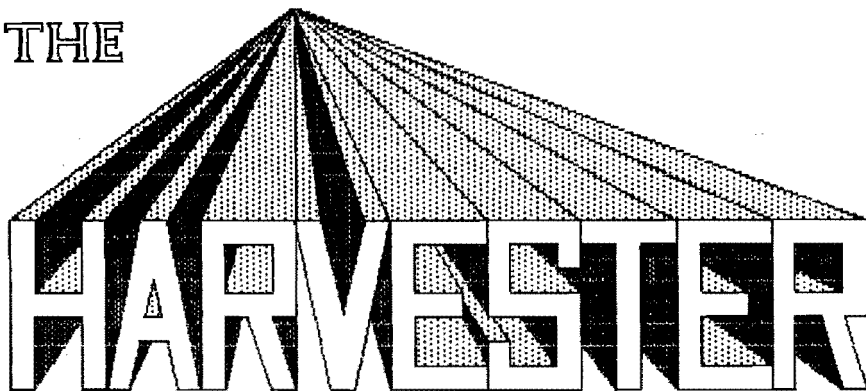


THE



"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 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 lovely understanding of this term, it is important that we consider a principle necessary in Biblical insight. Similar words or phrases may refer to the same, to related, or even to different matters. This is true of words such as:

House in Acts 2:2 referring to the structure, while house in Acts 2:36 refers to those who composed the family of Israel

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World of John 11:9 referring to the material, while world of 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 Rev. 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 (Heb. 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, 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 their 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 which shall be destroyed is death"* (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

The finality of their dissolution is noted in the statement, *"And there was no more sea"* (Rev. 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 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). But why does John refer to *"a new earth"* if there isn't going to really 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 you 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

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terms which he does not understand. You might describe the cotton field as being like the 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, a sight with which they are well acquainted.

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 Revelation 21 and 22, wherein the eternal realm is described with the likeness of "*a bride adorned for her husband*," abnormal but most desirable human characteristics, and an earthly city of John's day with most unusual features beyond expectations.

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 no growing old and departing in death. All we have ever known in our present realm has had to do with sight, smell, touch, sound, and that which could 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 possibly 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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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who was circumcised at the same time that Abraham was?
2. How many men did Samson kill as he was being handed over from the men of Judah to the Philistines?
3. The disciples of the Pharisees joined what group in asking Jesus if taxes should be paid to Caesar?
4. Zedekiah told Jeremiah to lie if officials questioned him about their secret conversation. Did Jeremiah lie?
5. The ministry of John the Baptist is found in three of the four accounts of the gospel. In which is it not found?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Besides Melchizedek, what other King came out to meet Abram as he returned from rescuing Lot? THE KING OF SODOM (Gen. 14:17)
2. In the Parable of the Great Banquet, how many excuses were there for people not to come? THREE (Luke 14:18-20)
3. When Paul was told that he would be bound if he went to Jerusalem, he said he was willing not only to be bound but to what, for the name of Christ? DIE (Acts 21:13)
4. How many times does the word "whale" appear in the book of Jonah (KJV)? NONE
5. According to the book of Esther, the day that Haman was hung, what did the king give Esther? THE HOUSE OF HAMAN (Esther 8:1)

HOW TO SPOT A CHRISTIAN

Hard as it may seem to believe, there are ways to look at a person and tell if he is a Christian. Here are some of the more obvious signs:

1. Starting at the top, look at the person's head. If it is "in the clouds", then this is a good sign that the person is a Christian. He is constantly seeking *"those things which are above"* and his affection has been set *"on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Col. 3:1,2).
2. There is a certain "glow" in the eyes of a Christian. The Bible describes such a person as having eyes of *"understanding being enlightened"* or illuminated (Eph. 1:18).

3. Look at a person's cheeks to see how red they are. Because of his extreme patience, the disciple of Christ will not seek revenge but allows his enemies the privilege of hitting both cheeks (Matt. 5:39).

4. A Christian can also be spotted by the shape of his tongue. It appears like a sword because from his mouth flows the word of God, *"quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow"* (Heb. 4:12).

5. If a person has a strong chest or abdomen, he may certainly be considered a child of God. He undoubtedly is wearing the *"breastplate of righteousness"* as part of his armour (Eph. 6:14).

6. Take note of a person's hands. One sure sign of a Christian is that his right hand of fellowship is always extended to his brethren (Gal. 2:9).

7. The knees can also tell a lot about a person's character. The Lord's saints always have worn out knees, deteriorated from the hours spent bowing in humble prayer to God (Eph. 3:14).

8. Finally, watch the person's feet. A detection of several blisters usually means that this person has been busy preaching the gospel and spreading the word (Rom. 10:15), while also fleeing fornication (1 Cor. 6:18) and idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14).

HAVE YOU SPOTTED ANY CHRISTIANS LATELY?

RAY

<p>"We always ask the Lord to deliver us, but we never want to pay the postage."</p>
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
June 3-8	Taylor's Crossroads Roanoke, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 4-8	Pine Hall Church near Crab Orchard, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 8-10	Thomaston, GA	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
June 10-15	Mt. Carmel Church Woodland, AL	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
June 10-16 (Su-Sa)	Pleasant Grove Church near Alex City, AL 7:00 each evening	Bruce Kessler (Forest Park, GA)
June 11-15 (M-F)	Chiricahua Mountains Arizona camp meeting -Studies on Holy Spirit-	Various speakers
June 12-17	Holdenville, OK	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
June 17-22	East Side Church Shawnee, OK	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 17-22	Ephesus, GA 7:30pm EST	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 17-22	Cold Springs Church Bogue Chitto, MS	Miles Crouch (Dadeville, AL)
June 24-29	Colquitt, GA	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
June 29 -July 1 (F-Su)	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS 7:30pm Fri & Sat	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)

SORRY FOR THE DELAY THIS MONTH! As I began work on the paper, my typewriter broke down. After a week in the shop, it still wasn't fixed. So I was forced to use this new computer program which I haven't worked out the bugs yet. Thanks for your patience with all these new changes as I correct the problems. The editor.