

An Examination of Revelation 21:1-27 and 22:1-6

The New Heaven and New Earth and The New Jerusalem

Part 1 of a study – by Elder Bob Allgood

I know of at least five basic views of The Revelation of Christ as given to John. (1) The Futurist or Pre-Millennial Dispensationalist View which holds that everything after Revelation 4 is yet unfulfilled prophecy. (2) The Historic or Full Preterist View which holds that all prophecy was fulfilled at 70 AD. (3) The Partial Preterist View which holds there is yet some unfulfilled prophecy such as the final return of Christ and the resurrection of the just and the unjust. (4) The Jehovah Witnesses maintain that the present heaven and earth will never be destroyed. (5) The Closed Book View which says that because of the Metaphorical and Sign Language in the Revelation it cannot be understood and therefore holds no view. There may be more than this, and there may be many variations within these basic views.

The Arminian and Sovereign Grace (Calvinist) Dispensationalist (which make up the vast majority of “professing believers”) sees everything in Revelation after Chapter 4 as being Future – and literally yet unfulfilled. They teach the binding of Satan in Rev 20, and the resurrection of the just will occur at Christ's return. They teach there will be a "millennial" judgment of the sheep and goats after a seven year tribulation period to determine who may enter the millennial kingdom. They teach a 1,000 year "dispensation" of Christ's earthly reign or kingdom from “the Jerusalem that now is” will follow. At the end of this time, Satan will be released, another climactic battle will take place, and at the end there will be final judgment of the wicked and Satan. After this the present earth will be burned up and a new earth and new heaven and New Jerusalem will be created as the eternal dwelling place of believers with God. They teach that

in the New Jerusalem, heaven (as God's dwelling place) and earth (man's dwelling) will be merged.

On the other extreme is the Full Preterist view that ALL prophecy in the Revelation has been fulfilled. They teach that the new heaven and the new earth is metaphorical of the New Covenant established in 70 AD with the final coming of Christ. They teach, QUOTE: “In the New Testament, the Old covenant was about to pass away (2 Corinthians 3:10; Hebrews 8:13, 12:25-28). If the New Heavens and Earth has not yet arrived, then the New Covenant hasn't either” END QUOTE. The Full Preterist teach that the “elements” that are burned up according to Peter are the principles of the Old Covenant. They teach that, QUOTE: “The new heavens and earth is referring to the New Covenant. This is the present period of time ... the Kingdom of God where Christ rules in the hearts of the believers” END QUOTE. In other words they teach we are now living in the eternal kingdom. To the Full Preterist the “New Jerusalem” is metaphorical language that represents the present day ETERNAL kingdom of God.

Since I am not a Futurist or Dispensationalist nor a Full Preterist, my belief about the New Jerusalem, if I ever establish one, will fall within the Partial Preterist view. Godly men have probably studied this for almost 2,000 years – please don't expect any “break through” of understanding from this feeble sinner. Some of the most noted commentators have made statements about this subject. I am not altogether sure I understand exactly what they were saying or if I can or would agree with what they said. But I will share them with you just in case you might.

John Gill says of Revelation 21, “This chapter contains an account of the happy state of the church, consisting of all the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, which will take place upon the first resurrection, and will continue during the thousand years' reign mentioned in the preceding chapter. The seat of the church in these happy times will be the new heaven and the new earth, Rev. 21:1, the church that will dwell there is described by its names, the holy city, and new Jerusalem; --“

Barnes says, “The whole of chapter 21, and the first five verses of chapter 22, relate to scenes beyond the judgment, and are descriptive of the happy and triumphant state of the redeemed church, when all its conflicts shall have ceased, and all its enemies shall have been destroyed. That happy state is depicted under the image of a beautiful city, of which Jerusalem was the emblem, and it was disclosed to John by a vision of that city—the New Jerusalem—descending from heaven. Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God, and to the Hebrews it became thus the natural emblem or symbol of the heavenly world.”

Matthew Henry says, “Hitherto the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment, in the conduct of divine Providence towards the church in the world: now, at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away; a new world now appears, the former having passed away. Some are willing to understand all that is said in these last two chapters of the state of the church even here on earth, in the glory of the latter days; but others,

more probably, take it as a representation of the perfect and triumphant state of the church in heaven. Let but the faithful saints and servants of God wait awhile, and they shall not only see, but enjoy, the perfect holiness and happiness of that world.”

