

## Heaven: The New Jerusalem

Several “heavens” are mentioned in the Bible. First, there is the atmosphere around the earth. Second, there is the space that contains the universe is locate. Third, there is the heaven where God dwells, and that’s the home we’re looking forward to living in one day.

Two heroes of faith cited in Hebrews 11 were specifically looking for that eternal city — Moses and Abraham. Although Abraham lived in a tent for a number of years, he was so wealthy he could have built the greatest of homes. He could have built the Taj Mahal of his day if he wanted to and still had plenty of money left over, but he didn’t. He packed up all of his silver, gold, cattle, and all his possessions and lived in a tent. The entire Promised Land was given to him, yet he lived there like a stranger to show the whole world that he was looking for a real city with real foundations, whose builder and maker was God. That city is heaven.

*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.  
But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.  
Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*  
2 Peter 3:6-7, 13

At one time, a world existed before the earth as we now know it. The earth as it is right now has not always been this way. Actually, what we’re living on right now is the *second* earth. The earth has always been here, but there was a different type of earth that was here.

There is a new earth that’s coming and that fits in with the new heavens that are coming.

*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.*  
2 Peter 3:1

The *pure mind* is not a reference to the fact that your mind has come into the total will of God; this passage refers to the mind being free from sin. Peter is telling them that through the Word of God they have learned to conquer sins, mental sins, which include jealousy, bitterness, envy, and strife. Those are the sins that cause all other sins.

Did you know the Bible says less about the types of sins we consider to be the worst sins? There are three types of sins: sins of the thoughts, sins of the tongue, and outward sins such as adultery, murder, and those types of things. Whenever you mention *sin*, most people think of adultery, lying, cheating, or murder, yet the Bible mentions those types of sins less. The greatest numbers of sins listed in the Word of God are mental sins — jealousy, bitterness, strife, and all of those things people have toward one another. If you learn to conquer mental sins, you’ll never have problems with outward sins because sinful acts always start as sinful thoughts. We are to stir up our pure minds and to learn more of the Word of God. Once we learn to conquer those mental sins, then we’re really ready to learn and absorb the Word of God. That’s when the Word of God will really begin to come alive to us in a greater measure than ever before.

*That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.*  
2 Peter 3:2

We cannot neglect the Old Testament or the prophets of the Old Testament in our study of the Scriptures. Many Christians know nothing about the Old Testament, which is the foundation for the New Testament. What good is a house without a foundation? Knowing the words of the Old Testament prophets is vital to knowing the Word of God.

You can find a lot of teaching on the subject of heaven. You’ll find many books on people’s personal vision of heaven, yet very few books on what the Bible actually says about heaven. Some have been there and back, and I thank God for those experiences, but if their experience doesn’t line up with the Word of God, I’m not interested. I want to build it on the Word of God. What does the Word have to say about heaven? That’s where our real foundation lies.

*Knowing this first, that there shall come those in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.*  
2 Peter 3:3

The *last days* in this verse is specifically speaking of the present time. We are living in the last days. The last days refer to the New Testament dispensation, which began on the Day of Pentecost. Peter said in Acts 2:16-17, *that which was spoken by the prophet, Joel; it shall come to pass in the last days, I'll pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.* Hebrews 1:2 says *that in these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I know the Lord is coming soon. In fact, I expect Him to come in my lifetime. You may ask, "What if He doesn't?" Then He doesn't, but I still expect Him. I get up each day expecting the Lord to come today. It's good to look at certain things I have to do throughout the day and say, "Well, thank God Jesus might come. I might not have to do that one." Then, there are the good things I look at and say, "Oh, Lord, please don't come. I want to do that one." Usually, single people who are looking forward to getting married do not want Jesus to come for a few more years.

Second Peter 3:2 tells us scoffers will come around, and it is specifically talking about the day we live in. The closer we get to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more important verse three becomes. Scoffers will come and they will say, "Well, where is the return of the Lord?" Throughout the years, many have tried to pinpoint a specific year or date that Jesus would return. However, those dates have come and gone and Jesus has not returned. You can't predict His return.

