Isaiah, chapter 65, verse 17:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Now, because of that little introduction many Bible scholars have gone on to read the next verses, through to the end of the chapter, as a description of the new heavens and the new earth. However, as you will see in a moment, because of certain things I will point out, this is not a description of the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth, but rather a millennial condition. This is common among the prophets. Isaiah looks forward clear to the end and sees the establishment of a new heavens and a new earth, but before that he describes, without any sign of this leap of time, the conditions that will obtain during the Millennium when Christ sets up his kingdom on the earth and before the new heavens and the new earth. The reason I say that will be evident as I read.

Isaiah, chapter 65, verse 18:

But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, [Crib death will be eliminated. What a blessing that will be.] or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old,

[now the presence of death indicates that this is not the eternal state. Other Scriptures tells us that in the eternal state there shall be no more death. So here is a child dying, but death has been drastically changed. Life expectancy is enormously increased, and a person dying at 100 years old is still a child according to this picture.]

...and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,

[Go up in the Santa Cruz mountains a look at those beautiful redwood trees. How old are they? Some of them go clear back to the time of our Lord, 2,000 years old, and according to this, "like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be."]

...and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their

children with them. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Just a quick look at a couple of the other prophets just to show you that Isaiah is not alone in this. Turn to the little minor prophet of Joel, just before Amos.

Joel, chapter 3, verse 18:

And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, [This is not literal. These are figurative terms. You won't find rivers of milk running down the mountainside. That just means there will be abundant cattle there who produce great quantities of milk. The earth shall enter into a period of fecundity and fruitfulness such as it has never experienced before.] and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, [It is looking back now to the end of the period of tribulation.] for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. I will avenge their blood and I will not clear the guilty, for the Lord dwells in Zion.

And one quick look at Amos, the very next book. In the 9th chapter, Amos the bitter old prophet from Tekoa who denounces so much of the social injustice of his day, nevertheless ends his prophecy with these beautiful words.

Amos, chapter 9, verse 13:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them, says the Lord your God.

You can see from just this cursory selection of certain passages that these predictions about the coming of a golden age to earth are widespread in the Old Testament. There are equally full predictions of this in the New Testament, and there is no way that any event of history since the beginning of time has ever remotely approached the fulfillment of these predictions. As you look at the prophetic passages that predict the future, it is clearly evident that the only possible time this kind of situation and circumstance could occur on earth is after the return of Jesus Christ to establish his kingdom.

I want to take you now to Revelation 20 where in the New Testament you have a gathering up of these great promises and a time given as to when they will be fulfilled.

Remember chapter 19 of Revelation, which we touched on briefly last week, pictures for us the return of our Lord, the rider upon the white horse whose eyes are like a flame of fire and on whose head are many crowns. He has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. Out of his mouth goes forth a sharp sword. He captures the beast and the false prophet, and they are thrown into the bottomless pit. Then we read in the opening of chapter 20 the following.

Revelation, chapter 20, verse 1:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

[That is where we get the word millennium. Millennium is simply the Latin for a thousand years. This number is repeated several times in this chapter, but here is specifically says, "he shall be bound for a thousand years."]

...and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. [We are not through with the Devil just because he is bound during the millennium] After that [John says] he must be loosed for a little while. Then I saw thrones and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed.

[Remember, Paul tells us that judgment is committed to the church. "We shall judge angels; we shall judge the saints," he says. We are to share in the judging ministry of the Lord himself, so that this is a picture of that.]

Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life...

[The resurrection. This is at the beginning of the millennium, after the tribulation. When the Lord comes for his church, there is a resurrection of the dead in Christ then, but that is before the days of the tribulation. This, now, is the resurrection at the end, after Christ has returned.]

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. [There is still another phase of the resurrection that will not come until the end of the millennium.] This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

John goes on to describe at the end of that time Satan being loosed from his prison and deceiving the nations again and for a brief time attempting to overthrow the work of God. Then again he is cast into the lake of fire and will be tormented day and night forever and forever.

From this I would like to return to the prophet Zechariah in the Old Testament. Zechariah gives us the clearest picture of how this period is initiated. We will pick it up where we left off last week with the return in glory and flaming fire of our Lord to decimate the enemies of God and to establish his kingdom upon earth. In the 14th chapter of the book of Zechariah the prophet describes this for us.

