

# FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT ON HEAVEN

Barry O'Dell

**T**he gospel writers give us four unique, inspired accounts of the life of the most influential man that has ever lived - Jesus the Christ. There were innumerable people impacted by His life while He was on earth, and even more since He ascended to go back to His heavenly Father. A few of those whom He influenced were men who would later pen the books of the New Testament. What did He and those men say about this place known as *heaven*?

As for Jesus, He taught the following:

- His disciples have a reward **in heaven** (Matt. 5:10-12; Lk. 6:22-23).
- Our treasures are to be **in heaven**, not on **the earth** (Matt. 6:19-21; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 12:33).
- His/our Father is **in heaven** (Matt. 5:45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21; Mk. 11:25-26; Lk. 11:2).
- He has all authority **in heaven and on earth** (Matt. 28:18).
- There is joy **in heaven** when a sinner repents (Lk. 15:7).
- There were things bound **in heaven** that would be bound **on earth** (Matt. 16:19; 18:18).
- As one reads John's record of the life of Christ, it should be noted how many times Jesus stated that He **came from heaven** or was **sent from heaven** and was **returning to heaven** (Jn. 3:13, 17; 5:24, 36-38; 6:33, 38, 41-42; 7:29; 8:21-23; 9:5; 13:33, 36; 14:1-3). This particular list could go on and on!

What is the logical conclusion when reading the words of Christ about heaven? Heaven and earth are two different realms of existence. Jesus came from above (Jn. 8:23). John the baptizer stated, "...He is from above...from heaven" (Jn. 3:31). One would have to *try* to misunderstand this clear, simple teaching!

The first four writers are very clear! What about the other writers of the New Testament? Paul wrote extensively on this subject. For example, while on earth he had "**a desire to depart, and to be with Christ**" (Phil. 1:23). The Christian has "**an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens**" (2 Cor. 5:1). Consider these passages written by Paul - Ephesians 1:10; 3:15; 6:9; Colossians 1:5; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:10. The writer of Hebrews taught the same thing that Jesus and Paul taught - that heaven and earth are two different places - Hebrews 9:24; 10:34; 12:23. Peter spoke in the same terms - 1 Peter 1:4; 3:22.

What is the point? Why does this matter? Because there are many, not only in the denominational world, but, sadly even within the Lord's church who are teaching that heaven will one day be on earth - a renovated or renewed earth. To the contrary of all the above statements of Jesus,

Paul, Peter, etc., on the fact that heaven and earth are two separate places, some teach otherwise. There are a couple of passages in particular that are used to advocate this teaching. Two passages frequently used are Second Peter 3:10 and Revelation 21:1-4 which speak of the new heaven and earth. Here are some problems with that teaching:

1. Both passages clearly state the current heaven and earth will "**pass away**." *Pass away* is from a Greek word that means, "to pass away, be removed, disappear." This is exactly what Jesus and John taught (Matt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33; 1 Jn. 2:17). This current dwelling place will pass away and there will be a new dwelling place for eternity!
2. The language of 2 Peter 3:10-12 is very clear. Notice the other terms that Peter used to describe the events of the end other than "**pass away**." The "elements shall **melt** with fervent heat." *Melt* is from a Greek word that means "to be loosed or destroyed." Peter wrote that the earth would be, "**burned up**." Some say that this word should be translated "discovered" or "laid bare." Here is the problem with that - it contradicts Peter and Jesus. They both said that heaven and earth would "**pass away**." Peter also said that all these things would be "**dissolved**." That is the same word for "**melt**" in verse 10! Peter also used a term in verse 12 (*shall melt - teiko*) that means "to dissolve or liquefy."

In an effort to bolster the error that heaven will be on earth, Peter's text is forced to contradict many other New Testament passages on heaven and earth.

Revelation 21 speaks of a new heaven and new earth as well. While it does paint a word-picture for us about the beauties of eternity, it must be kept in context. First, John stated that "the first heaven and first earth were **passed away**." Second, it was "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Beginning in verse 9, John recorded what he saw. If this is telling us that heaven will literally be on earth it is also teaching (1) it will be on a high mountain (v. 10), (2) there are 12 pearly gates, angels, and the names of the 12 tribes of Israel written on the gates (v. 12, 21), (3) there are 12 foundations (v. 14) and the city is perfectly square (v. 16). It would literally be 1,500 miles square and high! Now, either John is describing a literal, renovated earth or he is painting a picture of the glorified church at rest with God after remaining faithful through terrible persecution. An honest reading of this chapter proves the latter to be true. Again, the "first heaven and the first earth were "**passed away**." A passage with such figurative and symbolic language should not be used to teach a doctrine that would contradict other plain, non-figurative Scriptures.

