

New Heavens and New Earth

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Most people know the first verse in the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). But the Bible also talks about a “new heavens and new earth.”

What is that “new heavens and new earth”? Do these words mean a new material creation or a spiritual change?

Let us begin in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 65:17 God said, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.” In the next chapter God promised, ““For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord, ‘So shall your descendants and your name remain”” (Isaiah 66:22). What do these verses mean?

The best commentary on these verses is the book of Isaiah. It was a wicked time in Judah. Idolatry was everywhere. Isaiah said the land was “full of idols” (Isa. 2:8).

Throughout this book God challenged His people to find a god that could equal Him. In chapter 40 He asked, “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?” (v. 18). Then He asks, “To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” (v. 25).

God said there are two things I can do that idols cannot do. One is that God *knows the future*. Many Jews believed pagan gods could predict the future. That is why God talks so often in this book about knowing the future. He was telling them, “I am the only One who knows your future; the gods you worship do not.” Isaiah 46:10 says God declares “the end from the beginning.”

God foretold what would happen to the Jewish people. Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah warned the Jews that God would judge their nation. God said the Babylonians would conquer their land and take many into captivity.

The second thing God does that pagan gods cannot do is *to create*. God asks, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure?” (Isa. 40:12). He answers, “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain” (Isa. 40:22).

Isaiah chapters 40-66 were written to encourage Jews who lived later during the Babylonian captivity. The Jews spent 70 years in Babylon away from their home in Judah. Isaiah wrote these chapters two hundred years in advance by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In this section he assures the captive Jews that God will bring them home again.

That is where the creation of the new heavens and new earth starts to come in. God told these Jews that if He could create this vast universe, it was nothing for Him to bring them back to their land. Some of these Jews in Babylon had grown discouraged. Some were doubtful they would ever return. And all of them needed encouragement. The Lord said if He created the heavens and the earth, then He could surely deliver them.

“Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it... ‘I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house”” (Isa. 42:5-7).

In Isaiah 44 God said, “I am the Lord who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself... Who says to Jerusalem, ‘You shall

be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' and I will raise up her waste places" (Isa. 44:24).

He even mentions by name the Persian king who would let the Jews go home. That king was Cyrus; Isaiah mentions him in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 two hundred years before this happened!

Notice how God continues to use the physical creation to assure the Jews in chapter 45. "I have made the earth, and created man on it. I—My hands—stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded" (Isa. 45:12). In this chapter God said, "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other'" (v. 18).

In Isaiah 48 we read, "Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens...He shall do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be against the Chaldeans" (Isa. 48:12-14).

The Lord said the Babylonians would fall. And God described their fall as if the creation itself failed. In Isaiah 13 here is how God spoke about the fall of Babylon: "For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place" (Isa. 13:10, 13).

Isaiah is not talking about the end of the world. This is not a literal passage concerning the destruction of the material universe. The heavens and earth symbolize great world powers in human governments. Babylon's fall would be so catastrophic that it would be like the stars not appearing and the sun and moon not giving light.

This kind of language is used often in the Old Testament to depict the overthrow of powerful governments. In Ezekiel 32:7 God said, "I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light." In Daniel 8:10 the little horn in Daniel's vision, which represented Antiochus Epiphanes, "cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them." Obviously, these are not literal stars. They represent the nations Antiochus conquered.

Isaiah even says in chapter 24:19 that "the earth is split open." Who would say that is literal? God is using these figures to show the magnitude of the fall of nations.

God uses this same imagery again to describe the downfall of Babylon (and other world powers) in chapters 50 and 51. In Isaiah 50:3 God said, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." That is clearly figurative.

In Isaiah 51 he talks to the faithful Jews in Babylon. In verse 1 He says, "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness." He assures them that better days are ahead. Verse 3 says, "For the Lord will comfort Zion."

How would God do this? How could thousands of Jews make the journey back home? They had settled into a new home in Babylon. Jeremiah told them to buy houses and lands and raise their families there. Besides, where would they get the money and supplies to make this trip? And what if their enemies attacked them on the way? Furthermore, the government had given no indication that they would allow the Jews to go home. But God had given His word and through Isaiah He tells the people not to lose heart.

God said, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, and those who

dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abolished” (Isa. 51:6).

This is not the physical heavens and earth; it is not about the end of time. The context is the overthrow of great world powers. The heavens and the earth represent these nations. God will destroy their dominion so that He can restore the Jewish people to Jerusalem.

In chapter 51 God reproves the faithful and tells them not to doubt Him. He says you have been so afraid of these governments who rule over you that you are forgetting that “the Lord your Maker...stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth” (v. 13). If He did that, it will be nothing for Him to do what He promised. And when He does, two things will happen.

One is that He will overpower human government. That is what He said in Isaiah 51:6: “For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment.”

The second thing is in Isaiah 51:16: “I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, lay the foundation of the earth, and say to Zion, you are My people.” This cannot be literal. Planting the heavens and laying the foundation of the earth mean restoring the Jews to Jerusalem. Mark this verse—*Isaiah 51:16*.

If you keep reading in chapter 52, this becomes even more clear. In Isaiah 52:2 God said, “Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!” That is definitely the restoration of the Jews from Babylon to Judah.

