

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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OCTOBER 2012

THIS WORLD IS MY HOME

The bumper sticker proclaimed “If it’s not the King James Version it is not the Bible”! The King James version of the Bible with its beautiful poetic language and claim to authenticity by famous scholars and preachers, is perhaps the most honored and revered book in print. To even think of using any other version is heresy in the minds of many religious Fundamentalist today. Admittedly there are modern versions which do injustice to the Word and misleading in their translations, but to say the King James Version is the only one inspired of God is ignorance gone to seed. It is not translations or particular versions of the Bible that are inspired; it is the Word as revealed that is inspired. Anyone insisting on using the “original” KJV could not read it anyway since it was written in old English, which would certainly be foreign to most people today.

Depending only on the KJV has given rise to many ideas and doctrines which are simply not true. The most glaring one is that the world is going to come to an end and God is going to destroy it. Many preachers are telling us the signs of the times point to a soon coming end of the world. Didn’t Jesus plainly speak of “the end of the world”? The answer is yes if you read only the KJV. In all the verses cited to prove that Jesus spoke of the end of the world (example: Matt. 13:39, 40; 24:3; 28:20) the word “world” is the word *ainos* and is correctly translated “age” in other versions. The passage stating that “time shall be no more” (Rev. 10:6) is “there shall be delay no longer.” God was not going to delay the sounding of the seventh angel. When John writes “the world is passing away, and also its lust, but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (I Jn. 2:17) he identifies the “world” as the world’s system in the words: “for all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (ver. 16). Perhaps the main passage used to show the earth being destroyed is II Peter 3:10, 12: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be *destroyed* with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be *burned up*. Since all these things are to be *destroyed* in this way what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be *destroyed* by *burning* and the elements will melt with intense heat!” In verse 10 he uses the word *burned up* and in verse 12 he uses the word *burning*, but the word used in verse 12 is not the same word as translated *burned* in verse 10. The word in verse 10 is *discovered* and before we discount this look at Psalm 18:15: “The channels of the deep waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were *discovered* at Thy rebuke.” When David was speaking of God’s judgment he states “the foundations of the world were ‘laid bare’ or ‘discovered’.” When Peter states that “all these things are to be *destroyed* (ver. 12) he has also stated that the world in Noah’s was *destroyed* (ver. 6). When God “destroyed” the world then He did not annihilate it. Peter is speaking of the judgment of God and uses the same terminology used in the Old Testament to describe this judgment.

The question is: will God destroy the world? Before we let what we have heard at funeral services and learned from syrupy sentimental songs cloud our thinking let’s see what the Bible really says about this subject. Genesis 8:21b, 22: “I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done, *while the earth remains*, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night..” Just how long will the earth remain? We find the answer in Ecclesiastes (a book theologians like to ignore) 1:4: “A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth *remains forever*.” Psalm 78:69: “And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has *founded forever*.” Psalm 104:5: “He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter *forever and forever*.” Psalm 115:16: “The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of man.” At the risk of being taken to task as a heretic, let me say that the old gospel hymn that says “This world is not my home, I’m just passing through, if Heaven is not my home, Lord what will I do?” is flatly unbiblical. The doctrine that the earth will be destroyed is a doctrine of sensationalism, pessimism, fatalism and fear. Consider the future of the earth from these passages: Num. 14:21 “But indeed as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord” Hab. 2:14 “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” Isa. 11:9 “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” It is much easier to believe the earth will be destroyed rather than be evangelized. It is more exciting to hear about the “rapture” (getting out of the world) than to hear about the great commission (going into the world). There have been so many ridiculous claims about the end of the world the church has been the object of laughter, scorn, ridicule and unbelief in the eyes of the world. The worldly system assumes if the church is not right on its facts it is probably not right on its faith either. It is a shame that many Christian people will believe the heretical writings of Tim LaHay in the “Left Behind” series before they will believe the Scriptures. To many it is more exciting to listen to such doomsayers as Pat Robinson, Hal Lindsey, John Walvoord, John Hagee and Jack Van Impe than the Apostle Paul, Peter and John. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” God and not sensational T.V. preachers is in charge.

Many Christians have accepted the Greek philosophic idea that the body passes permanently away after death and the soul reappears in some type of disembodied state. If this is true the resurrection of our body is not a very important doctrine. The Bible never speaks of a soul apart from the body. Genesis 2:7 states: “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life and man became a *living soul*.” Man does not *have* a soul he *is* a soul. Man is not “soul and body” he is “*spirit, soul and body*” (I Thess. 5:23). The prophet Ezekiel states “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:4). When man dies it is not the soul but the spirit that departs (Isa. 26:14, 19). Ecclesiastes 12:7 states: the body “will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” When Jesus died he did not “yield” or “give up” his soul, rather his spirit (Matt.27:50; John 19:30). Luke records Jesus as saying “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit” (Luke

