

The Third Heaven

One of the most misunderstood scriptures in the Bible is found in **2 Peter chapter 3**. In this chapter, we get a glimpse of the three Heavens and Earths which are used figuratively in the Bible. The word **“figurative”** means a representation or semblance, expressing one thing in terms denoting something else which could be regarded as metaphorical language.

In **3 Peter 3:1-2**, the Apostle Paul is reminding them of what the Old Testament prophets had said and also of what the twelve Apostles had spoken to them in the beginning found in **Acts chapter 2**. They all were speaking of one thing, not different things. The subject that they all were speaking about was The Last Days.

2 Peter 3:3-4 speaks of the last days, but these last days were the last days of the Old Covenant system and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The last days were not the end of planet Earth.

In the first century AD, it was time for the old to pass away. (**Hebrews 8:13**) It was time for the grace and truth of God to come to reality in the New Covenant. (**John 1:14-17**) Everywhere the Apostles went; they spoke of the events that would take place in the last days.

In **2 Peter 3:3-7**, scoffers made fun of what the Apostles said because the scoffers said everything continued on as always. The scoffers did not realize that Jesus said that everything was going to happen in the time of their last days, the last days of their own generation which was alive at that time in Peter's day. (**Matthew 23:32-36, 38, 24:34-35**)

The second thing that Jesus said very plainly was that it was **“this”** generation, not some future generation that was yet to be born. The judgment of God came to that generation still living in AD 66-AD 70.

It's done; it will NOT happen again.

Matthew 24:34 is one of the most often twisted passages of scripture in the entire Bible. Let's look at some various translations of **Matthew 24:34**.

The entire verse in the KJV says, ***“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be **fulfilled**.”***

We will zero in on the word **“fulfilled”** to see how some other translations dealt with this word:

“... **accomplished” – (American Standard Version)**

“...take place**” – (New American Standard Version)**

“...take place**” – (Revised Standard Version)**

“...this age will come to its close**.” – (The Living Bible)**

“...take place**” – (New King James Version)**

“...all these things will happen before the people now living have all died.” – (Today’s English Version)

“...this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” – (New International Version)

Just as the scoffers in Peter’s day chose to be willingly ignorant of God’s impending judgment in the first century, so do many people today choose to be willingly ignorant of the proper meaning of the scripture.

Today, many Christians refuse to use the concept of **“audience relevance”** in order to understand this scripture and many others.

In Noah’s day, they were willingly ignorant of the impending judgment of God on their world. It was the **“Heavens”** and **“Earth”** that made up the world of Noah’s day.

The **“world”** was the people of Noah’s generation and their society. Noah and his family were saved by going safely through the flood waters aboard the ark.

The remainder of those who were rebellious and unbelieving perished outside the ark of safety. It was **NOT** the planet that perished in the flood; it was the **“world”** of those people that perished in the flood. The physical planet, Earth, remained.

As you can see, the figurative use of **“Heaven and Earth”** is the way that the Bible uses it. Noah’s **“world”** was the first **“Heavens and Earth”** to be destroyed according to scripture.

According to the scripture, the figurative **“Second Heavens and Earth”** was the one that existed when the Apostle Peter wrote his epistles. Again, it was not the planet Earth, but it was the **“world”** (heaven and earth) of Peter’s day that was about to be destroyed.

The **“world”** of Noah was destroyed by water; the destruction of the **“world”** in Peter’s day would be destroyed by “fire”.

The planet Earth is not the subject here, but rather the people, their society, and their culture is the subject. Again, the words “heavens and earth” here are used figuratively. **(2 Peter 3:7)**

The word **“now”** indicates that it was the **“Heavens and Earth”** that existed in the Apostle Peter’s day in the first century. The word **“but”** used in **2 Peter 3:7** is a coordinating conjunction that connects things of equal rank. This verse indicates that God exists outside of time and is not limited by time.

The comparison is that Noah’s **“world”** of people were destroyed by water, just as the **“world”** of people in Peter’s day would be destroyed by fire.

The **“Heavens and Earth”** of the Israelites would come to an end by AD 70 being destroyed by fire. Titus, the Roman General destroyed Jerusalem and its temple by burning it with fire.

The word **“fire”** is also used in a figurative way indicating the **“fiery”** persecutions that came on the early church. **(1 Peter 4:12, 17-18)** According to **verse 17**, the time of judgment had begun.

As in Noah's day, mankind continued to exist on planet Earth, so it was with the judgment in Peter's day. Jerusalem and the Old Covenant would be destroyed, but mankind would continue to live on planet Earth with a New Covenant.

