

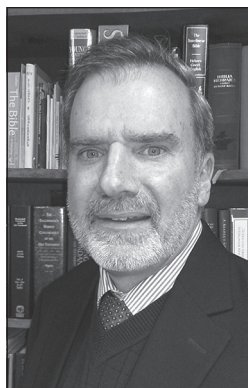
Does the Bible Teach an End of This Universe?

By Chris Reeves

Recent surveys reveal that approximately 75% of Americans still believe in some form of the afterlife.¹ However, *where* we will spend that afterlife and *what* we will be doing there are questions of much debate. Will the afterlife be in heaven, will it be on a restored earth, or will it be somewhere else? Will it even be in a place, or will it be just a state of mind? If in a place, will this place be physical in nature,

¹ Maggie Fox, “Fewer Americans Believe in God—Yet They Still Believe in Afterlife.” Caryle Murphy, “Most Americans believe in heaven. . . and hell.”

Chris Reeves was born October 20, 1965 in San Antonio, TX to Bill and Twilah Reeves. He attended Florida College from 1984 to 1988 and received a Bible Certificate. He was awarded a B.A. in Biblical Studies from Florida College in 2000. Chris began preaching regularly in 1984 and worked full-time with the McRae Road church of Christ in Camden, SC (1988–1990) and the Highway 9 church of Christ in Corpus Christi, TX (1991–1995). He worked with the Memorial Blvd. church of Christ in Springfield, TN for twenty-one years (1995–2016) and now he is currently working with the Warfield Blvd. church of Christ in Clarksville, TN (2017 to present). Chris has done preaching work outside the country in Mexico, Spain, the Philippines, and Germany. Chris married Cheri Goodall (daughter of Charles and Vernita Goodall) in 1988 and they have four children, Jessica Chapman, Jacob, Mason and Carlin. He writes articles regularly for *Truth Magazine*. Chris has written a commentary on Micah in the *Truth Commentary* series and a workbook on Ephesians in the Bible Text Books series. His book on the New Hermeneutic, “*Out with the Old and in with the New*,” is also published by Truth Publications. He can be reached at chrisreevesmail@gmail.com.



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spiritual, or both? Also, *what* will we be doing in the afterlife? Will we be doing what we are doing now just in a glorified state, or something completely different, or both? For centuries, these questions have been on the minds of many, especially believers. Let us turn to the Scriptures for the answers.

The Biblical View of the Afterlife

My assignment in this lecture is to answer the question: “Does the Bible teach an end of this universe?” This question deals with the nature and location of the final state of the righteous. The answer to this question will vary depending upon whom you ask. Our primary focus is, of course, “What the Scriptures teach?” not the latest opinion of biblical “scholars” or even our brethren might think.

What does the Bible say in answer to this question? Yes, the Bible teaches an end of this universe. God created the heavens and the earth *ex nihilo* (from nothing) and He will one day reduce them *ad nihilum* (to nothing) (Feldman, 56). In this lecture, I want to examine three Bible truths that give an affirmative answer to this question. First, the physical heavens and earth that we now know will one day “pass away.” They will come to an end and not remain. Second, the eternal reward of the righteous is “in heaven,” not on earth. The reward of the righteous is “heavenly,” not earthly. Third, the righteous will dwell in a “new heaven and a new earth.” This new heaven and new earth are not a restored version of the heaven and earth that we now dwell in, but it replaces the physical heaven and earth that will pass away. Let us now examine these three biblical arguments in closer detail.

1. Heaven and Earth Will “Pass Away”

The Bible teaches an end of this universe because Jesus said: “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35).² Peter also wrote: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). “Pass away” in these two passages comes from the Greek word

² All scripture quotations in this lecture are taken from the American Standard Version (1901) unless otherwise noted.

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parerchomai (παρέρχομαι) and has the meaning, “come to an end, disappear” (BAGD, 626)³, or “perish” (Thayer, 488). Our present, physical heavens and earth will one day “pass away”⁴ and “disappear” (NIV, NLB, CEV, etc.).

Add to this biblical testimony the following verses that indirectly teach a destruction of our present world:

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease (Gen. 8:22).

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished (Matt. 5:18).

. . . While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).⁵

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish; but thou continuest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a mantle shalt thou roll them up, as a garment, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Heb. 1:10-12).⁶

Before leaving this point, let me address one matter involving 2 Peter 3:10. The Jehovah’s Witnesses and some contemporary Bible scholars argue that the English translation “will be found,” “discovered,” or “laid bare” in verse 10 is better than “burned up.” They say the ancient manuscript evidence is better for *heurethēsetai* (εὕρεθήσεται— “found,” “discovered” [New World Translation], “laid bare” [NIV], or “exposed” [ESV]) than for *katakaēsetai* (κατακαήσεται— “burned up” [KJV, NKJV,

³ See Matt. 5:18; Mark 13:30-31; Luke 16:17; 21:32-33; 2 Cor. 5:17; and Jas. 1:10.

⁴ By contrast, Jesus’s words and God’s everlasting kingdom “*shall not pass away*” (Dan. 7:14). Henry C. Thiessen suggests that “pass away” does not mean non-existence, only transition (402). But, he offers no linguistic or lexical support for this opinion.

⁵ The adjective “temporary” comes from the Greek word *proschairos* (πρόσκαιρος) meaning “enduring only for a while” (Thayer, 546).

⁶ A quote from Psalm 102:25-27.

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ASV, NASV, RSV, etc.]). Thus, according to them, the earth and its works will be “discovered” or “laid bare” for renovation and restoration. The earth will not be “burned up” or annihilated, it will be renovated. Limited time and space here do not permit me to deal with all the issues involved in the textual criticism of this verse. The textual problems associated with the choice of words in this verse are admittedly difficult. However, a few brief comments can be made.

First, the translators of several major committee versions retained the word *katakāsetai* in verse 10 and translated it “burned up.” They did so because of the presence of this word in some ancient manuscripts and because the immediate context of verses 10-12 uses language associated with literal fire and burning.⁷

Second, even if the manuscript evidence is better for *heurethēsetai* (“found,” “discovered,” or “laid bare”),⁸ it is not a necessary conclusion that our present earth will be “found,” “laid bare,” or “discovered” for the purpose of renovation and restoration. If Peter, in fact, used *heurethēsetai*, then his point in this context would be that the earth and works will be discovered, laid bare, or exposed to God’s judgment of fire (vv. 7, 10, 12). The earth and its works will have been discovered, laid bare, and exposed to God’s fiery judgment when everything melts away and is dissolved and destroyed. J.H. Thayer commented on this word this way: “γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται *shall be found* namely, for destruction, i.e., will be unable to hide themselves from the doom decreed them by God, 2 Peter 3:10” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 261). “Laid bare” for destruction better fits the immediate context of verses 7, 10-12,

⁷ The verb *katakaiō* (κατακαίω) can be found in Matt. 3:12; 13:30, 40; Luke 3:17; Acts 19:19; 1 Cor. 3:15; Heb. 13:11; Rev. 8:7; 17:16; and 18:8.

⁸ This is the oldest reading according to Metzger (636). Peter actually uses a form of this same word in verse 14: *heurethēnai* (εὐρεθῆναι—“to be found”). This may point to some internal evidence for the use of *heurethēsetai* in verse 10.

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than “laid bare” for renovation.⁹ Whatever is made of the meaning of *heurethēsetai*, it must not contradict the plain meaning of “pass away” in the same verse.

Third, even if *katakaēsetai* (“burned up”) is removed from the text, the idea of burning up is still expressed in the words, “with fervent heat,” occurring twice in the text (vv. 10, 12). The words “with fervent heat” come from the Greek *kausoumena* (καυσούμενα) meaning “be consumed by heat, burn up. Destroyed by burning, 2 Peter 3:10” (BDAG, 425).

2. The Eternal Reward of the Righteous Is “in Heaven” (Heavenly), Not on Earth (Earthly)

The Bible teaches an end of this universe because heaven, not earth, will be the eternal abode of the righteous. “Heaven” (*ouranos*)¹⁰, in the Bible, can refer to the sky above the earth (Luke 12:56), where the birds fly (Matt. 6:26),¹¹ the weather is formed (Matt. 16:2-3),¹² the lightning strikes (Luke 17:24), and where the clouds (Matt. 24:30)¹³ and rain (Luke 4:25)¹⁴ appear (see Matt. 24:31 and Mark 13:27). “Heaven” can also refer to space above the sky where the sun, moon, and stars are found (Matt. 24:29).¹⁵ Finally, “heaven” can refer to a place above the sky and space

⁹ For those wanting to study this issue further, you will want to take note that the latest 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece* reads: οὐκ εὑρεθήσεται, “will not be found.” If this is the original reading, then the matter is closed. There will be no earth or works therein found after God’s judgment of fire. We also have a parallel in Revelation 20:11 where there it reads οὐκ εὑρέθη, not found.

¹⁰ Time and space does not permit me to cover the OT Hebrew words for heaven. The Heb. שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) is equivalent in meaning to the Greek *ouranoi* (οὐρανοί). For the root meaning of *ouranos* (οὐρανός), see Vine, “Probably akin to *ornumi*, “to lift, to heave. . .” (298); and, Thayer, “to cover, encompass” (464).

¹¹ See Matthew 8:20; 13:32; Mark 4:4, 32; Luke 8:5; 9:58; 13:19; and Acts 10:12.

¹² See Luke 12:56; 17:29; and Revelation 16:21.

¹³ See Mark 14:62.

¹⁴ See James 5:18 and Revelation 11:6.

¹⁵ See Mark 13:25; Acts 2:19-20; Hebrews 11:12; Revelation 6:13; 8:10; 9:1; and 12:4. Uranus, the seventh planet from the sun derives its name from the Greek word for heaven.

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where God (Matt. 5:16),¹⁶ His angels (Matt. 18:10),¹⁷ and Jesus (1 Pet. 3:22)¹⁸ dwell.¹⁹

After the judgment day, heaven (God’s dwelling place)²⁰, not the earth, will be the eternal abode of the righteous.²¹ Consider the following Bible truths. If the righteous are faithful to the end of their life, or when Jesus returns, their:

¹⁶ See Matt. 5:45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21, 10:32-33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 14, 19; Mark 11:25-26; and Luke 11:2.

Because God is “in heaven,” the spiritual “kingdom of heaven” is a kingdom that is *from* God and *by* God’s will. It is a kingdom that is “of heavenly or divine origin and nature” (Thayer). It is a kingdom of people now on earth that will one day reside “in heaven” (2 Tim. 4:18). Additionally, all sin is “against heaven” (Luke 15:18, 21), because it is against God who is “in heaven.” Authority (Mark 11:30-31) and signs (Luke 11:16; 21:11, 26) are “from heaven,” because God is “in heaven.” The one who “swears by heaven,” swears by God Himself (Matt. 23:22). In these cases, heaven is synonymous with God.

For “kingdom of heaven” (found only in the book of Matthew), see Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11-12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44-45, 47, 52; 16:19, 18:1, 3-4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1.

For “heavenly father,” see Matthew 5:48; 6:14, 26, 32; 15:13; 18:35; and Luke 11:13. See also Matthew 23:9.

For the “God of heaven,” see Revelation 11:13 and 16:11 and for “Lord of heaven and earth,” see Matthew 11:25..

¹⁷ See Matthew 22:30; 24:36; Mark 12:25; 13:32; Luke 2:15; 22:43; and Revelation 5:13.

¹⁸ See John 3:13; Romans 10:6; Ephesians 4:10; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; and 9:24.

¹⁹ This is likely the “third heaven” (paradise) that Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians 12:2. See 1 Kings 8:30.

²⁰ The Scriptures teach that God is in this space, but certainly not confined to it (1 Kings 8:27).

²¹ The Scriptures teach that the righteous enter into the paradise portion of hades when they die (Luke 16:23; Rev. 20:13) and then enter into heaven itself after the Judgment Day. The question “Where are the dead?” now and a study of the Hadean realm (“intermediate state”) is the subject of another lecture in this book.

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- Reward is great “in heaven,” not on earth (Matt. 5:12).²²
- Treasures are laid up “in heaven,” not on earth (Matt. 6:19-20).²³
- Names are written “in heaven,” not on earth (Luke 10:20).
- Resurrected body will be “heavenly,” not earthly (1 Cor. 15:48-49).
- House (resurrected body) will be eternal “in the heavens” and “from heaven,” not on the earth (2 Cor. 5:1-2).
- Citizenship is “in heaven,” not on earth (Phil. 3:20).
- Hope is laid up “in the heavens,” not on the earth (Col. 1:5).²⁴
- Salvation is unto a “heavenly” kingdom, not an earthly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18).²⁵
- Calling is “heavenly,” not earthly (Heb. 3:1).²⁶
- Gift is “heavenly,” not earthly (Heb. 6:4).
- Better [country] is “heavenly,” not earthly (Heb. 11:16).²⁷
- City will be the “heavenly” Jerusalem, not the earthly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).²⁸
- Names are enrolled “in heaven,” not on earth (Heb. 12:23).
- Inheritance is reserved “in heaven,” not on earth (1 Pet. 1:4).

