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Messianic Perspectives[®]

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

Yes,
**HEAVEN
MAY BE CLOSER
THAN YOU THINK**

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have you ever heard the term “heaven on earth”?

It’s supposed to portray something perfect and idyllic, as in, “Her new job was like heaven on earth compared to her old one.”

This phrase, however, is more than mere hyperbole; it’s a prophetic picture of Heaven’s future location, a real, physical, tangible place right here on Earth.

Are you shocked? Have you always thought of Heaven as something airy and ethereal that exists up in the clouds somewhere? If so, don’t worry; you’re not alone. Many believers are surprised when they begin to discover these heavenly truths in God’s Word. This physical world isn’t evil or bad. God created the world and pronounced it, not merely good, but “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Later, the Creation was tragically marred and sent into a tailspin by the Fall when Adam and Eve rebelled against God and submitted to the devil (3:6). It’s true that the physical world came under the curse of the Fall (3:17-19), but that curse was temporary. It will be reversed (gradually, over time) during the coming Millennium (Isa. 65:25).



Expulsion from the Garden of Eden
Peter Paul Rubens

While they were in the Garden of Eden, in their unfallen condition, fellowshiping with the LORD when He came to visit each evening (Gen. 3:8), Adam and Eve were experiencing “heaven on earth.” The Bible tells us precious little about their pre-Fall lives in Eden. It doesn’t even tell us how long they were there before the Fall happened—was it days, weeks, or maybe even years? We don’t know. What we do know, however, is that the Fall changed everything. Nonetheless, those original, Eden-like conditions will be restored someday when Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) reigns from the Davidic throne in Jerusalem and begins to neutralize the effects of the Fall.

Are We Thinking Like Pagans?

So, then, where did the idea come from that this physical world is bad—and that we can’t wait to leave it behind and enjoy spiritual bliss in Heaven? Believe it or not, it’s an idea that’s rooted in a pagan concept known as dualism. When a believer dies, for instance, we say, “Well, he’s in a better place now.” And that’s true, in a certain sense; but let’s not forget that our departed loved ones, if they’re believers, are coming back to this same “old world” someday (Zech. 14:5; 1 Thess. 4:14; Jude 14)!

Here’s how paganism has influenced our thinking about Heaven. First, consider the idea that there’s something evil or wrong about this physical world—so we can’t wait to leave it behind and graduate to a higher, more perfect spiritual plane in Heaven. This thinking is misguided. **In fact, it’s a Christianized variant of ancient, heretical Gnosticism.** Ancient Gnostics saw the material world as flawed and evil. To them, the non-material was preferable.¹



A Mandaean house of worship in Nasiriya, Iraq. Mandaeanism is a Gnostic sect from the first century AD that still persists in modern times.

By the way, Gnostics are still around. To this day, they dismiss the Genesis account of Creation as mythological, and they reject the historicity of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Book of Genesis, however, sets the record straight and tells us that God created the cosmos and pronounced it “very good” (Gen. 1:31); yet, Gnostics thumb their noses at Scripture and insist that the physical world was created flawed and imperfect.² True perfection, to them, is non-material.

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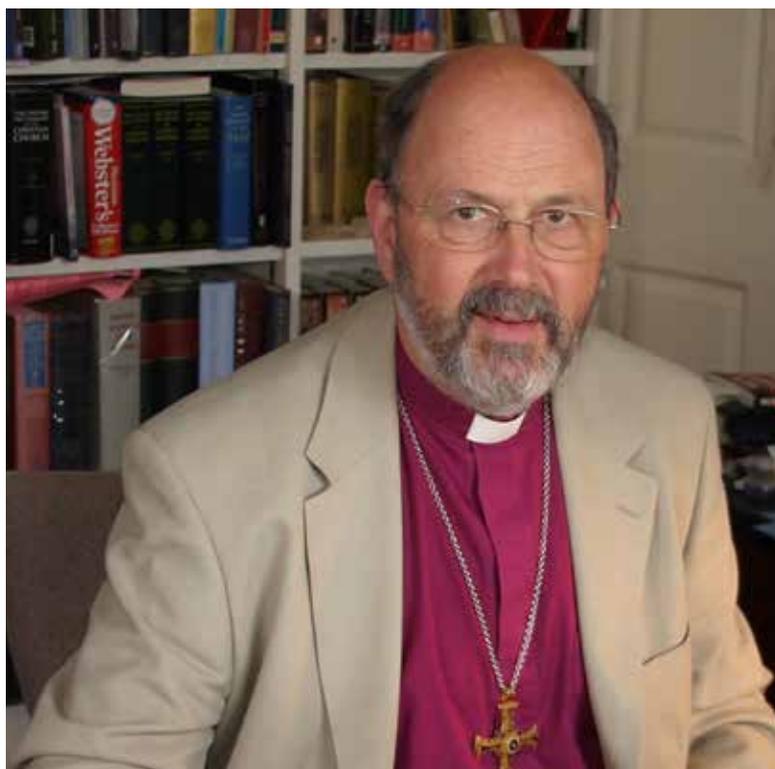


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Second, this notion (about graduating via death from earth to a higher spiritual plane in Heaven) is rooted in ancient Platonism.³ Here's what N.T. Wright, research professor of New Testament at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and one of the world's leading biblical scholars, has to say:

That (leaving earth and going to heaven) is basically the Platonic worldview. You find it in Plutarch at the end of the first century. . . . The normal Western narrative is about saved souls going to heaven when they die. That is not the biblical narrative. The Bible ends with the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth so that the dwelling of God is with humans. . . . **Heaven is God's space, which is designed to be married to earth at the end** (emphasis added).⁴

Planet Earth was designed to be the place where God and man would dwell together forever (Psalm 23:6). It will be the home base from which we will explore the galaxies and beyond!



