

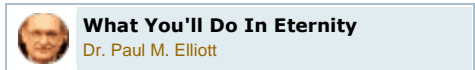
Eschatology

New Heavens & New Earth: The Present Creation Annihilated, or Renovated?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Will the new heavens and new earth be totally new, or will the present creation be renovated?

Listen to the Biblical answer on a *Scripture-Driven Church* broadcast titled "What You'll Be Doing in Eternity" (26 minutes). A summary appears below.



Divided Opinion

Over the centuries theologians have been divided on this question. Some hold that the existing creation will cease to exist, and the promised new heavens and new earth will be entirely new. Others say that the saints' eternal dwelling place will be the final renovation of the present creation. Which view does Scripture support?

Biblical Evidence

At least five factors in the Bible tell us that the new heavens and new earth will be the final, glorious renovation and transformation of the creation that now exists:

1. **The Greek.** There are two principal Greek words for "new" in the New Testament. *Neos* means "new in time or origin," while *kainos* means "new in quality," denoting something that is fresh or pristine. In the Greek usage of New Testament times, *kainos* was used to describe things that had gone through a process of transformation or renovation. The Holy Spirit uses *kainos*, not *neos*, in the passages that speak of "new heavens and new earth" (2 Peter 3:13,

Revelation 21:1). We also find *kainos* in Christ's great culminating declaration, "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). This indicates continuity, not discontinuity, between the old and new creations.

2. **The Flood & The Fire.** The historical account of the Genesis Flood recounts the redemption of man from a world that had become consummately evil — not by earth's utter destruction and replacement, but by its complete renovation through the cataclysmic upheaval of the global Flood. God promised never again to destroy the world by a universal flood of water. Immediately after speaking of that Flood (2 Peter 3:5-6), Peter tells us that God will destroy the world as it now exists, not by another Flood, but by fire. Nevertheless, Peter says, believers look beyond that coming cataclysm, for heavens and earth that are *kainos*, new in quality, "in which righteousness dwells" — literally, "where righteousness is at home" — something that has never been true of this world since the Fall of man.
3. **The Birth-Pangs.** Romans 8:19-22 tells us that *this* creation waits eagerly, with birth-pangs, for the revealing of the sons of God, so that it may be set free from its bondage to decay because of sin. Paul is saying that this present creation will be liberated from corruption in the Day of the Lord, not a totally different creation from the one that now exists.
4. **The Saints.** Scripture tells us that the bodies of believers, who are part of this present created order, are going to be renovated. The differences between our present bodies and our resurrection bodies are glorious differences, but they involve continuity. It is we ourselves who shall be raised up, and it is we ourselves who shall always be with the Lord. Not people like us, but we ourselves, the saints who have lived on this earth.
5. **The Reconciliation.** In Colossians 1:20, Paul declares that "it pleased the Father that in Him [Jesus] all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven,

having made peace through the blood of His cross." The word "reconcile" (*apokatallazai*) means "to change something backward and upward into its original condition." What exactly is being changed backward and upward into its original condition through the blood of the cross of Christ? Paul gives us the answer: "All things." And then he adds this for emphasis: "whether things on earth or things in heaven." In other words, nothing will be left out, everything will be changed backward and upward into its original condition. This, once again, speaks of continuity rather than discontinuity.

Listen to the broadcast above for more!

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