²² See Luke 6:23.

²³ See Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33 (“in the heavens”); and 18:22. The “treasure in heaven” of Matthew 19:21 is the “eternal life” of Matthew 19:29. The “treasure in heaven” of Mark 10:21 is “the world to come” of Mark 10:30. Paul makes the same point when he writes: “Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:2).

²⁴ See Hebrews 6:19-20 and 7:19.

²⁵ See Matthew 25:34 and 2 Peter 1:11. Traub, commenting on “heavenly” in 2 Timothy 4:18, wrote: “This kingdom is not only in Christ but with Him in heaven” (541).

²⁶ See Philippians 3:14.

²⁷ “In heaven” (Heb. 10:34) is found in the KJV and NKJV, but not in other standard versions.

²⁸ See Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:10; and 13:14. The “heavenly” Jerusalem is described figuratively in greater detail in Revelation 21:9-27. Traub, commenting on “heavenly” in Hebrews 11:16 and 12:22, wrote: “This characterizes them as the final aim for God’s community” (541).

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- Eternal worship, praise, and service to God will be around His throne “in heaven,” not on earth (Rev. 7:15; 14:3; 22:3).²⁹

When you examine the many “heaven” or “heavenly” passages in the NT (a little over 300 times),³⁰ several valuable lessons related to our topic can be learned.

First, the eternal afterlife of the righteous will be “in heaven” or “heavenly.” Nowhere in Scripture are we told that the eternal abode of the righteous is on a restored earth. Earth (*gē*), mentioned over 250 times in the NT, is never said to be the final resting place of the righteous.³¹

²⁹ Cottrell writes: “One advantage we will have over His angels is that the resurrected Christ, the Lamb of God, will no longer sit on God’s throne in their presence, but will move to the new throne room on our new earth” (571). However, the “throne” of God in the book of Revelation (and the rest of Scripture) is always pictured in heaven and never on earth (Rev. 1:4; 3:21; 4:2-6, 9-10; 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9, 11, 15, 17; 8:3; 11:16; 12:5; 14:3; 16:17; 19:4-5; 20:11-12; 21:3, 5; 22:1, 3). Nowhere in Scripture are we told that God’s throne leaves heaven and comes to earth. See also 1 Kings 22:19 (2 Chron. 18:18); Psalms 11:4; 103:19; and Hebrews 8:1. The reward of the righteous portrayed in the book of Revelation is clearly set in heaven. They will sit and reign on “thrones” (3:21; 20:4) in heaven, not on earth. The book of Revelation has a heavenly outlook from beginning to end. Jesus is coming in judgment from heaven (1:7). The rewards of Christians are set in heaven (2:7; 3:12; 3:21). God and Jesus are around a throne in heaven (4-5). The martyred saints are under the altar in heaven (6:9). The great multitude of the saved are around the throne in heaven (7:9-17). Divine judgment comes from heaven (8:10; 9:1). God’s prophetic message comes from heaven (10:1). The faithful witnesses enter into heaven (11:12). There is spiritual warfare in heaven (12:7). The beast blasphemes those who dwell in heaven (13:6). The 144,000 followers of the Lamb are in heaven (14:1-5) and judgment comes from heaven (14:17-18). The plagues of divine judgment come from heaven (15:5-8). The message of complete judgment comes from heaven (16:17). An angel with great authority comes from heaven (18:1). The voice of a great multitude praising God is heard in heaven (19:1-8) and more divine judgment comes from heaven (19:11). After some time, divine judgment upon the nations comes from heaven (20:9). Lastly, God will dwell with His people in a “new” heaven (21:1-7) and God’s servants will serve Him and reign with Him in heaven (22:1-5). Revelation is a book about heaven!

³⁰ See Appendix 2.

³¹ Augustus H. Strong made this candid admission in his *Systematic Theology*: “Is this earth to be the heaven of the saints?” He answered: “First, that the

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The many “heaven” or “heavenly” passages just examined above simply do not make sense if heaven is on earth. The speakers and writers of the passages just examined had the opportunity to mention earth as the final destination of the righteous, but they chose not to do so. Why? Earth is not the final destination of the righteous.

“Heavenly” (*ouranios*) means “belonging to heaven, coming from or living in heaven” (BAGD, 593); “what pertains to or is in heaven” (Zodhiates, 1075).³² What reputable lexicon is there that defines “heavenly” (*ouranios*) as “earthly”? If the Bible writers wanted to say that the eternal reward of the righteous was “earthly,” they could have used the Greek word *epigeios* meaning “on the earth” or “belonging to the earth.”³³ They did not use this word; instead, they used the word “heavenly” (*ouranios*).

Today, many advocates of a restored earth use the words “heaven” and “heavenly” to describe the eternal abode of the righteous, but they really mean a restored earth.³⁴ This is misleading on their part. They want you to think about the familiar setting of heaven that you have read about in your Bible and sung about many times while they talk about a restored earth. This is tantamount to a theological “sleight of hand” or “bait and switch.”³⁵

earth is to be purified by fire, and perhaps prepared to be the abode of the saints, although this last is not rendered certain by the Scriptures” (1032).

³² Vine: “heavenly, what pertains to, or is in, heaven (*epi*, in the sense of ‘pertaining to,’ not here, ‘above’)” (298).

³³ See the use of *epigeios* in John 3:12; 1 Corinthians 15:40; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 2:10; 3:19; and James 3:15.

³⁴ Grudem, 1162. This doctrine is not new, but it has been given renewed interest among evangelicals in the past 40 years. Some of our brethren have adopted this doctrine in the past 10 years.

³⁵ Consider the following examples:

J. Richard Middleton: “He hammers home the point that he fully expects ‘not to be naked’ (5:3), that he does ‘not wish to be unclothed’ (5:4); instead he longs to be clothed with his *heavenly dwelling* (5:2). In other words, Paul’s explicit hope is not for existence as a ‘naked’ soul or spirit (presumably in heaven), but for eternal embodied life (*on earth*)” (93; emphasis mine).

Jack Cottrell: “The only thing different about life *on the new earth* (i.e., “*in heaven*”) is the time will never end. . .” (566) and “The fact that God will

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Restored earth advocates also try to explain away the many “heaven” or “heavenly” passages by saying they merely point to a heavenly *origin* or *source*³⁶ for these blessings, not where these blessings will actually be *experienced*. According to them, heaven is where our blessings are being *prepared*, but not where they will be *realized*. Earth is where they will be realized.³⁷ My response: “Nice try.” Read these verses again. The words

manifest His presence *on the new earth* is that reason why we call it *heaven*” (571; emphasis mine).

Hoekema: “. . . we shall continue to be *in heaven* while we are *on a new earth*” (274; emphasis mine).

³⁶ Bob Wilkin, commenting on Hebrews 11:13-16, wrote the following: The reference to a “heavenly country” may seem to contradict the idea of the New Earth. It does not. The word *country* is not in the Greek. Abraham and Sarah desired a heavenly *homeland* (compare verse 14). The homeland they sought would be heavenly *in origin, not in location*. The Lord has prepared the New Jerusalem (John 14:1-3; Rev. 21). That city, according to Revelation 21, will be on the New Earth, not in the third heaven.

(Likewise, the Lord commanded us to lay up treasure “in heaven” in Matt 6:19-21. That is where the treasure is *sourced*. But that treasure will be enjoyed on the Millennial Earth and then the New Earth.) <https://faithalone.org/blog/does-hebrews-1113-16-contradict-the-new-earth/>.

³⁷ It is popular for New Creation Eschatology (hereafter, NCE) advocates to talk about their supposed “eschatological pattern” or “apocalyptic pattern” throughout the Bible where they say the eternal blessings are *prepared* in heaven now and then *revealed* upon a restored earth in the future (Middleton, 220-221). Consider this quote by N.T. Wright:

“. . . Heaven is the place where *God’s purposes for the future are stored up*. It isn’t where they are meant to stay so that one would need to go to heaven to enjoy them; it is where they are kept safe against the day when they will become a reality on earth. If I say to a friend, ‘I’ve kept some beer in the fridge for you,’ that doesn’t mean that he has to climb into the fridge in order to drink the beer. God’s future inheritance, the incorruptible new world and the new bodies that we are to inhabit that world, are already kept safe, waiting for us, not so that we can go to heaven and put them on there but so that they can be brought to birth in this world or rather in the new heavens and new earth, the renewed world of which I spoke earlier” (151-152).

There is a problem with Wright’s beer-in-the-fridge example. It is true that a person does not climb into the fridge to drink the beer. But, neither does Wright have any plans of bringing the fridge to his friend. When was the

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“in heaven” and “heavenly” speak to the *place* or *location* (see “place” in John 14:2-3), where these blessings will be enjoyed. “Heavenly” speaks to the idea of locale or locality. What reputable lexicon is there that defines “heavenly” (*ouranios*) as “sourced in heaven, but located on the earth” or “prepared in heaven, but realized on earth”?³⁸ You will not find one. The eternal blessing for the righteous are “laid up,” “prepared,” and “kept” in heaven, and that is where they will stay.³⁹

Just like there are beings “in heaven” now (God, Jesus, angels),⁴⁰ just like there are things that take place “in heaven” now (God’s will, answered prayers), just like there are things “in heaven” now (joy, peace, or a sanctuary),⁴¹ so there will be a “heavenly kingdom” that will exist “in heaven” in the future. This is not difficult to understand. Faithful Christians right now have “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).⁴² This refers to our spiritual blessings that we have

last time you went to a friend’s house and you ask for a non-alcoholic drink out the fridge and he brought the fridge to you? That’s what would have to happen for this example to be parallel with Jesus bringing heaven down to us. What proves too much, proves too little.

³⁸ Other restored-earthers like Jack Cottrell have the righteous going to heaven when they die, coming back to the earth when Jesus returns, going back to heaven for the Judgment Day (at which time God is restoring the earth), and coming back again to live eternally on a restored earth. Up to heaven, down to earth, up to heaven, down to earth—whew! See Cottrell (563).

³⁹ Traub wrote: “These blessings are in heaven, which means with God or Christ, but with the God or Christ with whom believers will also be, or already are in faith. Heaven here is like a place, but there can be no asking where it is situated, for such a question is opposed to the whole concept” (532).

⁴⁰ The KJV of 1 John 5:7 reads: “three that bear record in heaven.” See Rev. 12:12; 13:6; 19:1; and 19:14.

⁴¹ See Revelation 14:17; 15:5; and 16:17.

⁴² “In the heavenlies” (Gr. ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) is used in the NT only by Paul in Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; and 6:12. “In the heavenly places” is an actual spiritual realm, place, or location implied by the words “seated Him at His right hand” (Eph. 1:20) and “seated us with Him” (Eph. 2:6). Traub wrote: “ἐπ- here does not denote ‘upon’ but ‘at,’ i.e., ‘in heaven’” (538). See the lecture by Wayne Goff.

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in Christ now in the church, like forgiveness of sins or answered prayer. One day these faithful Christians can look forward to actually being in the “heavenly kingdom” itself (2 Tim. 4:18).

Second, heaven (the dwelling place of God) is a place, not just a subjective state of mind that people enjoy now and in the future. Heaven is a place, a location. God is “in heaven.” Jesus came “from” heaven (“from above” in John 3:31)⁴³ and ascended⁴⁴ back “into heaven” (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:11).⁴⁵ The Son of Man is “in heaven” (John 3:13). When Jesus ascended back into heaven, he went “where he was before” (John 6:62). He has “gone into heaven” (1 Pet. 3:22). Jesus looked up “to heaven” when He prayed.⁴⁶ Stephen “looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God. . .” (Acts 7:56). Peter heard a voice “out of heaven” (Acts 11:9). Jesus ascended into “heaven itself” before “the face of God” (Heb. 9:24).⁴⁷ The righteous will be in heaven, and the rest will not be able to “enter” (Rev. 21:27); they are “without” (Rev. 22:15). All of these passages imply that there is a location for heaven, though no passage of Scripture is specific about the exact location of it relative to the earth. However, from man’s perspective on earth, heaven is “up” (Matt. 14:19).⁴⁸

⁴³ “From above” is used synonymously of heaven in John 3:31; 8:23; 19:11; James 1:17; 3:15 and 3:17. See also John 6:31-33, 38, 41-42, 50-51, 58.