God used the image of *destroying* the heavens to illustrate the overthrow of world powers. In a similar way, He used the image of *creating* the heavens and earth to illustrate the restoration of the Jewish nation.

Isaiah 51:6 says the heavens will vanish. Isaiah 51:16 says God will plant the heavens. If one is symbolic so is the other. If *destroying* the heavens in these verses is not literal, then *creating* the heavens and earth in these contexts is not literal.

Now let us look at how these words are used in Isaiah 65:17-19. Notice the same symbolism: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.”

What are the new heavens and the new earth? There are two simple things that give us the definition. One is a contrast. Look at the last part of verse 16: “the former troubles are forgotten.” What troubles? The calamities of the Jews. The war with the Babylonians. The captivity. All these things will be forgotten. When? When the Jews return home by the grace and providence of Almighty God. Look at verse 17: “I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.” What are the new heavens and the new earth? The opposite of the former troubles! The contrast gives the meaning. Instead of weeping like before, now they will rejoice.

The second way is a parallel. Verse 18 gives the interpretation. Verse 17 says, “I create new heavens and a new earth.” Verse 18 explains what this means: “I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing.” These two statements mean the same thing! What are the new heavens and new earth in verse 17? Jerusalem rejoicing in verse 18!

This is what God meant earlier when He said that He would “plant the heavens” and “lay the foundation of the earth” in Zion in Isaiah 51:16! These expressions have nothing to do with a physical creation of another material universe.

Verse 19 says the former condition of the Jews was one of sorrow and weeping but God will give them joy and rejoicing when they go home. *That* is the new heavens and new earth in this passage. That is the definition the Bible gives.

The new heavens and the new earth symbolized a new *spiritual* state. It was an inner change, a change in heart. Isaiah defined it as joy and rejoicing. It was not primarily rebuilding the wall, the temple and their houses. Those external things were secondary. The main idea as the prophet explains it is the happiness they felt inside.

Ezra 3 gives a picture of how emotional this was for the Jews. When they laid the foundation of the temple, the older ones wept while “many shouted for joy” (Ezra 3:12). *They* rebuilt the temple, but *God* created a new heart in these people.

This expression may seem like a strange way of saying that life changed for the better. But what do we say when we have been through a bad time in our lives and suddenly we are enjoying life again? We say, “It’s like a whole new world!” We say, “It’s a brand new day.” “The sun is shining again.” “I feel like I can breathe again.”

There is another huge problem with saying that Isaiah 65:17 is a promise of heaven on a literal earth. Too many people stop reading in verse 19. After He talks about the new heavens and new earth in verses 17-19, He describes the changes in Jerusalem when the Jews arrived. They would build houses and plant vineyards in verse 21.

Verse 20 says the Jews who returned to Jerusalem would live long and peaceful lives. But it also says “the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed”! Sinners will be in this new heavens and new earth! If the “new heavens and new earth” is a promise of heaven on earth, then sinners will be in heaven!

But why does Isaiah say this new heavens and new earth will last “forever” in verse 18? The word “forever” is from the Hebrew word *ad*. This word does not always mean everlasting or eternal. It is used in Proverbs 29:14: “The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever” (*ad*). In Psalm 61:8, David said he would sing praise to God “forever” (*ad*). Just before this in verses 6-7 he explains what this means: “You will prolong the king’s life, his years as many generations. He shall abide before God forever” (*olam*). The word *ad*, like the word *olam*, can mean continuity as well as eternity. That is the meaning in Isaiah 65:18.

In Isaiah 66 we see the same image. God said, “Rejoice with Jerusalem” in verse 10. In verse 13 He said, “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” That comfort is the new heavens and new earth he is about to describe again.

Verse 20 says the Jews will return to Jerusalem. Verse 21 says that God “will take some of them for priests and Levites.” These cannot be Gentiles; they must be from the tribe of Levi. Why were they not already serving as priests and Levites? Because they had been in foreign countries and were separated from the temple in Jerusalem.

But now He speaks of a time when their worship will be restored. Isaiah 66:22-23 says, “‘For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord.”

Notice the context of the new heavens and new earth. Verse 21 says the priests and Levites will be active again by leading the Jews in worship at Jerusalem. Verse 23 says the Jews would then be able to worship from one New Moon to the next and from one Sabbath to the next. The verse between these two verses—verse 22—is about this new situation in Jerusalem!

And what are the Jews doing in this new heavens and new earth? They are worshipping according to the law of Moses. Isaiah said in verse 22 that they will keep the law of Moses as long as the new heavens and the new earth remain.

The new heavens and the new earth in Isaiah 66:22 represent a renewed spiritual condition of Judaism. We can only imagine how glad these people were to finally be back home worshipping God.

When Isaiah says in verse 23 that “all flesh” would worship Him, He is talking about people from all nations honoring Him. This is used in a general sense just as verse 16 says “the Lord will judge all flesh.”

These passages—Isaiah 65:17 and Isaiah 66:22—are about Jews in Jerusalem after they returned from captivity. The only one way to connect them to something other than this at a later time is to say that the “new heavens and new earth” are a prophecy or a type.

The question then is this: Do the “new heavens and new earth” in Isaiah predict something in the future after the return from captivity?

