

The Millennium & the New Earth

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Revelation 21:1 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.

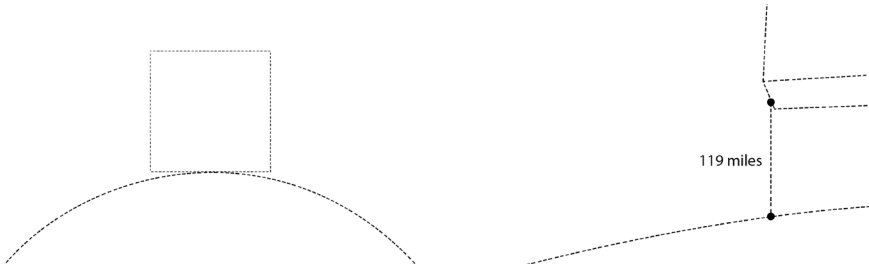
21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

As with a variety of Biblical themes, the subject of ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ is one of confusion when viewed through the lens of modern cosmology. For example, in order for John to observe the Holy City gracefully descending towards the globe, the city would have to first align itself with earth’s trajectory around the sun, travelling at a speed of 550,000 miles per hour. It would then need to begin orbiting the earth, slowing down as it approached the earth’s surface. All the while, its base would need to be continually adjusting to face the surface of the globe, so that John may be given the illusion of a graceful descent.

Despite the obvious absurdity, let’s suppose that the New Jerusalem does touch down on a spinning ball. What would that look like?

Firstly, John describes the city as a perfect square, since “the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal”. He adds that an angel “measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs”, which is equivalent to 1380 miles.

According to NASA, earth bears an average radius of 3956 miles. So if the heavenly city were to land on a globe, then the surface of the city would extend beyond the surface of the earth. In fact, the foursquare city would actually have a drop of 119 miles, or 191 kilometres, between its bottom corners and the surface of earth!



To put this immense distance into perspective, the corners of the Holy City would be so far off the ground that it would be equivalent to the height of 21 and a half Mount Everests stacked on top of each other.¹

To these blatant inconsistencies, some presume that the Holy City will be moulded around the earth. However, we are plainly told that the New Jerusalem bears equilateral sides. If the city has to be curved around a spherical earth, it will no longer have the squared dimensions of a cube.

Moreover, why would God—the Master architect—design a cubic structure if it was designed to sit on a sphere? If one intends to build a structure of this magnitude on top of a ball, the walls must be perpendicular to the surface of that ball. In such a case, the walls could not be equilateral in length or have 90 degree corners. As a matter of fact, the structure would look nothing like a perfect cube. Rather, with its curved floor and ceiling, it would be an entirely different shape.

Building on this conception, it has been speculated that the present earth will be blotted from existence, and the new earth will be of an unknown size and shape—potentially several times larger than the current earth—giving the colossal cubic city plenty of room.

¹ Some interpret the 12,000 furlongs of Revelation 21:16 to be the perimeter of the city, making each side 3000 furlongs, or approximately 375 miles long. If this is indeed the case, then the corners of the city would still be floating approximately 9 miles (roughly 14.4 km) above the surface of the earth. As such, all the same contradictions apply.

Granted, the new earth will be different in feature to the present earth, for oceans largely cover the face of earth's surface today. However, is it to be concluded that since the former earth passes away, that absolutely all that presently consists of 'heaven and earth' will be annihilated?

If we are to take this verse's reference of a 'new earth' in an absolute sense, to mean that nothing of the former earth will remain and God will start again from scratch, we will run into problems with other verses which state that the earth's foundations will never be removed, such as Psalm 104:5.

Psalm 104:5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

John's statement in Revelation 21:1 regarding the earth 'passing away' is comparable to the terminology used by Peter concerning the aftermath of the flood.

2Peter 3:6 ...the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

All men, animals, and plants were destroyed and the landscape drastically changed through the tremendous forces of the great flood, resulting in the formation of the great canyons, ragged mountains, desert wastes and vast oceans we see today. Yet the earth itself was not completely annihilated. In the following verse, Peter compares that cleansing of the world by water to a future and more thorough cleansing.