We can see from these comments that there are differing views on this subject – But what do we make of this by letting Scripture interpret Scripture? I approach making even the smallest comments about this passage with fear and trembling, realizing that the qualifications for one to do so is that he must be IN the Spirit of God and be led of the Spirit of God if anything good is to come from such an effort. I think the phrase “in the Spirit” carries with it the connotation of being “filled with the Spirit” and I have never in my life made such a claim, nor do I ever intend to. I pray that I will not speak anything in error. If I do it will surely be in ignorance.

John the beloved was IN the Spirit on the Lord’s Day to receive this Revelation from Jesus Christ (1:10). After John wrote the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia, which are applicable to all the churches, we read in Rev 4:1-2, “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne”. As we look forward in Chapter 21 to verse 9 and 10, we notice that John again says, “And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away IN the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ---“. The words “in the Spirit” in 1:10 and “in the spirit” in 4:2 and “in the spirit” in 21:10 are speaking of John being IN the same Spirit of God. John was caught UP into heavenly places to record this Revelation.

It was “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven LAST plagues” that said to John “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” It was this angel which showed John “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: --“. While it is not my purpose, nor do I have the ability or knowledge, to deal with the chronology of the book of The Revelation, I take note that what is recorded in Chapters 21 and 22 concerning “The New Jerusalem” follows after the “great white throne” judgment of the dead in Revelation 20:11-15. It was not until after this “great white throne” judgment was recorded that John said, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

SOME BIG “IFs” without being dogmatic:

IF we believe the “great white throne judgment” is prophetic and yet in the future, and IF we believe there is any chronological sequence to the events recorded in the Revelation, then it seems to me that we must consider

the possibility that (1) the new heaven and (2) the new earth, and (3) the New Jerusalem come AFTER the final judgment of the dead. This does not mean that there cannot be found a “TASTE” or “SHADOW” of the New Jerusalem IN the local visible NT church and IN the kingdom of God. Since the Law and Levitical form of worship was “a shadow of good things to come” could not the local visible NT church (assembly) be only a shadow of that “glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”.

Part 2 of a study

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

MAKE HASTE SLOWLY! Experience has taught me that every time I hastily read an email or a passage of Scripture I often overlook some important word, words or even a whole sentence. Too often I have responded or drawn a conclusion based on my incomplete understanding. That is probably one of our greatest problems today. Too many ministers are trying to instruct others based on their misunderstanding of the truth. The scriptures teach the precept of “making haste slowly” in order to avoid such errors. Solomon said, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Pro. 18:13). Jesus said “Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given” (Mark 4:24) and “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (Luke 8:18). James tells us, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak –“ (1:19).

If we will notice in Rev. 21:1-2, BEFORE John SAW the New Jerusalem, he saw “a new heaven and a new earth”. It does not say that he saw a “new heaven and earth” but “A new heaven and A new earth”. If I am reading this correctly, John saw TWO things, i.e. “a new heaven and a new earth” before he saw the New Jerusalem. John SAW “A new heaven and A new earth” take the place of “the first heaven and the first earth”, as it says, “for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”. It seems to me that if one is going to try and study about the New Jerusalem, one ought to first try and determine what is meant by the words “a new heaven and a new earth”. But before I attempt to do that, let me make a few comments about the date of origin of the Revelation itself.

It seems to me that, if possible, one ought to fix in his or her own mind when John SAW these things. As to WHEN somebody says something has a relevance of importance along with WHAT they have said. Historians and historical evidence has helped us fix the approximate date of origin to many (if not most) of the books of the Bible. For instance the most likely date of origin for the gospel books is: Matthew 60-65 AD, Mark 63 AD, Luke 60-63 AD, and John 90 AD. The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke probably