We have already seen that these two passages refer to the new condition of the Jewish people in Jerusalem when they returned from captivity. Therefore, these passages cannot be straight prophecies of a future recreation of the material heavens and earth at the end of time.

This also means these two passages are not straight prophecies of the New Testament dispensation. The New Moon and the Sabbath in verse 22 would have to be strictly symbolic in order for this interpretation to be true. But the context will not allow that.

This is why some appeal to the idea of double fulfillment. They say there was one fulfillment of the new heavens and new earth when the Jews returned after the Babylonian captivity, but there will be a second fulfillment at the end of time when God recreates the material universe.

But the idea of double fulfillment has major problems. If a prophecy can have two fulfillments, then why not three, four or ten? Prophecy becomes a ball of clay in the interpreter’s hands. He can shape them any number of times to fit numerous situations without giving definite Scriptural evidence.

But let us suppose for argument’s sake that this is a prophecy with a second fulfillment. That still would not prove by itself that the second fulfillment is a new literal, material universe. That fulfillment could be heaven.

We could say the same thing about a type or foreshadow. If the “new heavens and new earth” in Isaiah are a type, it would not necessarily follow that a recreated universe is the antitype. In fact, heaven fits the idea of an antitype far better.

It is unsound reasoning to *assume* that these passages in Isaiah are prophecies or types and then build a case for a renewed earth. A building is only as sure as its foundation. And since this doctrine starts with an assumption, that ought to be a big red flag. Just because the same language in Isaiah is used in another passage does not *by itself* mean it is a prophecy.

The next time we read this expression is in II Peter 3:13: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” Christians look for this new state. What is it?

In the verses before this Peter talked about the end of the material universe. There were scoffers who denied His coming in verses 3-4. One of the points he made to refute them is that God sent the flood in the days of Noah. In verse six he said, “The world that then was perished, being flooded with water.” The word “perished” is from *apollumi*. In *this passage* (not in every case) it means the world was brought to ruin.

Some argue that God will only destroy the *surface* of the earth like He did with the flood. Then He will create the new heavens and new earth. This is called the renovated earth or “scorched earth” theory in contrast to the renewed earth theory. But the wording of verse 10 will not allow this conclusion.

In that final day God will use fire. Water covered the earth, but fire will consume it. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (II Pet. 3:10).

The entire universe, not just the earth, will be incinerated when Jesus comes. “The heavens”—the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars—will “pass away” with a tremendous sound.

“Pass away” is from *parerchomai*, the same word that is used in Matthew 24:35 where Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Verse 12 explains this further when it says “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire.” This is not nuclear war on earth. The countless *stars* in the universe will be completely destroyed.

Peter then says that “the elements will melt with fervent heat.” The word “elements” is from the word *stoicheion*. The basic idea of this word is the first principles or elements upon which everything else is built. It was used of the alphabet, for instance, because everything in a written alphabetic language is built on the alphabet. If you take away the alphabet, you take away every book in that language.

Thayer defines this word as it is used in II Peter 3:10 “the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe” (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 589). Bauer defines it “elemental substances, the basic elements from which everything in the natural world is made, and of which it is composed” (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 769).

The very particles, the smallest elements of the material world, will melt with fervent heat. Peter repeats this in verse 12 for emphasis: “The elements will melt with fervent heat.”

Then Peter adds that “both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” The earth, that is, the planet, will be burned up. The works that are in it—whether the works God made or which man made—will be burned up as well.

The heavens according to verse 12 will burn before they dissolve. The word for being on fire in verse 12 is *puraō* which means to burn with fire. The word in verse 10 is *katakaio* which means to burn up, to burn completely, to consume by fire. This is not a burning or scorching of the surface of the earth but a complete annihilation of it and the entire material order.

Verse 11 adds even more emphasis. It says all these material things mentioned in verse 10 will be *dissolved*. This same word is used in verse 12. It is from *luo* which means to loose or destroy.

This is a clear, powerful passage. It is definitely about the physical earth and universe. That is what the context shows in verses 3-9. II Peter 3:10 is not symbolic. And it says that everything physical will be destroyed.

Here is a question for anyone who thinks this passage is not literal, or, if it is literal, it just means a partial burning of the earth: *If God had wanted to say that He would burn up and annihilate the whole physical universe, how would He have said it?* If the wording of II Peter 3:10 does not teach this, what set of words would?

Hebrews 11:3 teaches that God created the universe out of nothing. He did not use material that pre-existed. That verse says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are

visible.” This denies what ancient Greeks and others today believe—the eternity of matter. God created the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing.

This means that God *created* the world *out of nothing* and someday He will *destroy it into nothing*—nothing physical or material, that is.

Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes Psalm 102:25-27 and teaches the same end of the physical universe. “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.”

II Peter 3:13 says “Nevertheless...” This indicates a contrast. The creation that will be destroyed in verses 10-12 is material, *but* the new heavens and earth will be spiritual.

You might ask, “But how can he use the same words—heavens and earth—in a literal way in verses 10-12 but in a symbolic way in verse 13?” Again, it is a contrast for emphasis.

But we saw the same thing in Isaiah chapter 51. In verse 13 he said “the Lord your Maker...stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth.” That is the literal heavens and earth. And yet three verses later in verse 16 God said He would “plant the heavens, lay the foundation of the earth, and say to Zion, you are My people.” That is spiritual.

