

THE NEW EARTH AND THE NEW HEAVENS

THE PERFECT STATE OF THE EARTH WHEN IT WAS FIRST CREATED

The earth when first created by God was completely under His control, and consequently every part was perfect and harmoniously related with every other part of creation. The peace and presence of God permeated all things.

Gen 1:24-25

“Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”

MAN WITH A FREE WILL, WAS GIVEN DOMINION OVER ALL CREATION

When God created man he was given a free will and dominion over all of God’s creation. Man having a free will, opened the door to the possibility of Satan’s interference.

Gen 1:26

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.””

However man was not left to his own devices. Both before and after the Fall, God spoke directly to man and has continually made known His will, directly through His prophets. Satan also spoke directly as when he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden and has since exploited the greed of man, systematically destroying the perfection of God’s creation.

THE CURSE OF THE FALL ON GOD’S CREATION

Undoubtedly the most profound event that shaped the future of God’s creation was when Eve, (atypical woman), deliberately chose to obey Satan rather than God, and Adam as atypical man, followed suit. The end result was **“the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”** 1 John 5:1

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE EARTH

Paul makes this summation about the present state of the earth, groaning and reeling as it has been subjected to Satan’s interference with man’s mismanagement. Because of His justice and righteousness, God had to subject the world to Satan’s interference because of man’s disobedience. But there is hope, as Paul looks ahead to a glorious new creation.

Rom 8:20-22.

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.”

THE EARTH AND ITS CONTENTS WILL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED

Some Premillennialists and other people believe that the present earth will be cleansed by fire, and then replenished as a new future abode. But Peter explains that the earth will be dissolved completely, and be replaced by an entirely new creation.

2 Peter 3:10-11

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

Isaiah prophesied that there will be an entirely new earth and atmosphere. **“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”** Isa 65:17.

GOD’S DWELLING PLACE IS THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

The following readings tell us that heaven is God’s throne room, and that the whole universe is His habitation.

1 Kings 8:27.

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”

Isa 66:1-2

“Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,” says the Lord.”

CHRIST IS PREPARING A NEW DWELLING PLACE FOR US

We must remember that when Jesus gave His disciples the following assurance that He was going to prepare a new dwelling place for us to live eternally with Him, they had practically no knowledge of the universe with its stars and planets. With this in mind, we can see that His description was in a language that they could understand.

John 14:2-3

“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

In the light of our present knowledge, we could translate His message in this way. “In My Father’s universe there are many habitable planets. I am going to prepare one for you that we may dwell there together throughout eternity.”

THE NEW EARTH AND HEAVEN

How does the new earth relate to heaven? Heaven is the place of God’s throne, but in Scripture it is often used as an adjective to describe heavenly attributes here on earth.. E.g.

“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” John 3:12

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...” Eph 1:3-4

“...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...” Eph 2:6-7.

“And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.” 2 Tim 4:18.

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ.” Heb 3:1

“But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.” Heb 11:16.

Heaven is the location of God’s throne from where He reigns over the whole universe. It is also the heavenly state of those in God’s universe who have voluntarily subjected their wills and lives to Him, that He might reign and express the nature of His kingdom through them. It is therefore possible for us to experience a degree of heavenly life here on earth.

The new earth will be set free from sin and Satan’s influence, and be restored to its original perfection, and the power of death banished from our bodies. The new earth will have all of the attributes of heaven, and it will be our heaven where we will experience eternal life in union with the Lord.

A COMPLETELY NEW EARTH AND NEW HEAVENS OR ATMOSPHERE

First we have the definite statement that the Lord will create a new earth with a new atmosphere. **“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” Rev 21:1**

We are also told that the new creation will be recognisable, for the Lord says, **“Behold, I make all things new,”** not **“I will make all new things.”** The perfect earth God created will be restored and the curse of Satan’s presence will be replaced with the presence of God, who will dwell with us, and be known to us. Satan’s legacy of sorrow, crying, and death, will be removed forever, replaced by contentment and wellbeing.

Rev 21:3-5.

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

Isaiah 65:17 presents another picture of the new earth that is very challenging in its interpretation, because it does not fit well into usual Premillennial or Amillennial viewpoints,

To understand and appreciate Isaiah’s prophetic vision, we must understand that it is not literal, but takes the form of a series of poetic images that present an overall picture of longevity, prosperity, and wellbeing that are in sharp contrast to the imperfections of their present existence. These poetic images are definitely not intended to be taken literally, because for instance, a child to die at a hundred years old would be a denial of the fact that death will be banished, and that we are to enjoy eternal life. Although not literal, these poetic images do present an overall sense of peace, blessing, and wellbeing.

Isa 65:17-25.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem [symbolising the new earth] as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy

in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one 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 as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still 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 nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the Lord."

A man a hundred years old would normally be revered and honoured, and certainly not regarded as a habitual sinner. The statement **"the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed,"** is really an assertion that although sin was active in the old creation, it will have no place in the new earth.

"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox," presents an image of perfect harmony and peace, a main characteristic of the new creation. The poetic imagery in this prophecy presents a picture of fruitful labours, contentment, harmony, and wellbeing.

OUR PATHWAY TO HEAVEN

Our pathway to heaven is described by Paul in the following address to the Corinthian Church, explaining God's ultimate victory over sin and death, Hades and Hell, and His final reward awaiting those of the faith.

1 Cor 15:150-58.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

GOD WILL JUDGE THOSE WHO DESTROY THE EARTH

One final end-time judgment is directed at those who have destroyed the earth, who because of their greed, have exploited and destroyed natural resources, and have had little regard for the wellbeing of their fellow man.

Rev 11:18-19

"You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."