2Peter 3:7 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 next time earth is cleansed, it will be with fire. Yet since the earth

did not completely dissolve away the first time—even though it is described as having “perished, being overflowed with water”—it is fair to conclude that at the very least, the foundations of the earth will remain intact after the fiery future cleansing, in harmony with the Psalm 104:5.

Psalm 104:5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

A few verses later in 2 Peter 3, Peter reveals the event which heralds the cleansing of the earth by fire:

2Peter 3:10 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.

The day of the Lord which comes as a thief in the night is an unmistakable inference to the second coming of Christ. Like Peter, the psalmist also declares the coming of our Lord to be attended with fire:

Psalm 50:3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

Paul also doesn't fail to mention the flames of retribution attending the second coming:

2Thessalonians 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

John the Revelator was shown a vision of this day of vengeance. In

stark contrast to his lowly entrance to Jerusalem upon a donkey, John beholds our Lord upon a war steed, coming as conqueror.

Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire...

19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

While this fiery event will come as a rejoicing to Christ's servants, it will be a fearful call to arms for his enemies. Revelation 19 speaks of the forces of evil marshalling themselves together to meet Christ in battle upon His return:

Revelation 19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

The engagement that ensues is the notorious battle of Armageddon. It is indeed a marvel that men would even contemplate fighting these cavalries approaching from heaven. But it is revealed that the belligerents undertaking this suicidal attack are motivated so because of miracles performed by their spiritual leaders.

Revelation 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty...

16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Following their ignominious defeat by the armies of heaven, the bat-

talion sent to meet our coming king, are “slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse”. However, the spiritual leaders which misled them are said to be taken, or captured, to endure more severe punishment:

Revelation 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The intensity of the fire attending Christ’s return is so great that it melts down the elements, creating a molten lake. It is into such that captured priest and pope, false prophet and corrupt pastor are to plunge.

Peter declares that even the heavens are set ablaze by God’s wrath.

2Peter 3:12 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?

Another point to consider is that the Bible nowhere states that at His second coming, Christ sets foot upon the molten inferno into which the earth transforms. On the contrary, Paul speaks of God’s servants rising to meet their Lord in the air.

1Thessalonians 4:17 ...which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with [the dead in Christ] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...

The second advent is Christ’s occasion to both destroy his enemies and liberate his servants. He does not come back to dwell on the earth at this time.

In vision, the prophet Jeremiah surveyed the complete desolation of the earth following the outpouring of God's fierce anger upon those which had both rejected His mercy and murdered His servants.

Jeremiah 4:23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.

4:24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.

4:25 I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

4:26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger.

Not a man, bird, or beast remains upon the charred face of this earth. Yet the world is not completely obliterated. There are trembling mountains and hills amidst the wilderness. In verse 27, Jeremiah adds:

Jeremiah 4:27 For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

The desolate earth is to serve as a monument for an age, yet there is to be a renewal, by and by.

However, the earth is not left completely uninhabited after the Saints ascend from it with their Lord. As a phase of his punishment, the chief of conspiracy is to be given a period to reflect upon the misery and destruction he has wrought. After the fire consumes flesh, blood, and bone from the earth, a heavenly warden arrives to conduct Satan to his forsaken millennium.

Revelation 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

But the chains which bind the arch fiend, are not chains of iron. For six thousands years, bringing ruin and misery to the sons of Adam comprised the sole delight of the prince of evil. But now, with no man left to tempt or be used as his instrument, Satan is to be bound from pursuing his career of evil.

During this time, he walks to and fro and up and down over the cracked and broken surface of the earth, shuddering as he counts down the days until his damnation. Jude's words find their full application at this time.

Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

The prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the time of Satan's overthrow, exclaims:

Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...

14:14 ...I will be like the most High.

14:15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

To God's redeemed, the captivity of their former pursuer will bring great gladness and rejoicing. Isaiah continues to express the sentiment of the redeemed as they look down from heaven upon him whose iron fist they once endured.

Isaiah 14:16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to

tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

14:17 That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?

Unlike the fallen kings of nations past, the grave does not repose Satan during this period. No rest is granted the instigator of evil:

Isaiah 14:18 All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

14:19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.

