

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

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I want to talk on the subject, **The New Heavens and the New Earth.**

The last little book which we have published in our Matthew 24 series is on the subject, **Heaven and Earth Shall Pass Away.** That deals, of course, with the old heavens and the old earth. And so it is only fitting that we continue. I do not have another book to give you, but I shall preach a message on **The New Heavens and New Earth.** The Scripture which I am going to read as sort of a text is in **II Peter**, chapter 3, and verse 13:

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13).

Now I could have read the verses just before that dealing with the old heavens and the old earth, but that was another subject. And tonight it is **The New Heavens and the New Earth.**

In dealing with this passage of Scripture I shall not comment much on the old heavens and the old earth—that having been dealt with already; but in **verse 10** there is a comment or two I would like to make. *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."* This chapter deals with the coming of the day of the Lord in which these things happen—the passing away of the old heavens and the old earth; and then Peter says, *"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."*

There is a definition of *"the day of the Lord"* that we need to understand. I think most of us in past days thought of the day of the Lord as one great final day of the Lord. But the expression, "the day of the Lord" is used a number of times in the Old Testament. And here is something that I picked up and learned that has meant much to me in understanding this: that every time it is used in the Old Testament, so far as I know, it relates to God's judgment against a nation, a group of people, by invading armies.

Now it would seem to me (it seemed to me ever since I have been studying eschatology in depth) that if you want to know what a term means in the New Testament in relation to these prophecies, we need to go back to the Old Testament and see what it meant there. And if it were used a certain way in the Old Testament, would it not be plausible that Jesus and the writers in the New Testament would use those expressions the same way? So that when we come to the New Testament and we read about a coming "day of the Lord," what should we think of? In my opinion, we should think of the same thing that was meant in the Old Testament—thinking of God's judgment against a nation by invading armies, for that is what "the day of the Lord" meant in Old Testament times.

In this passage of Scripture dealing with the passing away of the old heavens and the old earth, there is a cosmic meltdown that is discussed in **verse 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?"* (The same thing is mentioned in **verse 10**). This type of language is also Old Testament language. And I want to read from **Isaiah 34:3-4** concerning this same sort of language. This cosmic meltdown involved the heavens being on fire and dissolving. In **Isaiah 34** where it is talking about Idumea and Bozrah and others being destroyed under the judgment of God, it says in **verses 3 and 4**, *"...the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and a falling fig from the fig tree."*

This is not the only place in the Bible in the Old Testament where this type of language is used. But of course if this is to be taken literally, materialistically, earthly, then the heavens have been dissolved more times than one; and of course that would be an impossibility. We have to find God's meaning to these types of

apocalyptic language and expressions that are used in the Old Testament.

So when I read in the Old Testament about God's judging somebody, and describing that great event in apocalyptic language, He uses language like *"the heavens shall be rolled together,"* being *"dissolved,"* etc., it seems to me plausible that when I come to the New Testament, and I find where on this "day of the Lord" (which is already defined as the judgment of God by invading armies), I find that it is expressed that the heavens are dissolved, I say it must mean the same thing that it meant back in the Old Testament. Not that the heavens will actually disappear; not the clouds and the stars, and the planets, will actually disappear; but this is cosmic language used in an apocalyptic way which God is using, describing the awfulness and the tremendous effect when He brings His judgment against individuals.

Let me carry you over to the book of Revelation just for a moment—to **Revelation 6**, and read there a verse that deals with this same type of expression. **Revelation 6:14** says:

"And heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

In **verse 13** it told how *"the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind."* This is just like we read in **Isaiah 34** in connection with God's judgment there.