Peter says, “We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.” We saw that “the new heavens and new earth” in Isaiah signified the joy the Jews experienced when they returned home. Peter uses the same *basic idea* of these words in Isaiah and takes it to a higher plane—a much higher condition that is perfect.

Peter said we look for the new heavens and new earth according to the promise of God—“the promise of His coming” (II Peter 3:4). That is the promise in the context. It is not the promise made to the Jews in Isaiah.

Peter himself had already shown where Christians are going in I Peter 1:4. He said that we have been begotten again to a living hope (v. 3) “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

What do the words “in heaven” mean? It is very simple. Heaven is where God is—*now*.

Jesus said to pray, “Our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). He said to pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Jesus contrasted heaven and earth in Matthew 6:19-20: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Our treasure is in heaven, not on earth. How could Jesus be any plainer?

He said in Matthew 18:10: “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” Ecclesiastes 5:2 also says, “God is in heaven, and you on earth.”

If heaven is where God is now and that is not on earth, then when Peter says our inheritance is in heaven, that means we will go to where He is now, not to a new planet earth.

The Bible consistently says that heaven is not earth and earth is not heaven.

In II Peter 3:13 the new heavens and new earth is a spiritual change. It is heaven itself because heaven is a completely spiritual realm. The physical world will no longer exist. Heaven is perfect because it is not made of matter.

We will be pure spirit beings when we get to heaven. On earth we are made a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5); in heaven we will be equal to the angels in that we cannot die (Luke 20:36). We are lower than the angels because of our physical and limited state. Angels sometimes

in the Bible took on human form (Gen. 18; Gen. 19), but their real essence is spirit. Here we are spirits joined to a physical body, but in heaven we will be pure spirits.

Someone might ask, "How can you say that 'the new heavens and new earth' in Isaiah refer to the Jews returning to Jerusalem but in II Peter 3:13 the same phrase means Christians going to heaven?"

The symbol is the same. It has the same *basic* idea in both cases. But the application is different because there is a different context. Let us go back to Isaiah 66: "'For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,' says the Lord, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the Lord." That is verses 22-23.

Notice what he says next in verse 24: "And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

What do the words "their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched" mean? Most of us have read the New Testament more than the Old Testament. We have heard these words before. Jesus used them in Mark 9:43-48. Three times He said hell is a place where "their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched." He uses the same language that Isaiah used.

But Isaiah was not talking about hell. He said the Jews would look upon the corpses of transgressors. That means their enemies. This is a symbolic way of saying that their enemies would no longer be a threat. That is what he says in the context in Isaiah 66:14-16: "For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many."

Jesus was talking about the fire of hell; Isaiah was talking about the fire of battle.

The same word or phrase can be used in different senses. Sometimes we forget this simple, common-sense rule, but it is not that hard if we pay attention to the context and not try to read into it something we saw in another passage.

In Matthew 26:26-28 Jesus said of the bread "This is My body" and of the cup "This is My blood." This is about the Lord's Supper. But in John 6:53 He said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." John 6 is not a discussion of the Lord's Supper. Jesus explained what He meant 10 verses later in John 6:63. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood *in John 6* means to imbibe His word that gives spiritual life just as physical bread gives physical life. It is the same figure applied in a different way. If someone asks, "What does Jesus mean by eating His flesh and drinking His blood?", you would be right in saying, "It depends on the context."

My point is that the words "new heavens and new earth" represent a change from sorrow to joy. For the Jews that was going home to Jerusalem. For us it is going to heaven. But the core idea of this expression is the same.

The last place the New Testament uses this language is Revelation 21:1-2: "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The bride in verse two is the church. Revelation 19:7 says, "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." That wife is the bride of Christ, the church. Christians are "married" to Him who rose from the dead (Rom. 7:4). The husband-wife

relationship represents Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-33). Many times in the Old Testament God is pictured as the husband of Israel. Prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Hosea often used this analogy.

The book of Revelation is about two women: a bad wife and a good wife. One was a harlot. That woman in Revelation represents the nation of Israel. The other is the bride. That woman represents the church. Israel had committed spiritual adultery many times in the Old Testament and she continued to commit spiritual adultery in the New Testament. In the Old Testament her partners were idols; in New Testament times they were silver and gold. God executed this woman which was the Jewish system when the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Now God has a new bride, the church. Israel is no longer the spiritual wife of God. The church is. The visions of this marriage in Revelation 19 and 21 are not chronological. Obviously, the church had already been established and so the spiritual marriage had already taken place. The *idea* of these visions is the important point rather than the order of the visions.

The book of Revelation is also about two cities. One is the “great city” where the Lord was crucified (Rev. 11:8). That is Jerusalem and in Revelation “the great city” is the Jewish political and religious system of which Jerusalem was the center. That great city is identified as the great harlot. Revelation 17:18 says, “And the woman you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” That city was destroyed in Revelation chapter 18. That occurred in 70 A.D.

The other city is “the holy city, the New Jerusalem” in Revelation 21:2. Hebrews 12:22-23 calls it “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.” Jesus called it “the temple of My God...the city of My God, the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from My God” (Rev. 3:12). The fact that this is in the present tense rather than the past tense is not unusual. Later in Hebrews 12 the writer says “we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (v. 28).