14:20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.

Returning to Revelation 20, the Revelator represents Satan's period of powerlessness and inactivity—on account of having no man to control—as being cast into an abyss; a bottomless pit.

Revelation 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

However, after a thousand years, Satan is given a brief opportunity to resume his career of deception:

Revelation 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

If it was the absence of a man left breathing upon the earth that caused

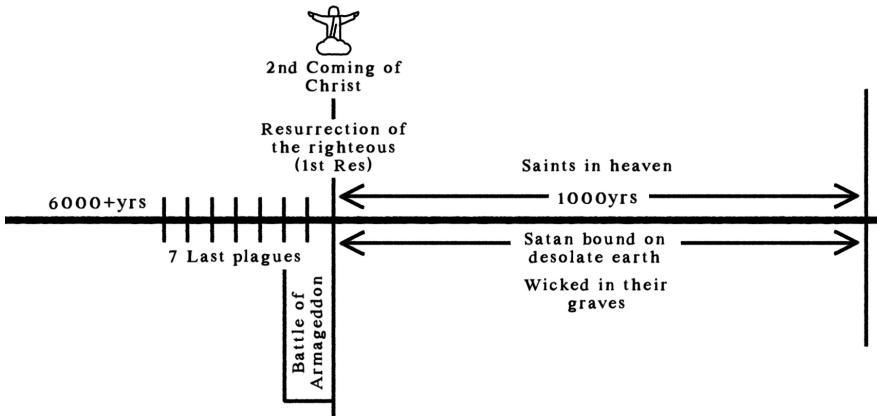
Satan to be bound, his release after one thousand years is due to the return of willing instruments.

But before we speak of the resurrection of the servants of Satan, we must first explain the resurrection of the saints, called the first resurrection:

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

From this verse we can see that:

1. There is more than one resurrection.
2. Those that are raised in the first resurrection will reign for a thousand years.



We may conclude that these resurrected ones will be with Christ in heaven during the same thousand year period in which Satan and his angels are to be bound upon the desolate earth.

The first resurrection, or the resurrection of the righteous, takes place at the second coming of Christ, as it is written:

1Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

This verse alone disproves the position that upon death the redeemed immediately go to heaven, as they are said to rise from the dead at the second coming. During the thousand years, that ransomed throngs will judge the cases of those which failed to rise in that blessed resurrection.

1Corinthians 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

Among these judging saints, John identifies those that were martyred during the last days

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

In reference to the wicked, John reveals that they do not to live in any particular until the expiration of the thousand year period.

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

This simple statement—an aside in John's talk of the saved—refutes the idea that upon death, the wicked are thrust immediately into some

fiery place of torment. Rather, as David declares of all who die the first time:

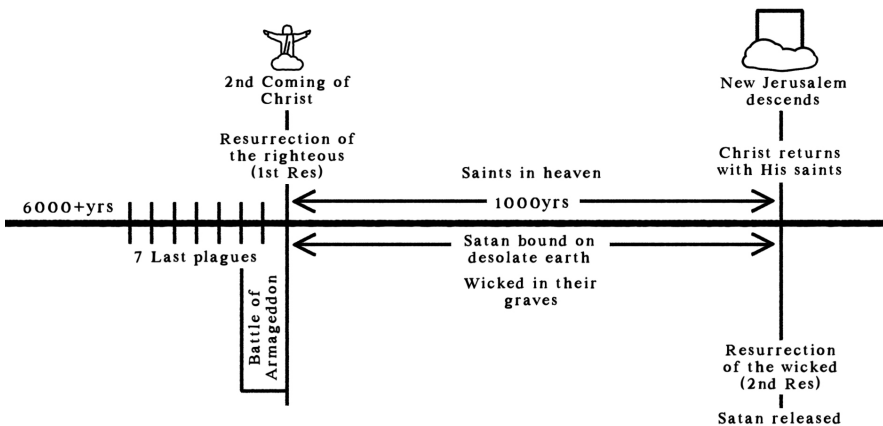
Psalm 146:4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

We have seen that the righteous sleep in their graves until Christ calls them forth at His second coming. At the end of Revelation 20:5, John calls this “the first resurrection”.