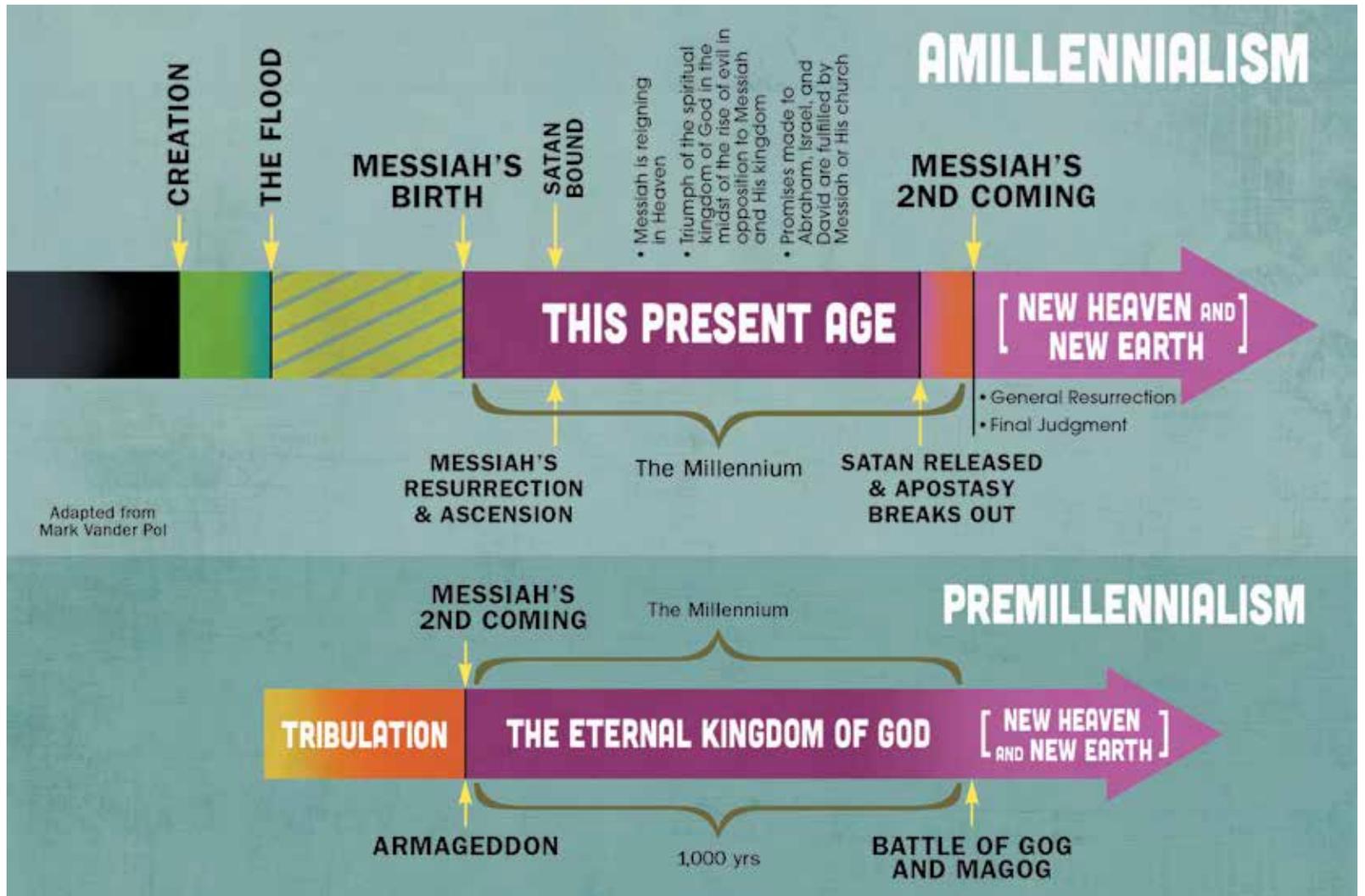
English theologian, New Testament scholar, and popular author N.T. "Tom" Wright

Where Is Heaven Now?

If all of this is true, and Heaven really is tangible and down-to-earth, it raises an interesting question: where is it now? Heaven obviously isn't here on earth. Just look around at all the pain, injustice, conflict, rampant sin, and death—and that much becomes abundantly clear. It's not here! So, if Heaven is supposed to be here on earth, why isn't it here now?

The answer is that we are currently in an interim period between the devil's defeat at Calvary and the Messianic King's return to establish His Kingdom on the earth. 1 John 3:8 says, *He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*





That “manifestation” of the Son of God took place in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. He was born to a young Jewish virgin named Miriam (Mary) and her betrothed husband, Yosef (Joseph). He was not a son of Adam (which would have made him a sinner by virtue of His possession of Adamic DNA) because Yosef wasn’t His biological father. It’s the only time in history that the Adamic lineage was broken. Every other human being ever born has been a direct descendant of Adam. But Yeshua was conceived in Miriam’s womb by divine intervention: *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 1:18).

- MESSIAH’S FIRST COMING → TO DELIVER THE FATAL BLOW AT CALVARY (1 John 3:8)
- INTERIM PERIOD (AD 30—PRESENT) → THE DE-FANGED (BUT STILL DANGEROUS) DEVIL CONTINUES TO BE “THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR” (Eph. 2:2; 1 Peter 5:8)⁵
- MESSIAH’S SECOND COMING → TO BIND THE ENEMY FOR A THOUSAND YEARS (Rev. 20:2)
- AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM → SATAN (AND HIS FOLLOWERS) WILL BE DEFEATED AND CAST FINALLY AND FOREVER INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE (Rev. 20:14-15)

So where is Heaven (i.e., the New Jerusalem) during this interim period while the devil continues to be active down here on earth? The answer is that we don’t know exactly where it is. However, we can do some sanctified guesswork.

We know, for example, that at the beginning of the Millennium, the New Jerusalem will come “down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). Since it comes down from above, we can safely assume that its current location is somewhere above the earth, in outer space. It may even be in a different dimension from our own—so it wouldn’t be visible from the earth, even if it was hovering overhead (like the moon, 235,000 miles away).

Another clue may be derived from the Lord’s Ascension back to Heaven, some forty days after His Resurrection. Luke recalls, *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel* (Acts 1:9-10).