23:46). This was a quote from Psalm 31:5. When they stoned Stephen “he called upon the Lord and said ‘Lord Jesus receive my spirit!’ And falling on his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord do not hold this sin against them!’ And having said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:59, 60). Nothing is said about his going to heaven. In fact the Scripture nowhere says anyone goes to heaven when they die, but it does say they are *asleep* (Dan. 12:2; Mt. 27:52; Jn. 11:11, 12; Acts 13:36; I Cor. 15:6, 18, 19, 20; I Thess. 4:13, 14, 15; II Pet. 3:4). In spite of these Scripture references most “Bible believing” preachers will explain them away and teach that Christians go to heaven when they die. This negates the importance of the resurrection, which is our hope (Rom. 8:23-25), and creates the idea that the earth doesn’t matter because it is going to be destroyed and we will all be taken to heaven when we die. Our destiny is an earthly one, a new earth, an earth redeemed and transformed. An earth reunited with heaven, but an earth nevertheless. The choice set before mankind is not a choice between heaven and hell but between life and death. In Romans 8:29 the Christian is promised we’ll be “conformed to the image of God’s son.” The body is not a prison from which to escape, but because we are “children of God, it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2). In the resurrection this body will be transformed “into conformity with the body of his glory by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself” (Phil 3:21). In his monumental work *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, N.T. Wright states: “There is no need to escape from earth to heaven; instead, the Messiah will come from heaven to earth, to rescue his people not by snatching them away from the earth but by transforming their bodies.” In the book of Romans Paul calls this transformation “the redemption of our bodies” (8:23). Throughout the years there has been a lot of Fundamentalist preaching on the redemption of our souls but the preaching of the redemption of the creation is an over looked concept. When we think and speak of “the hope set before us” (Heb. 6th18), we apply it only to the Christian and fail to see that the creation is included in that hope. Romans 8: 19-21: “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” The word futility is *mataiotes*, which denotes an object does not function as it was designed to, or, more precisely, an object which has been given a role for which it was not designed and which is unreal or illusory. This is clearly seen in Genesis 3:17, 18. James G. Dunn in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* has this interesting comment: “Paul’s essential conception of the world is that it was created good (Gen. 1:26-31). Human kind is still the image of God (I Cor. 11:7). ‘The earth is [still] the Lord’s and everything in it’ (I Cor. 10:26, citing Ps. 24:1). ‘Nothing is unclean of itself’ (Rom. 14:14). Even more explicit is I Timothy 4:4: ‘Everything created by God is good.’ So the created realm still speaks of God (Rom. 1:19-20), and, despite its’ subjection to futility, it will share in the final redemption (Rom. 8:19-23).”

All this means that the redemption of the earth is intimately bound up with the redemption of man. In the record of creation in the beginning (Genesis 1) it is declared the purpose of God creating man was twofold: to have the image of God displayed in the world He had created and to rule over it (Gen. 1:26). When

man sinned he forfeited his position of representing the image of God and lost his power to rule the creation and the earth was placed under accurse. What makes Romans 8:19-22 so important is its testimony that even after man’s sin and the curse on the earth, the purpose of God in creating man and the earth remains indissolubly united in His purpose. In I Corinthians 15:45-49 Christ is revealed as *the last Adam*. All the first Adam lost is restored in the last Adam. The image of God and man’s right to rule the earth are restored in Christ. The Scripture showing this to be true: Colossians 1:15: “For he (Christ) is the image of the invisible God.” II Cor. 4:4: “...Christ, who is the image of God.” The Christian is “predestined to be conformed to the image of His son” (Rom. 8:29). Our “new man is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col. 3:10). Not only has the last Adam restored the image of God on the earth, he has been made the “ruler of the kings of the earth: (Rev. 1:5). Jesus said: “he who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as also I have received authority over the nations” (Rev. 2:26, 27). The Apostle Paul stated: “If we endure, we shall also reign with him” (II Tim. 2:12). One of our best loved hymns states: “We shall reign with him on high.” The Bible says nothing of our “reigning with him on high” but it does say “And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev. 5:10). Floyd Clark in his *Clark Epistle # 89* states “This is a difficult verse. A literal translation would read: “and made them to our God king and priest, and they shall reign upon the earth.”

The Scriptures teach that Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (I Cor. 15:25). But how does he reign? A very convenient way to answer this is to accept Hal Lindsey’s, Jack Van Impe’s and the Scofield Reference Bible’s teaching that his reign will not begin until he returns. The Psalmist disagrees with them when he states that upon his ascension the Lord would “rule in the midst of thy enemies” (Psalm 110:1-3). If the church is his Body, then it follows that the church shares in his reign...here and now as well as in the future. Proverbs 16:7 states: “If a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” This verse shows how it is that the church is to govern the world, how she controls the governments of the world. When the church is faithful, God changes men. This is further illustrated in Acts 5:11-14. When God created man he told him to rule over His creation. The church is always in charge of culture. We don’t have to take over the government (James Dodson, Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, not-with-standing), we already have it, we just have to start using it aright. When Joseph was faithful, Pharaoh converted. When Daniel was faithful, Nebuchadnezzar converted. It was because Judah was wicked that Nebuchadnezzar conquered her. It was the faithfulness of the church that toppled the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:44). This is how we rule. We do not rule first and foremost through activism and we do not rule first through evangelism, as important as these may be. We rule first and foremost through our obedience to God, by pleasing Him through faithful lives.

Paul asked the Corinthians “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?...Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” (I Cor.6:2, 3). It is then that God’s plan and purpose for both man and the earth will be realized.