Revelation 21:1-2 is consistent with these descriptions. The first heaven and the first earth was like what we saw in Isaiah 65. The Jews had suffered. They were in great sorrow. But God changed that. He gave them great joy. He called that new condition of heart the “new heavens and new earth.”

In the last book of the Bible the tables are turned. Revelation is about the sufferings of Christians at the hands of Jews. At the time Jews were arresting Christians and putting them to death. The souls of martyred saints cried out to God and asked how long this would continue (Rev. 6:10). This book shows the vindication of the saints. It shows that God would punish their enemies just as He punished the Babylonians hundreds of years earlier. When the great harlot in Revelation—the Jewish powers—were put down, Christians could rejoice. They still had the Romans to contend with, but the relentless hatred of Jews would no longer be a threat.

The first heaven and earth in Revelation 21:1 was not primarily the law of Moses, the temple, and the Jewish system as a whole. It was the time of great sorrow for the church because of this persecution. The new heavens and new earth represent the opposite. It is the new outlook of Christians once this enemy was taken out of the way by the providence of God. It was the great relief they felt. Now the tears are turned to joy just like the Jews in Isaiah.

But the fundamental idea of the expression “new heavens and new earth” is retained because the change is spiritual, not physical.

The new heaven and new earth, the holy city, and the bride all refer to the same thing. Since the bride is the church, the new heaven and new earth refer to a renewed condition in the

church. The new heaven and the new earth cannot be a new physical creation! And what do we find in that new heaven and earth? As in other passages, we find great joy because of the great change inside.

The book of Revelation is a book of signs and symbols. It is strange that anyone would use a book of this nature to make the case for a literal earthly recreation.

The Bible mentions the “new heavens and new earth” four times: Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, II Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1. It is not used literally in any of these passages. None of these verses describes a physical, material recreation or renovation of the earth.

This brings us to Romans 8. What does this chapter mean when it says the whole *creation* will be delivered from bondage?

Paul encourages Christians in this chapter to be patient and endure suffering. In Romans 8:17-19 he wrote, “And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”

Christians are the ones who are suffering in this passage. We must not lose sight of that fact. If we suffer with Christ, we will be glorified with Him (v. 17). The suffering of this life is nothing compared to the reward (v. 18). This glory will be revealed “in us” in verse 18. Verse 19 says the creation waits for “the revealing of the sons of God.”

The *revealing* of the glory in verse 18 is the same as the *revealing* of the sons of God in verse 19.

Notice again in verse 19 that “the earnest expectation” of the creation “eagerly waits” for this glory. Who is waiting for this glory? Christians! Paul encourages *Christians* to be patient and wait. In verse 25 he says that “we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”

If the creation is eagerly waiting in verse 19, and if the ones eagerly waiting in verse 25 are Christians, then the creation must be Christians.

This is not unusual in the New Testament. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” In Galatians 6:15 he wrote, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.” This creation is spiritual, not physical.

The Greek word for creation in these verses is *ktisis*. It is the same word used in Romans 8:19-21. In other passages it refers to the physical creation. The context decides which meaning is used. Readers of the English Bible can be so accustomed to thinking of the physical creation that they assume this is the meaning in the passage before us. But the church as God’s spiritual creation should not seem strange. Do you remember the song “The Church’s One Foundation”? The first verse says, “The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; She is His *new creation* by water and the Word.”

The verb *create* is also used in both a physical and spiritual sense. It is from the word *ktidzo*. It is the word in Ephesians 2:10 where Paul said we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works.” Paul used it again in Ephesians 2:15 when he said that Jesus abolished the law by His death in order to “create one new man”—that is, the church, the one body composed of Jews and Gentiles. Then he said that “the one new man” was “created according to God” (Eph. 4:24). This is obviously the creating of Christians.

Paul continues to talk about this creation in verse 20: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope.” The word “futility” is from

mataiotes. This word means “frailty, want of vigor” (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 393); it refers to “emptiness, futility, purposelessness, transitoriness, frustration” (Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 495).

The basic idea is emptiness. But empty in what way? When we suffer, we ask “Why?” This is the age-old question that patriarchs, prophets and even Jesus asked. When we cannot see why we are suffering, we feel frustrated and depressed. We ask “Why?” and search for an answer but we come up *empty*.

Paul says we are subject to this feeling because of the conditions of life. We must learn to submit. That is a very difficult thing to do. We do not like this but we must endure it. Verse 20 says “the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly.” Hebrews 12:11 says “no chastening seems to be joyful for the present.”

These are the burdens we must bear in this life. But this is temporary. There is hope. We have been made subject to this lowly state. This was not our choice; it was because of God Himself. He subjects us to suffering to teach us to set our hope on the glory to come, not on the world.

But we do not hope in vain. Verse 21 says, “Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” The bondage of corruption is “the sufferings of this present time” in verse 18. It is being subjected to “futility” in verse 20. We live in a world of corruption or decay. There is no escaping this as long as we live in a body of flesh. “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19).

But in that final day of the resurrection, the body that is “sown in corruption” will be “raised in incorruption” (I Cor. 15:42). “For this corruptible,” Paul says, “must put on incorruption” (I Cor. 15:53). This is what Romans 8:18-24 is about.

