

# TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

## 410 - New Heaven - New Earth

### 1. Introduction

Descriptions of the second coming speak of the destruction of the physical universe. End times beliefs propose there will be a renewal, or regeneration, of those same heavens and Earth. Is there going to be a recreation of an unspoiled heaven and Earth resetting things to the way God intended in the beginning?

### 2. Paradox & contradiction

End times beliefs hold that Christ will reign on the Earth in Jerusalem for 1000 years after which the heavens and Earth will be restored to a pristine sinless state as it was in the beginning. There are a number of variations of what takes place in this final stage of God's plan. As we study the scriptures we find that this proposal creates conflicts with other passages that we need to understand and resolve.

One way we can study the scriptures and eliminate misunderstandings is to contrast passages, examining them in the greater context of the scriptural narrative. From our study of the second coming we saw a series of events that will take place. The final actions stated in the New Testament includes the destruction of the Earth and universe by fire after which Christ presents the saved to God and takes his place with the Father for eternity.

On one hand we have statements that speak of the finality of all things as we know them, while on the other hand, we have references to a renewal of the heavens and Earth. This creates some confusion as to the disposition of the physical reality we live in. In order to understand what the scriptures are teaching we need to review these carefully in light of the entire narrative so we can determine what will take place. In this lesson we'll discuss:

- a. A contradictory contrast
- b. The meaning of new
- c. Prophetic precedents
- d. Christ's return and promise to the saved
- e. The scriptural resolution

Let's take a look at each of these

### 3. A contradictory contrast

A host of writings exist that claim to expose errors in the scriptures. Contentions that the Bible is flawed revolve around misinterpretations and misunderstandings of numerous passages. One way we can resolve these is to compare passages side by side, examine them in respect to their relative contexts and determine their meaning.

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We have statements speaking of the destruction of the physical universe such as those found in the writings of Peter (**2 Pet 3.10-11**). Peter also states that we're looking for "*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" (**2 Pet 3.13**).

At face value this implies there will be a regeneration or restoration of the physical universe. As we look at passages listing events that will take place at the second coming we find a number of similarities. There's an overall sense of finality in these descriptions. In one chapter, as I've quoted here, we find statements of destruction as well as what might appear as a recreation of the world and universe in which we live. These statements when compared to each other seem contradictory. To understand this we can look for similar expressions in the scriptures, how they're used and what they refer to. To understand these we can start by taking a look at the idea of "**new**" and what this implies.

#### 4. The meaning of new

The word translated as "*new*" (**2 Pet 3.13**) is the Greek word **καινος (kainos)**. Vine states this "**denotes new, of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old**". This term is used in other places in the New Testament. It appears in reference to languages the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles and others to speak. In this sense the languages weren't new, in that they never existed before, but were new to the speaker. It's also used in reference to new commandments issued (**John 13.34**) and the new man created in obedience to the Gospel (**2 Cor 5.17**).

In these passages the idea of being new was the change of quality in regard to the state of the law, as in new commands, or the state of being, in reference to the change in character of believers when they were converted. This implies a change in the essential nature of that which was made new. Conversion of an individual is seen in changes in thinking and behaving, while the commands revealed as part of the new law, were spiritual in nature and not dependent on a physical transformation. The overall idea is a departure from what is known, not necessarily a simple regeneration of that which previously existed.

What does that mean for our discussion here? Those who are converted are new creatures in Christ but the physical body isn't altered. The same holds true for other appearances of the idea of being new. We'll apply this to the idea of a new heaven and new Earth but we can understand this better by looking at similar statements in the scriptures as they set a precedent for how God uses the term.

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#### 5. Prophetic precedents

I've noted before that God, the ultimate author of the scriptures, uses certain phrases, symbols and types to denote things that connect to other things in the Bible. This creates links to these as the scriptural message unfolds and prophecies are fulfilled, uniting the scriptures as a comprehensive whole containing elements of the Lord's ultimate plan. The Old Testament prophets, speaking of the future of God's people and his plan to save mankind, incorporate similar language pointing to the future. Some of these statements are misinterpreted and applied to the idea of the end times. A close evaluation of these will shed light on the meaning of these passages and what they imply about the fulfillment.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming of the Messiah and his nature. Descriptions such as those found in **Isaiah 53** describe the character of the Messiah's work and death. As the book progresses God speaks of the future of his people and how they'll be renewed. These are consistent with the issuing of a new name (**Isa 62.2**) and the establishment of the new kingdom described in (**Isa 2.1-2**). Isaiah, and other prophets, foretold the judgment that was coming on the nations of Israel and Judah. In the midst of these predictions is the promise of restoration through the return of a remnant and the preservation of the Lord's people. More importantly, we have details that speak of the nature of the kingdom and those who will serve the Lord.

Isaiah writes of how God appealed to his people to repent of their evil and return to him. *"I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face..."* (**Isa 65.2-3**). God goes on to describe his judgment and actions against this people. *"Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom."* (**Isa 65.6-7**).

The prophet extends hope to the nation as he records the future state of his people. *"And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there."* (**Isa 65.9**). Note the contrast between this description and the coming judgment against the evil that existed in the nation. *"Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not."* (**Isa 65.12**).