So, the Lord returned to the New Jerusalem by ascending upward and disappearing into a “cloud.” If Heaven is situated in another dimension, that cloud may have been some sort of dimensional portal (or doorway) that facilitates travel between Heaven and earth. Interestingly, the Apostle John said he received his vision of the Book of Revelation through a “door standing open in Heaven” (Rev. 4:1). Could the “door” have been a dimensional portal of some sort? It’s a possibility; but again, we don’t know for sure.

Walking Dead

Sometimes people ask why, if the devil has been vanquished (Heb. 2:14), he's still walking around like a roaring lion and causing mischief (1 Peter 5:8). It's a great question!

Think of it like this. We're told that many predators in the wild kill their prey by a process that ends with exsanguination—that is, death from blood loss. The predator, if it's not in a hurry, simply bites or claws its victim and then patiently follows the bleeding animal until it finally and inevitably loses consciousness and drops over dead. During this process, the prey can do its best to evade the predator, but it's to no avail. The predator is patient and knows it's only a matter of time before its next meal is served.



The fatal blow to the devil was delivered at Calvary. He's still on his feet, but he's been "bleeding out" for the past 2,000 years. So, his doom is inevitable. He is, in a sense, "walking dead," because it's only a matter of time before he meets his final and certain demise.

Restoration of All Things

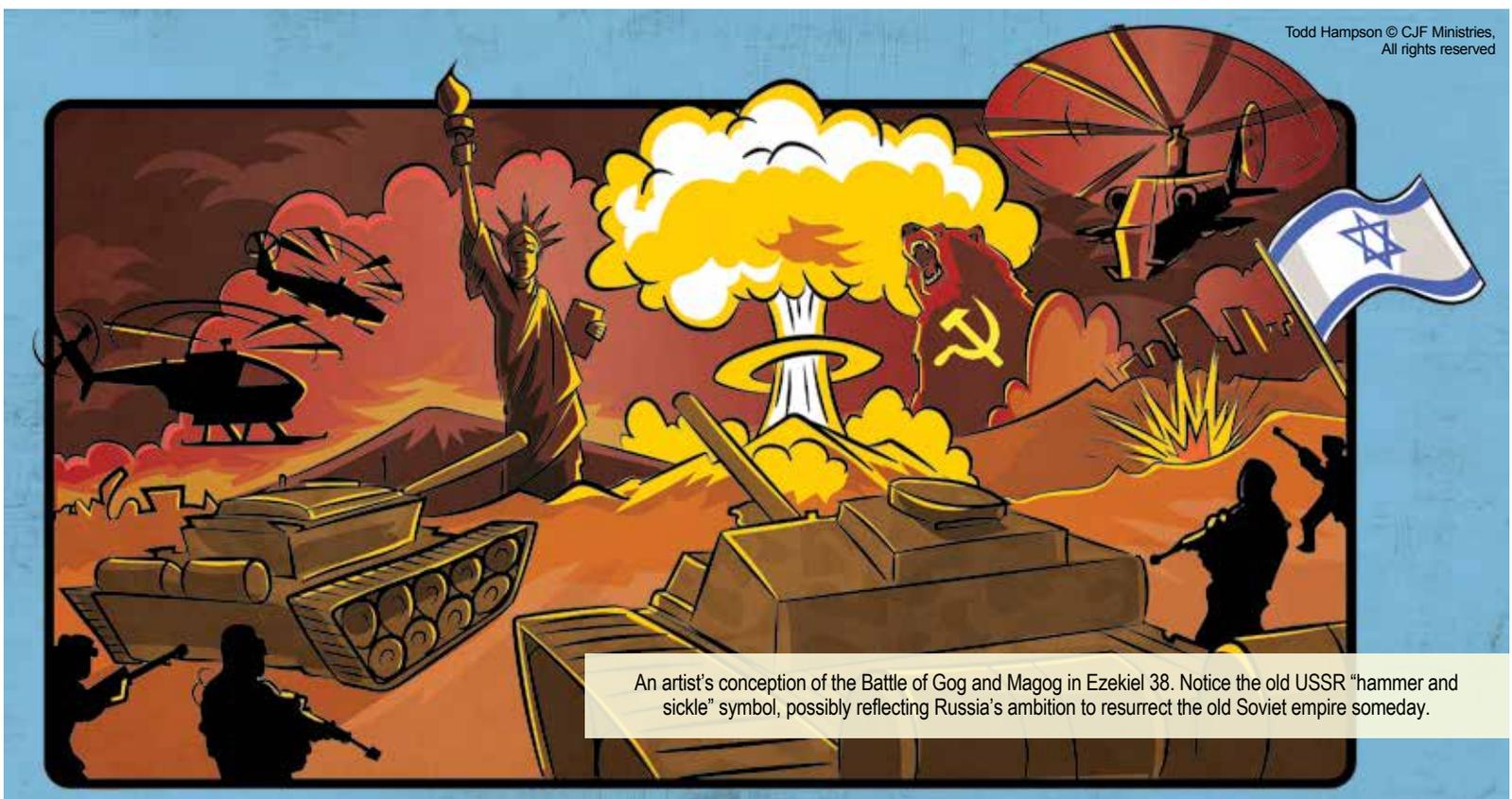
So, then, the Bible says a Millennial Age is coming when the devil will be confined for a thousand years in "the bottomless pit" (lit., "the abyss"; Rev. 20:1, 3). During this Millennium,⁶ as we said earlier, the curse of the Fall will be reversed. The New Testament refers to this period of renewal as "the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). Everything that was lost due to the sin of the first Adam will be restored by the Last Adam (i.e., Yeshua the Messiah; 1 Cor. 15:45).

At the beginning of the Millennium, the New Jerusalem (along with its throngs of inhabitants) will descend from heaven and take its place in the Middle East (Rev. 3:12; 21:2).⁷ It will be a magnificent spectacle!