Zechariah, chapter 14, verse 1:

Behold, a day of the Lord is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. [Here is the great attack upon the city of Jerusalem by the assembled armies of the nations who come against the city to do battle.] Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east.

Isn't that amazing? Remember in the book of Acts, we are told, that as the disciples were standing with Jesus on the Mount of Olives suddenly he was taken up from them. They watched him disappearing into the heavens and he was received out of their sight by a cloud. The angels standing there said to them, "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into the heavens." I remember years ago Dr. Vernon McGee describing this and he said it was his belief that when the Lord returns he will not have missed a step, that if his left foot was the last of his body to leave the mountain, his right foot would be the first to touch it as he comes back. I don't know that there is too much evidence for that, but it is clear that his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives and an amazing thing will happen.

Zechariah, chapter 14, verse 4b:

...and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; [They just had an earthquake two days ago in Jerusalem, one of many they have had there. There is a well known earthquake fault that runs right through the Mount of Olives. Geologists know about it, and this, of course, is but setting the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. This will be a great earthquake.] so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward. And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up, for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. The Lord your God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

This is a very vivid picture. It depicts a very strange phenomenon. Some cataclysmic disaster strikes at the same time, a great earthquake. Now, if you are familiar with prophetic passages, you know that a great earthquake is central in many passages of Scripture. Beginning in the 4th chapter of Revelation where you have the vision of things to come in the last days, you see a cycle of seven seals that are opened by the Lamb and then seven trumpets and then seven bowls of wrath being poured out, and each one of these series of seven ends with a great earthquake. Great hail stones, hundreds of pounds in weight, fall from the sky, and the mountains are shaken so people hide themselves in the caves of the earth and cry out in fear and terror to the land to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb which has come in that hour. The earthquake is the terminal point of these series of judgments that come upon the earth. That is one way you can guide your way through the book of Revelation. There is a reference to it in the Old Testament as well. There are others, which I won't take time to read, but notice verse 6. It is a very remarkable verse.

Zechariah, chapter 14, verse 6:

On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the Lord), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light.

A couple of days ago I picked up a book that is a collection of scientific reports on strange forces affecting this earth. I was fascinated to read there an account of what scientists feel could be happening right now in the build up of ice and snow on the Antarctic continent. Some of you may know that the snow level is increasing every year in Antarctica, the south pole. The ice and snow on the land is now some 2-1/2 miles thick. The tremendous weight of that has depressed the land. It has dropped some several thousand feet from levels measured in the past. Still the ice and snow builds up every winter. In 1929 when Admiral Richard Byrd spent a winter all alone at the south pole he erected two 70' steel radio towers. He buried their foundations 10 feet into the ice, so they rose 60' above the then level of the ice and snow. Because of the build up of snow and ice, the towers have risen less and less in height above their level. Eventually they were covered. Then a great iceberg, including these towers, broke off and drifted into the sea. But it illustrates very graphically how the weight of this ice and snow has been increasing. It is around the south pole but is not evenly distributed in weight. There is a big chunk spread out to one side. The result is it is beginning to affect the rotation of the earth.

Many of your ladies who have washed clothes know that if one big part of the clothes, during the spin dry cycle, gathers on one side, you have witnessed what happens to an eccentric distribution of weight when something is rotating rapidly. Now, the earth on which we sit is rotating rapidly, and that huge growing pile of weight is imparting a certain wobble to the rotation of the earth. In the above book I mentioned, there are serious minded scientists who are saying that this may be one of the causes for the strange changes of climate and atmospheric conditions that we are now experiencing. There may be other causes as well, but this wobble being imparted to the earth's rotation may be one of them. Furthermore, this study says that this pile up of ice and snow takes about 6,000 years to accumulate, and the record of the rocks, etc. tell scientists that about 6,000 years ago the Antarctic continent was freed suddenly from all the ice and snow. Scientists have conjectured that what happened was it built itself up to a great volume of weight like this and when it reached a certain level it affected the rotation of the earth to such a degree that it was flung out and slid off the land and into the ocean and the force of it sped up toward the Equator (this is the direction the centrifugal force of the earth would take it), and it created great tidal waves and huge mountains of water splashing up over the land

areas and changed the configuration of the earth in many ways. 6,000 years ago would just about put it back, according to some estimates, to the time of the flood, and there is some suggestion at least that perhaps this may be part of the forces involved in the great flood that destroyed the earth in Noah's day.