about 63-64 AD. All of Paul's epistles were written between 52 and 68 AD. Historians tell us Paul was beheaded under the order of the Roman Emperor Nero in May or June in 68 AD. Afterward, Nero died in June of 68 AD. James wrote his epistle from Jerusalem to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad", about 63-64 AD. It is believed that James was the pastor of the church which was at Jerusalem. Peter wrote his first epistle to the dispersed Jews (whom he called "strangers scattered"), probably from Jerusalem (which he called Babylon) about 64 AD. He wrote his second epistle to the Elect in general (them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ) about 65 AD. The date of origin for the epistles of John has been fixed at 90-100 AD, and the date of the Revelation is debated as being from 68-69 AD – OR – 96-98 AD. Even if some of the dates of origin of the Gospels and Epistles are off by a few years it would not make a great deal of difference in our understanding of the Scriptures. BUT for many folks that is not true with The Revelation of Jesus Christ as given to John.

MOST views as mentioned in part one will stand, fall or be altered depending on the date of origin of the Revelation. The Swiss cheese views held by the futurist Arminian and Sovereign Grace (Calvinist) Dispensationalist depend a great deal on the Revelation being written AFTER 70 AD. They teach that "the Temple" in Revelation 11 is the TEMPLE REBUILT by the Jews just before the literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The Full Preterist views depend on the Revelation being written BEFORE 70 AD. They claim ALL prophecy was fulfilled at that date, so if the Revelation was written after 70 AD – goodbye Full Preterist heretics.

According to the Scriptures we read, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9). The dispute among Scholars and Theologians is over WHEN John was banned to the Isle of Patmos. Unger's Bible Dictionary says, "If the apostle John was banished to Patmos under the reign of Nero, as the internal evidence indicates, he wrote the Revelation about AD 68 or 69, which was after the death of that Emperor; but the gospel and epistles some years later. This view "is advocated or accepted by Neander, Lucke, Bleek, Ewald, DeWette, Baur, Hilgenfeld, Reuss, Dusterdieck, Weiss, Renan, Aube, Stuart, Davidson, Cowles, Bishop Lightfoot, Westcott, and Schaff. The great majority of older commentators, and among the later ones, Elliott, Alford, Heng Stenberg, Ebrard, Lange, Hofmann, Godet, Lee, etc.," favor the traditional date, as the external evidence indicates, which is after Domitian's death in AD 96. John is said to have died a natural death in the reign of Trajan, about AD 98."

For those who are Futurist, Dispensationalist or Full Preterist, I must conclude that the date of origin of the Revelation may be the glue that holds together their views, and how they imagine what John saw. But for the Partial Preterist, like myself, or one who does not observe 70 AD as being the start of "the kingdom of Christ and of God", it may be that the date of origin only tells us WHEN John saw WHAT he saw. IMO, since God did not give

us a date of origin of the Revelation, it is far more important to understand **WHAT** John saw than **WHEN** he saw it.

Part 3 of a study

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORDS “A new heaven and a new earth”?

What did John mean when he said, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”? How are we to “spiritually discern” these words? It doesn’t take a Bible Scholar to realize that some of the language in The Revelation is to be taken in a literal sense and some as metaphorical or symbolic language. This principle is true if we were studying a Parable. Taking words in a literal sense and/or in a metaphorical sense does not change the fact they must be “spiritually discerned”.

BUT which words do we take as literal and which ones as metaphorical? If we look back chapter one of Revelation the Scriptures will help to know the answer. In verse one (1) we read, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.” I believe all would agree these words are to be taken in a literal sense. The word “signified” tells us that some hidden things or mysteries written in this book are in “SIGN language” and “made known” unto John, while other inspired words are literal and easily understood. For instance in 1:4 we read, “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne –“. John is literal. The seven churches in Asia were literal. God’s grace and peace from Christ which is, and which was, and which is to come is literal. But “the seven Spirits which are before his throne” must be understood in a metaphorical sense. How many Spirits of God are there? Is there literally seven (7) Spirits of God or seven aspects of The Holy Spirit of God?

The Holy Spirit of God is **ONE** with the Godhead, “for these three are one”. But in power and demonstration of the presence of Christ **IN** the seven churches, as in **ALL** of his churches at the same time (He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches), Christ and the Spirit of God is manifested in complete and perfect harmony. In Rev 4:5 and 5:6 the “sign language” of the “seven Spirits of God” is enlarged. In 4:5 we read, “And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God”. From here we would have to determine what the symbolic language describing the seven Spirits of God means. In 5:6 we read, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the

midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth". Again, from here we would have to determine what the symbolic language describing the seven Spirits of God means.

