

THE LAST THINGS

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There are believers in Christ who believe and teach that the Earth will last forever. They teach that when Jesus returns to the Earth He will cleanse the Earth with fire and then those saved by Jesus will live forever here on this planet. These teachers say that Earth is our final destination, that Earth will be our Heaven! Is this what Jesus and His Apostles taught us to believe about Heaven? Can we expect Heaven on Earth?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

There are some believers in Christ who are telling us that our future home in heaven will not be "up there" but "down here" on a renewed earth. Well, in one way, we may not care **where** heaven is, just as long as we enter there! I certainly will be excited about being in heaven, for I am now excited about the great salvation in Jesus Christ that enables me, and you, to go to heaven! However, if we believe that Jesus told us something about heaven and earth, then we who believe in Jesus should want to know what He taught us. Did Jesus teach that we can expect Heaven on a renewed Earth?

As I think about this strange teaching I see that it contradicts several clear statements in Scripture. Not only does it contradict Jesus' teaching, but also the teaching of Jesus' Holy-Spirit-led apostles. And so, I am afraid that this false teaching may focus our attention too much on material things, rather than spiritual things.

This teaching about Heaven on Earth is called by some people, the "new creation". Perhaps it is partly built upon the apostle Peter's statement in 2 Peter 3:13 where he wrote that "according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Peter was referring to God's promise overheard by Isaiah 700 years before Christ was born. Isaiah had recorded that promise in his book, Isaiah 65, beginning at verse 17. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an

infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed." ([Isaiah 65:17-20 ESV](#)) Even in this passage a young man of 100 years old can still die and sinners can still be accursed! So this does not sound like the place where the saved live forever and where righteousness dwells! No, this does not sound like the "heaven" taught by Peter and Jesus' other apostles! Therefore, the phrase "new heavens and new earth" must have a spiritual understanding.

In that great spiritual book, the book of Revelation, the apostle John [in Revelation 21:1] says he saw "...a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." John saw a new heaven and earth that had no need of the "sea"! This indicates to me that this is a spiritual heaven and earth for our physical existence on this planet requires the seas! That's right! John also said that he saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This "holy city, the new Jerusalem" was not obeying the law of gravity that was created by the God-created spin of planets! So again we are compelled to think these are "spiritual" symbols that point to a completely new existence! And then we read in verse 4 that the "former things have passed away." ([Revelation 21:1-4 ESV](#)) The "former things" refers to life as we now know it on this planet.

So we see that this theory that the earth will be our Heaven is based upon passages that should be understood in a spiritual sense. But the real problem with this theory is that it contradicts some very clear teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. For instance, in Matthew 24:35 Matthew recorded that Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Mark and Luke also record that saying. Jesus did not say that the earth will be transformed and renewed. The Greek word translated "pass away" literally means to "come to an end." Jesus echoed what the Holy Spirit told David 1000 years before Jesus' birth. David wrote, "Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end." ([Psalms 102:25-27 ESV](#)) Those words of the Spirit are quoted again in the New Testament, Hebrews 1:10-12. Jesus said the earth would pass away, but His words are eternal.

In John 14:2-3, Jesus gave this promise to His disciples: "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:2-3 ESV) Jesus clearly states that he was leaving this earth and returning to His father's house to prepare places for his disciples. So, whatever Jesus left the earth to do is being accomplished in heaven with His father. He is not preparing a place on earth amongst his disciples! Jesus is with the Father now, but He promises to return. Just before his ascension Jesus told his disciples, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) If Jesus is in heaven with His father, how can He say that he will be with his disciples to the end of the world? Jesus is now with us in spirit represented by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to his obedient followers. Jesus' apostle Paul put it this way to Christians, "...He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:17-20 ESV)

Yes, Jesus and His Father are with Christians right now, in spirit. That is, they are represented by the Holy Spirit that lives in Christians. However, one of these days Jesus Himself will return to planet earth. Jesus himself predicted His return, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." (Matthew 25:30-32 ESV) When Jesus was standing on trial in the early morning of his crucifixion day, the High Priest commanded, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:63-64 ESV) When that High Priest died, there is no doubt that He saw Jesus seated at the right hand of Power. And in the great resurrection day when all the dead will rise, that High Priest will see Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven.

Forty days after Jesus' own resurrection, as Jesus ascended from the earth, He disappeared in the clouds. "And while [the disciples] were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.""
(Acts 1:10-11 ESV)

Jesus is coming back to this earth, but not to stay! That's right! No other passage in the Bible more clearly predicts the fate of this planet than the second letter of Peter. Peter tells us that on the day Jesus returns, "... the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore since all these things will be destroyed like this, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, which will cause the burning heavens to be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:10-12 WEBA)

The apostle Paul also tells us some things that will happen when Jesus returns. The persecution and affliction heaped upon Christians will come to an end, for "... It is a righteous thing with God to repay affliction to those who afflict [Christians], and to give relief to [Christians] who are afflicted...." And when will this happen? "... When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 ESV) Do you believe Paul's testimony? Paul also told this to the Thessalonians, "... The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 ESV) You can only be encouraged with these words if you are a Christian! Are you a Christian? Have you believed in the Christ, repented of your sins, submitted to baptism in water in the name of the Lord? Are you ready for the Lord's return? Or, are you still in

your sins? Visit a church of Christ near you and obey Jesus Christ! Then He will take you to Heaven to be with Him when He comes again.