

Notes on New-Earth vs. Annihilation-then-Brand-New-Earth Created from Scratch **By Pastor Phil Layton**

Some premillennial theologians committed to grammatical-historical interpretation have argued the 'new earth' of Rev 21, Isa 65-66, 2 Pet 3 is a *redeemed and renewed creation*, while other premillennialists see a *removed creation* in Rev 20:11 (matter ceases to exist for however long final judgment is), then in Rev 21 *re-creation from scratch*. Are Israel's 'forever' land promises to fulfill on another planet? Will earth be *transformed* or *totally obliterated*, no trace of its existence in Rev 20:11-15? Will there be a *restoration of all things* or will there be an *annihilation of all things* when Rev 20 ends? Robert Thomas's Revelation is a most scholarly example defending a brand-new-earth theory but he admits weighty arguments on the other side. For the restored/renewed earth view, George Peters' 3-volume Theocratic Kingdom is the massive and classic standard, or a smaller summary is found in Robert D. Culver's Daniel and Latter Days, Randy Alcorn's book Heaven, or early church father Irenaeus (c. 140 AD) also taught earth's restoration, not annihilation.

How did Peter view the OT and the future?

Peter in Acts 3:21 spoke clearly of a future '*restoration of all things*' that God had spoken about in the OT prophets (I think including Isaiah 65-66). But some think the same author taught earth's annihilation instead of its restoration, based on some translations of 2 Pet 3:10-11 '*...earth and its works will be burned up*. Since all these things will be destroyed ...' (NASB, footnote mentions early manuscripts have '*discovered*' rather than 'burned up' in relation to the earth in v. 10). The ESV translates it '*will be exposed*,' or NIV is '*will be laid bare*.' Biblical translators aren't sure in this text that earth will be burned up, but the clearer statement in Acts 3:21 sheds light on whether Peter foresaw earth's restoration or its annihilation. Even if the correct texts/translations have to do with a future burning, it could speak of fire *purging and purifying* earth but not *putting it out of existence entirely*:

- In Revelation the only fire mentioned right before the new earth (Rev 21) consumes only earth's sinners (Rev 20:9), similar to Isaiah's new earth context (Isa 66:15-24).
- The OT parallel to 2 Pet 3:10-12 (heavens and their bodies dissolving) is Isa 34:4, which suggest final burning judgment isn't removal of all matter and earth (34:9-11, 34:17-35:2), but is a restoring or renewing of earth (35:2, 6-9) where Israel's land, Jerusalem, Mt. Zion still exist (35:10, 24:23, 25:8-10 parallel Rev 21:4's new earth)
- 2 Pet 3 itself connects the future judgment with the past judgment on the earth in a flood judgment that radically affected the planet, when that *old world* passed away: '*the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction...*' v. 6-7, same Greek root for 'destroy' in both, and the opposite word for 'new' in v. 13, 2 Pet 2:5 used of the pre-flood '*old world*' (KJV). The first was '*of old...the world that then existed perished being flooded with water but the heavens and the earth which are now...are reserved for fire*' (3:5-7 NKJV). In the context he compares past purging and purifying by water to a future fiery one and there's a now/new contrast with the old that perished/passed similar to Rev 21:1
- Ps 104 similarly speaks of earth created to never be moved but a flood made radical changes to it (v. 5-8), then it speaks of God's creating as parallel with renewing the earth (v. 30), which may parallel the new creation also *renewing* earth in Rev 21:5?

Do the words of Jesus and Paul shed light on the new world of Rev 21?

Jesus did say 'earth will pass away' (Mt 24:35) but also in the same book spoke of earth's future passing or changing as a '*renewal* of all things (19:28 NIV; ESV 'the *new world*'; NASB '*the regeneration*'). Paul used that same Greek word in Titus 3:5 of believers saved by '*regeneration and renewal*,' only other use of *regeneration* in the NT, clearly parallel with *renewal*, not a removal from existence, but a radical transformation like in Rom 12:2

Metamorphosis is the Greek word in Rom 12:2 for change like a butterfly from a cocoon, where the old isn't made non-existent but its original existence continues in transformed form. Earlier in Rom 8:21 Paul also said all creation itself will be *liberated* from sin's curse and bondage, rather than *annihilated*. There final redemption isn't limited to man in creation; the groaning earth will be released in Rom 8, *set free*, not *sent out of existence*. Just as created people will never be annihilated, and there will be a bodily resurrection of the original person in the age to come, Rom 8 connects creation with created man's future

The new creation of Rev 21 is paralleled with Paul's picture of Christians as first-fruits of the regeneration/renewal of all things in the new world of Mt 19:28, as 2 Cor 5:17 says we're '*a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*' (compare Rev 21:1, 4-5: '*a new heaven and a new earth ... for the old order of things has passed away*. He who was seated on the throne said, "*Behold, I make all things new*"'). Paul's language like Rev 21 shows 'passing away' isn't vaporizing, it's vivid transforming.

