

## **WILL HEAVEN BE ON EARTH?**

### **Bobby L. Graham**

Recent decades have seen the rise of many strange teachings, among which is the one here considered: namely, that heaven will be here on earth. Although many have not heard of this teaching, it is currently being advocated by several outspoken teachers. What does the Bible say about this teaching?

While it usually takes much to gain our attention, in this instance, the usual response is something like “Wait! What?” It is such a radically different doctrine which alleges that earth will be renovated/renewed to serve as heaven’s location, that people often react with disbelief that anybody believes such. It will be “down here,” not “up there!” While the actual location of heaven might be unknown and, thus, irrelevant, much more is involved in this case.

In Revelation 21:1-5, there is John’s record of a part of his vision, in which the holy city, the New Jerusalem with its redeemed inhabitants, came down from God. She was prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband. What John saw he described as the new heavens and new earth, because the first heavens and earth had passed away, along with the sea. God was dwelling among the redeemed; they were at home with the Lord. The vision’s depiction of this scene “coming down” in no way indicates the location of heaven, but the source or origin of the vision.

Our question is, “Where will this take place?” The main idea of “New Creation Theology” is not new, because this idea was associated with Bishop Methodius of Olympus, who was martyred in AD 311. It resurfaced in nineteenth century Seventh Day Adventism and also in Jehovah’s Witness doctrine. It was briefly echoed in the Restoration Movement.

Jesus begged to differ from all of these! In Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, and Luke 21:33, Jesus said that heaven and earth would pass away, but His word would not pass away. Note that He did not say that earth will be purified by fire, as these people claim will happen. No, He instead said that it will come to an end or perish. According to Jesus, the saved will be with Him in heaven, not on earth (John 14:2-3). He told the apostles they could not then come where He was going, but later they would come where He would be (John 13:33, 36; 14:1-3). It cannot be denied that the teaching being examined contradicts the clear teaching of Jesus.

The apostle Peter’s teaching aligns well with that of his Master. In 2 Peter 3:10-13, he discusses the earth’s future destruction. He employed such verbs as “pass away,” the same as Jesus, and “dissolve/destroy” of everything physical, including the heavens and earth.

Likewise, the teaching of Paul, who was not one whit less than the twelve, pictures Jesus as coming in flaming fire to take disciples away from the earth (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). Paul affirmed that this teaching agreed with that of Jesus (1 Thess. 4:15). He also speaks of the spiritual body given to both the dead and the living saints at the resurrection, that they might possess glorified bodies like Jesus (1 Cor. 15:40-49; Phil. 3:20-21).

Various biblical statements are senseless if this strange doctrine is true. Jesus's admonition to lay up treasures in heaven, not on the earth, makes no sense if heaven is a place on earth (Matt. 6:19). Paul's exhortation in Colossians 3:1-2 to seek the things that are above and to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth, is equally nonsensical in view of this idea. His teaching about things earthly (things seen) being temporary in 2 Corinthians 4:18 is equivalent to Hebrews 12:26-29 which says that the things of earth will be shaken, as opposed to remaining, and also to 1 John 2:16-17 saying that the world passes away. We need to remember that our Father is in heaven, and that we hope to go there to be with Him, because Christ our *forerunner* has preceded us there (Matt. 6:9; Heb. 6:19-20; 9:11-15).

--*Truth Magazine*, November 2024