⁴⁴ For Jesus’s ascension into heaven, see the passages of Scripture that contain the Greek verb *anabainō* (ἀναβαίνω).

⁴⁵ Various things and beings are said to come “from” heaven or “from the heavens.” See the following Scriptures: 1) ἀπ’ (from)—Matthew 24:29, 31; Mark 8:11; Luke 9:54; 17:29; 21:11; 22:43; John 6:38; Romans 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Hebrews 12:25; 1 Peter 1:12; and, 2) ἐκ (out of)—Matthew 3:17; 16:1; 21:25 [2x]; 28:2; Mark 1:11; 11:30-31; 13:25; Luke 3:22; 10:18; 11:13, 16; 17:24; 20:4-5; John 1:32; 3:13, 27; 31; 6:31, 32 [2x], 33, 41-42, 50-51, 58; 12:28; Acts 2:2; 9:3; 11:5, 9; 22:6; 1 Corinthians 15:47; 2 Corinthians 5:2; Galatians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Peter 1:18; Revelation 3:12; 8:10; 9:1; 10:1, 4, 8; 11:12; 13:13; 14:2, 13; 16:21; 18:1, 4; 20:1, 9; 21:2, 10.

⁴⁶ See Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41; 7:34; Luke 9:16; 18:13; and John 17:1. The angel in Revelation 10:5 lifted up his right hand “to heaven.”

⁴⁷ See Revelation 11:12.

⁴⁸ See Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; and 2 Corinthians 12:2. “Exalted unto heaven” in Matthew 11:23 also implies an upward direction of heaven. “Down from heaven” is found in 1 Peter 1:12, Revelation 10:1, 18:1, and 20:1.

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Additionally, Jesus's words in John 14:2-3 are important to our study. ⁴⁹ Jesus said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that *where I am, there ye may be also*" (emphasis mine). Jesus was leaving to go back to His Father, who was in heaven (John 14:12, 28; 16:5, 28; 17:1). The place He was going to prepare was in His Father's house. ⁵⁰ And, when He returns a second time, He will

⁴⁹ When NCE advocates get done with this verse, they have Jesus saying the opposite of what He said. Matthew Benfield wrote: "It is not that He will go to prepare a place for us and then take us to that place, rather, He will prepare a place for us and then reveal that place at His coming" (*A New Heaven*, 42).

⁵⁰ Some Bible students understand these verses to say that Jesus is returning to heaven to prepare the church. They say that heaven is already prepared when Jesus says these words, but the church is not. And, the "Father's house" is a reference to the church which is the "house of God." However, I do not take this position for the following reasons. First, Jesus spoke of "my Father's house" in the present tense. The "Father's house" was already in existence in heaven when Jesus said these words, but the church would not be present until days later on Pentecost. (For heaven as God's "habitation," see Psa. 11:4; 33:13-14; and Isa. 63:15). Second, Jesus said He was going to "go" to His Father to prepare a place and that He would come again and "receive" them "unto Myself." All of this activity is heavenward, not focused on the earth. Jesus never said that what He was going to "prepare" would then be brought to the earth. The church is a relationship that is experienced here on the earth. Jesus didn't "prepare" the church in heaven and then bring it to earth. What he left this earth to prepare was in heaven, it stays there, and He receives His disciples to Himself there. Jesus is our "forerunner" into heaven (Heb. 6:20). Third, Jesus was going to return for the purpose of receiving the disciples and taking them to His Father (see also 12:26). The coming of Jesus and the receiving the disciples unto Himself occur at the same time. Jesus wants His disciples to be with Himself ("Myself") and He wants them to come to His Father (vv. 4-6). (Paul wrote, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. 4:17.) Once Jesus returned to the Father, both He and the Father were in heaven together. Jesus and the Father in heaven together, not the church, is a focus of this passage and this focus is found throughout John 13-17. Fourth, Jesus said that His disciples already knew the way where Jesus was going (v. 4). They knew the way to the Father in heaven was through Jesus. He had already taught them that principle (see 5:19ff; 6:32ff; 7:37ff; 10:7, 9; 11:25; 12:26, 32ff). They would not have already known the way to the church. For these reasons, I believe that John 14:2-3 teaches that Jesus is going to prepare a place in heaven, not that He is going to prepare the church.

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receive His disciples to Himself where He is (John 13:36). Jesus said, “be with me where I am” in John 17:24. The words “where I am” refer to Jesus in heaven, not on earth (see also 12:26). The focus of Jesus’s words is on heaven, not on a restored earth. Jesus is not going to be living for eternity with His disciples on earth.⁵¹ John 14:2-3 is simple to understand.⁵²

Third, heaven (the dwelling place of God) and earth are two separate places. Heaven will not become earth. This should go without saying, but it is good to remind us of this important fact. Heaven (God’s dwelling place) and earth are two separate places and they are never joined in Scripture. Heaven is the throne of God, and earth is the footstool of His feet (Matt. 5:34-35).⁵³ All authority has been given to Jesus in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Heaven and earth are two different places, not the same place, and they will not become the same place in the future.⁵⁴

Additionally, heaven (God’s dwelling place) is never said to come to earth or be “joined to a renewed earth” (Grudem, 1160). There will not be a “unification of heaven and earth” or a “joining of heaven and earth” (Grudem, 1158-1159). Heaven and earth will not be “joined together” (Wright, 19, 191). All this scholarly mumbo-jumbo is not in the Bible. Let us, on this topic, “speak where the Bible speaks.” Not one time in

⁵¹ It is true that Jesus later says the He and the Father will come and abide with the disciples (14:16-18, 23; 15:4-10). This is a different coming that speaks of deity coming to abide in the disciples while they are on the earth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, their obedience, and their fruit-bearing.

⁵² One way you can tell when a Bible passage is easy to understand is look at the large amount of Scripture twisting that takes place by the errorist to make it say something else. See Middleton on John 14:1-3 (217, 228-229).

⁵³ See Matthew 23:22; Acts 14:15; 17:24; 1 Corinthians 8:5; 15:47; Ephesians 3:15; Hebrews 12:25-26; Revelation 5:3; and 14:7.

⁵⁴ There are 62 passages in the NT mentioning both heaven(s) and earth: Matthew 5:18; 6:10; 11:25; 16:19 [2x]; 18:18-19; 23:9; 24:30, 35; 28:18; Mark 13:27, 31; Luke 4:25; 10:21; 12:56; 16:17; 21:33; John 3:31; Acts 2:19; 4:24; 7:49; 10:11-12; 11:6; 14:15; 17:24; 1 Corinthians 8:5; 15:47; Ephesians 1:10; 3:15; Philippians 2:10; Colossians 1:16, 20; Hebrews 1:10; 12:25-26; James 5:12, 18; 2 Peter 3:5, 7, 10, 13; Revelation 5:3, 13; 6:13; 8:13; 9:1; 10:5, 6, 8; 11:6; 12:4, 12; 13:13; 14:6-7; 18:1; 20:9, 11; 21:1 [2x].

For passages mentioning heavenly (or heavens) and earthly (or earthy), see: John 3:12; 1 Corinthians 15:47-49; and 2 Corinthians 5:1.

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Scripture do we read about heaven coming to earth, heaven on earth, heaven turning into earth,⁵⁵ earth turning into heaven, or heaven disappearing and earth remaining.⁵⁶ An example of this mindset is found in Russell D. Moore's material on the "new earth":

The point of the gospel is not that we would go to heaven when we die. Instead, it is that heaven will come down, transforming and renewing the earth and the entire universe. After the millennium, the final judgment, and the condemnation of the lost, John sees a new Jerusalem coming down from the heavens *to earth* (Rev. 21:2). He then describes an eternal order that, consistent with the rest of biblical eschatology, is surprisingly "earthy." . We lay up treasures in heaven, but the treasure does not stay in heaven. We focus our minds on heaven, but heaven comes down to earth (912-913).

So-called biblical "scholars" today (and some brethren now) speak of heaven (God's dwelling place) "coming to earth," but the Bible never speaks this way. This is pure eisegesis (reading into) of the biblical text. The idea of "heaven on earth" can be found in modern movies and pop-culture songs,⁵⁷ but this idea is not found in the Bible. When the righteous get to heaven, they will be singing "a new song" (Rev. 14:3), but I doubt it will be Belinda Carlisle's 1987 "Heaven Is a Place on Earth." Let us practice what we preach to others. Let us "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent" and let us "use Bible words in Bible ways."

⁵⁵ Discussing the "new heavens and new earth" of Revelation 21:1-2, Schoonhoven wrote: "The heavenly order is now subsumed (placed within—CHR) in a terrestrial kingdom where all things are new" (656). Paul Enns wrote: "the new earth becomes part of heaven" (389).

⁵⁶ NCE are not agreed on how they should describe the eternal abode of the righteous. Some continue to use the word "heaven," others only "earth," and still others "heaven/earth." The NCE approach actually makes for some novel ideas about heaven. Cottrell, commenting on the abode of the righteous after the Judgment Day writes: "From that point on, then there will actually be *three* "theological" heavens: the divine dimension itself, the divine throne room in the angelic realm, and the divine throne room on the new earth" (571).

⁵⁷ See "Heaven on Earth" by the Christian rock band *Stars Go Dim* (2015) and "Heaven on Earth" by Micah Stampley.

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Fourth, when Jesus and others spoke of heaven, they emphasized the spiritual quality of eternal life, not the physical or material life.⁵⁸ Heaven is not a material realm on a material earth. Jesus said that things like physical houses and lands are for “now in this time,” but in the “world to come,” there will be “eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). The “world to come” is otherworldly, not the world we know on this earth. Also note the argument of the Hebrew writer as he focuses on Jesus ascending back into heaven to carry out His priestly ministry in the “heavenly” tabernacle (Heb. 4:14; 7:26; 8:1, 5; 9:23-24). There is a “heavenly” focus in this argument that must not go unnoticed. Before this section in Hebrews (in 3:1 and 6:4) and after (in 11:16 and 12:22), the author speaks of “heavenly” things for faithful Christians (a heavenly calling, gift, [country], and Jerusalem). These “heavenly” things are *in the same place* where Jesus is now conducting His “heavenly” ministry. These “heavenly” things will not be on a restored earth just as Jesus’s “heavenly” ministry is not now (nor will it ever be) on earth. The OT tabernacle did not typify a renewed and restored earth, but the “heavenly” ministry of Jesus (9:23-24). Jesus is our “forerunner” (*prodromos*), leading the way for the faithful “into that which is within the veil,” into heaven itself (Heb. 6:20). He goes before the righteous into heaven, and they will follow Him there (see also 12:1-2).⁵⁹ He is not leading the faithful to a restored earth.

Many Bible students today are so focused on the material things of a restored earth that I wonder if they are like Nicodemus, who had trouble believing the “heavenly things” that Jesus spoke about (John 3:12-13).⁶⁰ One member of the church is even now describing his end-time view as a “materialistic eschatology” (Ashby Camp, “Materiality”). The words of Millard J. Erickson on this point serve as a good reminder concerning our current perspective on heaven:

⁵⁸ Grudem, referencing Revelation 22:1-2, writes: “. . .it should not strike us as surprising to find that some of the descriptions of life in heaven include features that are very much part of the physical or material creation that God has made” (1161). Later, Grudem writes about “the physical beauty of the heavenly city. . .” (1163).

⁵⁹ Thayer defines *prodromos* (πρόδρομος) as follows: “one who comes in advance to a place whither the rest are to follow” (538).

⁶⁰ Some evangelicals in the 1980s were focusing on a restored earth to the neglect of heaven which caused Dave Hunt to write a book titled *Whatever Happened to Heaven*.

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Sometimes, especially in popular presentations, heaven is depicted as primarily a place of great physical pleasures, a place where everything we have most desired here on earth is fulfilled to the ultimate degree. Thus heaven seems to be merely earthly (and even worldly) conditions amplified. The correct perspective, however, is to see the basic nature of heaven as the presence of God; from His presence, all of the blessings of heaven follow (*Christian Theology*, 1228).