This teaches me that metaphorical language is often, if not always, explained in the Scriptures, either in the same book or elsewhere in other Scriptures. Scripture interprets Scripture. This precept can be confirmed by the fact that the "seven golden candlesticks" (1:13) and the "seven stars" (1:16) are explained in Rev 1:20. There we read, "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." Having said that, it appears to me that literal language has no need for explanation, and stands alone. Of course, some will always try to make the Scriptures mean something other than what they mean, no matter whether the words are literal or metaphorical. That is why Jesus warned against the false doctrine of the Pharisees. This is why Paul warned against Teachers, having itching ears, for "they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables".

John saw "a new heaven and a new earth - FOR (because) the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." The FIRST heaven and the FIRST earth recorded in Scripture is that which God created. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen 1:1). We all should realize that the EARTH that God created in Genesis 1:1 is this earth upon which we all dwell. The same earth that was flooded with water in Genesis 6. God created Adam from the "dust of the earth", so we all dwell in "earthen vessels". But if I understand it correctly, the heaven God created in Genesis 1:1 was not God's dwelling place, sometimes called heaven in the Scriptures. Since God is eternal, He was dwelling in his dwelling place when He created the "heaven and the earth" in the beginning. In Job we read, "Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!" Hold on to this thought! There is more than one heaven taught in the scriptures. Paul said he knew a man who was "caught up to the third heaven". If there is a third heaven, there must also be a first and a second.

IMO, the first heaven God created in Genesis 1:1 is the earth's ATMOSPHERE, which is AIR that extends about 1,000 miles above the earth. Clouds float around in the lowest part of the atmosphere, which is called the troposphere, and extends upward to about 10 miles above the earth. Above the troposphere, from 10 to 30 miles is the stratosphere, and above the stratosphere is the mesosphere, and above that is the thermosphere. The higher up one goes the thinner the air gets, and above 50 miles the temperature gets extremely hot. At about 1,000 miles above the earth, they say the atmosphere gradually fades into Space, however most experts say space begins about 60 miles above the earth. This First Heaven is by no means the extent of God's creation - for "God made two great lights; the greater light (the Sun - ba) to rule the day, and the lesser light (the Moon) to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16). The Sun is about 93 million miles from the earth, and the average distance from the earth to the Moon is 238,857 miles.

BUT the Sun and the Moon is not the extent of God's creation, for it says "He made the stars also". How many stars are there? No one really knows how many stars there are. They say on a clear, dark night you might be able to see as many as 3,000 stars. They say about 6,000 of the brightest stars can be seen from earth without a telescope. A telescope with a 3 inch lens allows one to see about 600,000 stars, and the powerful telescopes used by astronomers (not astrologist) allow them to see millions if not billions. Only a few stars have names given them by man, BUT "God telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Psalms 147:4-5). HOW FAR above the first heaven and the first earth are the stars? The answer is millions of miles above the earth.

The earth's weather – rain, snow, wind and storms all take place in the troposphere. In Gen. 1:6-8 we read, And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven". We know that we have water in the firmament which God called Heaven, or in the clouds in the sky (troposphere), from which we get rain and snow, etc. As we read on in Genesis 1:9-10, God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good". So IF we go back to the beginning we find the FIRST heaven and the FIRST earth to be that which God created and we find the SEA of which John said, "and there was no more sea". But is this enough to give us the correct understanding of these words?

Part 4 of a study

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Again I ask, how are we to "spiritually discern" the words "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea"? Are we to take these words as literal, meaning exactly what they say, and consider "a new heaven and a new earth" to be a re-creation of "the first heaven and the first earth" found in Genesis creation? OR, are we to take them as metaphorical language and give them a spiritualized definition, such as the New Covenant? It is not my purpose to labor on this verse anymore than necessary, but it does seem to me that HOW we understand these words, "a new heaven and a new earth" will help us understand the "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband".