This turning point between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium will produce a completely new phenomenon, described by Isaiah as "the new heavens and the new earth" (65:17; 66:22).⁸ What Isaiah describes is no mere overhaul of the old-world order, but rather something completely renewed!

Clearly, these "new heavens" and "new earth" aren't in a future, post-Millennium Eternal State, but are a reference to the Millennium itself. The context where the reference in 66:22 occurs is clearly the future reign of the Messiah, when "priests and Levites" (v. 21) will preside over the sacrificial system in the millennial Temple (Ezek. 40-48).

We know the earth itself will still be essentially intact despite the ravages of the Tribulation wars. The millennial prophecies mention many geographical landmarks that will remain on "the new earth" (e.g., Jer. 31:38-40), including identifiable nations like Israel, Egypt, and Assyria (Syria). We are also told that the process of cleaning up and rebuilding after the Tribulation wars will require up to seven years (Ezek. 39:9)—which takes the clean-up through the remainder of the Tribulation and well into the Millennium.⁹



Does “New” Mean It’s Not The Same?

Some scholars say the Greek word for “new” (*kainos*, as in “new” heavens and earth) means the previous earth will be destroyed and a “new” one created. With all due respect, however, that’s reading more into the Greek than what’s really there. Yes, *kainos can* mean something completely different and brand-new; but not always.

Bauer’s lexicon, for example, says everything in the next world will be “new” 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.”¹⁰ Anthony Hoekema explains that *kainos*, in this context, doesn’t mean “the emergence of a cosmos totally other than the present one, but the creation of a universe which, though it has been gloriously renewed, stands in continuity with the present one.”¹¹

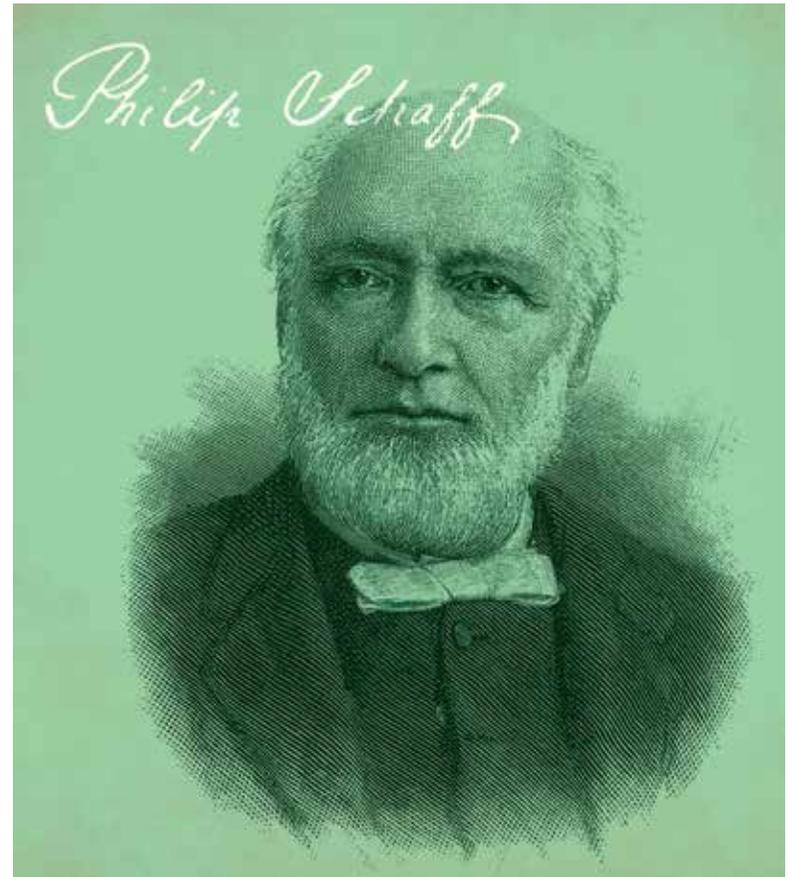


Elsewhere, in fact, when Paul says a believer becomes “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), he uses the word *kainos*. That surely doesn’t mean we aren’t ourselves anymore! In fact, that’s the whole point—we are still ourselves, but by God’s grace we’ve been renewed from the inside out. We have new priorities, a new purpose, a new position, and a new power working in and through us!

The “new earth,” then, will be the same earth we live on today—only it will be renewed and returned to the way it was originally intended to be in the Garden of Eden. There will be no more curse (Rev. 22:3; cp. Gen. 3:17; 5:29). Even in nature, current food chains may be transformed. In some cases, there will no longer be predators and prey (Isa. 65:25), a conversion that will require physical changes—specifically, altering animals’ diets and digestive physiology.¹² Much about this terrestrial transformation remains mysterious, but we know that the changes in the millennial world will be significant and far-reaching.

It Will Be A Physical World

After the Lord’s Resurrection, He remained here for forty days before returning to Heaven. He spent much of that time ministering to His followers and “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). So, if He was telling them that the Kingdom was spiritual, not physical, wouldn’t you expect that to have been their message later, when they spread out over the known world, preaching and teaching?



Yet, virtually all historians agree that the Apostles and the Early Church were chiliasts¹³—that is, they believed in a coming, earthly Kingdom of God. Philip Schaff, the preeminent church historian of the 19th century, notes:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed . . . a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius; while Caius, Origen, Dionysius the Great, Eusebius (as afterwards Jerome and Augustine) opposed it.

The advocates of this theory appeal to the certain promises of the Lord, but particularly to the hieroglyphic passage of the Apocalypse, which teaches a millennial reign of Christ upon this earth after the first resurrection and before the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.¹⁴

Where did the Early Church get this idea about an earthly Kingdom of God? From the Lord himself, when He was teaching them and “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). This is not carnal, misguided “pie in the sky,” dear friends. It’s not wishful thinking. It’s the promise of God—and it’s going to be a down-to-earth, tangible reality!