Fifth, when Jesus and others spoke of heaven, they limited their description of life there and did not engage in exaggerated imagination or speculation. Heaven is not what we want it to be. Heaven is what we are told in Scripture. Yes, heaven is described in splendid terms in Scripture.⁶¹ Heaven will be a reward, joy, eternal life, fellowship with the redeemed, home, glory, rest, an inheritance, righteousness, paradise, serving, singing, comfort, no tears, no death, peace, endless, reigning, Jesus face-to-face, God's presence, and more.⁶² Heaven will be glorious! Yet, the Bible's description of heaven is still limited.⁶³

In contrast, popular authors today like Randy Alcorn and his book titled *Heaven*, encourage imagination about heaven and they write many pages about heaven.⁶⁴ They have written much more about heaven than the

⁶¹ It is popular to quote 1 Corinthians 2:9 as a reference to heaven, but I do not do so here because that passage is speaking of God's wisdom that was prepared for Paul and revealed to him to preach (see vv. 1-8 and 10-16). It is not a reference to heaven.

⁶² See Matthew 5:12; 25:21, 23, 46; Mark 10:30; John 14:2-3; 17:24; Romans 2:7; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Galatians 6:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Titus 1:7; 3:7; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:34; 1 Peter 1:4; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 2:7; 3:12; 7:13-17; 14:1-5, 13; 15:2-3; 19:6-9; 21:1-27; and 22:1-5, 14.

⁶³ Schoonhoven wrote: "Of great significance is the ambivalent portrayal of heaven given in the biblical materials. The conception of heaven revolves around clouds, harps, and angels, with humanity marching through the Pearly Gates to live a life of bliss. This conception is far removed from the biblical witness" (654). A.A. Hodge, who believed in a restored earth for the righteous, warned against two things: 1) regarding heaven as "too nearly analogous to that of our earthly life" and 2) regarding heaven as "too widely distinguished from that of our present experience" (579).

⁶⁴ The references to "imagine," "imagining," or "imagination" are many in the writings of NCE advocates. See Grudem (1162).

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inspired speakers and writers of the NT ever did!⁶⁵ They mix Bible truths about heaven with their own speculation and imagination about it. They write about animals, music, paintings, architecture, commerce, agriculture, politics, banqueting, and spouses in heaven (Moore, 914-916). Others write about the righteous in heaven having “governmental ministries” (Grider, 542), “judging and ruling,” and “authority over cities” (Paul Enns, 390). They write about the righteous building homes, farming, and dining in heaven (ibid., 390-391). Randy Alcorn has probably written more about his imagined life in heaven than anyone. He writes about the possibility of work, cultural developments, dancing, telling stories, art, drama, entertainment, laughing, playing, sports, thrills, crafts, trade, business, technology, machinery, and new modes of travel to other worlds in heaven (Alcorn, 409-443). Bill T. Arnold wrote the following in *Christianity Today*:

A beautiful sunset—and, yes, perhaps a well-seasoned salad—and glimpses of our blissful enjoyment of Him forever. As far as we know, the pleasures of this life are not obliterated by union with and enjoyment of God in heaven. Rather, it seems likely that all such pleasurable experiences are enjoyed in heaven in a holy way that acknowledges God as their source (*Christianity Today*, 104).

It might be good to remind ourselves at this point that the apostle Paul was caught up to the “third heaven”⁶⁶ or “paradise” and heard “unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Apparently, no one is stopping Alcorn and others from imagining many things about what heaven will be like and writing volumes about it. Does Alcorn know more about heaven than Jesus, Paul, Peter, or John?

Let us always be content to limit our understanding of heaven to what the Scriptures say. Ray Summers’ words serve as an appropriate reminder here:

It is to life after death that man looks when he begins to consider the nature of life and destiny. His question is always, ‘What is that life like?’ Man’s dreams of what that life will be like have often gone far beyond that which is given by revelation from God. Christians look with disfavor on the sensual views of future survival in some religious systems, but at the same time many so-called Christian concepts come

⁶⁵ Cottrell, relying on the work of Gilmore, wrote several pages about what he imagines the righteous will be doing in heaven (567-572).

⁶⁶ “Third heaven” (τρίτου οὐρανοῦ) is found one time in the NT.

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close to the same sensual idea. Islam looks upon man's future life as one in which he shall be married to large-eyed maidens and shall drink of a wine which results in neither headache nor dimmed wits. There are times when a Christian's description of his idea of heaven would be much like that. Knowledge of life after death must be derived from the New Testament (*The Life Beyond*, 196-197).

Sixth, heaven has always been, is now, and will always be where God is. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that God and heaven are coming to a restored earth. The righteous will be with God in heaven. Jesus wanted to ascend unto His Father in heaven. Paul wanted to die and be "with Christ" in heaven (Phil. 1:23). He wanted to be "at home with the Lord" in heaven (2 Cor. 5:8). Being in the very presence of the "glory of God" will be a central feature of one's eternal life in heaven. John wrote: "God himself shall be with them. . ." (Rev. 21:3), "the glory of God did lighten it" (Rev. 22:23), and "they shall see His face. . ." (Rev. 22:4). Now that's heaven!

3. The Righteous Will Dwell in "A New Heavens and a New Earth"

The Bible teaches an end of this universe because the Bible teaches that God will create a "new heavens and a new earth" (emphasis mine) for the righteous to dwell in.⁶⁷ Peter wrote: "But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13), and John wrote: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . ." (Rev. 21:1). Whatever interpretation we give to the new heavens and new earth, it must adhere to the two biblical facts already set forth above. The new heavens and new earth are not our present heaven and earth because these will "pass away," and the new heavens and new earth must be "in heaven" (heavenly), not on earth (earthly).⁶⁸ There are three truths I would like to examine regarding

⁶⁷ The Talmud (*Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 1*) states that the "new heavens and new earth" were created at the end of the creation week in Genesis 1, but there is no biblical evidence for this belief.

⁶⁸ The following brief survey of history on this subject was adapted from Gregg R. Allison's chapter on "The New Heavens and New Earth" in *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine (723-733)*. The biblical doctrine of the new heaven and new earth has been interpreted differently by students of the Bible for centuries. Some have emphasized the spiritual nature of this realm while others emphasized the physical. There has been no unified con-

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the new heavens and new earth. First, the new heavens and new earth will follow the complete destruction of the old universe that we now

sensus about the doctrine after the first-century teaching of Peter and John.

The early “Church Fathers” were divided as to the future state of the present heavens and earth. Some believed that they were to be totally annihilated, while others believed that they would be changed by miraculous divine renewal. For example, Tertullian wrote that the world “shall be consumed in one great flame!” and that “all things which have come from nothing will return ultimately to nothing.” Melito of Sardis also believed in the total annihilation of the current heavens and earth. Irenaeus, on the other hand, believed that our present heavens and earth will be transformed. He wrote that “Neither is the substance nor the essence of the creation annihilated. . .” Origen also believed in the transformation of our world and wrote that the passing of the world is “by no means an annihilation or destruction of their material substance. . .” Methodius of Olympus as well believed that the world would be renewed not destroyed.

A few medieval theologians addressed the nature of the eternal state of the righteous. Anselm wrote that “the present physical mass of the universe is to be changed anew into something better” and Thomas Aquinas, writing in his famous *Summa Theologica*, set forth his position that since man is to be renewed so his world will be renewed.

Later, some of the Reformers like John Calvin also addressed the doctrine of the “new heaven and new earth.” Calvin believed that the new heavens and new earth of Isaiah 65:17 was to be taken metaphorically of the church. As for his understanding of 2 Peter 3, he believed that the elements of the world are to be “consumed, only that they may be renovated, their substance remaining the same. . .” Some post-Reformation theologians among the Lutherans disagreed with Calvin and set forth their annihilationist perspective; men like John Andrew Quenstedt (1715) and David Hollaz (1707). Others, like William Ames (1634), wrote that “The elements will not be removed but changed. . .”

The understanding of the “new heaven and new earth” in modern biblical scholarship over the past 100 years has been divided just like in previous centuries. However, many denominational scholars have tended to emphasize the physical when writing their systematic theologies. For example, Charles Hodge wrote that the destruction of the world “is not annihilation,” and his son, A.A. Hodge, wrote that heaven “must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structures, conditions, and activities.” The systematic theologies of Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, and Wayne Grudem also set for the earthly, physical nature of the “new heaven and new earth.” In contrast, men like William G.T. Shedd, Donald Guthrie, and Millard J. Erickson, emphasized the spiritual realm of heaven as the place of God.

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know. Second, the word “new” points to a completely new realm for the righteous, not a restored universe.⁶⁹ Third, the phrase “new heavens and new earth” mentioned by Isaiah, Peter, and John is used by them in a symbolic sense, and this phrase does not describe our physical or material universe renovated.

Evidence for the complete end of the universe is found in the words of both Peter and John. Just before Peter wrote about the new heavens and new earth in 2 Peter 3:13, he wrote these words describing the complete passing of our universe:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

Like Peter, John also wrote about the passing of our universe. He wrote: “. . . for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more” (Rev. 21:1).⁷⁰ “Passed away” in this verse and Revelation 21:4 comes from the Greek word *aperchomai* and has the meaning “depart” (BAGD, 84)⁷¹, or “disappeared” (Zerwick and Grosvenor, 775). Thayer wrote concerning these words “of an evanescent state of things” (57). *Evanescent* means to pass out of sight, quickly fade or disappear. The “*first heaven and the first earth*,” which we now experience, will one day depart and “go away” (Liddell and Scott, 187).⁷²

⁶⁹ “Recreationists” (those who believe in a completely new heaven and earth) and “renewalist” (those who believe in a restored heaven and earth) are the two popular terms that are being used today in theological circles. See Svigel (“Extreme Makeover”).

⁷⁰ “First heaven” (πρώτος οὐρανός) is found only here in the NT.

⁷¹ See Revelation 9:12; 11:14.

⁷² John uses different words in Revelation 6:14.

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John also wrote: “*the sea is no more.*” The “sea” in Revelation represents the realm of mankind now on earth.⁷³ If the sea is “no more,” then life on earth is no more. A few verses earlier in Revelation 20:11, John wrote: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.” Here, John describes in poetic fashion the vanishing and disappearing of our present heaven and earth to make way for the new heavens and new earth.⁷⁴ Peter described the passing away in detail and John simply stated the event that would take place.

It is popular for NCE advocates to talk about Revelation 21:2 and say that the new Jerusalem is coming down out of heaven “to earth.”⁷⁵

⁷³ See 5:13; 7:1-3; 8:8-9; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 12:12; 13:1; 14:7; 16:3; 18:17, 19, 21; and 20:8, 13. The exception is the “sea of glass” which is around the throne in heaven (4:6; 15:2). See also Daniel 7.

⁷⁴ Compare Revelation 12:6 and 16:20. J. Marcellus Kik commented on Revelation 20:11 this way: “These words teach us the end and annihilation of the material earth and heaven. They fled away and there was no place for their existence in eternity. . . This is one of the clearest statements in Scripture of the non-eternity of the earth and the heavens” (254). Traub commented on Revelation 20:11 this way: “Heaven and earth are kept for this destruction (2 Pet. 3:7), and both experience the eschatological terror of flight from God’s manifestation. . .” (515). Dave Mathewson commented on Revelation 21:1 this way: “In place of the ‘fleeing’ heaven and earth are found a new heaven and earth. Thus, reading 21.1 within its broader visionary context, where John reiterates notions of removal, suggests that *at a literary level* John envisions nothing less than the complete removal of the old order to make room for a qualitatively new creative act of God” (38). David J. MacLeod commented on Revelation 21:1 this way: “When John said ‘new’ (*καινος*), he probably meant a completely new universe made of new materials and not merely the renovation of the present heavens and earth. . .” (441). In contrast to this, Heide believes that John is simply saying that “heaven and earth had gone from his sight” (43).

⁷⁵ Those scholars who believe in a restored earth take the words “new creature” from 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15 and apply them to all of creation including the earth. However, in both places, Paul limits his use of this phrase to people who have been converted to Christ. These scholars broaden the meaning of “new creature” to include the earth. See the articles by Moo, Scholz, House, and Beale.

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They always add the words “to earth” because this is fundamental to their position.⁷⁶ However, according to Revelation 20:11 and 21:1, there is no earth to come down to.⁷⁷

Evidence for the complete end of the universe is also found in the word “new” (*kainos*) that Peter and John used to describe the eternal abode of the righteous. Thayer defined “new” “as respects form; *recently made, fresh, recent, unused, unworn*. . . *new, which as recently made is superior to what it succeeds*” (317). Arndt and Gingrich say “new” stands “(a) in contrast to something old. . . (b) in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by what is new. In such a case the new is, as a rule, superior in kind to the old. . .” (394). The word “new” (*kainos*) points to the new kind, nature, or quality of the abode. It will be new in kind, not just another heaven and earth like we now have. It will be altogether new and different.

⁷⁶ See the article by David L. Turner.