People put so much stock in what others say even though it is outside the realm of God's Word. Then, when those predictions don't come to pass—which are strictly speculation—people turn into scoffers. Finally, they'll say, "He hasn't come all this time so is He really coming?" People's predictions are not what give us confidence. We base our confidence upon the Word of God. We are confident because of what is written in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Greek word for *scoffers* and *walking* in verse three is the same word. One word, however, is a noun and the other is a verb. Actually, this verse says there are coming scoffers, scoffing after their own lusts. The New American Standard Version says there are coming mockers who will mock after their own lust. Lust produces mocking. In other words, the *mental sin* of scoffing produces the physical sin of mocking or scoffing. Verse 1 states that the pure speak the Word, speak from your pure mind. However, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (*Matthew 12:34*) When you meet a scoffer, scoffing—not the Word—is in his heart, because if the Word was in his heart, the Word is what would come out.

*And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*  
2 Peter 3:4

Where is the promise of His coming? When will it come to pass? Back in the 1930s, Mussolini was supposed to be the anti-Christ. In the 1940s, we heard Jesus was coming. In the 1950s, we heard all the healing revivals were bringing in Jesus, but the healing revivals have come and gone and Jesus still hasn't come. In the 1960s, we had the Jesus movement and all of them were saying the same thing — this is the last big wave before Jesus comes, but He didn't come. That wave has come and gone. The 1970s saw the charismatic movement and the 1980s introduced the Word movement, and people once again said, "This is the big movement before Jesus comes." Where is the return of the Lord Jesus? We don't live by waves; we live by the Word. We live by "thus saith the Lord." Man shall not live by natural bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. (*Luke 4:4*)

The fathers who fell asleep are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nothing has changed. Men are still bad and God is still good. Men make predictions and men are wrong. Men prophesy and men are wrong. All these things come and go, but things are continue as they were since the day of creation.

*For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.*

*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.*  
2 Peter 3:5-6

Those who scoff are, the Bible says, willingly ignorant. They know nothing about creation. They don't understand that we're living in the second world! This verse is bringing out that as surely as the first world perished and the

second world came in, the second world is going to perish and the third one is going to come in. God doesn't live by our calendar or our watch. God isn't bound to the same time we're bound to. Scoffers may say, "Well, we've been here for 50 years and we haven't seen His coming!" Fifty years is a drop in the bucket for God. We don't know how old the first earth was. We don't know how long it existed before the current earth came into being.

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.  
Genesis 1:1*

God created the heavens and the earth by His Word. People argue about when time began. Some people say the beginning took place six thousand years ago. That's wrong! We don't know when the beginning was, but we do know it was longer than six thousand years ago. Although Adam and Eve were placed on the earth about six thousand years ago, the earth is older than that. Some people believe in evolution. I don't believe in evolution. There's no such thing as evolution. The big argument comes from those who say that the earth is only six thousand years old when science can prove it's older than six thousand years. Anyone who studies geology or earth science discovers very quickly that the earth is older than six thousand years, yet many Christians say, "Adam and Eve were placed here six thousand years ago and that's when the beginning was." No, the beginning was much further back than that.

Let me tell you some things about the earth. The earth is possibly billions of years old. The earth existed long before the time of Adam and Eve. In fact, Lucifer was cast out of heaven to the earth below. (*Isaiah 14:12-15*) He was already the devil in the Garden of Eden, which means the earth must have been here before Adam and Eve because Lucifer was cast out and landed on the earth. By the time Adam came here, Lucifer was already the devil, so his expulsion from heaven had to occur before Adam and Eve were created.

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.  
Genesis 1:2*

Although this verse says the earth was without form and void, the Hebrew says, the earth *became* without form and void. (*See the marginal reference in the Dake Bible.*)

This earth used to be beautiful before Adam and Eve were here, but something happened to cause it to *become* without form and void. I believe it was when Lucifer was thrown out. I believe when Lucifer hit this earth, God wrapped up the whole earth in judgment. It says *darkness was upon the face of the deep*. There is no great description in Scripture as to what happened. However, we do get a few sketchy things from the verses here. Apparently, God enveloped this whole earth in judgment with water and removed all the light. If there is no light, then it must have been extremely cold. The earth was one big ice ball. I personally believe that was when the Ice Age was. I believe the mountains we see and all the events that happened during the Ice Age were really God's judgment on an earth that was here previously.