We will be released from this condition in that day. That is the “glorious liberty of the children of God.”

Verse 22 says, “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” In II Corinthians 5 Paul said we groan while we are in this tent (our physical body) and long for “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (vv. 1-4). The longing we have to be released from this corruptible state is like a woman who is having birth pangs. This is why Paul says three times in Romans 8 that we “eagerly wait” for that day.

Verse 23 says, “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Who is Paul talking about now? If these are Christians, why do they seem to be distinguished from the creation in the verses before?

The firstfruits of the Spirit were the best and highest powers of the Spirit in the early church. Who had these firstfruits? The apostles. Paul says we apostles, even we also, groan and eagerly wait for that day. (See R. L. Whiteside’s commentary on Romans).

Paul answers a simple question in these verses: what are we waiting for? His answer in verse 19 is that we are waiting for “the revealing of the sons of God.” That does not mean we are waiting until the last day to discover who the true children of God are. It means we are waiting to know what our future state will be. In verse 23 he says “the adoption” is “the redemption of our body.”

While we are in this mortal body living in this present world we cannot comprehend this. I John 3:2 explains, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as

He is.” The revealing is not some future condition of the physical creation. It is the revealing of the change in Christians from physical to purely spiritual beings.

As Paul continues to discuss this, the meaning becomes clearer. In verse 24 he writes, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” What is that hope? It is the same hope he says the creation has in verse 20.

Again, if the “creation” in verse 20 and the “we”—Christians—in verses 24-25 are the same, then this creation cannot be the physical creation. It must be the spiritual creation, the church.

It is unnecessary to suggest that the material creation is personified in these passages. Personification is a common figure of speech in the Old Testament. It means that human actions are ascribed to non-human things. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psa. 19:1). “The cypress trees rejoice” (Isa. 14:8). “The mountains skipped like rams” (Psa. 114:4).

But there is no indication that Paul is using this figure. And it would be hard to fit the language Paul uses into this mold—especially when he says the creation did not *willingly* subject itself to futility and that it will be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God—a liberty he defines specifically as the redemption of the *body*, not the earth.

Those who advocate a literal second heavens and earth argue that the earth will be restored to its original state when Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden—no death, no disease; just a perfect paradise. The earth, they tell us, will return full circle to the state before Adam and Eve sinned.

But they are forgetting what that original state was. Adam and Eve *were married* in the garden! Yet Jesus said there will be no marriage in the resurrection (Matt. 22:30). Adam and Eve *were naked* in that paradise and did not know they were naked. If the new heavens and the new earth is a return to this environment, it certainly will not be heaven! This is not coming full circle. It is going back ten steps.

Another passage we need to look at is Matthew 19:27-29: “Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.’”

Some say Jesus is teaching the new heaven and new earth theory. They claim the context is about eternal life. The rich young ruler asked Jesus how to have eternal life in verse 16; therefore, Jesus must be talking about the resurrection.

When Peter asked Jesus what the disciples would have, He said they would sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel while Jesus sits on His throne. This interpretation says all of this is literal and future! This is what premillennial doctrine teaches.

What is the regeneration? “Regeneration” is from *palingenesia*. This word is a compound of two Greek words: *palin*, which means anew or again, and *genesis* which means a beginning or birth. It is the same word that is used in Titus 3:5 where Paul said God saved us “through the washing of regeneration” or the bath of regeneration. It means a rebirth. It refers to being born again.

This regeneration is a rebirth of the soul of man, not a regeneration of the dust of the earth.

In John 3:3 Jesus told Nicodemus, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus interpreted Jesus’ words literally and thought He was talking about a physical rebirth in verse 4. But Jesus explained that rebirth or regeneration in John 3:5: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” That regeneration or rebirth is spiritual.

Nicodemus made the same mistake that many Jews made. He interpreted symbolic statements literally. When Jesus told the Samaritan woman He could give her “living water” in John 4:10, she thought He was talking about physical water. When He said He was the bread of life in John 6, the Jews were confused because they interpreted His words literally. When He spoke to the rebellious Jews in John 8, He talked about their father in verse 38. They thought the discussion was about their physical ancestor, Abraham (v. 39).

The same kind of misinterpretation is happening today in regard to the new heavens and new earth, and Matthew 19:28 is just one more example.

The regeneration in Matthew 19:28 is the church age when people are regenerated. It is the dispensation of time when regeneration occurs. It is strange that many apply this passage to a future kingdom on earth or a renewed earth when it fits perfectly with what the New Testament says about the new birth. They forget that regeneration—being born again—takes place now in this age (James 1:18; I Pet. 1:3, 23).

The apostles sat on twelve thrones in a spiritual sense. They were leaders in the church at the beginning. Paul wrote, “God has appointed these in the church: first apostles” (I Cor. 12:28). He also spoke of the authority God gave them and the signs that confirmed they were God’s apostles (II Cor. 10:8; II Cor. 12:12). The apostles were not judges on literal thrones; they judged by divine revelation given by the Holy Spirit. They did not judge by their own will but by the inspiration of the Spirit.

What are the “twelve tribes of Israel”? This refers to the church. Christians are the seed of Abraham now because we are His descendants in the truest sense—spiritually (Gal. 3:29). The church is the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). The verse just before this says that Christians are the “new creation” (Gal. 6:15). All this is taking place now. It does not happen when Jesus comes again.