⁷⁷ John does not say that the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven “to earth” (see also 20:10) or “upon earth.” Read the text carefully. This is what NCE advocates would like for you to believe, but the text does not say that, either explicitly or implicitly. Neither in this passage nor its parallel in Revelation 3:12 is the New Jerusalem said to come down out of heaven “to earth.”

When John wants to make it clear that something is coming down out of heaven *to the earth*, he mentions the earth. He does this in Revelation 10:1-3 with the strong angel, in 13:13 with the earth beast, in 16:21 with the great hail, and in 18:1 with another angel. John does not speak of coming down out of heaven “to earth” when he discusses the new Jerusalem setting. When NCE advocates add “to earth” in Revelation 21:2, they engage in eisegesis (reading into the text that which is not there). The words “out of” heaven in Revelation 21:2 and 21:10 are mentioned to show that John is receiving a vision from heaven. They are not mentioned to give the direction from which the new Jerusalem is travelling to the earth.

Additionally, if the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21:1 are the heavens and earth restored as some argue, then there are some problems. How can the new heavens and new earth be a physical, restored earth and *also* be the “new Jerusalem” and a “tabernacle”? These are not physical places and things (like much of the rest of the book), but symbols to describe the relationship of God’s people to God Himself in heaven.

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Heaven will be a completely “new” reality. God’s people will be given a “new name” (Rev. 2:17; 3:12)⁷⁸ as they sing a “new song” (Rev. 14:3) in the “new heavens and new earth” (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1) and the “new Jerusalem” (Rev. 3:12; 21:2),⁷⁹ because God makes “all things new” (Rev. 21:5). Note that Peter and John used the word “new” (*kainos*) to describe the eternal dwelling of the righteous, not the word “renew.” The words “renew,” “renewed,” and “renewing” are always used of *persons* in the NT, never of the heavens and earth.⁸⁰ Scripture speaks of “new heavens and new earth” (NHNE), not “renewed heavens and renewed earth” (RHRE). “New” and “renew” are two different concepts. We certainly believe in and advocate a NHNE, but not a RHRE. As I admonished us already, let us “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.”

Lastly, evidence for the complete end of the universe comes from the way in which Isaiah, Peter, and John all used the expression “new heavens and new earth.” All three of these prophets used this phrase in a symbolic way. The words “new heavens and new earth” are a description a new dwelling place—a new age, a new era, a new arrangement of things for God’s people. Peter and John used these words in a manner consistent with Isaiah. Isaiah was speaking symbolically of the spiritual realm of Israel’s remnant on the earth which culminated in the New Testament church. Peter and John were speaking symbolically of the spiritual realm of the righteous in eternity in heaven.

To understand the words of Peter and John, we must go back to the beginning. The expression “heaven and earth,” from beginning to end in Scripture, refers to a dwelling place for mankind. The context will determine the time, location, and nature of this dwelling place. For example, in the beginning, God created the “heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). This obviously is the physical dwelling place of all mankind that we now know upon the earth. Yet, the Scriptures also speak four times of a “new heavens and a new earth,” and to this we now turn our attention.

⁷⁸ Note the similarity with Isaiah 62:2.

⁷⁹ See the lecture by Phil Roberts.

⁸⁰ See the use of the Greek verb *anakainoō* in 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Colossians 3:10, and the noun *anakainōsis* in Romans 12:2 and Titus 3:5. The Greek verb *ananeoō* is used in Ephesians 4:23 and *anakainizō* is used in Hebrews 6:6.

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Isaiah was the first to write about the “new heavens and a (the) new earth” in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22.⁸¹ After discussing the Lord’s judgment upon His rebellious and sinful people (65:1-14) and the reward of the chosen (65:15-16), Isaiah turned his attention to the Lord’s new heavens and new earth.⁸² Not all of Israel would be destroyed by the Lord’s judgment (65:8). There would be a remnant who would return to Israel after the captivity, and the Lord would make a “new” dwelling for them.⁸³ In other words, there would be hope after judgment. The remnant would be given a “new name” (62:2) and a “new heavens and a new earth” (65:17; 66:22).⁸⁴

Isaiah’s new heavens and new earth would be a peaceful and joyous place for Israel’s remnant after their time of judgment and trouble. The place would be in the Lord’s “holy mountain Jerusalem” (65:9, 18, 19, 25; 66:10, 13, 20). The ones who would benefit from this place are “the chosen” (65:9, 15, 22). They are God’s “servants” (65:9, 15; 66:14), “people” (65:10, 18, 19, 22), and “seed” (65:9, 23; 66:22) who have a “contrite spirit” (66:2, 5). The things spoken of here by Isaiah are done so symbolically and applied to Israel’s remnant.⁸⁵ Israel would be physically living in Palestine (Jerusalem), but their spiritual relationship with God would be like a new heavens and new earth.⁸⁶ Because of the wording of Isaiah

⁸¹ Many Bible students connect the “new heavens and a new earth” of Isaiah with that of Peter (2 Pet. 3:13) and John (Rev. 21:1) and place it at the end of time. See Grudem (1158); Cottrell (567); and Smith (“Isaiah 65-66”). Others, including many brethren, connect the “new heavens and a new earth” of Isaiah with the NT church. See lectures by Hailey, Harkrider, Payne, and Truex.

⁸² See also Isaiah 51:6, 16.

⁸³ What Isaiah wrote here is similar to what he had written earlier in the book: “Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (43:18-19).

⁸⁴ The Hebrew word for “new” in these passages is *chadash* (חֲדָשׁ).

⁸⁵ Note the words “as the days of a tree” in 65:22 and “as one whom his mother comforts” in 66:13.

⁸⁶ Consider 17 spiritual characteristics of this “new” dwelling place found in Isaiah 65:17—66:24: 1.) a place where “new” things for Israel’s remnant would

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in 65:25 and 11:6-9 are identical, we know that the spiritual blessings of the new heavens and new earth that begin with Israel’s remnant after the captivity extend into the period of the coming Messiah.⁸⁷

Peter and John followed Isaiah in writing about the new heavens and new earth. However, what Peter and John wrote about is not the same new heavens and new earth of Isaiah. Peter and John did not directly connect their prophecies to what Isaiah said. In one sense, the new heavens and new earth of Peter and John are similar to Isaiah. There is symbolic language used by all three, there is a description of something “new” that surpasses the old, and there is a promise of no tears (Isa. 65:19; Rev. 21:4). Yet, in another sense, the new heavens and new earth of Peter and John are completely different than that of Isaiah. Peter and John used the expression as a description of the dwelling place of the righteous in heaven and not of the peaceful dwelling place of Israel’s remnant on the earth.⁸⁸

exist and the “former things” (Israel with its “former troubles,” 65:16) would not be remembered (65:17); 2.) a place of “joy” for the Lord’s people, not “weeping” (65:18-19); 3.) a place of lengthy “days” (time) for everyone (65:20, 22); 4.) a place of lengthy prosperity for the Lord’s “people” and “chosen” (65:21-22); 5.) a place where the Lord’s “seed” will not labor in vain and are blessed (65:23; 66:22); 6.) a place where the Lord’s people “call” in prayer and are heard (65:24); 7.) a place of peace in the Lord’s “holy mountain” (65:25); 8.) a place for those with a “contrite spirit” who “tremble at my word” (66:1-6); 9.) a place where the tender care and comfort of a “mother” is experienced (66:7-13); 10.) a place where the Lord’s servants will “flourish” and the Lord’s enemies will experience His “indignation” (66:14); 11.) a place where the “fire” of the Lord’s judgment will be executed upon the wicked (66:15-17); 12.) a place where all nations will come and see the Lord’s “glory” (66:18-19); 13.) a place for worship in the Lord’s “holy mountain Jerusalem” (66:20); 14.) a place “for priests and for Levites” to offer up service and sacrifice (66:21); 15.) a place where the Lord’s “seed” and “name” will remain (66:22); 16.) a place where “all flesh” (Jew and Gentile) can worship (66:23); and, 17.) a place where those who have “transgressed” are punished eternally (66:24).

⁸⁷ I do not have the time or space in this lecture to tie in all the Messianic prophecies found in Isaiah and other places with the new heavens and new earth.

⁸⁸ Consider four important differences between Isaiah, Peter, and John:

1.) In Isaiah’s new heavens and new earth, there is still sin (65:20; 66:24) and death (65:20). However, in the final new heavens and new earth of Peter and

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The main point we need to understand here is that Isaiah, Peter, and John were speaking about a new dwelling place for God's people, not about a renewal of the old dwelling place. Yet, one final question must be addressed concerning the new heavens and new earth. Why, if our eternal home is "in heaven" as argued above, do Peter and John describe heaven as a "new heavens *and new earth*" (emphasis mine)? Why not just say "heaven" and leave it at that? The answer is found in the fact that there are various descriptions (figures) of heaven given by God for mankind to relate to and understand. God, through the Holy Spirit, uses the language of earthly things that mankind already understands now in the present to describe heavenly realities in the future. God uses language and concepts found in the past (the Old Testament) to describe future realities.

For example, heaven is said to be "new heavens and new earth" to describe heaven (in earthly terms) as a place of complete sustenance (Rev. 21:1). Heaven is said to be "new Jerusalem" to describe heaven (in earthly terms) as a place of permanent protection (Rev. 21:2, 10-27).⁸⁹ Heaven is said to be a "tabernacle" to describe heaven (in earthly terms) as a place of close communion (Rev. 21:3-7). Heaven is said to be a "bride"

John there will be no sin, only righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13), and there will be no death (Rev. 21:4; 22:15). Note also the reference to Zion giving birth to children (66:7-9). This figure of birth is not found in Peter or John's description of the new heavens and new earth. Will there be houses (65:21-23), mules and dromedaries in heaven (66:20)?

2.) In Isaiah's new heavens and new earth, there is still a literal heaven and earth that God created (65:16; 66:1-2). God is in heaven separated from man on the earth. However, both Peter and John speak of the passing away of our current heaven and earth (2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 21:1) and God is no longer separated from His people (Rev. 21:3).

3.) In Isaiah's new heavens and new earth, there are still enemies of the Lord remaining (66:6, 15-17). However, in John's new heavens and new earth all enemies have been removed (21:8, 27; 22:15).

4.) In Isaiah's new heavens and new earth, Jerusalem on earth is still in existence (65:18-19; 66:10, 13). However, in John's new heavens and new earth a "new Jerusalem" exists (Rev. 3:12; 21:2). It is the "Jerusalem that is above" (Gal. 4:26).

⁸⁹ Gundry argues that the New Jerusalem is not a description of a place, but a description of a people ("The New Jerusalem").

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to describe heaven (in earthly terms) as a place of loving relationships (Rev. 21:2, 9; see 19:7-8). Heaven is said to be “paradise” or a “garden” to describe heaven (in earthly terms) as a place of living beauty (22:1-5).⁹⁰ These earthly terms (figures); however, that God uses to describe heaven do not mean that heaven will be on a renewed earth. They are figures, no more (Thiselton, 197-203).

The “new earth” part of the new heavens and new earth does not mean that heaven will be on a restored earth.⁹¹ These words are simply a part of the total description of the heavenly dwelling place for the redeemed and righteous of all time. The new heavens and new earth of Peter and John are indeed the height of the eschatological hope of all the righteous. God’s revelation comes full circle in the book of Revelation. The Bible begins (Gen. 1:1) and ends (Rev. 21:1) with the creation of a dwelling place (heavens and earth) for His people, first earthly, then heavenly.

Erroneous Views of the Afterlife

There is a strong urge among many people today to make heaven into something of their own liking. For these people, heaven is highly individualistic. Heaven is whatever a person wants to make it. Heaven is whatever you want it to be. Heaven is golfing, fishing, boating, reading, cooking, gardening, sewing, bowling, barbequing, etc. Lisa Miller wrote in *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination with the Afterlife*, “For many Americans, heaven is the kingdom of ultimate personal fulfillment” (216). Do you remember when Hank Williams Jr. sang: “If heaven ain’t a lot like Dixie I don’t wanna go. . .”? Kevin Rushby, documenting man’s idea about paradise past and present, wrote that “paradise was shaped first by religion, then by secularism” (xv).

Many people today, whether consciously doing it or not, create a vision and version of heaven in their mind and then try to convince others of it.⁹² While many Protestant denominationalists place heaven on a restored earth, world religionists turn heaven into something else, and atheists place heaven within each one of us. Let us examine a few of these erroneous and false doctrines about heaven.

⁹⁰ See the lecture by David Barnes.

⁹¹ Writing about 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1, P.S. Johnston wrote: “These texts imply a future life for the people of God not in heaven but on a transformed earth” (542).

⁹² See the articles by Ralls, Wesley Smith, Bregman, and Stackhouse Jr.