Does John's language in Rev 21 require a brand new planet made out of nothing?

The Greek word for 'new' in Rev 21:1 is *kainos*, 'qualitatively new, as contrasted with *neos*, temporally new' (Complete Word Study Dictionary). Different forms of the root for *kainos* are translated 'renew, renewal' (Rom 12:2) and 'newness of life' (Rom 6:4), etc. Trench's Synonyms of the NT argues that *kainos* emphasizes a new quality, better, while *neos* is the Greek term for new in 'time, as that which has recently come into existence.'

Thomas in defending his brand-new-planet view admits the Greek word for '*making all things new*' in Rev 21:5 is not the word for creating something out of nothing (i.e., brand-new-planet), still he argues Mt 19:4 may be one NT exception. But the making of woman wasn't out of nothing (Adam's side) and neither was man's creation (formed out of dust). So the fact remains the Greek word for 'making' things new in Rev 21:5 (*poieo*) is used over 500x in the NT, but is never used in NT for creating things brand-new *out of nothing*

What about Rev 20:11 where it says the earth 'fled/ran'? Rev 20:11 by itself *could* mean there's no earth until 21:1, just a throne floating in space, but 20:12 pictures billions of sinners standing somewhere (not floating) and v. 13 later pictures 'the sea' giving up its dead, so it seems earth and sea still exist after v. 11. If '*And I saw*' in Revelation indicates chronological progression, then a simple reading of 20:11-13 in order helps see that the 'fleeing' or 'running' in v. 11 doesn't mean 'removing from existence' earth/sea (v. 13). Further confirmation from the analogy of Scripture is v. 13 symbolically pictures Death delivering its dead raised for judgment day, and Jn 5:28-29 says in a clear non-symbolic text that the last day will have sinners resurrected bodily from their earthly graves, so the earth and its graves must exist in the time after Rev 20:11 when unbelievers rise (see v. 5)

The language of 'fled away' in 20:11 is clearly a metaphor, picturing earth running away like a fugitive (Greek *fugeo*) from the face of God, though our planet doesn't have literal legs to run in the sense of this Greek verb (Rev 12:6). It's used in the NT 42x outside of Revelation, always with the idea of movement but never an idea of going *out of existence* (which would fit Eccl. 1:4 'a generation comes and goes, but *the earth remains forever*').

Even if earth can literally run somewhere else in the universe, v. 12's point is man can't. Rev 20:11 may be repeating/completing the image of 6:16-17: the enthroned God sinners ask who can stand before? Note the context of 6:14, every earthly mountain or island gets *moved* (though mountains are clearly not fully removed as you read v. 15-16). Stars fall rapidly as heaven is split or the sky is rolled back as a scroll (v. 13-14) and as the heavens and earth's mountains are being 'moved,' men try to flee away but they can't from the face/presence of Him sitting on the throne in v. 15-16 (very same terms as 20:11). That seems to be the very scene Rev 20:11 is drawing from, One before whom all fled. When heaven and earth are being so radically altered, it seems creation can't stand before the face of God, but Rev 20:12 answers the question of 6:16: sinners *will stand* before Him who sat on the throne. All sinners must stand before the One creation can't stand before.

The Greek in 20:11 'no place was found for them' is from Daniel 2:35 (Greek version) where it describes the end of earth's *kingdoms* and a kingdom from heaven that will fill the whole earth (pictured as a stone). Daniel 2:44 confirms this means the days of future kings will be interrupted and ended by this kingdom of God coming to earth, crushing and ending man's government, and God's coming earthly kingdom will be 'forever' (not just 'for 1000 years'). Other clearer Bible promises include land on this earth forever:

To Abraham in Genesis 17:8: "*I will give to you and to your descendants after you, **the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession ...***"
13:15 '*all **the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever***'
Ex 32:13 says to God '*Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself...**all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.***' "

Isaiah 60:21: '*Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land **forever...***' (the context of the chapter seems to be earthly Jerusalem and its land in the millennium, but God promises them they will possess that land *forever*, not just *for 1000 years*). Ezek 37:25 *They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell **there forever...***'

I respect brothers of other views but I just can't relegate those promises to another planet. For me, God's unilateral unconditional covenant promises are the most clear and I put the most weight there, rather than man's unclear ideas of Rev 21 and 2 Pet 3. Some prophetic and poetic texts arguably could support a brand-new-earth (Ps 102:25-26, but see 148:5-6, etc). I lean more towards new-in-a-sense-of-renewed based on other clearer promises to Israel in historical narratives, in above texts, and word meanings in 2 Pet 3, Rev 21, etc. It seems God will preserve His people while sinners and the earth as we know it will pass away/perish much as a flood destroyed the world of old, purging, purifying sin and its effects, proving Satan didn't win and nothing is beyond God's redeeming or renewing.