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## BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS TEACH HEAVEN IS NOT ON EARTH

Billy Bland

**W**hile man will live forever, it will not be on the earth. In fact Peter, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote that when Jesus comes again the heavens and the earth shall be “burned up.” Peter stated, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:10–12). Would not even a casual reader of the above text understand the earth and the works that are therein shall be **burned up**? Some however, might ask “but does not the context also mention a new heavens and new earth”? Yes, it does. After saying the earth will be burned up when the Lord returns, Peter then said, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). The new heavens and new earth are used as a figure describing the future dwelling of God’s people. They are so used in both the Old and New Testaments.

“The current dwelling place of God’s people serves as a figure of the future dwelling place. Since God’s faithful ones are to live with him eternally in [the third] heaven (Matt. 5:12; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:4; et al.), the “new heavens and new earth” figuratively represent the spiritual (not physical) dwelling place of the righteous (cf. 1 Cor. 15:48-54). This is one of the many examples in the Bible where physical symbols are used to illustrate spiritual concepts” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22,45; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 12:22-23; 1 Pet. 2:5-9; 3:20-21; et al.) (Moore).

Old Testament saints knew heaven was the eternal home of the soul. King David knew his dead son could **not return** to him, but he could **go** to him. He said, “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23). Obviously, David did not believe in a “renovated” earth. His son would “**not return to him**” on earth, but he would “**go to him.**” Abraham and his offspring knew they were strangers and pilgrims on earth and they looked for a heavenly city. The writer of Hebrews stated, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to

have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:13–16).

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, affirmed our eternal home is “in the heavens,” and not here on earth. “For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal **in the heavens**” (2 Cor. 5:1). Since it is “eternal **in the heavens**,” it will never be here upon the earth. Paul also says the Christian’s hope is “laid up for you **in heaven.**” To the saints in Colosse, Paul said, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints, **For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven**, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:3–5). Since our hope is laid up for us **in heaven**, it is not laid up for us on earth. Jesus taught, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon **earth**, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in **heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat. 6:19–21). Jesus contrasted **earth** with **heaven**.

The Hebrews’ writer states; “Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 6:19–20). Our hope is “within the veil,” where Jesus has entered (heaven). Likewise, Paul says our affections should be set on things which are **above where Christ is dwelling**. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are **above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things **above**, not on things on the **earth**. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the **earth**...” (Col. 3:1–5). Paul repeatedly contrasted the words **above** and **earth**. The Christians’ affections and hopes are on the above and not on the earth. Paul reminds us that our citizenship is **in heaven where Christ is**. “For our conversation is **in heaven**; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20).

Finally, attention is given to the fact that our living hope and our inheritance is laid up for us **in heaven**. “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, ...continued at top of next page...

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and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, **reserved in heaven** for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:3–5). Peter affirmed that the Christian’s inheritance is **reserved in heaven**. The Christian looks forward to the time he will go to heaven. There he will be with God and with all of the redeemed from all ages. May we each so live that heaven will be our eternal home (Matt. 25:31-46).

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Works cited

Moore, Kevin. “What Is Meant By The New Heavens And New Earth In 2 Peter 3:13-14.” *Moore Perspective*, 5 Oct. 2016, [kmooreperspective.blogspot.com/2016/10/what-is-meant-by-new-heavens-and-new.html](http://kmooreperspective.blogspot.com/2016/10/what-is-meant-by-new-heavens-and-new.html).

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Another passage used to teach the renovated/renewed earth doctrine is Romans 8:19-23. The argument is that the *whole creation* is waiting for redemption from the curse of Genesis 3. Paul wrote that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1-2), and that they have become children of God through adoption (Rom. 8:15-17), and they look forward to glory (v. 18). What do the heavens and earth have to look forward to?

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### GOING TO HEAVEN - Ted Knight - September 1974 FCGN

Do you really want to go to heaven? “Oh, yes!” you say, “anyone in his right mind wants to go to heaven.” I feel sure that almost every person would respond in that way when faced with that question. I wonder though, if we are really serious about this matter of going to heaven. Let’s put this desire to the test.