It says in **verses 15-17** here that this is the time when *"the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;*

"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

"For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

In **Luke 23**, when Jesus Christ was going to the cross, and the women all gathered around Him and were crying because of what was about to happen, what did He say? He said, *"...weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* Then He told them why. *"For, behold the days are coming....Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."* And you find what Jesus Christ predicted in **Luke 23** is brought to pass again in prophecy in **Revelation 6** where it said that all those great men call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

(Incidentally, the Greek word for "earth" also means "land," and probably means "land" in this passage, referring to the land of Israel. Also, the word "kings" probably refers to the heads of the tribes of Israel. They were called "kings" in the Old Testament. See **II Chronicles 9:25-26**, for example).

When is this **"day of the Lord?"** Peter says the day of the Lord is coming, and that at that time the old heavens and the old earth shall pass away; and then he says that as a result we see the new heavens and the new earth. The old heavens have been dissolved. The old earth has been taken away, and passed away. But after this, we find a new heaven and we find a new earth.

In **II Peter 3:13** Peter said, *"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."* This is *"according to his promise."* Now we don't find that promise so much in the book of Genesis. You don't find it so much in the book of Malachi, or most of the other books of the Old Testament. Where do you find the promise of the new heavens and the new earth? In **Isaiah 65**, and in **Isaiah 66**—the only two passages of which I know of the promise which Peter recalls here concerning the new heavens and the new earth. We shall take just a moment and we shall read what Isaiah said about it in the Old Testament; for if you do not understand the Old Testament in what it says about something, then if it talks about it again in the New Testament how can we understand what God is talking about?

In **Isaiah 65** it starts off with God talking to His people. He said:

"I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." (verse 1).

Now in the very beginning of that chapter God is dealing with a situation that is going to come to pass where there is a nation going to know Him that was not called by His name. Then you go down to **verse 9**. He said:

*"And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." Many times in the Old Testament the word "mountains" refers to "kingdoms." He says His elect shall inherit this and His servants shall dwell there. Now already He had talked about a nation that will **not** be the one that is not called by His name.*

Then you go on over to **verse 12**. He said, *"Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter..."* Now this is the totality of those to whom He is talking.

Then in **verse 13** He said, *"Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed."*

Now His "servants" mentioned here is referring back to the "elect" and the "servants" He was talking about in **verse 9**.

"Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit" (verse 14).

Verse 15 says, *"And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name."*

Then down in the last part of **verse 16**, where this takes place, He goes on to say, *"...the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes."* That will be said, but why? And how will that be said? You have God's people being slaughtered. You have God's people being slain. And another group coming which was not known by his name, who are the elect of God and are called His servants.

And then in **verse 17** we have the verse: *"For, behold I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."* This is why and how. This is the reason.

The other place is in **Isaiah 66** where it simply repeats about the new heavens and the new earth in the words, *"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain."* That is talking about His **elect**, now. That is not talking about all the unbelievers whom God said He was going to slay and slaughter and put out of existence.

We are going back now to **II Peter 3**. Peter said, *"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."*

Righteousness never came by the law.

Well, what is he talking about—*"according to his promise"*? Just like He promised in **Isaiah 65 and 66**.

I give this challenge to anyone who is doing any study on the new heavens and the new earth, and the old heavens and the old earth, to go back and read that promise found in those two places, and see if you can understand that God is talking anything in the world about a physical planet earth being destroyed, and another physical planet earth being devised and renovated and transformed and made new again, from the physical, earthly, materialistic standpoint. And if God were not talking about it in the promise He made, in the prophecy He made, then certainly the fulfillment of it would not be a materialistic planet earth that has been burned up with fire and transformed so that it will be a new earth—not with literal fire, that is. The promise consists of a spiritual transformation, not a physical planet earth change.

One of the greatest preachers we know anything about was **Charles Spurgeon**. I used to have both sets of his books—two tremendous sets of books of sermons written by him. When I gave the pastorate up to go into full time evangelism (in 1976) I began to get rid of my books—sold books, gave books away, gave them to a theological college. And then when I moved and got into a new type of work instead of the pastorate (overseas evangelism), and then got an interest in eschatology, I began to buy books on eschatology. You should come into my front room where my library is and see my books now! Now I don't know what to do with all of them, but I have them, and studying as I can.