I also have other portent of what it might do, what it can do and what it probably has done in the past is by the tremendous dislocation of the earth it has caused the earth to shift on its axis, getting a pole shift where the poles run straight through it, north and south, inclined now at an angle of 23 degrees. If you get a sudden shift of that pole, it can even reverse entirely. Scientists have long known this, and there are indications in the earth in many places where the polarity of the earth was totally reversed and then came back again. This is one suggestion as to what happened to the Mammoth up in the arctic who are found buried in snow and ice with grass still in their stomachs and in their mouths, who suddenly died and were plunged into a deep freeze. You also get the sun appearing not to go down, so it may well be that this is the description here of just such a phenomenon; that it is building up to that very moment again when a sudden release of this eccentric weight will create a pole shift that will bring about the conditions described here.

Furthermore, the prophet goes on, it will affect the level of the land.

Zechariah, chapter 14, verse 9:

And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one. The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft upon its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall be no more curse; Jerusalem shall dwell in security.

Strange passage, is it not? Remember, in one passage I read to you from Isaiah, he says, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be lifted up as the highest of all the mountains." It is clear from several passages like this that we can look forward to some drastic topographical changes in the land.

This will effect the earth in many ways. I do not have time here to go into all the ways it will effect it, but you can read, if you like, those puzzling passages in the prophet Ezekiel beginning with chapter 40 and running through to the end of the book, chapter 48. This has been a conundrum to many Bible scholars. He describes a wholly different land from what we call Palestine today. He talks of a lifting up of certain levels of the plains to high points and a subsidence of the earth at other points, the break out of a river that flows from underneath the steps of the temple that will be built in that area. It is not, however, at Jerusalem but north of the city about 20 or 30 miles at the old site of the tabernacle in the city of Shiloh. This will be lifted up to a high plain and from it will flow a river. Ezekiel describes it in detail. It will flow down into the present location of Jerusalem and there divide into two rivers, one flowing into the Dead Sea and one flowing into the Mediterranean Sea. Of course, no such river now exists, but it will exist in that day when these tremendous topographical changes come about. Imagine what this will do to cities, villages, habitations, etc. located near these earthquake faults that produce these vast changes in just a short period of time.

There, according to Ezekiel, will be build the millennial temple. The Lord himself will be there, and during that time, David, apparently will be raised from the death to be the King of Israel again. Offerings will be established and offered again in this temple for sin. This is a picture of conditions on earth during the millennium when Christ shall rule, according to the Scriptures, with a rod of iron. "He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron." Second Psalm says that. Righteousness shall be the dominant theme of earth. Sin and crime will still be present but subdued and not visible, quickly judged. Death will occur, but it is limited and life will be greatly prolonged. Apparently there will exist together a strange combination of living persons of flesh of blood who, like ourselves, will have been born through the natural process of birth, human beings, mingled with them will be redeemed resurrected creatures from the saints of the church, plus the Lord himself, and as I have already suggested, Old Testament saints, including David and others.

Now, what does this mean? Could it really be? Well, the Gospels record for us just exactly that kind of a condition prevailing on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration, remember? Jesus glorified, his garments

glistening and white, brilliant and shining. There gathered with him are Peter, James and John, three normal ordinary human beings, a transfigured Lord, who has been glorified without passing through death and with him appearing two resurrected saints of the Old Testament, Elijah and Moses. Years later when Peter writes his second epistle, he says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy for we were with him on the mount and we beheld his coming when we were with him," and he labels it a kind of prefiguring of the coming of the Lord. So, this is not something absolutely new in human history. There was a brief time and place where this kind of condition prevailed.

I do not have time to go on with a further description of the millennium. It will be a time when the nations do not make war because war will not be possible. They will be prevented from making war. Nevertheless, there will be children born in that period who will still inherit Adam's fallen nature. They will not be able to express it very much. As they grow there will be evil desires that will be immediately prevented from being expressed. It is exactly the reverse of what we find today. Here we find righteousness put down, oppressed, opposed and evil allowed to reign triumphant in many ways. Then it will be evil that is oppressed and put down and has to live sub rosa, underground as it were. Righteousness will be allowed public and full expression.