The preservation of God's people is then described as the Lord speaks of the coming kingdom that will be established. *"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."* (**Isa 65.17**). How would God create *"new heavens and a new earth"*? The answer can be found in how these were fulfilled.

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The people of Judah were carried away to exile in Babylon for seventy years (**Jer 25.11**). The remnant returned, rebuilt the temple and later the walls as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The purpose of the remnant was to preserve the environment in which God would bring the Messiah into the world. Isaiah had provided a sign of this (**Isa 7.14**). Within this environment, the Messiah would offer himself as the final sacrifice for the sins of the world (**Isa 53**). A new kingdom would be established that was for all nations (**Isa 2.2, Mic 4.1-2**). A new law would be given (**Jer 31.31-34**) which is confirmed by the writer of Hebrews (**Heb 8.8-9**).

The difference in the new kingdom and its law is found in the description of the faithful. *“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”* (**Heb 8.10-12**). These changes constituted the “*new heavens and new Earth*” spoken of by Isaiah. The Law would pass away (**Heb 8.13**), the Gentiles would be included (**Acts 10.35 & 15.14-17**). The priesthood would be changed (**Heb 8.1-6**).

In all of these things God brought about a renewal spiritually. In essence this constituted the new heavens and new Earth spoken of by Isaiah. This is consistent with the meaning of the word new as used by Peter in that the nature and character of service to God was renewed in the fulfillment of God’s plan. Spiritually there was a renewal. Those drawn to the Lord did so from a position of faith and heartfelt dedication. In that sense there was a renewal or regeneration of the nature of our relationship with God. We can understand this better as we take a look at the promises Christ made to the apostles and the future disposition of the faithful at the end of time.

#### 6. Christ’s return and promise to the saved

Prior to his death and later ascension to the Father, Christ told his disciples, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* (**John 14.1-3**).

There are critical points in Jesus statement at this time that will help clarify what Peter refers to in his statement about a new heaven and new Earth. First, Christ assured them they could rely on their faith in God. Although they would experience the death of Christ and later see him leave them, they had the assurance that God would be with them. This was followed by a promise. The promise that Christ indeed would return for them. He let them know there were many “*mansions*” in his fathers house and followed this with the declaration that he was going to prepare a place for them there. He then provides more comfort in the fact that he would return for them to “*receive*” to himself so that they would be with him. They had seen miracles and

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heard his teachings. All things he told them had come to pass and now on the eve of his death and later departure he extended peace to them through the promise that they would one day be with him.

The hope of the Christian is to have that eternal home with God. Paul told the Colossians, ***“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*** (Col 3.1-4). This is consistent with other statements about the second coming.

Paul told the Thessalonians, ***“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*** (1 Thess 4.16-18). The church at Thessalonica had been subjected to false statements about the return of Christ. In the two letters Paul wrote to them, he spoke of what would take place at the second coming. He assured them that those who had died wouldn't miss out on a reward, that their faithful service was not forgotten. This assurance pointed to a time when the world would end and Christ would return to render judgment, take vengeance on those who rejected God (2 Thess 1.7-9) and they would be with the Lord through eternity.

This is the message and hope of the Gospel. The new heavens and new Earth would be new because the faithful would receive the reward of their service and have the eternal home that was promised. There's no indication in any of the passages we've reviewed about the second coming that suggests an earthly kingdom, a millennial reign or the regeneration of the physical universe. These descriptions have a finality to them that ends with the faithful being presented to God as Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor 15.24).

The eternal home will indeed be new from the perspective of those who have overcome the world through Christ. Tears will be wiped away. Sin will not be present, and the faithful will live with the Lord throughout eternity. Christ's promises, the details of the second coming and statements about the eternal home are summed up in Paul's second letter to Timothy. ***“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*** (2 Tim 4.7-8). This is the hope we have in Christ, that we'll dwell with God and Christ in a place that is far from the pain and suffering that has corrupted the world through the influence of Satan and the weakness of humans.

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**7. The scriptural resolution**

Regeneration of the physical world, ideas about a millennial reign and events believed to take place following this create contradictions within the scriptures. The resolution is to accept what the Bible states. We're told there will be a day when God sends his son to return to the Earth with his angels to gather the faithful, judge the world, destroy it and present the saved to the Father. Ideas, such as those proposed by Premillennialism, in a way reflect an inability to let go of the present world. The world will pass away just as the scriptures teach. We need to focus living in a way that's acceptable to God so we can escape the wrath to come. The same assurance and comfort is present in the book of Revelation as John reminds the seven churches of Asia of this fact. God would save them through their tribulations and persecutions. John, quoting Christ, writes, "*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" (Rev 2.10). When we accept what the scriptures teach, contradictions are resolved and we can focus on applying godly principles to our lives with the assurance that we can overcome and will be saved in so doing. John confirms we can do this when he states, "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" (1 John 4.4).

**8. Next**

Views of the end times come to a climax with the millennial reign of Christ followed by the regeneration of the world and a final entry into Heaven by the faithful. As we review the interpretations these beliefs are based on we find problems with the proposed sequence of events that can't be reconciled with the biblical narrative. In the next lesson we'll discuss **And After This** as we explore conflicts and problems created by a literal interpretation of passages in Revelation and other books.