But Charles Spurgeon was one of my favorites. I remember when I went to London and went to the church that is there now—the Metropolitan Tabernacle—so different than when Spurgeon was there. A meeting on Wednesday night down in the basement, with not too very many people. And then one time my wife and I were there and visited on a Sunday in the main auditorium. I suppose not more than 250 people in the service on Sunday. Charles Spurgeon used to preach to 5,000 people at one time.

And Charles Spurgeon said in a sermon on **Isaiah 65:17-19** these words:

"Did you ever regret the absence of the burnt-offering, or the red heifer, or any one of the sacrifices and rites of the Jews? Did you ever pine for the feast of tabernacles, or the dedication? No, because, though these were like the old heavens and earth to the Jewish believers, they have passed away, and we now live under new heavens and a new earth, so far as the dispensation of divine teaching is concerned. The substance is come, and the shadow has gone: and we do not remember it." (Charles Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. xxxvii, p. 354).

Well, Peter did not say much about the new heavens and the new earth. He said, *"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (**II Peter 3:13**). He described all this as a place of righteousness. Isn't it strange that that is all he said? And that is all he told us about it?

Well, the Bible wasn't finished yet. And old John was on the island of Patmos, and God gave him a vision—gave him some things to look forward to. He had written a lot of it down which God had shown him. In my mind I can see him writing about the persecution of the saints, and writing about the Beast, and writing about the destruction of Babylon, writing about the judgments of God upon the land—writing about all these things in the book of Revelation. But oh, so much of it is negative; so much of it is persecution, so much of it is murder, so much of it is being put to death, and so much of it is bad, bad, bad things happening on the earth. I mean, that is the whole book—until you come over toward the end. And I think maybe (you see, I don't know)—but I think maybe John said, "God, maybe we ought to say something to really let the folks know what is going to come about as a result of this. It's not good enough just to get downhearted, and distressed, and discouraged, and put down, and put in jail, and have your head cut off, and all these other things, without having something said to encourage more than what Peter told us about when he said, 'We look forward to a new heaven and a new earth.' God, don't you think we ought to say something more?"

God gives him the last two chapters in the book of Revelation. I do not know how God gave it to him. I do not know how John got it from God by inspiration. But I believe it came from God. And here we have in the last two chapters of **Revelation 21 and 22** concerning the new heaven and the new earth.

Pictured in Revelation 21

Starting in **chapter 21, verse 1**, John said, *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away..."*

Now that introduces the situation following what we have been talking about, as the old heaven and the old earth pass away. Now we have a new situation coming on the scene that is based on the promise of God made in **Isaiah 65 and 66**.

And in relation to the new heaven and the new earth, he says that in this new heaven and in this new earth there is the New Jerusalem:

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

Who is this bride? What is this holy city? Over in **verse 9** he said:

"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."

So the bride is the Lamb's wife.

I remember preaching in Spain. I was preaching through a missionary translator. I was preaching from **Revelation 22:17** where it says, *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come."* And my translator stopped and said, "The word in Spanish (**esposa**) means 'wife.'" I was saying "bride"; he said the word means "wife." I said, "If that is what it means, say it! That is what I want to say." The bride is the Lamb's wife. And I think it is not necessary for me, in talking to folks who are mostly Baptist here, to go back any further than **Ephesians 5** to understand and realize that the bride of our Lord is the church, God's people. Paul used the idea of a man and his relationship to his wife as a picture of Christ and the church. He said in **Ephesians 5:32**, *"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."*

The bride of Christ is not a localized institution either. The bride of Christ is the totality of God's elect people, and this is a picture of God's elect people in the new dispensation, in the new age following the dispersion and destruction of the old heavens and the old earth.

I don't believe that it is a Baptist bride, either, or a Methodist bride, or any other denominational bride. It is the totality of God's people.