I believe there were animals on this earth. I believe that's the time of the dinosaurs. I don't believe that Adam and Eve had to name the Tyrannosaurus Rex in the Garden of Eden. I don't believe brontosaurus were running through the Garden of Eden. They were destroyed in the previous earth. I don't believe Noah had to try to get dinosaurs on the ark. I believe that the animal species we have around us today came from the time of Adam and Eve. I believe that the hovering of the Holy Spirit came to start an incubation process and the ice pack around the earth began to melt and the light appeared again. Then the continents rose up and the earth began again at the time of Adam and Eve. I believe all that was the process of God, but I believe that through all that flooding that occurred on the earth, the first earth, is where we get all the fossils and fossil fuels we have today. Out of cursing, God always brings blessing. Today, we're using the results of that past destruction.

The Bible is very silent on a past earth, but from time to time the Word of God refers to it. When we get to heaven, God can explain it. I believe the reason God left it so quiet is because we would have people today that would get so bogged down by it that they would never study anything else.

Verse 2 says *darkness was upon the face of the deep and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*. This is a flooded earth. The flood of Noah was really the second flood this earth has seen, not the first one.

We don't know how many years there were between verse 1 and verse 2. The first earth system could have existed for millions of years before it was wrapped up in darkness. We don't know how long the darkness was here. We

don't know how long the waters covered the face of the earth before God began to restore it and the Holy Spirit began to brood over it.

*For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.*

2 Peter 3:5

The word *earth* in the Greek is the word *ge* and it refers to *physical land*. This is the same word used in Matthew 5 where it says we are the salt of the earth. It means the physical land we stand on. *Geology* and *geography* come from this word. We are the salt of the physical land we stand on. We preserve our nation, our city, and the neighborhood we live in. This verse says there was earth at that time, standing out of the water.

Now some of you are reading this verse of Scripture and asking, "Does that really mean all this?" If you read different scholars' viewpoints or if you have a Dake's Bible, they'll verify these verses are talking about the ancient world, a world that existed before the time of Adam and Eve, not the world we live in today. We know there were mountains and islands at that time because there was land standing out of the water.

*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.*

2 Peter 3:6

The word *world* is the Greek word *kosmos*, which means the *world's system*. There was actually some type of system that existed at that time. I believe that it started out under Lucifer's reign, then he became Satan and perverted everything, which caused the first flood to come. However, there was a *kosmos*, a world system, here and that's another word that appears in Matthew 5. Not only are we the light or the salt of the earth, the word *ge*, but we are also the light of the *kosmos*, light of the world, the world's system. The world's system is in darkness around us, but we are the light in that system. Before the time of Adam and Eve, before a flood that came on this earth, there was earth standing out of the water and in the water, but there was also a *kosmos*, a world system.

*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.*

2 Peter 3:6

This is the flood of Genesis 1:2.

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*

Genesis 1:2

God totally overflowed the whole world with water, including the mountains. If anyone could have seen this planet floating out in space, it would have been nothing but frozen water before it was recreated into the earth we have today.

*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

2 Peter 3:7

God keeps this earth in state by the same word with which He created the whole earth. Just as the first earth was destroyed by water, the one we have today will be destroyed by fire. The first one was reserved unto a judgment of water. The one we are living on right now is reserved unto a judgment of fire.

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

2 Peter 3:8

We cannot measure time as God measures time, because God is in a place where there is no time. With God, a thousand years could be one day long, or one day could be a thousand years long. It really doesn't matter with God because God doesn't measure time as we do. We sit around and complain because Jesus hasn't come in 50 years, and God says, "What's 50 years? Fifty years is such a small increment of time with Me that a thousand years could be one day."