Then at the end of that thousand years comes a final outbreak. We will return now to Revelation 20, and after we read that it will bring us to the new heavens and the new earth.

Revelation, chapter 20, verse 7:

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Why is the devil allowed loose again? This, of course, is conjecture. The Bible never tells us specifically, but most Bible scholars feel that this is the final proof to mankind of the reality of the truth he finds the hardest to believe, the truth that he himself is a hopelessly depraved creature, that the nature we inherited from Adam is thoroughly and utterly evil. Our tendency, even today, when we do something wrong is to blame someone else. Remember how Adam started it? When God said to Adam, "Did you eat of that apple?" Remember what Adam did? He took it like a man. He blamed it on his wife. And then she blamed it on the serpent. The serpent didn't have anybody to blame it on. He was judged for it. But this has been characteristic of fallen man ever since. He blames someone else. Today we can blame the IRS, the government, the Republicans, the Democrats, the Communists, the elected officials in our community, our children, our parents, whoever, whatever. The one thing we do not want to blame is us. Only those who have been redeemed in life and given a new basis from which to live can face the terribly humiliating fact that they have been permeated with evil. Even then we struggle with it, don't we? It grows upon us through a whole lifetime.

This is why one mark of true maturity is an increasing awareness of our sinfulness and the degree to which we are able to realize that what we once thought was love was really selfishness in disguise. Of course, the final one to blame it all on is the devil. The devil made me do it! God's answer to that is a thousand years without the devil, with the presence of the Lord himself among us, the saints redeemed, cleansed, purified and in close fellowship and communication with human beings, with sons and daughters of Adam right on the face of the earth and conditions tremendously blessed, prosperity abounding on every side, with peace and no more war. Then after 1,000 blessed years, he turns the devil loose who immediately finds ripe ground for his temptations. It is the demonstration of the truth that God has been trying to impress upon the human race ever since the fall; our problem is us and this is the final expression of it.

Now, once that occurs John, after the description of the great white throne judgment, beautifully describes the new heavens and the new earth beginning in Revelation chapter 21.

Revelation, chapter 21, verse 1:



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

That is a very remarkable statement. There is no more sea in the new heaven and the new earth. Now if you have been planning to have a little cozy cottage on the seaside during eternity, forget it. There will be no sea. There is much speculation as to why this is, and we are not sure at all as to what it means. But in some way I think it reflects the fact that actually physically the oceans of our world are salt to prevent the spread of decay and corruption that would centuries ago have eliminated the human race from this planet were it not for the purifying quality of the sea. There is no need for that in the new heavens and the new earth. There is no sea. There are bodies of water. There is a river that flows through it and makes glad the tabernacle of God. It does not mean the elimination of all bodies of water necessarily. There may be lakes and rivers, etc. but no sea.

Revelation, chapter 21, verse 2:

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;

Remember, in Hebrews 11 we are told that Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. That is what he was looking for, an eternal city, the new Jerusalem, not built by man. Man has nothing to do with it. It is a great city coming down from heaven. The question, of course, is, "Is this literal or is it figurative?" I am convinced it is both. It is a literal city having the characteristics described here, but it is also figurative. It is a picture. God loves to do this. He loves to illustrate spiritual truth with physical reality. I think that is the case here. The city, as John will identify it for us later, is the church, the bride. We are told. "I saw the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

And later on you find a further description of this in verse 10.

Revelation, chapter 21, verse 10:

And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

What is this? Well, it is the church, the saints of God; both the saints of Israel and those of the church living together in perfect harmony and symbolized here by the twelve gates which are the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve foundations which are the twelve apostles.

As an aside, that establishes the fact that Matthias, who was chosen in the first chapter of Acts to take Judas' place, is a true apostle because he makes up the twelve. Many people have felt it was Paul who was to make the twelve, but Matthias took his place. Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, as he himself tells us, and, therefore, he is not part of this group here, but he is part of the church and the foundation of the church. I do not have time tonight to read this whole passage. It is beautiful, and you will want to read it for yourself.