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1. Heaven on a Restored Earth

Various religious groups argue that heaven will be on a restored earth. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses say that a "great multitude" of righteous people will live eternally in paradise on earth, while the "little flock" or 144,000 will live in heaven with God (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, 120-126). The Seventh-Day Adventist Church also believes in a restored earth.⁹³

Various millennialists also believe that the righteous will live on a restored earth. There are premillennial (both historic⁹⁴ and dispensational⁹⁵), postmillennial, and amillennial⁹⁶ advocates who say that the righteous will live in paradise on earth for 1,000 years and even beyond.

Realized eschatologists (preterists) are harder to pin down. Partial preterists, full preterists, and hyper preterists believe that the promises of Jesus's coming in the NT were fulfilled in the past in AD 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem. However, they believe different things about the future. Some say that the earth will continue forever; others say it will cease one day. Some say the righteous go to heaven; others say they do not. Some say that we are in heaven right now.⁹⁷ Because they have used up most of the Bible to talk about the past, there are not many Scriptures left they say talk about the future.

When asked about the future afterlife, many of them say, "I just don't know." For example, Max King, who advanced preterism among our brethren in the early 1970s, wrote: "I don't know what the destiny of this physical world is that we're living in." But, on another occasion, he admitted that 2 Peter 3 has "a secondary application" and "I have every reason

⁹³ "So according to the Bible, our future home isn't in some far-flung place called heaven. Its right here on this planet only infinitely better than the world is today. God's plan isn't a new planet. It's a complete restoration of the one we're on now." <https://www.adventist.org/articles/an-old-world-made-new/>.

⁹⁴ George Eldon Ladd, 39.

⁹⁵ Herman A. Hoyt, 84, 92 and Craig A. Blaising, 162-164.

⁹⁶ Robert B. Strimple (104-107) and Anthony A. Hoekema ("Amillennial," 184-187; and *The Bible and Future*, 274-287).

⁹⁷ Tim King: "We live in the new heavens and new earth that is to come." Quoted by Kevin Kay ("Realized Eschatology," 78).

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to believe that someday this physical heaven and earth will melt away.”⁹⁸ Two preterists still known to our brethren today are Samuel Dawson⁹⁹ and Don K. Preston.¹⁰⁰ Both have made the point that the righteous go to heaven when they die, the wicked suffer in hell but eventually cease to exist, and the Christian age will continue on earth for eternity.

New Creation Eschatologists (NCE) from various denominational backgrounds also teach a restored earth. They have taken the older premillennial doctrine of a restored earth for 1,000 years and made it a restored earth for eternity (Hoekema, 275-276). Some of the more contemporary and popular NCE advocates among the “scholars” are N.T. Wright,¹⁰¹ J. Richard Middleton,¹⁰² and Douglass Moo.¹⁰³ Other NCE advocates like Randy Alcorn¹⁰⁴ and Scott McKight¹⁰⁵ write for a popular audience. The focus of NCE afterlife is on a restored earth, although a few of these advocates would allow a place for the righteous in *two different places*—some in a new heaven and others on a new earth.¹⁰⁶ They twist and distort a number of Bible passages to teach that heaven will be on a restored earth.¹⁰⁷ One NCE advocate, J. Richard Middleton, is so bold

⁹⁸ Quoted by Bill Reeves (“The Preterist View Heresy (V)”, 7).

⁹⁹ *Essays on Eschatology*, 322-323, 466.

¹⁰⁰ <https://donkpreston.com/going-to-heaven-what-does-it-take/> and https://www.preteristarchive.com/Hyper/0000_preston_world-without-end.html.

¹⁰¹ *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. In a way, this book really lives up to its title. The reader will be “surprised” all right; surprised at how little sound biblical exegesis is offered by Wright for his doctrine.

¹⁰² *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*.

¹⁰³ “Nature in the New Creation;” etc.

¹⁰⁴ *Heaven*.

¹⁰⁵ *The Heaven Promise: Engaging the Bible’s Truth about Life to Come*.

¹⁰⁶ Thiessen wrote: “Some of the redeemed will, no doubt, be at home in the new heaven, but even those who dwell on the new earth will have contact with the new heaven” (402). Strong, quoting a certain Dr. A.C. Kendrick, wrote that the righteous may be at home on a restored earth, but they might travel on excursions throughout the universe.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 5:5 is twisted to say that the meek will inherit a restored earth. Mat-

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as to say that he has repented of using the term “heaven” to describe the eternal abode of the righteous.¹⁰⁸

Some brethren, both institutional¹⁰⁹ and non-institutional,¹¹⁰ are now arguing the same NCE position. They are saying that the righteous will come back to live eternally on a renewed, renovated, and restored earth. They are reading from the authors just mentioned above and getting this idea from them. Some brethren are also referencing “restoration preachers” who believed that heaven would be on a restored earth.¹¹¹ However, regarding these “restoration preachers,” we must keep two things in mind. First, many of them had the misguided hope that Jesus would come again in their lifetime and usher in some sort of millennial reign with the righteous on earth. Their misunderstanding of the millennium led to their misunderstanding of the final destiny of the earth. Second, these men, as spiritually gifted as they proved to be, were still men who

they 19:29 is twisted to say that the “regeneration” includes a restored earth. Acts 3:21 is twisted to say that the “restoration of all things” includes a restored earth. Romans 4:13 is twisted to say that the “world” of Abraham will be fulfilled on a restored earth. Romans 8:21 is twisted to say that the creation will be “delivered from the bondage of corruption” when it turns into a restored earth. 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 is twisted to say that the resurrected body will be suitable for a restored earth. Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20 are twisted to say that the “all things” includes a restored earth. Philippians 3:20-21 is twisted to say that our heavenly citizenship will be brought to a restored earth. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is twisted to say that the faithful will meet Jesus in the air and then return with Him to a restored earth. 2 Peter 3:5-13 is twisted to say that God will renovate and renew the earth with fire and turn it into a restored earth. Revelation 21:1-2 is twisted to say that the New Jerusalem will coming down out of heaven to a restored earth.

¹⁰⁸ “Therefore, for reasons exegetical, theological, and ethical, I have come to repent of using the term ‘heaven’ to describe the future God has in store for the faithful. It is my hope that readers of this book would, after thoughtful consideration, join me in this repentance” (*A New Heaven and A New Earth*, 237).

¹⁰⁹ John Mark Hicks, Dan Chambers, Wes McAdams, Daniel Hayes, Matthew Benfield, and Ashby Camp are all on record advocating this position.

¹¹⁰ I can provide documentation for this point to anyone who is interested.

¹¹¹ Men like Alexander Campbell, Moses Lard, and James A. Harding. See the articles posted by John Mark Hicks on his website, johnmarkhicks.com.

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made mistakes. They, at times, retained or returned to the denominational theology that they once left. We base our theology today on NT teaching, not upon the theology of past restoration preachers. Like the restorationists' views of instrumental music, the missionary society, and the office of deaconess, their views of returning to a restored earth were simply in error. Yes, you can find the idea of a restored earth among some restoration preachers and in many religious writings (including the un-inspired Apocrypha),¹¹² but not in the inspired text of the biblical writers.

2. Heaven as Something Else

Many religious people down through time have believed that they will go somewhere after death. That somewhere is not the biblical heaven, but some place of bliss. For example, in the Baha'i faith, the soul of man after death continues in a spiritual progress of spiritual education in the presence of God in the next world. In the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, a person is reincarnated (*samsara*) over and over until he is released (*moksha*) from his karma on his way to nirvana (extinction), the achievement of ultimate enlightenment. Upon reaching nirvana, the soul (*atman*) merges into the cosmic Brahma (i.e., transcendent godhead). Some forms of Hinduism replace the idea of nirvana with a heaven-like place called the “World of the Fathers” (Vedic Hinduism) or “Abode of Salvation” (Devotional Hinduism).

In contemporary Judaism, a view of the resurrection and heaven is maintained by the Orthodox tradition. According to the Midrash Konen, heaven is a great expanse with fine buildings made of cedar for various classes of the righteous. Reformed Jews do not have any particular view of the afterlife. In Islam, both resurrection and heaven are found in the Koran and the Hadith. Heaven, or “paradise” (*al-Jannah*), is a garden composed of eight levels. It is prepared for the saved with all kinds of delights, including, of course, many “wide-eyed houris” (virgins) for the taking.

¹¹² 1 Enoch 45:4-5 reads: “In that day I will cause my Elect One to dwell in the midst of them; will change [the face of] heaven; will bless it, and illuminate it forever. I will also change [the face of] the earth, will bless it; and cause those whom I have elected to dwell upon it. But those who have committed sin and iniquity shall not inhabit it, for I have marked their proceedings. My righteous ones will I satisfy with peace, placing them before Me; but the condemnation of sinners shall draw near, that I may destroy them from the face of the earth.”

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3. Heavens on Earth

Unbelievers, skeptics, and atheists do not believe, of course, in an afterlife. They believe they have no hope of living beyond the grave even though they will, in fact, do so. When some of them speak of heaven, then, it is to say that heaven is what we make of our life in the here and now. They would say that we need to make our own “heaven” here on earth by living a fulfilled and happy life. According to them, there are as many “heavens” (note the plural) on earth as there are people who can imagine them. Michael Shermer, the former publisher of *Skeptic Magazine* and a regular contributor to *Scientific American*, wrote the following:

Maybe the “kingdom” to which Jesus refers is the heaven within ourselves, and the heavenly communities we build here on earth. Heaven is not a paradisiacal state in the next world, but a better life in this world. Heaven is not a place to go to but a way to be. Here. Now. Since no one—not even the devoutly religious—knows for certain what happens after we die, Jews, Christians, and Muslims might as well work toward creating heavens on earth (66).

Before the After

Knowing that one day everything we see around us will “pass away,” how are we to be living *before* this day comes? If there is an afterlife, what is our *before-life* supposed to be like as a Christian? Let me address two issues: the care of the physical world around us and the care of the spiritual soul within us.

1. Environmentalism

Environmentalism as a cultural phenomenon in America began in the 1960s.¹¹³ By the 1990s, “Evangelical Christians” had gotten involved with environmentalism (Ronan, 18). Today, those who advocate for a restored earth make a strong argument for global environmentalism. They read environmentalism into passages like Romans 8:21.¹¹⁴ They believe the earth

¹¹³ The environmentalist agenda is backed by different motives. Atheistic unbelievers who are environmentalists are active in their cause because they believe the earth is eternal and they should care for it as long as they can. Evangelical believers who are environmentalists are active in their cause because they believe the earth will be restored and they should care for it as long as they can.

¹¹⁴ Consider the candid admission of Olson who wrote: “We are all becoming aware today of the devastating effects of human exploitation of nature and disregard for its limited resources. I believe it is perfectly appropriate for us to

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will one day be the restored paradise for the righteous, so we must practice responsible Christian environmentalism now.¹¹⁵ They believe that the Scriptures demand a “distinctive Christian environmental ethos” (Jonathan Moo, “Continuity”). They preach an “eco-theology” (or “green theology”) and “eco-praxis” as they read from their “green Bible.” They say, “our present eco-crisis is a spiritual crisis” (Olson, 130). They speak of “creation care” and “eco-justice” (Grizzle, “Evangelicals”). They believe that environmentalism today does not make sense unless our earth will one day be restored. If our planet is to be our heavenly home, they say, we might be more diligent in taking care of it.¹¹⁶ The question they raise is this: If our earth will one day pass away, why even try to conserve it now?¹¹⁷

This is a good question. Yet, there is good reason to conserve things now and make them better even if one day they will be gone. For example, we know that one day the marriage relationship will cease to exist (Matt. 22:30), but that does not keep us from being good stewards of our marriage now (1 Cor. 7:3-5). We know that one day the physical body that we now have will die (1 Cor. 15:35-49), but that does not keep us from being good stewards of our body now (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We do not let our marriage and physical body “go to pot” today because one day these things will be gone. In the same way, we can be good stewards of our physical, earthly environment today, knowing that one day it will be gone. Good stewardship of the physical things that God gives us is both encouraging and beneficial for us today.

read this new situation back into the meaning of Paul’s description of nature’s plight in Romans 8. Part of the fallenness of nature is its *openness* to being raped by humans. The actual rape of nature by humans is another shackle added to its imprisonment and another cause for its groaning” (126).

¹¹⁵ See the chapter by Moore (922) and the articles by Douglas Moo (“Nature”), Olson (“Resurrection”), and Bullmore (“Biblical Passages”).

¹¹⁶ See also the articles by Spencer, Pitetti, Kearns, Bishop, Dumbrell, and Chryssavgis. The articles by Copeland, Burkholder, and Greene review many recent books written to advocate for “Christian environmentalism.”