IF there is any chronological or time sequence to the things that John had revealed unto him, then it seems it would make a big difference in our understanding. IF "the first heaven and the first earth" that is passed away

in verse one is “the heaven and the earth” of the Genesis creation, and they are replaced by “a new heaven and a new earth” then it seems to me that “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” would have to follow in sequence, just as it does in the vision John saw. THEREFORE, I would ask, do the scriptures teach that “the heaven and the earth” of the Genesis creation will “pass away”? If so, when will they pass away?

In Matthew 24 Jesus foretold of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the desolation to come upon the natural nation of the Jews, according to Daniel’s “70 week” prophecy. Everyone except the Futurist realize that Daniel’s prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Roman General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. However, IMO, there are things spoken in Matthew 24 that were not fulfilled in 70 AD, and are yet to be fulfilled. This is why I am a Partial Preterist and not a Full Preterist. As Jesus began to foretell of the destruction of the Temple, the disciples said to him “Tell us, when shall these things be? AND what shall be the sign of thy coming, AND of the end of the world?” (caps mine - Matt 24:3). Some see these three questions as ONE – and ALL related to the events of 70 AD. Others, including myself, see these as THREE questions, one of which is related to 70 AD and the other two as related to end of time here on this earth at the final coming of Christ for his saints, at the resurrection of the just and the unjust, according to many other Scriptures. Since man is subject to error, one should take the advice of Jesus as he said to his disciples, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matt 24:4).

Matthew 24 is not my text and I do not wish to get sidetracked, so I will be brief. But a study of that chapter would be beneficial. When talking about the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matt 24:34). In the very next verse He said “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”. This is also recorded in Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33. The Full Preterist have tried to make this “heaven and earth” to be the Old Covenant which they say “passed away” in 70 AD and was replaced with the New Covenant or “a new heaven and a new earth”. IMO, if you believe this you will be deceived indeed.

When Jesus said “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” it appears to me that he is talking about the “heaven and earth” of the Genesis creation. The Greek word translated “heaven” is translated “heaven” 268 times and means (1) the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it, (1a) the universe, the world, (1b) the aerial heavens or sky, the region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced, (1c) the sidereal or starry heavens and (2) the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings. I cannot find where this word is ever used to speak of a “covenant” in the New Testament. The Greek word translated “earth” in Matthew 24:4 means (1) the ground, the earth as a standing place, (2) the main land as opposed to the sea or water, (3) the earth as a whole, (3a) the earth as opposed to the heavens, (3b) the inhabited earth, the abode of men

and animals. I cannot find where this word is never used to speak of a “covenant”.

If we believe the words of Jesus we will understand that this present “heaven and earth” did not pass away in 70 AD. Jesus said in Matthew 24:36 “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”. We can know of the signs leading up to this time for Jesus said, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt 24:37-39). Everyone who studies Jewish history knows about 70 AD. Furthermore the event was predicted in scripture, and the wars leading up to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem were in progress for six years before 70 AD. Besides these disregarded facts, IF the final coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in 1 Thess 4:13-19 took place in 70 AD, we are all in big trouble and have no hope.

In 2nd Peter 3 we read something about “the heavens and the earth, which are now” passing away. Peter reminds us that “there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation”. The Full Preterist are in effect “scoffers” denying the promise of the final coming of Christ. Peter says, “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished”. In other words Peter reminds of the flood which destroyed all life on this earth, and then he tells us, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”. Peter is not comparing any “covenant” when he said “the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, PERISHED”. Peter is not speaking of any “covenant” when he says, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”. The words “heavens” and “earth” in this passage are the same as those used when Jesus said ““Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”.

Peter goes on to say, “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”. IF this is speaking of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD, will someone please tell me how an event broadcast by six years of war preceding it, can be “as a thief in the night”. Peter continued, “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? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new

heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness". Granted the word "elements" can mean and is used to speak of the basic principles of The Law, one of the primary meanings of the word is "the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe".