In other words, don't get uptight because time goes by and seemingly the promise of God has not come to pass. As surely as the first world was destroyed by water, this one will be destroyed by fire. No matter how long it takes, God's Word always comes to pass. That is important to know when you walk by faith. When you walk by faith you might pray it, believe it, confess it, and walk off from it and then get mad because ten minutes, ten days, ten weeks later "it"—whatever you've been praying, believing and confessing—still hasn't come to pass. Then you get irritated because God doesn't operate according to your time schedule.

When we walk by faith and not by sight, we forget that time exists. We are in a realm with God, because faith is of God. We don't worry if the manifestation hasn't come, if our body still hurts the next day, if our finances still aren't in line a week later, or if the economy hasn't turned around in a week. We understand that if God is on the throne, He's in a place where there is no time, but His promises are just as real. We don't want to be ignorant of the same thing the scoffers are ignorant of — the fact that God's Word has come to pass and that things around us are much older than we realize. Don't be ignorant of what God's plan has been in the past or what it is going to be in the future.

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

2 Peter 3:9

We count slackness through the passing of time. God is not slack because He doesn't count time in the same way we count time. I wonder how many of the prophets in the Old Testament got upset because Messiah didn't come during their lifetime. However, He came at the appointed time. In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ came. How many times did the disciples get upset with Jesus because things hadn't come to pass at the time they thought it was supposed to? Above all things do not become a scoffer because Jesus hasn't come in your lifetime. I believe He is going to come in my lifetime. I believe it because the signs of the times are happening so rapidly. But if He doesn't come, it doesn't bother me. I'm not going to become a scoffer because God doesn't view time in the ways I view time.

We also need to understand with every day that passes and Jesus has not come back, we have one more day to get people born again; we have one more day to bring people into the kingdom of God. Don't get upset that the Lord has not yet returned. Get busy, go out and win more lost souls. Plan your day, saying, "I'm going to win souls for Jesus. If Jesus hasn't come back by the end of the day, I will have won somebody for Him."

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which 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.*

2 Peter 3:10

The day of the Lord will come. The Word doesn't tell us when it will come; it just says that day will come. When thieves come, they don't call you ahead of time and say, "At five o'clock in the morning, I will be there to steal your television. Please have the front door open and lay out all your jewels and money. If you could please have them by the front door, that would help a lot. Thank you." Thieves don't announce when they're going to come. It doesn't say Jesus is a thief. He is not a thief. It says He is going to come *as a thief comes in the night*. This is the same truth brought out in Matthew 24 and Matthew 25. He will come, but it will be as a thief come in the night, without announcement.

He's not going to broadcast it ahead of time, "Here I come." However, Jesus does give indications of the time period. You know when certain seasons of the year are coming because you can feel it in the air. It may feel like summer outside, but you know when fall is around the corner. It's the same thing with the return of Jesus. Even though the world is seemingly going downhill and Satan seemingly is having victories on every side, there are indicators all around that let us know Jesus is coming. You can feel it. Jesus is coming very soon, although you can't accurately predict the exact day.

This verse says the earth we live on right now is going to be burned up. This earth is going to pass away and there will be another earth.

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.*

2 Peter 3:11

It says that *all these things* shall be dissolved. *Things* are cars. *Things* are homes. *Things* are everything material and temporal or not eternal. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these *things* shall be added unto you. (*Matthew 6:33*) It's perfectly fine to have *things* as long as *things* don't have you. You won't have things very long before you go to heaven. Once you get to heaven, the things of this earth will be gone, but a day is coming when fire will hit this planet and your precious *thing* is going to burn up. The thing you're grabbing onto or living your life for is going to burn up one of these days. That car, that home, those finances, that job — everything around you will be gone; it's not going to matter at all.