If Matthew 19:28 has not happened yet, and if it is literal, then Jesus will reign as king over Israel—Israel in the flesh, *national* Israel—not for a thousand years as premillennialists teach, but forever! And since the law of Moses was the national and religious law of Israel, that would mean the law of Moses with all its sacrifices and offerings would have to be regenerated again and made permanent.

And if this is literal Israel, then the same Jesus who broke down racial, national and religious barriers by His death will erect them again in this future heaven on earth!

But those who advocate this view say that this passage must be about the end of time because the context is eternal life when Jesus comes. They are forgetting the parallel account in Mark 10:30. Jesus said in that verse that the disciples would receive “a hundredfold now **in this time**” what they had sacrificed and “in the age to come, eternal life.”

Now let us look specifically at passages that speak about where Christians will go when the Lord returns. A key passage is I Thessalonians 4:13-18:

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

This passage is about Christians who died in the Lord. Paul tells the church not to grieve over these souls like others who have no hope beyond this life. He calls them “those who sleep in Jesus” in verse 14 and “the dead in Christ” in verse 16.

They are at peace now in what the Bible calls *sheol* in the Old Testament and *hades* in the New. When Jesus comes, those souls will be resurrected. They will rise from the dead—from the hadean realm—“first,” that is, before the living Christians rise in the air to meet Jesus.

This passage is about Christians, not sinners. It is about those who died in Christ, not out of Him. Other passages like John 5:28-29 and Matthew 12:41-42 address the judgment of the lost in that day. The resurrection of the lost is not discussed in this passage because that was not Paul’s purpose. He is writing to comfort Christians about Christians that are dead.

Paul says the dead in Christ “will 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.” Paul says nothing about them staying on earth forever. In fact, there is no statement anywhere in the New Testament that says Christians will live on earth forever! There is no plain passage that teaches this doctrine.

When Christians rise from the earth to meet the Lord in the air, that will be their final departure from this world. Paul says, “And thus we shall always be with the Lord” in verse 17. There is not one word said about us rising to meet Jesus and then coming back to the earth as our home. Anyone who says this will happen is adding to the text.

Paul says “and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” The word “thus” is from the word *houto*. It means in this way, in this manner, in the way described in the text. It does not mean “therefore” we shall always be with the Lord. It means we will always be with Him in this way. What way? We will meet Him in the clouds!

The way that we meet Him is how we will remain. Since we will not meet Him on the earth, we will not remain on earth.

Anyone who says that a renewed earth will be our eternal home must say that we will meet the Lord in the air and then come back with Him to the earth to stay forever. Do you see that anywhere in the verses we are reading?

Paul says we will meet Him in the air and always be with Him in that manner. The word *meet* does not mean we will meet Him in the air and then follow Him or escort Him back to the earth. Instead of a meet and greet that would be a meet and retreat. And yet some say this is what Paul means.

The word for *meet* in verse 17 is the Greek noun *apantesis*. It just means a meeting. What kind of meeting or what is done after the meeting depends on how it is used. In Matthew 25:6, the virgins are told to go out and *meet* (*apantesis*) the groom for the wedding procession. But those virgins followed the groom to *his home*. They did not meet the groom and bring him back to *their house*!

In Acts 28:15, certain brethren came from their cities to *meet* (*apantesis*) with Paul who was on his way to Rome. Paul did not go back with them to their homes; he went on his way toward Rome!

The verb form, *apantao*, can mean a good meeting as when Jesus met His disciples after His resurrection (Matt. 28:9). But it can also mean a bad meeting as in Luke 14:31 where two armies meet each other in battle!

The view that these Greek words contain the idea of meeting and bringing back is false. It is a misuse of the text based on a misunderstanding of how language functions. And in this case it is just wishful thinking.

What Paul describes in I Thessalonians 4 is Christians who meet the Lord in the air because they are on their way to heaven. That is taught throughout the New Testament.

In Matthew 5:12 Jesus said, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Where is our reward? "In heaven"! How can we receive that reward unless we go there?

Paul wrote about "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" in Colossians 1:5. Our hope is heaven, not a renewed earth.

He said in Philippians 3:20 that "our citizenship is in heaven." Jesus told the disciples in Luke 10:20, "Your names are written in heaven." Can you imagine having citizenship in heaven but never going there?

Hebrews 10:34 says, "You have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." And again, I Peter 1:4 says our inheritance is reserved in heaven for us.

Think of how the renewed earth theory looks at these verses: our possessions are in heaven and our inheritance is in heaven but we will never go there!

In the great judgment scene in Matthew 25, Jesus says there will be two groups of people with two different destinies. In verse 34 we read, "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

That kingdom is the inheritance Peter spoke of in I Peter 1:4. It is in heaven, not on earth. And it has been prepared *since the foundation of the world*. Jesus said our home has already been prepared; renewed earth advocates say it is not prepared yet. Hebrews 11:16 says God "has prepared" that city for the saved.

The other group is in verse 41: "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

If this place of everlasting fire is not on earth, then the kingdom of inheritance is not on earth. If one is spiritual and not material, then the other must be spiritual and not material.