In his classic book *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn tells a story about a pastor friend coming to visit him one morning. Randy's teaching about Heaven had comforted this man's broken heart after his teenage son died just four months earlier. They chatted briefly and Randy told him how sorry he was to hear about his son's death. Before they parted ways, the preacher reached out and handed Randy a reddish-colored, shiny, polished rock. He explained that he had been told that it was a jasper stone—the same crystalline substance the Bible says will be incorporated into the walls of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18). He said it had comforted him because it was a reminder that the New Jerusalem is real, and that someday he and his son will be reunited in that heavenly City. Now he wanted Randy to have the stone as a token of his appreciation and affection.

Randy says that even to this day, he sometimes takes out that smooth, polished stone and holds it in his hand, turning it over and over with his fingers, as a reminder that Heaven is a real, tangible place.¹⁵ And if Heaven is a real, tangible place, so is the earthly Kingdom of God!



Polished red jasper. There are other varieties, as well (like blue dalmatian jasper).

Doronenko

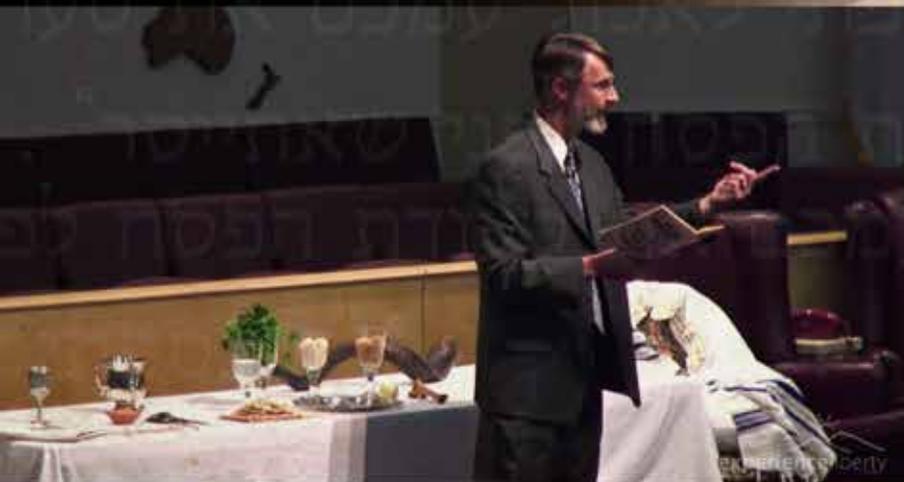
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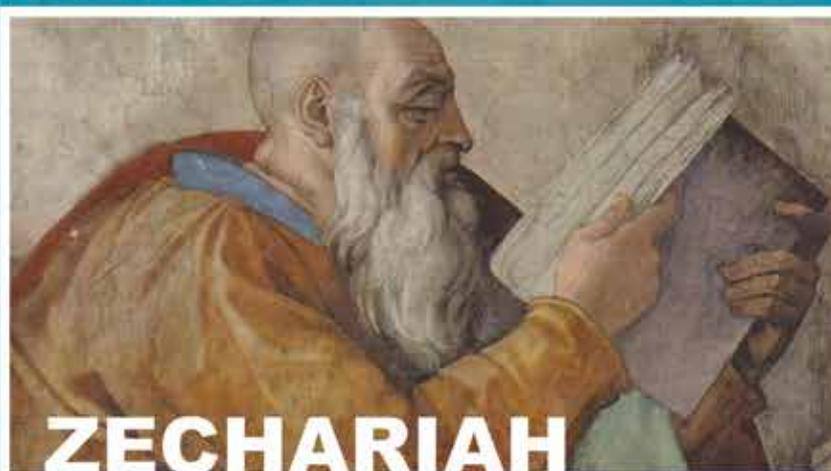
Explore the Jewish roots and celebrate the first of the Seven Feasts of Israel, Passover. A CJF Ministries representative will explain the elements of this important feast, you will see how the Jewish people have observed Passover for the past 3,500 years, how they observe it today, and how it all points to Yeshua, the Passover Lamb who was slain for us. You will also see a comparison of the Old Covenant Passover to the Lord's Supper as Yeshua established it 2,000 years ago with His disciples in the Upper Room.

The Prophets Speak

The Old Testament prophets (not to mention the New Testament writers) repeatedly point us to a future, earthly Kingdom (in a very real sense, Heaven on earth) in which God's will is destined to be done "on earth as it is in Heaven" (Luke 11:2).

A few examples:

- **Psalm 2:** God will establish His King upon the throne in Jerusalem, and He will rule over all nations, including those that were formerly rebellious or antagonistic.¹⁶
- **Psalm 72:** The Psalmist gives a vivid description of an earthly Messianic kingdom, which will span the globe and be characterized by justice and compassion/mercy for all people.
- **Psalm 110:** David describes the future earthly reign of the Warrior Messiah—who is also "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"—from (the New) Jerusalem.
- **Isaiah 2:2-4:** The Prophet refers to a coming earthly kingdom, with the New Jerusalem as its capital, and all nations traveling there to learn the ways of God. He says it will be a time of global peace; hence, implements formerly used to wage war can be repurposed as farming implements to help render hunger non-existent in the future global order. The LORD will sit as ruler and judge over the nations.
- **Isaiah 9:6-7:** A long-expected Child would at last be born of a virgin (7:14) and the governance of the world will someday rest on His shoulder. The Messiah's four-fold name is *Pele Yoetz* (i.e., Wonderful Counselor), *El Gibbor* (Mighty God), *Avi Ad* (Everlasting Father), *Sar Shalom* (Prince of Peace). Unlike all previous kingdoms on the earth, this Child's Kingdom will never come to an end.
- **Isaiah 11:1-4:** The Messiah will "come forth" from the line of Jesse (father of King David). He will be filled with the four-fold Spirit:
 1. The Spirit of the LORD (our Covenant-keeping God)
 2. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding
 3. The Spirit of counsel and might
 4. The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORDThis Spirit-filled Messiah will rule the world with righteousness and justice for all people.
- **Isaiah 65:17-25:** Isaiah describes a supernaturally abundant, peaceful, and prosperous time on the earth, when the deleterious effects of the Fall in Eden will be reversed. It will be an especially "advanced" time for human civilization—the way things were meant to be prior to the Fall.
- **Habakkuk 2:14:** The world will be radically transformed. *For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.*
- **Zechariah 14:** The LORD will return to the Mount of Olives (in the Person of Yeshua the Messiah), supernaturally bring the international Armageddon Campaign to an abrupt and judicious conclusion, and rule over all nations of the earth in His eternal Kingdom.