The book of Revelation is concerned about two women. Did you know that? One woman is the wife of Jehovah. God married her, and He had to divorce her later. I mean, He had problems with that woman. And she was a harlot. She engaged in all kinds of things which the Bible tells about. And so was Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, so that later on she is called "**Babylon**" in the book of Revelation. And she is called the "**mother of harlots**." And she is called "**the whore**." It is sad to think that God would have to call someone who had been His people by that name. But Israel had been the wife of Jehovah. Jerusalem was the capital of the nation of Israel. And when you come to the teachings in the book of Revelation about Babylon, we are thinking in terms of Old Jerusalem, and this involves the wife of Jehovah. You have got that woman, and we are dealing with her in a lot of the book of Revelation as you read about Babylon being destroyed, Babylon being burned with fire by the ten horns, Babylon being made desolate, and Babylon being responsible for the blood of the prophets and the saints. **Rome** was not responsible so much for the blood of prophets, but Jerusalem was. And God gave His judgments against Jerusalem because of that.

But in contrast to this unfaithful woman, this wife of Jehovah, you have the bride—the wife of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this wife of the Lord Jesus Christ has nothing to do with the old Jerusalem. This is a New Jerusalem. This is the new city. This is the new bride of the Lord Jesus Christ which comes down from Heaven, implying that this originated in Heaven— not upon earth. The origin of the church is in Heaven. And it comes down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

In **verse 10** it says,

"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."

So we are thinking about not only that Revelation is concerned about two women, but Revelation is concerned about two cities—the old city of Jerusalem, and the new Jerusalem which is the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. The old city was destroyed, but the new city which supplants it and takes its place is that city which is the bride of Jesus Christ, which is the totality of God's elect people.

When I was a kid growing up, I read my Bible. And from the very first, as I studied and read about Heaven and things that pertain to Heaven, naturally my mind came to these verses when I saw them in the books and as I read my Bible. I used to read my Bible—I remember at the age of 12, I was really digging into the Bible then. But we get a picture of this beautiful city coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband—over 1,000 miles wide, over 1,000 miles long, and over 1,000 miles high—here is a cube; here is a four-square city. Here is the picture of a city the likes of which have never been seen in all the world. It has walls of jasper. It has walls over 500 miles high. It has gates that are made of pearl. It has a street that is made of gold. And you know, we are taught about this in our Sunday School, and we are taught by preachers about this, and we are taught that some day after the drudgery of this life is over, and the poverty of this life is over—brother, we are going to walk on streets of gold up there!

It does say that it will have a street of gold (vs. 21); (the whole city is pure gold—vs. 18). We need to remember the book of Revelation was written in sign language. It is figurative and symbolical language. And God is not here describing a materialistic city (even though a new kind). He is describing His church, His people who are going to live and be with Him forever.

I don't think I'd be so happy walking on streets of gold, anyway. I mean, looking at it from a realistic standpoint, I don't think I'd rather walk on streets of gold.

When you have walls of jasper, and you have gates of pearl, what do they mean? What do they mean?

Look at **verse 22**:

“And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

It would seem like if the temple had always been such a great structure that meant so much to God's people, that surely in the new heavens and the new earth and in the New Jerusalem, God would have another temple. There are many in the world today who think that God needs another temple. But there is no need of another temple. The temple in the Old Testament represented the very presence of God. As the Shekinah presence of God came down in the glory of a cloud, or the fire by night, it represented the very presence of God that was there. But you remember what God said in **Isaiah 66:1**:

“...The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me?...

“For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been...”

But He went on to say that the man to whom He would look is the man of a contrite heart who would tremble at His word" (vs. 2).

But God is not interested in a temple where He has to come down in a cloud or a fire to make His presence known any more. It is shown to us in the Bible that the only temple we need in our day and time, the only temple that is needed in the new heavens and the new earth, the only temple that is needed in the New Jerusalem, is the Father and Jesus Christ Himself. They are the temple of that place, it says.