Knowing that the earth will one day be destroyed should cause you to live a holy and righteous life. Knowing there's a better life than what this life has to offer should spur you on to 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?*  
2 Peter 3:12

The Greek actually says, "*Looking for and hastening the coming, the more holy you live before God.*" You can actually speed up the day of the return of the Lord Jesus. I don't believe there's just one set day in heaven that God has ordained to be the day that Jesus is going to return. I believe that things the Church does can actually cause the return of the Lord Jesus to be pushed up closer. As the Church rises up and begins to do the will of God, we can hasten the day of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But like a thief in the night, it will come unannounced. We won't be able to pinpoint the day or the hour of His return.

*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*  
2 Peter 3:13

His promise is the Word. We are to base our lives on the Word. Knowing Jesus is coming, knowing there will be a new heaven, and knowing there will be a new earth should cause us to live in righteousness. Hebrews 1 describes the day when Jesus ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Hebrews 1 tells us what God, the Father, said to His Son, the Lord Jesus, on that day.

*And, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:  
They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;  
And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*  
Hebrews 1:10-12

The *beginning* it refers to is in Genesis 1:1. We don't know when that was, but Jesus Christ was the creator of the earth. According to verse 11, the heavens and the earth shall perish. The first earth was destroyed by water; this earth will be destroyed by fire. Jesus was here before the earth began and He'll be here after it's gone. When this earth we're standing on right now is burned up, Jesus Christ will still be here. Verse 11 says thou remainest, and they shall wax old as doth a garment. We all know clothes don't last forever. They wear out. Usage and dirt cause clothes to wear out. If your clothes never got dirty, they'd never wear out. But they do get dirty and they have to be washed. Each time they are washed, they wear out just a little bit more until they begin to get thread bare and start falling apart. This process is the comparison made in verse 11 — *they shall wax old as doth a garment.*

The earth we are on right now has been through many washings, because it has gotten dirty a number of times. Dirt is sin. This earth has been through six dispensations so far and it's about to enter into the seventh dispensation. At the end of every dispensation, sin causes the earth to go under a renovation and God starts again. The first dispensation was Innocence — Adam and Eve. Man's fall in the Garden of Eden caused innocence to fail and the earth got dirty again. God washed it out and brought along the next one, Human Government. After that time, sin entered in again. Then we have Conscience in the Tower of Babel. Sin entered in again. God started all over with a new dispensation of Promise, and brought Abraham along. After Abraham, the time in Egypt brought a dispensation of Captivity. Sin came along. God started all over again — Dispensation of the Law, and then sin entered in again. Jesus went to the Cross and wiped out the sin. We're living in the Church Age today. It's getting dirty again. At the

end of the Church Age, we'll have the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation, and then the Second Advent of the Lord when Jesus comes back, and the earth will be washed again. However, at the end of the Millennium there will be one more uprising of Satan and at that time, finally, Jesus is going to say, "It's not worth washing any more."

What do you do with clothes after you've washed them so many times? You throw them away, and that's what's going to happen to this earth one of these days. Jesus is going to look at the earth and say, "This earth has been washed so many times, it is thread bare. We're going to throw it away and start all over again, but this time we're going to have new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit and eventually thrown into the Lake of Fire. All sin will be gone, and we will rule and reign with Jesus forever and forever with the new heavens and a new earth.

Revelation 21 talks about the New Jerusalem and about how the Lord who makes everything new and keeps everything new. Revelation 21:5 says that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Praises belong to Him because He makes everything new. The Greek actually says that He not only makes everything new, He *habitually* makes everything new. Have you ever wondered if you'll be bored in heaven? We'll praise Him every day and we're never going to sleep. Won't we get bored? No, Jesus keeps everything new.

The first time I heard people singing in the spirit, I thought I was in heaven. I thought I was hearing angels all around me. I could have sworn I heard angels sing at the same time we were singing. It went on and on like waves coming in. I never forgot that experience. However, after awhile it lost the newness of that first-time worship excitement. Where was that feeling I had the first time? I wish I could capture that and bottle it. The good news is that Jesus is the One who captures it and bottles it. Every day of eternity will be like the first day of heaven. A million years after you've been in the New Jerusalem will seem to be just like the first day, because Jesus is there and He keeps everything new. Glory to God!

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