¹¹⁷ Gale Z. Heide wrote: “If this earth on which we live is going to be completely destroyed, as many evangelicals believe it is, then we have little more responsibility to it than to act as good stewards of the resources God has given us. But if this world has a future in God’s plan, being renewed rather than re-created *ex nihilo*, then perhaps we have a much greater responsibility than to merely act as good managers” (39).

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Even though the Bible teaches that our universe one day will pass away, can we still be good stewards of the earth that God has given us? Can we be conservationists, preservationists, and environmentalists? Of course, we can. Mankind's dominion over and subjugation of the creation does not give him the right to abuse and misuse creation (Gen. 1:28-30). I was raised by parents who grew up in the Great Depression (one in a city, the other on a farm), and we (eight children) were taught to conserve and preserve. We had to turn off the lights and water faucets that we were not using. We were not allowed to waste food on our plates. We were not allowed to tear up our shoes or clothes purposely. We were made to respect other people's property. We planted trees. We treated our pets with care. We gardened.

Environmentalism is a good thing because every aspect of God's creation is a "good" thing (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Recycle if you can. Work to reduce carbon emissions and clean up air and water pollution. (My son-in-law is an engineer working in the battery plant for the electric operated Nissan Leaf that has zero emissions.) Develop alternative sources of energy like that which comes from solar and wind power. Join the Sierra Club. Plant a tree. Be responsible without being radical.¹¹⁸

Environmentalism is not the necessary corollary of a coming restored earth, nor is it the direct admonition of the New Testament Scriptures. Where is the NT passage that plainly orders Christians to take care of the earth? Environmentalism is a solid inference from the consequence of knowing that everything comes from and belongs to God. "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). Our stewardship of God's earth motivates us to environmentalism.¹¹⁹ Knowing that we pass this earth on to our children and grandchildren motivates us toward environmentalism. These things still motivate us even though heaven will not be on this earth.

Along similar lines, many people today speak of the world ending one day due to "global warming" or "climate change." Have you heard

¹¹⁸ An example of taking environmentalism too far in my opinion is the "What Would Jesus Drive?" initiative. This campaign was popular among some evangelicals a few years back and encouraged people to stop driving gas-guzzling SUVs by pointing to Jesus.

¹¹⁹ See the lecture by Tony Mauck.

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lately any presidential candidates or leaders in Washington, D.C., say this?¹²⁰ There are those people who claim to have “eco-eschatological” fears, and they suffer from “eco-anxiety” (Nugent, “Terrified”). Well, the world we know will indeed come to an end. However, it will not be man’s fire of “global warming.” It will be by God’s fire of cosmic conflagration (2 Pet. 3:10-12).¹²¹ The ultimate end of the world will be caused by the Lord (after all, it’s “the day of the Lord”), not because of what mankind is (or is not) doing to the environment. It is the Lord’s prerogative in judgment, not man’s, to bring our world to an end.

2. What Manner of Persons Ought You to Be?

In closing, I would also say that the question before us in this lecture is not merely academic or theoretical, but a practical one. That our universe will one day come to an end is certain, but what practical impact should that have on our lives today? The question “Does the Bible teach an end of this universe?” should, in fact, motivate us to obey the gospel and live faithfully for Jesus Christ. This question should lead naturally to a second question: “What manner of persons ought you to be?”

In the same place where Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away” (Matt. 24:35), He also warned men to “watch” and be “ready” for His coming (Matt. 24:42, 44). In the same place where Paul wrote that our hope is laid up “in the heavens” (Col. 1:5), He also exhorted believers to “seek the things that are above” and “set your minds on the things that are above” (Col. 3:1-2). In the same place where Peter wrote that “the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10), he also wrote about “holy living and godliness,” “looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God,” giving diligence to be “found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight” (2 Pet. 3:12-14). Peter also wrote “beware” (2 Pet. 3:17) and “grow” (2 Pet. 3:18).

In the same place where John wrote: “the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Rev. 20:11), he also wrote about the judgment day when “they were judged every man according to their works”. . . “and if any was not found written in the book of life, he

¹²⁰ Various leaders and law-makers in our nation went on record in 2019 saying that the world will end in 12 years due to climate change.

¹²¹ Carsten Peter Thiede is one of the few contemporary scholars who is willing to defend a “cosmic conflagration” teaching of 2 Peter 3.

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was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:13, 15). In the same place where John wrote “the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more” (Rev. 21:1), he wrote things like “he that overcomes shall inherit these things” (Rev. 21:7); “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8); “they that are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (21:27); “His servants shall serve Him” (Rev. 22:3); “he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still” (Rev. 22:11); “blessed are they that wash their robes” (Rev. 22:14); and, “Without are the dogs. . .” (Rev. 22:15). The answer to our question in this lecture should then be followed by practical obedience to God’s word.

In addition to these biblical admonitions, I would also recommend you read three good past lectures given during the 2016 Truth Lectures titled “*This World Is Not My Home.*” The presentations by Jeff May, Jeff Archer, and Mark Mayberry will encourage you to stay focused on your heavenly home as you travel through this world. The book *Heaven: O for a Home with God* by brethren Steve Klein and Jeff May is a good read as well.

Preachers, let me encourage you to keep preaching about heaven. Bible teachers, keep teaching about heaven. Brethren keep reading your Bible (not the scholars) about heaven. Song leaders, keep leading songs about heaven. Let us all continue to raise our voices in praise, singing songs like. . .

Heaven will surely be worth it all. . .

When we all get to *heaven*. . .

In *heaven* they’re singing. . .

Sing to me of *heaven*. . .

Heaven holds all to me. . .

No tears in *heaven*. . .

Heavenly sunlight. . .

Heaven’s jubilee. . .

Appendix 1: 2 Peter 3 and New Creation Eschatology¹²²

Peter’s words in 2 Peter 3 are being used today to teach that the righteous will come back after the Judgment Day and live on a renovated earth for all eternity. Jehovah’s Witnesses have used 2 Peter 3 this way for many years. More recently, those who advocate New Creation Eschatology (NCE) are also using Peter’s words in a similar way. Some brethren are even now beginning to use 2 Peter 3 this way. Simply put, will the earth one day be renovated, or will it be annihilated? Let us turn our attention to some of the arguments being made in favor of renovation with a biblical refutation of each one.

Argument #1: God’s destruction of the world with water in the past is “parallel” to his destruction of the world with fire in the future. The water of the flood in Noah’s day is a “type/antitype” of the fire God will use at the end of time. Just as the water that God used in the flood did not completely annihilate the earth, so the fire will not completely annihilate the earth at the end of time.

Answer: First, we should not speak of things that are “parallel” to the flood without Peter telling us that they are parallel. We should not say, for example, that the flood is a “type/antitype” of the fire unless Peter uses that language (see 1 Pet. 3:21). Anyone can come up with “types” and things that are “parallel” between the flood and the end of time and then insert them into the text, but this is eisegesis (reading into the text), not exegesis. Parallels and type/antitype comparisons are alleged by NCE advocates, but they are not actually supported by the text.

Second, the comparison that Peter is making between the flood and the end of time is in reference to “the word of God” (vv. 5, 7). Yes, we all recognize that Peter mentions three time periods: (1) creation and Noah’s day—“heavens from of old” (v. 5); (2) Peter’s day—“the heavens that now are” (v. 7); and, (3) a future day—“new heavens and a new earth” (v. 13). Yet, the point of comparison between these three time periods is not what NCE advocates make of it. The comparison that Peter makes concerns God’s promised Word that brings judgment. God’s

¹²² This material is a reprint (with some revisions and corrections) of an article I wrote that appeared in *Truth Magazine*, March 2015. It is reprinted here with permission from the editor.

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word that created the world and brought about the judgment in the flood of Noah's day (vv. 5-6) is "the same word" (v. 7) that will bring about the judgment of fire and destruction at the end of time. This comparison concerning God's word, and none other, can rightly be established from the text. The purpose and effects of the flood are not the "same" as the purpose and effects of the fire. The condition of the earth after the flood is not the "same" as the condition of the earth after the fire.¹²³ What is the "same" between Noah's world, today, and the end of time, is the power and promise of God's word. God's word is powerful, and God keeps His promised word. Peter makes this point about God's word in answer to the mockers' question in 2 Peter 3:4: "Where is the promise of His coming?" Peter's response: God's word (v. 7) of promise will be kept (v. 13)!

Third, look at all the material in the Bible about the flood outside of 2 Peter 3. What do you find? We are told about the flood in each Scripture to teach us a lesson about how God judges ungodly men and saves the righteous (see Gen. 6-7; Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:4-14). Peter is not making the "parallels" or "type/antitype" comparisons that some NCE advocates think he is making. Peter, in keeping with the rest of the Scripture, tells us about the flood and then the fire to make his point about "the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (v. 7; see also Jude 14-23).

Fourth, the purpose of God in using water in connection with the "world" (*kosmos*) of Noah's day was entirely different from his purpose in using fire in connection with the "earth" (*gē*) at the end-time. These two distinct purposes are not parallel. The purpose of the flood was to "perish" (*apōleto*) the "world" (*kosmos*)—every living thing except Noah and his family and the animals in the ark (Gen. 6:7; 7:4, 21-23; 2 Pet. 2:5). Yet, (and note the "but" beginning in v. 7), the purpose of the fire at the

¹²³ Wolters wrote: "However, just as the 'destruction' wrought by the water did not cause the world to vanish (it continues to be preserved 'by the same word' [3:7]), so the 'destruction' which will be wrought by the fire will presumably not cause the world to vanish either" (408). I base my understanding of this text on a straight forward reading of the text not a "presumably" as Wolters does. Wolters goes on his article to use words like "He seems to have in mind. . ." (409), "it seems. . ." (410), "But we seem to have. . ." (411), "Could it be. . ." and "this hypothesis" (412).

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end of time is to dissolve (*luthēsetai*) the very heavens and “earth” (*gē*) themselves (vv. 10, 12).

Argument #2: The destruction of sin is the main point of Peter, not the destruction of the earth. Verse 7 says that God will destroy ungodly men, not the earth.

Answer: It is true that Peter speaks of “the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (v. 7). The “day of the Lord” (vv. 8-9) certainly involves the destruction of the ungodly men. Peter had already mentioned God’s judgment against ungodly men in 2 Peter 2:4-6, and 9. However, the question and argument of the mockers in the immediate context deals with their view of “the creation” (v. 4), not with the sin of man. The mockers had ignored the agency of God’s powerful word and His divine intervention. They claimed that “the creation” has always continued, and nothing is going to change that. Peter responds by saying that the creation was made “by the word of God” (v. 5), God’s word caused it to be “overflowed with water” (v. 6), and God’s word one day will cause it to “pass away” with fire (vv. 7, 10-12). The “day of the Lord” is not just about punishing sinners; it is also about removing all together our present heavens and earth to make way for the new heavens and earth (v. 13). Jesus plainly said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away” (Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

Argument #3: The fire of 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12 is the fire of testing and proving (just like in 1 Peter 1:7 and 4:12). This fire is like the fire of the “smelting process” (Wolters, 408). This fire will not destroy the earth; it will simply test it and prove it. This fire will bring about a “cosmic renewal” of the earth through testing and proving.

Answer: First, we all recognize that there are passages in both the OT (Mal. 3:2-4; 4:1) and NT that speak of God using fire to test His *people*. “Fire” can certainly be used figuratively in the context of testing *people* (1 Cor. 3:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12; etc.). Here, Peter is not talking about fire for *people*, but fire for the heavens and the earth (v. 7). What words in the context of 2 Peter 3 indicate that the fire here is being used for testing? There are no words in 2 Peter 3 mentioning “proving,” “testing,” or “trial” like in the other passages mentioned above. In fact, read all of 2 Peter, and you will not find one reference to testing, proving, or trial like you do in 1 Peter.

Second, fire for testing is *figurative*, but Peter has been speaking of *literal* water (vv. 5-6) and now of *literal* fire in the dissolving of the earth

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(v. 7; see Heb. 6:8). The words Peter actually uses in verses 10-12 are associated with *literal* fire, a fire that burns (the Greek word *pyri* used here is also found in Revelation 21:8 for the fire of hell). Here are Peter's words: "great noise," "dissolved" (3x), "fervent heat" (2x), "burned up," "being on fire," and "melt." Peter's graphic and intense description makes it clear that a world conflagration is meant. The earth that God once "compacted" (v. 5), he will one day destroy by loosing it, releasing it, and dissolving it (*lutheesetai*).