Conclusion

So, it's true! Heaven (i.e., the New Jerusalem) will be here on the earth someday!¹⁷

And in the meantime, it's "up" there somewhere, possibly in another dimension—and maybe closer than you think.

*But as it is written:
"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for
those who love Him"*

(1 Cor. 2:9).



*Dr. Gary Hedrick
is president of
CJF Ministries.*

¹ The Gnostic narrative is silly but entertaining: "Theologian Michael Reeves explains that the various strains of Gnosticism agreed that God is The One. The only thing that existed eternally was this singular God in his good, spiritual world. Then, somehow, something emanated from this One. As this thing separated from The One, it was seen to be obviously inferior. Only the spiritual One was good; everything else was bad. So, The One vomited this other out of its presence, which explains how the physical world came to be. Someday The One will return and suck the universe back into its happy singularity, and everything will be One again" (*Becoming Worldly Saints* by Michael Wittmer [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015], np).

² Here's the Gnostic view of the cosmos, straight from the horse's mouth at the Gnosis Archive (gnosis.org): "Many religions advocate that humans are to be blamed for the imperfections of the world. Supporting this view, they interpret the Genesis myth as declaring that transgressions committed by the first human pair brought about a 'fall' of creation resulting in the present corrupt state of the world. Gnostics respond that this interpretation of the myth is false. The blame for the world's failings lies not with humans, but with the creator."

³ Some scholars appeal to the Book of Hebrews in defending the dualistic, platonic view: "The 'Platonism' of [the Book of] Hebrews does not derive from a direct reading of the philosopher, but is an outlook whose basic perceptions and convictions point to the influence of a philosophical school. The outlook is dualistic. A sharp distinction is drawn between the realm of the material and the spiritual. . . . Ontologically, 'things unseen' (that is, the spiritual) are regarded as more real than 'things seen' (the material); material things are always in stages of growth and corruption, never stable in their being, whereas spiritual things are eternal" (*The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, Eds. [Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015], 111). An eloquent explanation! However, the alleged dualism can be pressed too far. Note, for instance, that the writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham "waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God" (11:10). He says it's a "continuing" (never-ending) city (13:14). A bustling, visible, enduring, divinely constructed megalopolis resting on solid "foundations" hardly sounds like something transient or intangible!

⁴ "Heaven + Earth: N.T. Wright Sets Things Straight About the Kingdom of God," an interview by Douglas Estes with Professor N.T. Wright in *Bible Study Magazine* (January/February 2020 issue). The interview was a promotion for Wright's recently published book, *The New Testament in Its World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019). More information at biblestudymagazine.com.

⁵ According to zoologists, a lion's roar is primarily territorial. The roar is how an older lion stakes out his territory and warns others of his presence. See "Ask the Expert: What makes a lion roar?" by Sarah Crupi, on the online blog of the Cleveland Zoological Society (Nov. 30, 2017) at clevelandzoosociety.org. Satan, too, is territorial. He knows the earth is currently (and temporarily) his domain (2 Cor. 4:4), and he has diabolical ways of intimidating God's people and making his presence known.

⁶ The term "Millennium" comes from Latin and means, literally, "(a) thousand years."

⁷ For more details about the New Jerusalem, see "Seven Things Every Christian Should Know About Heaven" in the March-April 2019 issue of *Messianic Perspectives*, available in our online archives at cjfm.org.

⁸ Many Bible-believers see the "new heavens and a new earth" as a completely new creation that follows a supposed destruction (by fire) of the current heavens and earth at the close of the Millennium. However, we have a different interpretation of 2 Peter 3:7-12—and there are many Scriptures that speak of the current earth as

unending (e.g., Eccles. 1:4; Psalm 104:5; 119:90). Other passages referring to the earth passing away, we believe, have alternate explanations. For a good treatment of this topic, see "What Does the Bible Mean When It Says, 'Heaven and Earth Shall Pass Away?'" by Jack Wellman on the *What Christians Want to Know* Bible study site (whatchristianswanttoknow.com). For a summary of our teaching on 2 Peter 3:7-12, see the "Q & A" in the October-December 2018 issue of *Messianic Perspectives* (pp. 10, 12), available in our online archives at cjfm.org.

⁹ We believe there are two battles of Gog and Magog—Gog and Magog One during the Tribulation Period (Ezek. 38) and Gog and Magog Two at the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20). Both will (1) take place in Israel and (2) involve a massive invasion force approaching Jerusalem. The battle described in Ezekiel 38 will be a precursor to the final conflict in Revelation 20 (more than a thousand years later), which will be, literally, "the war to end all wars." Historically, it's not unprecedented for two battles or wars to share the same name—like World War One and World War Two, for instance.

¹⁰ Walter Bauer, *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Cited in *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).

¹¹ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 280. Cited in *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn.

¹² Some people make sweeping statements claiming that in the millennial New World, there will be no more death or decay. This will no doubt be the case *inside* the New Jerusalem; however, *outside* those jasper walls (during the Millennium) there will be an occasional death (Isa. 65:20), even though longevity will be greatly increased (vv. 19-20). After all, death took place in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:21), so why not during the Millennium? Furthermore, sacrifices in the millennial Temple (Ezek. 40—48), also outside the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22), will require death and the shedding of blood. Also, bacterial processes (involving molecular decay) will still operate in a way that's beneficial (and even necessary) for human and animal life outside the City. God created bacteria for a reason. They are necessary for biological life!