The same parallel is true in verse 46: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." If the punishment is spiritual, not physical, then the life is spiritual, not physical.

This raises another serious question for those who believe this theory. If this chapter is about a future reward on a renewed earth, then where will hell be, and what is hell? If the reward of the saved is on earth, then is the punishment of the lost on earth?

And what about Jesus' description of eternal punishment being a place of "outer darkness" in Matthew 25:30 and other verses? Is that a physical place?

One of the arguments made by those who hold this view is that Jesus still has a glorified physical body and if we become like Him then we will have a glorified physical body. Philippians 3:21 says He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His

glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” I John 3:2 says, “We shall be like Him.”

Proponents of the renewed earth view tell us these verses prove we will have a physical body after this life.

But even if we will have glorified physical bodies like His, that would not *necessitate* our living on earth forever. Why? Because *if* Jesus took glorified matter into heaven, then so can we.

Jesus rose from the dead in the same physical body He died in. He proved that to the disciples when He showed them His hands and His side (John 20:20, 27). But that does not mean that Jesus kept that same body when He entered heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

In fact, even before He ascended to heaven there were changes in His physical form. He “appeared in another form” to two of His disciples after His resurrection (Mark 16:12). As the disciples sat down to eat with Him in Luke 24:31, He “vanished out of their sight.”

How could He do this without at least momentarily becoming immaterial? And how could He appear in the room where the disciples were hiding with the doors shut without dematerializing and then materializing in John 20:19?

If Jesus’ body went through these miraculous changes before He ascended, why is it unreasonable to think this happened when He did ascend?

The same question could be raised about angels. They are pure spirit beings by nature. But sometimes they took on earthly form as in the case of the two angels in Genesis 18 and 19. They had human bodies. We know that because Abraham and Lot both gave them food to eat. What happened to their physical bodies? In fact, we could ask the same question about the Lord in Genesis 18. He obviously manifested Himself in human form. What happened to that body? And what about the body of Enoch whom God took or the body of Elijah?

My point is that the same God who instantly caused the body of Jesus to appear and reappear and gave angels a physical form and then caused it to disappear could easily do the same with the body of Jesus as He ascended to heaven. And if God could do all of that, He can do the same with Christians living when Jesus returns as they rise to meet the Lord in the air.

Heaven is not a place for dust. It is a realm of pure spirit. God is pure spirit. The angels are pure spirit. Our spirits are joined temporarily with this body the Bible calls our “earthly tabernacle” (II Cor. 5:1). Death is the point when “the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Matter is temporary; spirit will live forever. Paul said, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50).

There is one more question that poses a difficulty for renewed earth thinking. The Bible says that souls go to *sheol* or *hades* when people die. The rich man and Lazarus went to hades in Luke 16:19-31. The rich man was tormented in flames and asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue. He lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus resting in the bosom of Abraham. My point is not that they had physical existence in hades. But they did exist without a physical body in a purely spiritual realm.

Even Jesus went to *hades*. David foretold this in Psalm 16:10 and Peter said it was fulfilled in Jesus in Acts 2:31: “His soul was not left in Hades.” The penitent thief went with Him to this paradise (Luke 23:43). They were in paradise but not in physical bodies. Their physical bodies were on earth.

They had existence—recognizable existence—as pure spirit beings in hades. If souls in hades exist without a physical body, then they can exist in heaven without a physical body.

In a similar way the resurrection body in the last day is a *spiritual* body. Paul made a distinction between it and the physical body in the great resurrection chapter when he said, “The

body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (I Cor. 15:42-44).

The natural body is the physical, material body. Paul said it is *corruptible* but the spiritual body is *incorruptible*. He says that the natural body is *dishonorable* compared to the spiritual body which is glorious. The physical body is *weak* in contrast to the *power* of the spiritual body.

The Greek word for “natural” is *psuchikos*. Here it means the physical part of man. It is used in I Corinthians 2:14 where Paul talks about the natural man not receiving the things of the Spirit of God. There it means the man who lives for physical things and not for God. He is carnally minded.

The argument is made that this is the meaning in I Corinthians 15—that Paul is saying in the resurrection some will be natural or unspiritual and thus lost while others will be spiritually minded and saved.

This confuses the usage of the word in different contexts. The word *natural* in I Corinthians 15 is not applied to the *heart*. It is applied to the *body*. Paul said twice in verse 44 that he is contrasting a “natural body” with the “spiritual body.” “There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.”

This argument misses the whole point of I Corinthians 15. Paul is not distinguishing the resurrected lost (the “natural” in renewed earth thinking) from the resurrected saved (the “spiritual”)! He is talking about the same persons—Christians—who have an earthly body that is corruptible, dishonorable, weak, and natural. That body will be changed into one that is incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual.

That is what we who are Christians, the creation of God, long for. We will receive a spiritual body and be taken to a spiritual place in that day. That place will be heaven. The earth will be no more.

God’s purpose for creating was to bring “many sons to glory” (Heb. 2:10). What is that glory? It is not a glorified physical earth. Jesus called it “the glory I had before the world was” (John 17:5). That is the glory He had in heaven and has now. Renewed earth advocates want to go back to the beginning in Genesis. The problem is they don’t go back far enough—into eternity.

We need to keep singing that old hymn, “This World is Not My Home.”