I mean, if you are in the presence of the Father, and you are in the presence of the Son, why do you need a building for a cloud to settle on, or for a fire to come down on, to let you know that God is there? In this age in which we live now, which I feel is, according to **Ephesians 1:10**, ***“the dispensation of the fullness of times,”*** we are here; we are here now. And God dwells with His people. Jesus dwells with His people. And they are the temple of this New Jerusalem which is the totality of God's people since the passing away of the old heavens and the old earth.

Look at **verse 24**:

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it...” Walk in the light of what? Walk in the light of the city.

Now people have their differences about postmillennialism, premillennialism, and Amillennialism; and some say pessimillennialism. Some talk about the world getting worse, and some talk about it getting better. Well, whatever—it says here that in this area, *"the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it."* And I like that, *"...the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it"* (vs. 24).

I know that Christianity has had to struggle. But I also know it started out with twelve men. And the next number I see is about one hundred and twenty. And the next number I see is three thousand. And the next number I see is five thousand. And the next time I see it, it is 144,000. And I have seen statistics of later about the number of Christians in the world today (2 billion), and I look back and see that all started with Jesus Christ picking out a few ignorant fishermen and tax collector and people like that, and making out of them a group of people that would grow and grow and grow and have influence and power in this world so that even in the book of Acts it was said they *"turned the world upside down"* (Acts 17:6). Now I don't believe that they are turning the world upside down so much today, but I believe that God is still working, and the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed which when it is planted grows until it becomes a great tree (Matthew 13:31-32). And it is like the leaven which a woman puts into the meal, which continues to move and to do its work until the whole is leavened.

Charles Spurgeon went so far as to say he believed that some day all the world will be converted. I do not know about that. But I do know that God's purpose will be fulfilled in His church, and that is that we shall be the influence for God in this world to affect the whole world. I believe that.

Someone mentioned about Jesus saying that He was the light of the world. He was the light of the world, it is true. He said that. But he said, *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"* (John 9:5). The light of the world today is you. The light of the world today is me. The light of the world is His church. And His church is to have influence in this world. His church is to have power in this world.

"...and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it" (vs. 24).

Here is another interesting thing. Verse 25 says,

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day..." What does that mean, when the gates are kept open? Well, we look at Isaiah 60, going back to the Old Testament to find the same expression (and I am sure that John must have got this from this particular verse. You know, it is amazing when you read through Revelation to find out that again and again and again and again, multiplied over again, there are references to the Old Testament. John must have really known his Bible. He doesn't come out and quote, saying "Isaiah said this" and "Jeremiah said this," but you read through Revelation and you find, if you know your Bible very much, you see these expressions cropping up all in the book of Revelation),

Isaiah 60:11:

"Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night..."

And then he gives the reason why. Have you wondered why it says the gates of that city shall not be shut at all by day, and there's no night there? Well, the reason is right here:

"...that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought" (Isaiah 60:11).

And I believe that this is a reference to the power and the influence of the invitation of the church to the Gentile people of the world where God will continually use the church to bring those powers into the sphere of the church life. I believe this.

He is definitely talking about the Gentiles and kings coming in to serve God, for in the next verse He said,

"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isaiah 60:12).

And this shows us also that these events take place in this life and not in eternity.

Pictured in Revelation 22

Now we come to **chapter 22**. God probably said, "Now John, let's give a little bit more about this. Maybe we don't have enough written down yet to encourage the people like they ought to be encouraged. Let's write some more about some of the good things."

"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" (Revelation 22: 1-2).

The river of the water of life!

Was that predicted in the Old Testament? Yes, it was. In **Ezekiel chapter 47**, in that great passage of Scripture over there that our dispensational friends like to throw into the future and say that it will have to be fulfilled some day when the new temple is built, where all of these things will actually be existent in Jerusalem and that area sometime out in the end of this age. It was mentioned in the book of Ezekiel about this river of the water of life.

