

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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New Heavens and a New Earth

The basic meaning of the expression "heavens and the earth" is a dwelling place, a habitation. In Genesis 1:1, God created "the heavens and the earth" (the physical world) with plant and animal life, for humanity to inhabit (Genesis 1:26-28).

We later find a similar expression used with a spiritual application (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). Isaiah spoke of God creating "new heavens and a new earth" in which all men would come to worship before Him (Isaiah 65:17; 66:23). He thus prophesied of the church – the habitation or dwelling place of God's people (cf. Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-12).

God dwells with His people, the church, and they with Him (2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Ephesians 2:11-22). Christians, reconciled to God, are raised out of the death of sin to sit "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6, 16). We become citizens of the kingdom of the Son when we are saved in Christ (Colossians 1:13-14). Christians inhabit a new and spiritual realm, the church, the kingdom of heaven (Acts 2:47; Matthew 16:18-19). Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Isaiah's prophecies are fulfilled in the church over which Christ reigns and into which we have been transferred (Romans 15:12; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 5:9-10).

The kingdom of Christ, the church, is a dwelling place unlike this earth. It is a spiritual kingdom, the house of God, a holy temple in the Lord, where peace between God and man exists (Ephesians 2:14-22). This earth is not our home (Hebrews 11:13-16).

When Peter used the expression "new heavens and a new earth" in 2 Peter 3:13, he looked forward to yet another dwelling place of God's people, the eternal kingdom, our heavenly home (2 Peter 1:11). In visionary form, John saw this "new heaven and a new earth" prepared for eternal habitation (Revelation 21:1-7). Revelation 20:11 and 21:1 allude to the time when the material universe is destroyed – no place is found for heaven and earth (2 Peter 3:10-12). In its place will be "new heavens and a new earth" where God's people will eternally dwell with Him (Revelation 21:22-22:5).

In summary, we see the expression "heavens and earth" applied first to this material world (Genesis 1:1). Then, to the spiritual kingdom (the church) that exists now (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). And finally, to the eternal kingdom, our heavenly inheritance (1 Peter 1:4; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). In each case, "heavens and earth" is applied to a habitation created by God for His creation. As His "new creation," Christians presently inhabit the Messiah's kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:17). In the last, glorious day of resurrection and judgment, Christ will deliver us, His kingdom, to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). We shall dwell forever in that habitation of righteousness (2 Peter 3:13; Matthew 25:46).

- Joe R. Price, in *The Spirit's Sword*, 03/22/2026

The Stone Which the Builders Rejected!

Following the parable of the wicked vine-growers (Luke 20:9-16) in which the scribes and chief priests understood that Jesus spoke this parable against them, the Lord completed His divine warning to them regarding their future by pointing to a reference in their holy Scriptures, Psalm 118:22. "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'What then is this that is written: "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*"? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.'" (Luke 20:17-18).

Clearly the Jewish rulers had rejected Jesus as the Messiah and were on a determined path to destroy Him, just as their fathers had done to the prophets which had been sent by God. As this discussion began with their questioning Him regarding His authority to do and teach as He did, Jesus uses the word of God to show His divine preeminence and authority (cf. Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10) by what the rejected "stone" becomes. The "stone" represented Jesus Christ. The "builders" represent the religious leaders who opposed Christ. They rejected Him in favor of their own building plans: "This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours." (Luke 20:14).

To those who conclude that this prophetic cornerstone is not Jesus Christ, their rejection is described as a falling over this stone resulting in their being "broken to pieces." The application is, of course, spiritual. One is spiritually shattered by opposing or denying the Christ. Note Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 1:23, "but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness". This reflects what Isaiah had preached hundreds of years before: "Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many will stumble over them, Then they will fall and be broken; They will even be snared and caught." (Isaiah 8:14-15).

Of greater fear and dread (cf. Isaiah 8:13) is the condition of one upon whom the stone falls in judgment: "it will scatter him like dust." (Luke 20:18). It will grind the unbeliever to powder, such that a cleansing wind will blow away. This pulverizing is a clear and severe warning of disastrous catastrophe, God's harsh, yet just, judgment upon the disobedient who reject His Son.

Peter offered this assurance to believers:

"And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: 'BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.' This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,' AND, 'A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE'; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY." (1 Peter 2:4-10).

Men hurt themselves when they reject Christ. They will hurt worse at the Judgment for refusing to listen to His Son. We praise and thank the Lord today for all who believe and serve the Lord Jesus Christ! These have received mercy. Have you received His mercy?

- Gary Smalley

* "Atheism never wrote a line that was comforting on a death bed!"

* "A man is never better than his principles!"

* "Time spent in pitying oneself is worse than a waste of time!"

* "God planned to make us creatures of character, not of comfort!"

* "To change one's character, we must begin at the control center - the heart!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)