Revelation 20:4 ...and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

After the thousand year period, the wicked live again. Their summons—which comes a thousand years after the raising of the righteous—may be termed the second resurrection. This raising of the lost coincides with the release of Satan.



Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

Yet it is not the power of Satan that has resurrected the wicked. At the expiration of the thousand years, the Lord Jesus again returns to the earth. This time accompanied by the host of the redeemed, Jesus summons the lost from all quarters for the final day of reckoning.

Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

It is this, the resurrection of the servants of Satan, which causes the fiend to be 'loosed out of his prison', freeing him from the chains of inactivity with which he had been bound. Immediately repossessing his instruments, Satan resumes his career of deception.

Meanwhile, the New Jerusalem descends:

Revelation 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Yet it is not upon a new or entirely different world that the holy city descends. Before his final battle with the nations, Zechariah records that the conquering king first sets foot upon a place very familiar to the days of his humiliation.

Zechariah 14:3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

14:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the moun-

tain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

The Mount of Olives is a place only relevant to our present earth. So that none might be confused as to which mount is being referenced, Zechariah adds that it is the Mount of Olives “which is before Jerusalem on the east”. The fact that this precise location is named proves that it is not upon a different world that the New Jerusalem descends, but upon the very earth upon which the Mount of Olives sits beside and the ancient city of Jerusalem. Indeed, this heavenly city is ‘The New Jerusalem’ not only in symbol, but in a physical sense. It literally replaces the old city for it rests upon the same geographical area.

Zechariah was honoured to view this scene in vision. He obviously recognised the location, and thought the details necessary to include in his account. Yet if one believes that the New Jerusalem lands on an entirely different world, then Zechariah’s description of the precise location becomes meaningless.

Furthermore, it is not the purified earth towards which the city descends, but that cracked and broken surface which has lain waste for a thousand years. This is why in preparation for its descent, a great valley is made by the touch of Christ’s feet, resulting in a purified location upon which the city is to rest.

Unchanged by his thousand year sentence, Satan’s beady eyes observe this incredible spectacle. Determining not to yield, he sets his sights upon the holy city, to take it by force of arms. Surveying the freshly resurrected billions at his disposal, his hopes revive. Immediately following his loosening, we find that Satan:

Revelation 20:8 ...shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

Marshalling together the living dead, he lays out his plan to overthrow

the heavenly city. Placing himself at the head of the teeming army of the lost, this mightiest of warriors orders the advance.

Revelation 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

As Satan prepares to command the charge, Christ appears on a throne high and lifted up and by a glance the greatest army the earth has ever boasted is put to flight.

Revelation 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Again, Zechariah uses geographical terminology peculiar to this earth alone to describe the fleeing away of Satan and his army.

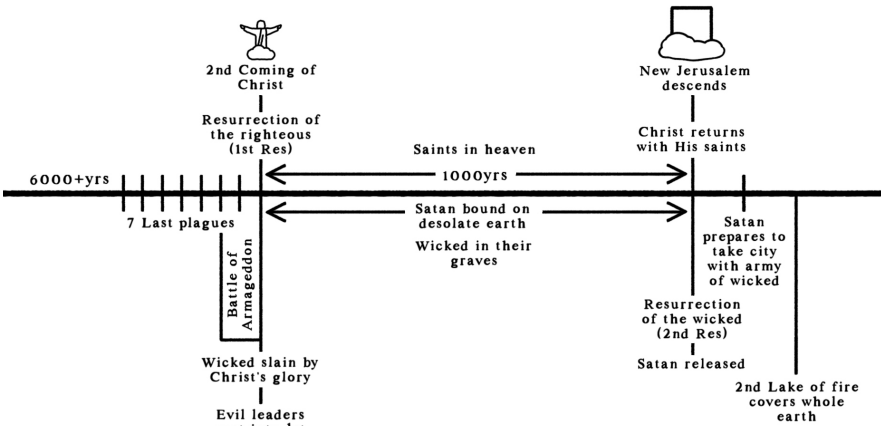
Zechariah 14:5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

Rather than engaging in a clash of arms, Satan's host hang limp before the terrible majesty of Christ, struck dumb before his fearful tribunal:

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Having refused in life the pardon offered for their sins, he who once pleaded with them to repent hands down to them the irrevocable sentence of death.