The first twelve verses tell about Ezekiel looking at a little stream of water coming out from under a door there in the house of God. He sees that little trickle of water go on out toward the gate of that place. He said that a man came out and measured with a measuring rod so many cubits. And Ezekiel got in that little stream of water and waded out to his ankles. Now this is coming out of the house of God.

The man measures another so many cubits, and Ezekiel goes on out wading until the water comes up to his knees. The water keeps going out and getting deeper. He follows the man out, and wades in it until he is up to his loins. Then he said the man goes on measuring further so many cubits out there, and he said, "I couldn't make it. I would have had to swim. So I came back to the shore!" And he said, "I began to look, and to see some trees growing on either side of that river of water." And he said that *"the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine"* (Ezekiel 47:12). And he said that the water that was flowing out there made everything to live that it touched (vs. 9). Now that was Ezekiel's prophecy.

And then, bless God, I read here where this is in the New Jerusalem. And this is the river of the water of life *"proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"* (Revelation 22:1). And there is the tree of life bringing forth this fruit, and the nourishment of the trees come from this river of the water of life, and *"the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations"* (vs. 2).

Remember it talked about *"the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour"* into this city (Revelation 21:24). Now my friend, I cannot get anything out of that but that the church is to be engaged in a healing process. The church is to be engaged in *"the healing of the nations"* (Revelation 22:2).

In what way? Well, it is done by the water of life. I believe Ezekiel's prophecy and Revelation 22 are the same identical thing.

But the question comes up, what is the water of life?

We read in **Revelation 22:17**—the last invitation given in the Bible, where God says, "Let's invite men to come and drink of the water of life." What is the water of life?

Jesus came and sat on the well at Samaria. Here comes a woman to draw water, and Jesus said, *"Give me to drink"* (John 4:7). And she said, "Why are you talking to me? I am a Samaritan, and you're a Jew!" And Jesus

said, *"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"* (John 4:10). "You come and drink that water and you thirst again." "But," he said, *"whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"* (John 4:14). Everlasting life! This is what He was talking about.

And, bless God, the women got some water that day that was not in the well.

He said, "You go to the city and tell your husband to come out and I'll talk to both of you." She said, "I don't have a husband." He said, "That's true; and the man before him was not your husband, and the man before him was not your husband; the five men you have lived with were not your husbands."

You know what she did? She ran into the city and said, *"Come, see a man, which told we all things that ever I did..."* (John 4:29). I think that was an exaggeration; but he did tell her a lot that she had done. And I think that she was convicted in her heart. She found salvation that day. She found the water that was not in the well.

But you know, it is interesting to me that there in John where it tells about that, it says, in connection with the water that was not in the well, that this *"water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"* (John 4:14). Now get the picture: this is water springing up in the person. The water that came from the temple in Ezekiel's prophecy didn't flow into the temple; it flowed out from the temple.

And what is the temple? **I Corinthians 3:16** says that *"ye are the temple of God."*

I Corinthians 6:19 says *"that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."*

Jesus Christ and God the Father are the Temple of this city (**Revelation 21:22**), but we are the temple in which God dwells.

This structure here is not the temple of God. Jesus said, *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). He dwells in the midst of his people. And we need not a Shekinah glory over a human-built building anywhere.

And this water springs up into everlasting life.

Let me give you another incident. In **John 7:37-38** it says, *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."*

Where did God say that? Where is any Scripture that said that? As I look through the Scriptures of the Old Testament, **Ezekiel 47** is what gets my mind's attention—that this must be what Jesus was talking about—where the water comes out from the house of God, flowing out for the healing of the nations, for the benefit and blessing of others. And here He said, 'If you thirst, come to me and drink; and if you drink, just like the Scripture said, rivers of living water shall flow out of your belly—that is, out from you—not into you.