Now let us look at just another brief passage in chapter 22.

Revelation, chapter 22, verse 1:

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life...

The tree of life is used throughout Scripture as a picture of the Lord Jesus himself. He is the true tree of life. Here appears again the tree of life which began in the Garden of Eden. John saw it.

Revelation, chapter 22, verse 26:

...with us twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Some have said, "Well, that means there must be sickness there." No, this word "healing" should properly be translated "health," health giving to the nations. It is a confirmation of the fact that the Lord himself is our life and our health. As we eat of the fruit of the tree of life, feeding on the Lord himself, it brings health to our spirits, health to our souls and health to our bodies. John goes on.

Revelation, chapter 22, verse 3:

There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, [Isn't that beautiful? 'When we see him,' John says, 'we shall be like him for we shall see him face to face.'] and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Running all through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, and especially in Genesis and Revelation, is the great theme that God's desire is that he may dwell amidst man. Man himself is to be the dwelling place of God. This is what our Lord and the apostle Paul speak of when they speak of a new creation, a new man which God is forming at this present hour. Just as there is an old man symbolized by Adam and all his descendants, so there is a new man, the true Adam, symbolized or figured in Jesus Christ and all his spiritual sons and daughters. That is the new creation.

Just as the old creation, humanity itself, is made up of body, soul and spirit, so in the new heavens and the new earth there will be a new humanity to inhabit, develop and fulfill it, body, soul and spirit. This seems to be, then, the place where we can bring together the apparent conflicting destinies of Israel as a nation and the church as the bride of Christ. In our human bodies we have an outward physical part of our life, i.e., the body.

That seems to be the place that Israel occupies in the new man, the new humanity. Israel's destiny is earthly. It will reign on the earth. It will govern the earth. It will be involved with the blessing and the fruitfulness of the earth as Paul so beautifully describes in the 11th chapter of Romans. But linked with the body very closely in our humanity is the soul, our inner life, our minds, our emotions, our wills, this inner functioning of which we are so aware and which links us to so much of the universe of God in terms of feeling and thinking, etc. Now, that is the church. The special dwelling place of God is in the soul of man, and the church is called to fulfill that, linked together with Israel as the soul in our humanity is linked with the body. And the spirit, which is the third part of man necessary to his existence is, of course, God himself. God is a spirit, and in the new humanity, God fulfills that central control place. So, you have a whole new creation in a whole new world operating on totally different principles which probably are the exact reverse of the principles on which the world functions today.

One of the great principles with which science has to deal is the so called second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, the idea that everything is running down, that no matter how good things are they do not eventually get better. They get worse. They fall apart. They phase out. They lose energy. That law is universal. In the new heavens and the new earth, it will be exactly the opposite. There things will start and you will not be able to stop them from developing. They get better and better, and richer and sweeter and fuller and more exciting. We are awed when we look at the vastness of the cosmos in which we now live, but everywhere we look we see the evidence of sin and decay, the futility that is present in the universe today. But according to the promises of Scripture, there is coming a new heaven and a new earth. This is why for believers the apostles and the prophets try to describe what lies beyond death, but they can only talk about what is not going to be there, no sorrow, no tears, no separations, no weakness, no fear, no war, no death,

and just imply the opposite. This is the fulfillment of the dreams and hopes of mankind.

I don't think there is anything more beautiful in all the Scripture than these words.

Revelation, chapter 21, verse 3b:

Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

What a beautiful hope. Only those who have come to know the Redeemer, the Savior, have any possibility of experiencing that hope. That is why we must be eternally grateful to God for salvation, for redemption, and eternally hopeful that others like us will find this magnificent promise.

Well, our time is gone.

Father, thank you for this evening. Thank you for the glimpse that we have had and for the great hope that lies before us. We thank you that through the blood of Jesus you have made us part of that redeemed humanity. We are not afraid to return to the Father. We are so confident that you are totally in control of the future, ours personally and all the universe. Thank you for that certainly. It has been sealed by your Spirit in our hearts. Thank you for the Word that has been taught us tonight. Go with us now we pray. Dismiss us in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Posted September 22, 1996.

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With special thanks to Helen DeCoursey for transcribing, typing, and editing from the original audio tape.