Besides these things, "Eternal Life" and "Righteousness" is IN Christ himself, not in the "new covenant" of which he is the Mediator. Let me explain what I mean. ALL of God's elect people, according to His everlasting or eternal Covenant with Christ, even those living under the "old covenant" (which term is not in the Scriptures) referring to The Law, of which Moses was the mediator, were saved by the GRACE of God and made the Righteousness of God and accepted IN Christ the beloved. ALL whom God foreknew He predestinated, called, justified and glorified IN Christ before the foundation of the world. ALL of God's elect people are children of the promise of eternal life. God's elect did not have to wait until 70 AD for this to become the will and purpose of God.

Just as Abraham, who was not under the old law covenant, "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" so do we "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness". If I understand it correctly this is that which God promised in Isaiah 65, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying". I ask, IS THIS NOT THE NEW JERUSALEM that John saw? For he said, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away".

Part 5 of a study

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

In part four I tried to briefly show that the Scriptures and sound doctrine will not support the Full Preterist concept that the "new heaven and new earth" in verse one is metaphorical language speaking of "the new covenant" replacing the "old covenant". In this part I will try to present scriptural proof of this truth. The phrases "New Covenant" and "New Testament" are sometimes interchangeable and can mean the same thing. The word "covenant" appears more than 250 times in the Old Testament, and only 18 times in the New. The word "testament" does not appear in the Old, but appears 13 times in the New. In the New Testament, the words "covenant" and "testament" are sometimes translated from the same Greek words

meaning “a promise, a disposition or an agreement”. The “old covenant” (a term not found in the scriptures) speaks of The Law Covenant given to Moses. “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Let’s ask ourselves some questions about the Law Covenant.

1. To whom was the Law or Old Covenant given?

Answer: The Law (Old Covenant) was given to the natural nation of Israel or Jews, when they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt. Most of God’s elect people have never been under the Law or “old covenant”. For example, Abel, Enoch, Noah Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were NEVER under the Law. But they were all men of Faith, made righteous (by the imputed righteousness of God) before God according to the promise of eternal life (made by God with himself before the world began), without the Law Covenant. None of the elect Gentiles have ever been under the Law or Old covenant, but ALL are under the everlasting covenant or promise of eternal life, and made “accepted IN the beloved”.

2. Why was the Law or Old Covenant given?

Answer: The Law was “added because of transgressions”. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:19, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”. The SEED under consideration is not the natural seed of Abraham but Christ himself, IN WHOM is righteousness and eternal life. The keeping of the Law and the offering of animal sacrifices under the Law never made anyone righteous in the sight of God. Paul wrote in Romans 3:19-20 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

3. What purpose did the Law or Old Covenant serve?

Answer: The Law or Old Covenant was a Tutor or School Master to bring the elect Jews to faith IN Christ. Paul said, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24). None of God’s elect people have ever been eternally saved by obedience to the Law, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”. Paul wrote, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law (or old covenant – ba), then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal 2:21). Paul taught that the Law covenant was “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things”.

4. Did the Law Covenant replace the Promise of eternal life?

Answer: NO! Paul wrote in Galatians 3:15-18, “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to

thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant (i.e. the everlasting covenant - ba), that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise". The Promise (or covenant) of eternal life was made IN Christ before the world began.

Paul told Timothy that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN" (2 Tim 1:9). Paul told Titus we live "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN" (Titus 1:2). Peter wrote, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20).

5. When did the Law or Old Covenant pass away?

Answer: WHEN Jesus Christ offered the ONE sacrifice that perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28). The same or similar words are recorded in Mark 14:24 "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many", and in Luke 22:20 "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you". The CUP of communion represents the "shed blood" of Christ. The BREAD represents his broken body. The CUP and the BREAD represents the ONE sacrifice of the New Testament that perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

In the Old Testament we read where God had promised the Jews a "New Covenant". In Jeremiah 31:31-33 we read, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people". It is clear from this passage that the "new covenant" is speaking of something different than "the law covenant". It is also clear that the "new covenant" will take place "after those days" when "the days come". It is also clear that the New Covenant (according to this passage) is God's promise to put His "law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts".

In Hebrews 10:12-18 we read, "But this man (Christ), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the

Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, **THIS IS THE COVENANT** that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin”. I believe the New Covenant speaks of the Promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. But since that is a subject by itself I will not go into it here, but only suggest you read John 14:17, Acts 1:4, 2:33, and 2:39.