What is He talking about? He explained it in verse **39**: *"(But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)"*

Well, there was a day when Jesus was glorified. He arose from the dead, and later ascended up and sat down on the right hand of the Father, received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, and shed forth that Holy Spirit on His people (Acts 2:33). And that Holy Spirit is the representative of Jesus Christ. He is Jesus living in us today.

In **John 14:18** Jesus said, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."* *"My Father and I both will come to you."* *"We will make our abode with you"* (See verse 23). By the way, the Greek word for "abode" is the same word as the word "mansion" it is translated into in **verse 2**: *"In my Father's house are many manions."* And in that same chapter he says, *"...we will come unto him, and make our abode (mansion) with him."*

John 14 is talking about the coming of Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers in this world.

And in **John 7** He is talking about the Holy Spirit. In **John 4** He is talking about everlasting life.

What is this prophecy of the river of the water of life in the New Jerusalem which comes out of the throne of God? It is that which in your life and my life is brought about by the Holy Spirit's presence in us, as He flows out from us to enrich the lives of others in salvation, forgiveness of sins, and the blessings of God. I think the river of the water of life means all of the spiritual blessings that God has for us; but not to be kept bottled up on the inside of us, but to flow out. *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"* (**John 7:38**).

That ought to be said of the church today!

In **Revelation 22:17**, it says, *"And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* When it says that (listen carefully), this cannot be something that is said in eternity. **Revelation 21 and 22** cannot apply just to eternity. It begins in this age in which we live now, because the church—the Spirit and the bride both—are still giving the invitation to the world, *"And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* That has to be now—not in eternity.

And when He talks about **"whosoever,"** that has to be now, not in eternity. And as a matter of fact, as I read this passage of Scripture, and I see the closing account that God is giving here of the new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem which is in it which is representative of the people of God, and these are the spiritual blessings God has promised to us in this age and this dispensation, John says, "We cannot close this book without once more reminding the people to whom these letters are going that the time is short." That is what He is saying.

In **verse 6**, in this last chapter of the Bible, *"Then he said to me, 'These words are faithful and true.' And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.* He is reiterating the same words he gave in **chapter 1** and **verse 1**. At the end of the book He said, "I'm telling you this again."

And immediately following that, He said, *"Behold, I come quickly."*

What some of our friends believe that the word **"quickly"** means is this: that whenever He does come, maybe two thousand or even three thousand years away—whenever He does come, He is coming quickly! He is coming suddenly!

Well, the definition of this word is given by the preceding verse, *"...things which must shortly be done."*

And you go down to **verse 10**: And he said to me, *"Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand."*

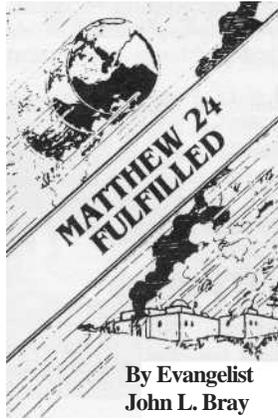
Once again He is saying, there is not much time left.

In **verse 12**, once again He says, *"And, behold, I come quickly..."*

And then again in the next to the last verse in this chapter, *"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly."*

There is an importance being attached to this matter of imminence, or soon-to-be, or a nearness, a "behind the door" event, that is going to take place before long. That is one reason I have to believe that the book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. The internal evidence points that way.

Well, there was an old Puritan preacher many years ago. He said something that I'll pass on to you in



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By Evangelist John L. Bray

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8. Covers things which **most** Christians have never understood.
9. Written by a Southern Baptist evangelist. Was pastor of Southern Baptist churches for over 30 years, plus 26 years in evangelism in 53 foreign countries and 31 states.

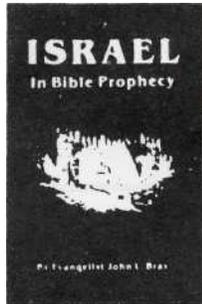
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