

The Second Coming Of Christ



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By Randolph Dunn

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(Isa 65:17-19) “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”

(Isa. 66:22-23) “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD.

(2 Pet 3:10-13) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

(1 Cor. 15:35-44) But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” 36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

39 All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

The old earth will be destroyed and replaced by a new earth in which God dwells. Moreover, our bodies will be replaced by new, spiritual bodies that are different in kind from our present bodies.

(1 Cor. 15:51-53) Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead (The body God created from earth's elements) will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

(1 Cor. 15:22-26) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (Christ's resurrection was the victory over death over Satan control over man)

Jesus' second coming is a *coming*. We aren't called into heaven to be with Jesus. Rather, Jesus returns to be with his people.

The old earth (the physical earth) will be destroyed, which will certainly put an end to "all dominion, authority and power."

And then Jesus will turn the new earth over to God, who, as we've seen, will live in the new earth. And, of course, as only the covenant people will live in the new earth, there will no more death, and so death will have been destroyed.

(Phil. 3:20-21) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies (made from dust) so that they will be like his glorious body.

But at least one other passage seems to paint a different picture.

(1 Thes. 4:16-17) For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Although we see the familiar coming of Jesus from heaven, we are also told that the saved will be caught up into the clouds to meet him. We don't see the Christians taken into heaven or returned to earth. Surely, we don't stay in the clouds!

Paul's description of Jesus' reappearance in 1 Thessalonians 4 is a brightly colored version of what he says in two other passages, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 and Philippians 3:20-21: At Jesus' "coming" or "appearing," those who are still alive will be "changed" or "transformed" so that their mortal bodies will become incorruptible, deathless. This is all that Paul intends to say in Thessalonians, but here he borrows imagery—from biblical and political sources—to enhance his message.

(John 14:1-4) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."

Jesus will be in his Father's house long before his followers. The resolution has to be found in Revelation 21:2, which we quoted earlier.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (Since the Holy City, the New Jerusalem are prepared as a bride, they are His Church).

* The images are figures of speech, but they are given to us to help us understand and anticipate and long for the End. But the End is promised to be a new beginning, incorruptible, imperishable.

* This new earth will be radically different from our own. Paul makes clear it will not be the same.

* There will be a separation of the saved from the lost will certainly happen, and the lost will be taken away from the presence of God. 2 Thes. 1:9.

* On the whole, I think Wright has it right. This understanding seems well confirmed by these passages and very consistent with the prophets.

* If we don't get to live in the new Jerusalem on the new earth until the End, where do we live until then?