After the **ONE** sacrifice of Christ in 30 AD – there was **NO MORE** offerings for sin recognized by God. The Old Covenant had passed away and the New Covenant was in place. In Hebrews 12:22-24 Paul said to the **HEBREWS**, “But ye **ARE COME** (present tense) unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”. Jesus was the mediator of the New Covenant at that time – and that time was before 70 AD. God’s elect people did not have to wait until 70 AD for the New Testament or New Covenant to take place.

Part 6 of a study

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Before we begin to consider any particular details about “the holy city, new Jerusalem” which John saw, let’s try to gather into one basket some things to help us identify “the holy city, new Jerusalem”. We are told in verses 2-3: (1) It is “the holy city”, (2) It is **NEW** as in new Jerusalem, (3) It is coming down from God out of heaven, (4) It is prepared **AS** a bride adorned for her husband, (5) It is said to be “the tabernacle of God” that is with men. Then in verse 4 we are told that in this “holy city, new Jerusalem” or “tabernacle of God” – that God (1) shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, (2) and there shall be no more death, (3) neither sorrow, (4) nor crying, and (5) neither shall there be any more pain, (6) for the former things are passed away.

IF verses 2-4 were all that we had to try and “spiritually discern” perhaps our task would be fairly easy. But as we look forward in the **FULL TEXT** of the Revelation about “the holy city, new Jerusalem” we read in verse 9 where the angel said to John, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife”. In verse 10 we read, “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem,

descending out of heaven from God”. From this we can conclude that “the holy city, new Jerusalem” of verse 2 is the SAME as “the bride, the Lamb's wife” in verse 9 and the SAME as “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” in verse 10. After this in Rev. 21:11-22:6 we are told many more things about “the holy city, new Jerusalem”, which is “the bride, the Lamb's wife”.

Since these things are many, and since many of them are given to us in metaphorical language, I will not try to list them ALL here, but suggest that the reader, if they have an interest to do so, read and re-read this passage. Among the things that I will mention here are found in verses 23-25 where it says, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there”. Another thing that I must mention here is found in verse 27 where we read, “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life”.

Last I will mention here the things that are written in Rev. 22:1-6 “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever”.

Now I will ask some questions. Can the descriptions of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” be speaking of the “true” local New Testament gospel church, or speaking of all of God's elect people “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”? Can the descriptions of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” be speaking of the local New Testament gospel church in which there may be deceivers, false professors, hypocrites and pretenders, or speaking of all of God's elect people, referred to as “the church” which Christ will “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”?

Can the descriptions of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” be speaking of the kingdom of heaven in time in which there are both “wheat and tares”, or do they speak of all of God's elect people which “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” after the tares are separated from the field. Jesus said, “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the

fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”.

Before trying to answer these questions we should look back to some other scripture references that might influence our understanding of “The Holy City, New Jerusalem”.

In Revelation 3 our Lord had directed a letter to the “church in Philadelphia”. This was the sixth letter of the seven to the seven churches in Asia that John was told to write. In this particular letter Jesus said, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”. Since this letter was written to a local New Testament church already in existence in Asia – and since all the seven letters end, as did this one, with these words “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” -- it seems obvious that “the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God” must be speaking of something other than the local New Testament gospel churches which were already in existence. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

This is not to say that the local New Testament Church is not a foretaste of the “heavenly Jerusalem”. I certainly believe that the local New Testament church is to be a representative in time of that which will be eternal. Those things which are eternal await the saints of God when this “earthly tabernacle” is dissolved. Paul told the Hebrew saints prior to the resurrection, “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24). If I understand the words “But ye are come” correctly, they mean NOW “ye are come” – in the present tense, but in a spiritual way. The children of God are blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” and have been made to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”. But these blessings and these sittings are experienced in a spiritual way in this time world.

So, it seems to me that as we consider “the holy city, new Jerusalem” we ought to keep in mind that there may be an abundance of applications that apply to the gospel New Testament church in time – but there may be an abundance of evidence that shows the “new heaven and new earth and the holy city, new Jerusalem” is eternal.

(To be continued in the future - I hope) BA