¹³ The term "chiliasm" ("thousand") comes from Greek, and "millennialism" ("thousand years") comes from Latin. They both refer to a future, thousand-year reign of the Messiah from Jerusalem, which will be the capital of "the new heavens and the new earth." The context of Isaiah 65 and 66 makes it clear that the period of "the new heavens and the new earth" includes the Millennium, as well as what comes after it (65:17; 66:22).

¹⁴ Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 2, Chapter 12, Section 158 ("Chiliasm").

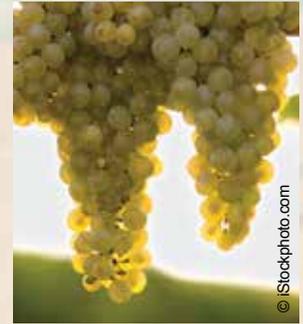
¹⁵ Alcorn, *Heaven*, Chapter 24 ("What Is the New Jerusalem").

¹⁶ Some interpreters claim that prophecies like this one were fulfilled during the reign of King Solomon. That is, David was referring to his son, the future Davidic king. That may be true in some instances; however, in numerous prophecies, there are elements that simply don't fit Solomon. For instance, his rule was never extended to "the ends of the earth" (Psalm 2:8). Therefore, the referent must be Someone more distant in the future. The psalm is clearly Messianic.

¹⁷ For more of our teaching about the future Heaven on earth, see Gary's article, "Seven Things Every Christian Should Know about Heaven," in the March-April 2019 issue of our bimonthly publication, *Messianic Perspectives*. Also, see the related article, "Seven Things Every Christian Should Know About the Coming Kingdom," in the May-June 2019 issue. Both are available in our online archives at cjfm.org.

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



Mardi Gras Evangelism

Michelle Beadle, CJFM representative (New Orleans), and volunteers take to the streets every year to evangelize during Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Metairie. They hand out pamphlets and ask individuals to respond to a six-question survey. Following the survey, the person is asked if he or she knows what the Good News is. Michelle writes: “They usually say that they don’t, so we ask, ‘May I share the Good News with you?’ This gives us the opportunity to share the Gospel with them.” During Mardi Gras 2019, Michelle was privileged to pray with a woman to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Recently, Michelle received a phone call from the woman’s mother telling her that she needed a Bible and was hoping that Michelle could send her one just like the one she had sent her daughter after she prayed to receive the Lord. Michelle ordered the Bible, and then the woman called again the following week to ask when the Bible would be delivered. She also told Michelle that she had begun attending church with her daughter. Michelle adds: “A long conversation ensued, and, at the end of the conversation, she also gave her heart to the Lord. Now both mother and daughter have a living, loving relationship with Jesus. It does not get any better than that!” Michelle also mailed her discipleship materials, and they are now doing a discipleship Bible study via telephone. Please pray for these two ladies and their walk with the Lord. Pray also for Michelle and her team to have opportunities to share the Gospel this year at Mardi Gras 2020.

“God is not Dead” on College Campuses

CJFM Representative Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH) leads campus ministries at Ohio State University (OSU) and Columbus State Community College (CSCC). He and his team had several witnessing encounters with a Mormon student, who eventually transferred to another college. However, he contacted Eric to let them know that he “recently felt compelled to give his life to the Messiah and has left the Mormon church. He is now looking for a new church in his area.” Eric asks that we please pray for him to get rooted in a strong, Bible-teaching church. While doing outreach at CSCC, Eric had an opportunity to explain the Gospel to a female student who had been reared in a church but had never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. She repented and trusted the Lord for her salvation, and Eric is helping her find a new church in the area. Eric also hosts speakers and arranged for Dr. James Tour, a Jewish believer and world-leading organic chemist, to lecture at OSU. He invited a student who was not a believer to attend. Recently, this student told Eric that he is now attending a Bible study and considering becoming a follower of Messiah Jesus. Eric writes: “We do believe God planted a seed in this student’s heart. Please pray for him to truly trust the Lord and make a commitment to follow Him.”

Next Year in Japan, Again!

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas), and his wife, Oanh, returned recently from a speaking tour in Japan. Richard taught on the “Pre-Trib Rapture” (from his book, *Israel in Prophecy: A Chronology*) and they both gave their testimonies at three separate conferences in Osaka, Tokyo, and Kanazawa. Richard adds: “A total of 1,100 people attended, and 13 individuals gave their hearts to Jesus. They were also touched by Oanh’s testimony on how God blessed Oanh, who is Vietnamese, and her family and protected them as they escaped even though they were not believers at the time.” Richard and Oanh were invited back to Japan in 2020. Richard’s messages will be on “Yeshua’s Second Coming.” Please pray for another fruitful trip.

Uber

CJFM Representative Diann Parkas (New Jersey) recently hired Uber for a trip to the airport, which is an hour away. Her driver was a Muslim man from India, who lives in her area. Following the usual friendly topics, the conversation turned to spiritual matters. Diann shared her personal testimony with him and gave him reasons why she believed the Bible is the Word of God: “I explained that the Bible teaches that we are all sinners in need of a Savior, that we cannot save ourselves, and that’s why Jesus came—because we cannot be good enough to earn our salvation. Salvation can only be achieved by God’s grace through faith. His belief is that one garners favor with God through good deeds. Please pray that God will bring to mind what he heard and give him the grace to believe.” *Answer to prayer:* The Jewish woman Diann witnessed to in a nursing home recently prayed to receive Yeshua (Jesus) as her personal Savior. Diann is now teaching her how to live out her life in Messiah. Please pray for her spiritual growth.