Third, the fire of 2 Peter 3 is not for testing or proving, but for dissolving. The fire is for "the earth and the works that are therein" (v. 10) and for "the heavens" (v. 12). The fire (v. 7) is not for some alleged "cosmic renewal," but is for the dissolving of our present heavens and earth (vv. 10-12). The fire will cause the heavens to "pass away" (see also Matt. 24:35; Rev. 20:11; 21:1) and the elements (*stoicheia*, i.e., the elemental particles or components of the universe)¹²⁴ to be "dissolved with fervent heat" (v. 10). God's fire is for the dissolving of the physical heavens and the earth (annihilation), not for their testing, proving, or renovation as some allege. We must be content to use the language of Peter, not the language of contemporary scholars.

Argument #4: The translation "will be found," "discovered," or "laid bare" in verse 10 is better than "burned up." The ancient manuscript evidence is better for *heurethēsetai* (εὑρεθήσεται—"found," "discovered," NWT; "laid bare," NIV, NET) than for *katakaēsetai* (κατακαήσεται—"burned up," KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASV, RSV, etc.). Thus, the earth and its works will be "discovered" or "laid bare" for renovation. The earth will not be "burned up" or annihilated; rather, it will be renovated.

Answer: Limited space here does not permit me to deal with all the issues involved in the textual criticism of this verse. However, a few brief comments can be made.

First, the translators of several important versions (see above) retained the word *katakaēsetai* and translated it "burned up." They did so because of the presence of this word in some ancient manuscripts and the immediate context of verses 10-12, which uses language associated with literal fire and burning (see above).

¹²⁴ Winters tries to argue that the "elements" refers to the elementary teaching of the false teachers in 2 Peter 2 and 3 ("A Strange Death," 158-161).

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Second, even if the manuscript evidence is better for *heurethēsetai* (“found,” “discovered,” or “laid bare”), it is not a necessary conclusion that our present earth will be “laid bare” for the purpose of renovation. If Peter in fact used *heurethēsetai*, then his point in this context would be that the earth and works will be discovered and exposed to God’s judgment of fire (vv. 7, 10, 12). The earth and its works will have been discovered, laid bare, and exposed to God’s fiery judgment when everything melts away and is dissolved. J.H. Thayer comments on this word: “γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὑρεθήσεται *shall be found* namely, for destruction, i.e., will be unable to hide themselves from the doom decreed them by God, 2 Pet. 3:10” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 261). “Laid bare” for destruction better fits the immediate context of verses 7, 10-12, than “laid bare” for renovation. (Note: For those wanting to study this issue further, you will want to take note that the latest 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece* reads: οὐκ εὑρεθήσεται, “will not be found.” If this is the original reading, then the matter is closed. There will be no earth or works therein found after God’s judgment of fire. We also have a parallel in Revelation 20:11 where there it reads οὐκ εὑρεθή, not found.)

Third, even if *katakaēsetai* (“burned up”) is removed from the text, the idea of burning up is still expressed in the words, “with fervent heat,” found twice in the text (vv. 10, 12). The words “with fervent heat” come from *kausoumena* (καυσούμενα), meaning “be consumed by heat, burn up” (BDAG, 426).

Argument #5: The word “new” in verse 13 is from the Greek word *kainos*, meaning “new in quality.” This is not the Greek word *neos*, meaning “new in time.” The “new heavens and a new earth” will be the old heavens and earth renovated and given a new quality of existence.

Answer: First, Peter indeed uses the word *kainos* in verse 13, and yes, it does mean “new in quality.” However, the word *kainos* also carries with it the idea of something brand new (new in time). New in quality does not necessarily eliminate the idea of new in time or new in substance. For example, the “new” (*kainous*) wineskins in Matthew 9:17 (same word and form as 2 Pet. 3:13) were not old wineskins that were renovated. They were completely new wineskins, which replaced the old ones. The old wineskins were discarded, and “new” (*kainos*) wineskins were made and used.

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Second, to argue that *kainos* means that something old is renovated does not hold up elsewhere in the NT. Who among us would argue that the “new” (*kainos*) man of 2 Corinthians 5:17 is simply the old man renovated, the “new” (*kainos*) covenant of Hebrews 8:8, 13 is simply the old covenant renovated, or the “new” (*kainos*) Jerusalem of Revelation 21:2 is simply the old, literal Jerusalem renovated?

Third, the word “but” which begins verse 13, introduces a contrast between two different dwelling places, our physical earth now with ungodly men (v. 7), and that of a future new dwelling place for the righteous only (vv. 13-14). This “new” dwelling place for God’s people is in heaven (Matt. 5:12; 6:20; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 11:16; 12:22-23; 2 Tim. 4:18), not on a renovated physical earth.

Argument #6: The phrase “new heavens and a new earth” in verse 13 is used literally, not symbolically.

Answer: Peter uses the phrase “new heavens and a new earth” in a fashion consistent with Isaiah (Isa. 65:17 and 66:22) and John (Rev. 21:1). Studying the use of this phrase by Isaiah and by John helps us to understand that Peter is using this phrase symbolically. When you study the context of this phrase used by Isaiah, Peter, and John, you will find that all three use this phrase to mean a new order, realm, or environment for God’s people that does not involve a literal, restored earth. What God’s people have experienced in the past is now gone (Isa. 65:17-25; 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 20:11; 21:1, 4) and a “new” order or realm awaits them (Isa. 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-3, 5). Isaiah, Peter, and John do not use this phrase to mean a literal, renovated heaven and earth for God’s people. The “new heavens and a new earth” is certainly a real, literal place, but it is not our heavens and earth restored.

It is undoubtedly good to answer error and false teaching with God’s word as I have hoped to do here, but we must also remember the importance of learning what Peter is actually teaching. Therefore, I would like to close with some practical admonitions concerning the coming Judgment Day of 2 Peter 3. Peter wanted his audience to be stirred up to remember some essential truths concerning the Lord’s coming and final judgment (vv. 1-2). They were to remember some things and not to be carried away by the error of the mockers (vv. 3-4, see also v. 17). What did Peter want them to remember?

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First, they were to remember that when God speaks concerning coming judgment, God keeps His promised word. God’s word is powerful and sure (vv. 5-7).

Second, they were to remember that a Judgment Day will indeed come, and God is not slack (as the mockers suggested) concerning His promise of that day (vv. 8-9).

Third, they were to remember that God’s delay is not a sign of weakness, but in fact, one of strength. God is good and longsuffering. He delays His coming to allow all to come to repentance (v. 9, see also v. 15 and Rom. 2:4).

Fourth, they were to remember that the day of the Lord would come unannounced and unexpected, “as a thief” (v. 10). They must be ready.

Fifth, they were to remember that the heavens and the earth they presently know would one day “pass away” and “be dissolved,” it would all be gone (vv. 10-12).

Sixth, they were to remember to maintain “holy living and godliness” while they are waiting for the Lord’s coming (v. 11). They must be “found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight” (v. 14).

Seventh, they were to remember, like Abraham (Heb. 11:10, 16), to “look for” something “new” and heavenly (vv. 12-14).

Finally, they were to remember that some who were “ignorant and unsteadfast” would twist the Scriptures to their own destruction before the Lord comes (v. 16). (Note: This very chapter is being twisted by NCE advocates and others who come to the text with their preconceived idea of a renovated earth. They start with a theology of a renovated earth, twist these verses to make their theology fit, and then end by making Peter say the opposite of what he is really saying. They have the earth remaining in a renovated state when Peter said it would pass away!) They were not to be carried away with the error of the wicked or fall from their own steadfastness (v. 17). Instead, they must remember to grow in grace and knowledge (v. 18).

I desire that we all today be reminded of these same things so that we can be prepared to meet the Lord when He comes in judgment.

Appendix 2: The Use of Words for “Heaven” and “Heavenly” in the New Testament

“Heaven” in its various Greek forms is found 280 times in the NT: οὐρανέ (vocative—“O Heaven!”) is found one time (Rev. 18:20), οὐρανῶ (dative, singular—“to, for, [or] from heaven”) is found 38 times (Matt. 5:34; 6:10, 20; 18:18 [2x]; 22:30; 23:22; 24:30; 28:18; Mark 10:21; 13:32; Luke 6:23; 11:2; 15:7; 19:38; John 3:13; Acts 2:19; 1 Cor. 8:5; Col. 4:1; 1 John 5:7 [KJV]; Rev. 4:1-2; 5:3, 13; 8:1; 11:15, 19; 12:1, 3, 7-8, 10; 13:6, 14:17; 15:1, 5; 19:1, 14), οὐρανῶν (genitive, plural—“of the heavens”) is found 42 times (Matt. 3:2, 17; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19 [2x], 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11-12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44-45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3-4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 24:29, 31, 36; 25:1; Mark 1:11; Luke 21:26; Eph. 4:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 7:26; 12:25), οὐρανοί (nominative, plural—“heavens”) is found 7 times (Matt. 3:16; Heb. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3:5, 7, 10, 12; Rev. 12:12), οὐρανοῖς (dative, plural— to, for, [or] from heavens”) is found 38 times (Matt. 5:12, 16, 45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21; 10:32-33; 12:50; 16:17, 19 [2x]; 18:10 [2x], 14, 19; 19:21; Mark 11:25-26; 12:25; 13:25; Luke 10:20; 11:2; 12:33; 18:22; 2 Cor. 5:1; Eph. 1:10; 3:15; 6:9; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5, 16, 20; Heb. 8:1; 9:23; 12:23; 1 Pet. 1:4), οὐρανὸν (accusative, singular—“heaven”) is found 43 times (Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; 7:34; 16:19; Luke 2:15; 3:21; 9:16; 15:18, 21; 16:17; 17:24 [2x], 18:13; 24:51; John 1:51; 3:13; 17:1; Acts 1:10, 11 [3x]; 2:5, 21; 4:12, 24; 7:55; 10:11, 16; 11:10; 14:15; Rom. 10:6; Col. 1:23; Heb. 9:24; 12:26; Jas. 5:12; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 10:5, 6; 11:6, 12; 14:7; 19:11; 21:1), οὐρανός (nominative, singular—“heaven”) is found 12 times (Matt. 5:18; 16:2-3; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 4:25; 21:33; Acts 7:49; Jas. 5:18; Rev. 6:14; Rev. 20:11; 21:1), οὐρανοῦ (genitive, singular—“of heaven”) is found 92 times (Matt. 6:26; 8:20; 11:23, 25; 13:32; 16:1, 3; 21:25 [2x]; 24:29, 30; 26:64; 28:2; Mark 4:32; 8:11; 11:30-31; 13:25, 27; 14:62; Luke 3:22; 8:5; 9:54, 58; 10:15, 18, 21; Luke 11:13, 16; 12:56; 13:19; 17:29; 20:4-5; 21:11; 22:43; John 1:32; 3:13, 27, 31; 6:31, 32 [2x], 33, 38, 41-42, 50-51, 58; 12:28; Acts 2:2; 7:42; 9:3; 10:12; 11:5-6, 9; 17:24; 22:6; Rom. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:47; 2 Cor. 5:2; 12:2; Gal. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7; Heb. 11:12; 1 Pet. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 3:12; 6:13; 8:10; 9:1; 10:1, 4, 8; 11:12-13; 12:4; 13:13; 14:2, 13; 16:11, 21; 18:1, 4, 5; 20:1, 9; 21:2, 10), οὐρανοῦς (accusative, plural—“heavens”) is found 5 times (Mark 1:10; Acts 2:34; 7:56; Heb. 4:14; 2 Pet. 3:13), οὐρανόθεν (adverb—“from heaven”) is found two times (Acts 14:17; 26:13), and μεσουρανήματι (dative, singular—“to, for [or] from the midst of heaven”) appears three times (Rev. 8:13; 14:6; 19:17).

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“Heavenly” in its various Greek forms is found 28 times in the NT: οὐρανόυ is found one time (Luke 2:13), οὐράνιος is found 7 times (Matt. 5:48; 6:14, 26, 32; 15:13; 18:35; 23:9), οὐρανίω is found one time (Acts 26:19), ἐπουράνια is found three times (John 3:12; 1 Cor. 15:40; Heb. 9:23), ἐπουρανίω is found one time (Heb. 12:22), ἐπουρανίων is found three times (1 Cor. 15:40; Phil. 2:10; Heb. 8:5), ἐπουράνιοι is found one time (1 Cor. 15:48), ἐπουρανιοίς is found 5 times (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12), ἐπουράνιον is found one time (2 Tim. 4:18), ἐπουράνιος is found one time (1 Cor. 15:48), and ἐπουρανόυ is found 4 times (1 Cor. 15:49; Heb. 3:1; 6:4; 11:16).

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