1. Do I want to go to heaven enough to put the Lord first in my life? This means that I am willing to put the Lord’s work ahead of my own.
2. Do I want to go to heaven enough to be patient and longsuffering with my brother? Am I willing to forgive him when he wounds my feelings or do I carry a grudge against him?
3. Do I want to go to heaven enough to make any sacrifice I am called upon to make in order to get there?
4. Do I want to go to heaven enough to become a soul winner? I know that going to heaven may depend upon my taking someone else with me.
5. Do I want to go to heaven enough to love my brother even when he is somewhat hard to love?
6. Do I want to go to heaven enough to control my tongue? Am I determined to use it for the glory of God and to edify others?
7. Does my desire to go to heaven exceed my desire for personal gain?
8. Do I want to go to heaven enough to forget the past and reach forward?

I am convinced that no person will go to heaven by accident! That person who is allowed entrance there will have been determined enough to go there after death. I am also convinced that the desire to go to heaven must be the supreme desire in our life. It must exceed our desire for wealth, fame, or success according to the world’s standard of success. It must be strong enough to motivate us to overcome the barriers and difficulties that will be in our way. It must be powerful enough to remove any obstacle that stands in our way. When we want to go to heaven that much we will see the church moving forward as it has never moved before. *DO YOU REALLY WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN?*

**Passing away or renovation?** To teach renovation would contradict multiple writers and passages of the New Testament. While this may be a more difficult passage to understand, it will not contradict other clear passages. This writer believes that Paul is teaching that all “groaning” in this life will one day be over for everyone/everything. However, inanimate objects do not and cannot groan and hope. On the other hand, the Christian is “saved by hope” (Rom. 8:24) and will purify himself “even as He is pure” because of that hope (1 Jn . 3:1-3). An inanimate object cannot purify itself in an effort to “be like Him” (1 Jn. 3:2). Again, this world will “pass away.”

First Thessalonians 4:17 is also used to teach that when Christ comes, we will meet Him in the air and then escort Him back to a renewed earth. This idea is taught because, it is said, citizens used to meet important visitors who were approaching their city and would then escort them back. First, that belief is read into the text (eisegesis). Second, this eisegesis clearly contradicts multiple passages/writers of the New Testament. Third, when Jesus left the earth to return to the Father, He said to His disciples, “thou shalt follow Me afterwards” (Jn. 13:33, 36; 14:1-3). In a recent discussion of this subject this writer was told that he probably did not know the “renovation position” well enough to comment on it. That is an excellent example of arrogance. Our faith is to be built upon God’s word, not some preacher’s “position” on a subject. Even the casual reader of the New Testament can see that the renovation “position” causes many problems and contradictions within the Biblical text.

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## March/April 2018 Contributors

### Churches of Christ

Eastside (Lexington, OK)	\$2,100.00
Pilot (Mammoth Spring, AR)	\$700.00
Crossroads (Gepp, AR)	\$300.00
Bakersfield (Bakersfield, MO)	\$200.00
Clarkridge (Clarkridge, AR)	\$150.00
Pritchett (Big Sandy, TX)	\$100.00
Agnos (Agnos, AR)	\$100.00
Elizabeth (Elizabeth, AR)	\$100.00
Moody (Moody, MO)	\$100.00
Lowell (Springdale, AR)	\$50.00
Viola (Viola, AR)	\$50.00

Winona (Winona, MO) \$30.00

### Individuals

Gordon Barnett (Salem, AR)	\$105.00
Mary Williams (Franklin, AR)	\$25.00
Jerry Childs (Corinth, MS)	\$20.00
The McFanns (Malaga, WA)	\$50.00
Gary & Ann Wilson - In memory of Marty Rogers, Noel & Bertie Wilson, Floyd & Opal Mitchell	\$40.00
Mona Martin (Winona, MO)	\$30.00
FCGN CD Purchases	\$280.00

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**Mammoth Spring church of Christ**

### Biblical Worship

- Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-24)
  - Prayer (Acts 12:5; Phil. 4:6-7)
- Vocal music only (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15)
  - Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7-8)
  - Preaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7)

### The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:3)
  - Name (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
  - Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Body of Christ and Christ alone is the Head and Savior (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23)
- Added to the church today just as in the 1st century (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13)

### Salvation

- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
  - Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
  - Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
  - Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)