Other Drivers

CJFM Representative and Staff Writer Violette Berger (Phoenix) usually takes the Airport Shuttle to the airport, but unfortunately, that shuttle service went out of business. Someone highly recommended a private driver. He was wonderful—just as she said—professional, articulate, and punctual. Violette and her grandson, Austin, had a great conversation with the driver on their trip to the airport, but had an extraordinary one on the return trip. It focused mainly on “religion.” He had left Catholicism and was now an advocate for “social justice.” However, he also shared some personal struggles he has had in the past, recognizing that it was God who spared his life. This gave Violette an opportunity to share the Gospel and point out the difference between religion and a personal relationship with Jesus—and our need for a Savior. He asked some very interesting questions and would like to continue their spiritual discussion over the phone. Austin will also be hiring him again for a future trip. Please pray for C’s salvation. 🙏

Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at garyh@cjfm.org, or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

QUESTION: As a working scientist, I have difficulty with the idea of there being “no more sea” after the Lord returns (Rev. 21:1). The earth’s surface is 2/3 water and her oceans are a key component of the global ecosystem. Without them there would be very little (if any) rain to water crops (I’m assuming that people will need to eat during the Millennium) and to keep trees alive. Trees, of course, produce the oxygen we need in order to breathe. Without the oceans, the earth would become a barren desert wasteland. Am I thinking too scientifically here?

ANSWER: No, I don’t believe you are. In fact, sometimes we don’t think scientifically enough! What is science, anyway? It’s man’s efforts to analyze and understand the elements and forces of nature that God created and the physical laws (i.e., laws of attraction, physics, etc.) He set in motion. I’m a Bible teacher, not a scientist; but I believe God and science should go hand-in-hand. Some of the greatest scientists in history have been Christian and Jewish men and women who believed in God. Driving a wedge between God and science is a ruse of the devil. After all, God invented science—and the first two scientists were Adam and Eve! They were tasked by God with studying the forces of nature and harnessing them for the benefit of mankind (i.e., “subduing” the creation; Gen. 1:26-28).

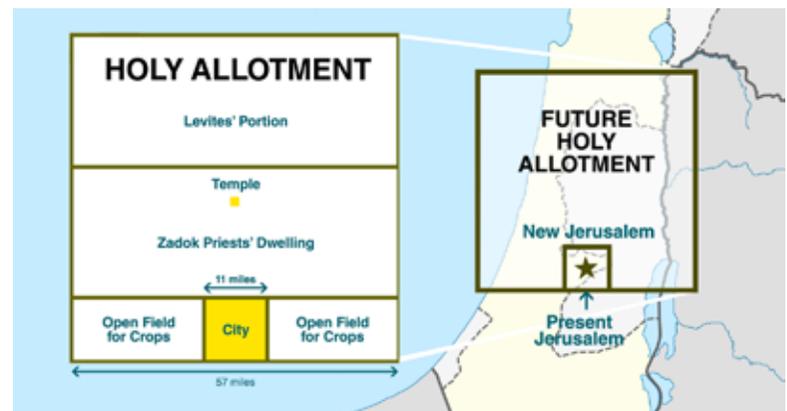
Before I answer your question about Revelation 21, though, let me tell you a little story. Many years ago, when I was an associate pastor in Georgia, I went to visit a church member who was a contractor and had built a beautiful, hilltop house for his family. We stood in the front yard and looked out over the valley below—and the view was just breathtaking. However, he was concerned because the county was planning to build a road across one end of his property, and it would mar their beautiful view. We could see off in the distance where engineers had been surveying and leaving behind stakes with red ribbons tied on them. A few weeks later, this brother approached me at church. He was grinning from ear to ear and blurted out three simple words: “No more road!” Then, he explained that he had attended a meeting of the county commissioners and talked them into rerouting the road so it wouldn’t interfere with his view. He was very happy! He said he convinced them it would save money if they followed his alternate route because they wouldn’t have to build a bridge! So, here’s my point. When this man said, “No more road,” he didn’t mean the road wouldn’t exist anywhere anymore. What he meant was that it wouldn’t be on or near his property and he wouldn’t have to look at it after all.

Now let’s look at Revelation 21. Here, John is describing his prophetic view of the New Jerusalem as it descends (in the future) from heaven to earth and settles in the Middle East where the “old” Jerusalem used to be: *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 (vv. 1-2).

The OT Scriptures indicate repeatedly that the Middle East will undergo vast and sweeping topographical changes at the beginning of the Millennium. For instance, valleys will be raised up and hills will be leveled to form a huge, sprawling plateau (Isa. 40:4).

Janet Willis, in her excellent book *What on Earth Is Heaven Like?* (Sebring, FL: Khesed Publications, 2013), uses geographical markers from passages like Zechariah 14:10 to map out the enormous future platform (which she refers to as the “holy allotment” of land) upon which the New Jerusalem, priestly dwellings, and the Temple will someday be situated (see Chapter Three, “Majestic Measurements”).



So, what John is very likely saying in Revelation 21 is that, even though it might look at first glance like this future platform (i.e., a square plateau with measurements of roughly 57 miles on each of its four sides) will encroach on both the Mediterranean and Dead seas, it really won’t because *there will be “no more sea” in those areas* (see Janet’s diagram, where she superimposes an outline of the future plateau on a current map of Israel) due to the geographical changes.

We know the statement “there was no more sea” doesn’t mean there won’t be any more seas left anywhere in the world because the Bible says the Dead Sea will be transformed into a fresh water sea and will be teeming with fish and other marine life during the Millennium (Ezek. 47:8-12). Another Millennial prophecy in Isaiah 11 also mentions the sea (vv. 9-11). You don’t have to worry—the seas of the world aren’t going anywhere anytime soon.

Keep on thinking scientifically, my friend. We need trained people like you to help us meet the science-based challenges of unbelievers and skeptics in our declining culture. God bless you!

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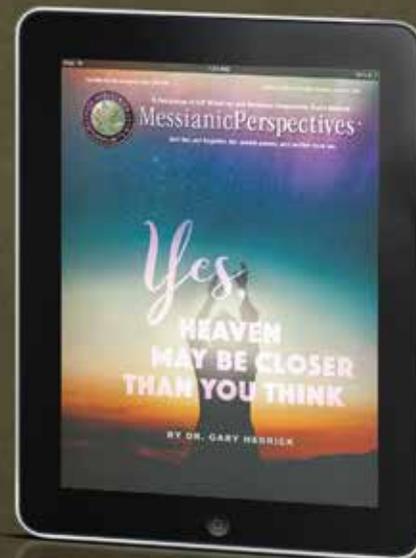
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