The final cleansing of the earth by fire now commences.



One thousand years earlier at the second coming, the wicked that were alive met Christ in battle. Their defeat resulted in the spiritual leaders—represented as the beast and the false prophet—being cast into a lake of fire.

But this time, the wicked of all ages assemble to make war against Christ, and rather than just the leaders, all belligerents, from the least to the greatest, are recorded to take the fiery plunge.

Therefore, we are told of two lakes of fire. One at the second coming which consumes only the leaders, and another after the thousand years which consumes every unrepentant soul.

The Father himself kindles the flames of wrath which are not to cease until every trace of the curse is purged:

Revelation 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them....

20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the

second death.

Beyond the walls of the holy city, the furious flame transforms the earth long defiled beneath unholy feet. The wicked suffer in the flames 'according to their works'. Some for a moment, others for more prolonged periods. But eventually, all burn to ashes, and cease to exist.

Malachi 4:3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

The very rocks are set ablaze and melt down into a one great molten mass. The earth itself becomes a vast lake of fire consuming away all traces of sin.

In the next chapter of revelation, the glorious scene of a renewed earth is presented to John:

Revelation 21:1 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.

The same wondrous event was included in Zechariah's vision, and he once again uses the geography of earth to describe the placement of the heavenly city.

Zechariah 14:8 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

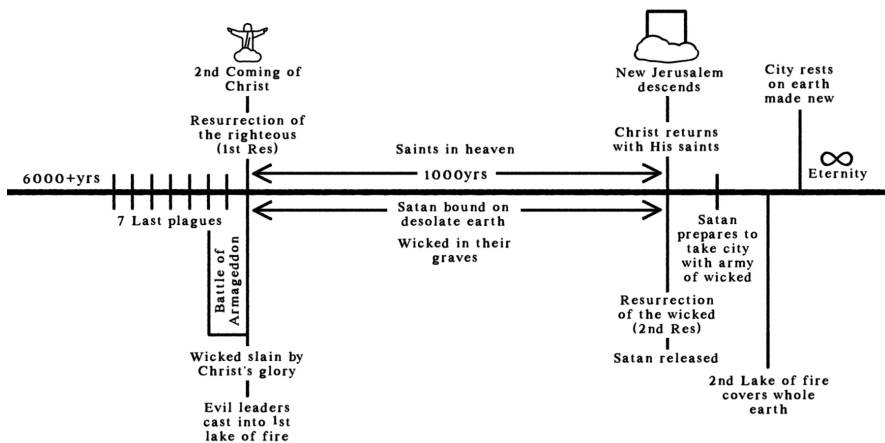
14:10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate,

unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

14:11 And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

Once the cleansing work has been accomplished, the work of renewal takes place, restoring and even surpassing the earth's original beauty. Finally, as Zechariah proclaims, there will be no more destruction. Jerusalem will be safely inhabited.

Revelation 21:4 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.



If hell were a place of everlasting torture, shrieks of pain and anguish would be eternally ascending from teary cheeks imprisoned in the fiery depths. Yet Revelation states that these former things are passed away, and no longer exist.

There is a beautiful parallel in the fact that the former foundations of earth are not entirely destroyed. The forgiven sinner is similarly not

ground to powder. Although broken by Christ's love for him, he retains his former features and elements of his personality. And so with man's original abode. Though once defiled by unholy feet, it is not to be wholly discarded. On the contrary, she—along with many of her inhabitants—will be cleansed and restored, and at last honoured as the tabernacle of the King Eternal.

Revelation 21:3 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.

For more information:
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Did the prophets see an entirely foreign world when they beheld the New Jerusalem in vision? What is meant by the terms 'new heaven' and 'new earth'? Finally, what timeline does the Bible paint concerning the second advent of Christ, the millennium, and the fiery renewal of this earth?



EARTHEN VESSELS

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7