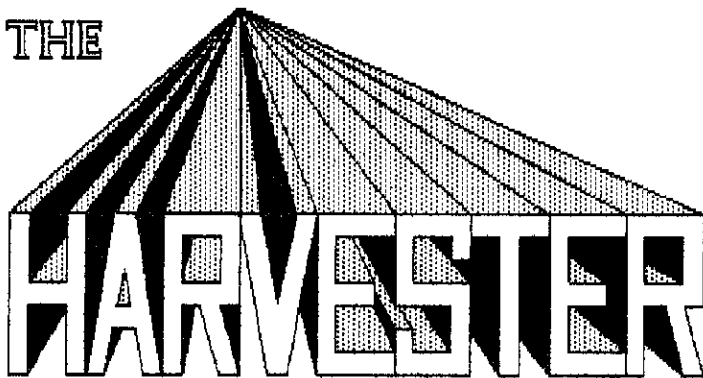


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*"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)*

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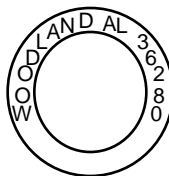
## A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

Having permitted John in beautiful symbolic language to present in the Revelation a chronological view of the grand Christian era, God now allows us through John's writings to see the grandeur of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

In approaching the understanding of this lovely term, it is important that we consider a principle necessary for correct Biblical insight. Similar words or phrases may refer to the same, to

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related, or even to different matters. This is true of words such as: **house** in Acts 2:21 referring to the structure, while **house** in Acts 2:36 refers to those who compose the family of Israel and **world** in John 11:9 referring to the material, while **world** in 1 John 3:13 refers to those who are led by human thought. It is also true of the passage under consideration.

The phrase "*a new heaven and a new earth*" (or terms very similar) are to be found in Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13, and Revelation 21:1. This phrase in both Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 refers to the then approaching Christian era. History confirms the fact that there was indeed a drastic change between conditions of old Israel of the Old Testament period and new, spiritual Israel of the New (Galatians 6:16, Romans 11:26). There was no actual change in the physical make-up of the material universe, but there was a change in what had intentionally been temporary -- the Law and its purpose (Hebrews 8:7-13, Galatians 3:16-17, 19a).

The beautiful term "*a new heaven and a new earth*" found in Revelation 21:1, however, refers to a situation beyond the present material existence. Verse 11 of the previous chapter informs us that "*the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*" The nature of their dissolution is spoken of in 2 Peter 3:10-12, "*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 all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"*

The time of this dissolution is spoken of by Paul as when death ceases to be. *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"* (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

The finality of this dissolution is noted in the statement, *"And there was no more sea"* (Revelation 21:1). This suggests that the material earth, in which the sea plays such a prominent role, is not even under consideration as a continuing state.

In view of the fact that Jesus said, *"A spirit hath not flesh and bones"* (Luke 24:39), that Paul taught, *"Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50), and that John revealed, *"For the former things are passed away"* (Rev. 21:4), we are necessarily led to the proper conclusion that the new heaven and the new earth relate to a condition removed from the present and the material. This idea presents the pleasing picture of a situation where *"the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God"* (Rev. 21:3).

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address and all correspondence to:

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But why does John refer to "a new earth" if there isn't really going to be an earth at all? We use terminology in our everyday life similar to that which God permitted John to use in describing life beyond the physical realm. How could one describe a field of white cotton to an Eskimo? He has never seen cotton growing. In fact, he has never seen a cultivated field of anything. Describe to him the searing desert of our Western states during August. In order for him to comprehend, one must use terms which the Eskimo does understand to explain terms which he does not understand. You might describe the cotton field as being like fluffy, white clouds which he has seen overhead. The heat of the desert might be described as an expanded likeness of the heat from the fire burning in his igloo. In describing to my listeners in this country the appearance of young banana groves in the Middle East, I have used the similarity of tobacco fields in Kentucky and Tennessee. This is a similarity with which they can well identify.

In like manner, even as we do, God described things which we could not

possibly understand otherwise by using things with which we are familiar. Consider the lovely word pictures of Rev. 21 and 22, wherein the eternal realm is described with the likeness of "*a bride adorned for her husband*" and as an earthly city of John's day with most unusual and unexpected features.

It would be utterly impossible for us humans to understand an existence where there was nothing physical, where time was non-existent, and where there was not growing old and departing in death. All we have ever known must be placed on a material basis. Man cannot relate to living where there is no solid earth beneath or a beautiful blue expanse above filled visibly at night with unnumbered heavenly bodies. God found it wise, therefore, to express in materialistic terms the view He wanted us to have of the glories of eternity. We could not have understood in any other way. Paul even writes of such a vision "*which it is not lawful [possible] for man to utter*" (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

It appears to me then, that "*a new heaven and a new earth*" simply expresses a new incomprehensibly desirable state of existence prepared for the redeemed by their heavenly Father.

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<p>Life is 10% of what happens to you, and 90% of how you respond to it.</p>
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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Zechariah 9, which tribe does the Lord say He will bend as a bow?
2. Which apostle said he was ready to die with Jesus if He should go to where Lazarus was sick?
3. How old was Ishmael when he died?
4. At what time of day did Paul say drunkards got drunk?
5. What two prophetic books are from the time of the Babylonian captivity?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. According to Proverbs 27, what is better than secret love? OPEN REBUKE (Prov 27:5)
2. Who did Naaman go to first to find a cure for his leprosy? KING OF ISRAEL (2 Ki. 5:6)
3. Where did Jesus perform His first miracle? CANA OF GALILEE (John 2:11)
4. Who slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad? SHAMGAR (Judg. 3:31)
5. According to Paul, who will suffer persecution? ALL WHO LIVE GODLY (2 Tim. 3:12)

## BLOOM WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED

Have you ever been somewhere you didn't want to be? Maybe it was a job, maybe a town, maybe a marriage, maybe a stage in life -- like singlehood -- or a state in life -- like a disability. In fact, maybe as you read this, you're wishing you were somewhere else, living a different life, but you know it's not likely that anything is going to change any time soon.

God has a word for you. It's the same word He gave a group of Jews when they were stuck in Babylon, exiled from their homeland. They'd folded their arms and said, "We're going to wait this thing out, and when we get home, we'll start living our lives." Through the prophet Jeremiah, God told them, "You're not going home any time soon, so start making your life here. Plant gardens, buy homes, let your children get married, and pray for the peace and prosperity of the city you're in because that's how you're going to find peace and prosperity."

To use a modern cliché, God was saying, "Bloom where you're planted." Don't invest your energy in hopes of leaving; instead invest your energy in the people around you. The Christian martyr Jim Eliot expressed it this way: Wherever you are, be all there. Don't be physically present but mentally somewhere else, thinking of the future or the past, thinking of someplace else. Our journey with Christ requires that we be fully present in the present.

(continued next page)

