

PREMILLENNIALISM: REVELATION 20, “THE EARTH AND THE HEAVEN FLED AWAY”

Materialists in general, including many premillennialists, contend that God’s reward for some, if not all, of the righteous will be this earth in a purged, purified and renovated form.

Premillennialists who teach this idea rely on the 20th chapter of The Revelation for much of their premillennial details. We have already noticed that the positions these people argue from this book, especially chapter 20, simply are not there. Neither is their supposition of an earthly reward for the righteous. Ironically, Revelation 20, so much relied on by premillennialists, flatly denies this materialistic notion.

Notice John’s words. “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face **the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them** (Revelation 20:11, emphasis supplied). So, at the point the Lord returns it will be to judge mankind (verses 12-15) and this earth and its heaven will have served God’s purpose and no longer have any place in his workings. None!

“But doesn’t the Bible speak of a new heaven and earth?” one may ask.” Yes, it does (Revelation 21:1; II Peter 3:13, et al). But the key word here is NEW. That is, God’s habitation for the righteous will not be this old planet and its atmosphere made over, but a NEW dwelling referred to in terms with which we are familiar. In fact, Peter’s refer-ence to a new earth and heaven is in the context in which he assured his readers that just as surely as God was able to flood the earth with water in the days of Noah so also he is able, and eventually will, destroy this present physical sphere with fire (II Peter 3:1-12).

How, then, should we live?

First, we must place our emphasis on the spiritual blessings God has provided in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-11). As did the early Chris-tians, we must seek forgiveness by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and so lay hold on the heavenly hope of an eternal inheritance in him (Acts 2:38; 19:5; Philippians 3:20-21).

Then, having been baptized into Christ—into his atoning death—we must walk in the newness of the life he has exemplified for us (Romans 6:1-14). So doing, we are assured that, “...the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Our reward will not be on this planet, however, but on that which lies above and beyond (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Peter 1:4; Revelation 20:11). –Jerry F. Bassett