When were the Heaven and Earth to pass away as Jesus stated in **Matthew 24:34**? How is it that so many preachers today are so "willingly ignorant" of these things?

We do know what the second Heaven and Earth was. What is the third Heaven? The fact that there is a third Heaven proves that there was certainly a first Heaven and a second Heaven.

We have already examined their figurative use. The Old Covenant was not done away with at the cross. (**Hebrews 8:13**) The Old Covenant ended in AD 70 when Jesus returned. We know that the Book of Revelation was completely fulfilled in AD 70.

The Apostle John wrote about a New Heaven and a New Earth in **Revelation 21:1-2**. The word "**first**" in front of the words heaven and earth in **verse 1** comes from the Greek word "**protos**" which means "**previous, prior, or former**". It was the previous heaven and earth that had passed away when the Old Covenant ended in AD 70.

In **Revelation 21:1-2**, we see the third "**Heaven**", the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven to be with mankind on the earth.

Keep in mind the figurative use of "**Heaven and Earth**". The Scripture is not talking about a new planet Earth and a whole new universe.

God was not going to destroy the planet and make a new planet. The **“New Heaven and Earth”** was a covenantal relationship that God was to have with men.

Notice what **Revelation 21:3** says, it does not say that men are with God, but rather that God is with men. Notice in **Ezekiel 37:28**, it says that God would be in the midst of them forevermore. (**Revelation 21:4**)

When the Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation, it was only a short time until God shall erase the guilt of sin. John used the future tense **“shall”** because it was in his future, his very near future that this would take place.

The **“former things”** that had passed away were the Old Covenant and its rituals. The scriptures were never referring to our physical planet Earth.

In **Revelation 21:5**, the scripture said that ALL things were being made new. That was from the time that Jesus walked on planet Earth until AD 70 when the New Covenant was completed and the Old Covenant vanished.

Notice what the scripture said in **Revelation 21:6**. Are we not drinking of the fountain of the water of life freely right now?

Is not Jesus that living water that came down from Heaven?

Mankind had the hope of eternal life while he lived between AD 30 and AD 70.

That hope was promised before the world began. (**Titus 1:2**) Eternal life came through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (**Romans 6:23, 2 Timothy 1:10, 1 John 5:11-13**)

In **2 Peter 3:9-13**, Peter mentions a “**promise**” not promises. What was the promise?

It was the arrival of the New Heavens and New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

This was the Third Heaven that they were looking for. God would not be slack or tardy on His planned arrival of the New Heavens or the Third Heaven.

Only one promise is spoken of here. Notice also in **2 Peter 3:9**, the word “**usward**” is used. This does not refer to people who would be alive 2000 years in the future. The Apostle Peter was referring to the generation that was alive when he wrote his Epistle. He included himself when he said “**usward**”.

The Bible refers to the Israelite world that existed between 1500 BC and AD 70.

The scripture says in **Galatians 4:3** that they were in bondage, not to the minerals of the planet. They were in bondage to the Old Covenant system and all the laws that were associated with it.

The Old Covenant never offered them freedom, only slavery. (**Galatians 4:9**)

The “rudiments of the world” mentioned in **Colossians 2:8** were the elements of the Old Covenant, not the physical elements of the planet Earth. (**Colossians 2:20-22**)

In **2 Corinthians 12:1-4**, we find that whatever the Bible says about the Third Heaven is the same thing it says about Paradise. Paradise and the Third Heaven are the same. We know that the Tree of Life was in the midst of the Paradise of God. (**Revelation 2:7**)

Conclusion

The first heaven and earth discussed in the Scripture was Noah’s “**heaven and earth**” which was destroyed by water.

The Second Heaven and Earth was that of Old Covenant Israel which was destroyed by fire in AD 70.

The New Heavens and New Earth of the New Everlasting Covenant was consummated at the return of Jesus Christ in AD 70.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost access to the Tree of Life. What Adam lost in the Garden of Eden was restored in Jesus Christ. Paradise was eternal life in the presence of God.

The Tree of Life is in the Paradise of God. The Tree of Life is for the healing of the nations which is the healing from sin. Only those who had a right to the Tree of Life through obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ had received their healing from sin.

Only when we are born again according to **Acts 2:37-41**, do we enter into the Third Heaven and gain access to the Tree of Life.

When we continue to partake of the Tree of Life, we maintain our spiritual life. As we have already studied, continuing to partake of the Tree of Life keeps us dwelling in the Third Heaven which is Paradise. Paradise is eternal life in the presence of God.

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