

## Should We Anticipate Heaven or Paradise Earth?

### I. Introduction

A. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that when the end comes, the wicked will be destroyed forever (that is, there will be no eternal punishment, just annihilation), that only 144,000 saints (Jehovah's Witnesses) will go to heaven, and that the rest of the faithful will live forever on "paradise earth."

B. Regarding the idea of paradise earth, notice a quote from the Watch Tower Society, "God's kingdom will soon remove all the governments of this world, and it itself will replace all of them. (Daniel 2:44) Then God's kingdom will usher in an earthly paradise...The whole earth will become a paradise...As time passes, parts of the earth already subdued will expand until the whole globe is as beautiful and productive as the garden of Eden...Wild and domestic animals will feed together. Even a little child will have nothing to fear from animals that are now dangerous." (*What Does the Bible Really Teach*, pg. 33-34, printed by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania in 2006)

C. This is what the Jehovah's Witnesses believe, and they often speak of "paradise earth" when they go door-to-door. But the question is- does the Bible teach that the saints will inherit paradise earth, or does the Bible teach that the saints will inherit heaven as their eternal home? It will be shown in this study that the latter is the case. The doctrine of paradise earth as taught by the Jehovah's Witnesses is unbiblical and therefore must be rejected (Rev. 22:18-19).

### II. Did God Originally Intend for the Earth to be an Eternal Paradise?

A. The Jehovah's Witnesses assume that because God originally placed Adam and Eve in the paradise of Eden, then God will restore the earth to its original form one day (paradise earth). But this is an assumption, not a biblical conclusion.

B. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, He gave them one law to follow (Gen. 2:16-18).

1. In doing this, God introduced the possibility of sin. After all, sin cannot exist where there is no law (Rom. 4:15; 1 Jn. 3:4), so when God gave the law to Adam and Eve, He knew that they could choose to disobey it.

2. There would be consequences to disobedience (Is. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23), and we see that indeed there were consequences to Adam and Eve's sin. They faced spiritual separation from God as well as the forfeiture of everlasting life and the comfort of paradise (Gen. 3:14-24).

C. In the beginning, did God give paradise to mankind? Yes! But he also gave mankind a law, which means that God was more concerned with His relationship with man than He was with the actual paradise of Eden? Otherwise, why give the law? What we need to draw from Genesis 2-3 are not the wonders of paradise earth, but rather God's concern for man.

D. But not only did God give mankind law to follow, we also see throughout the scriptures that God had an eternal plan of redemption in His mind before even establishing the world!

1. "According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:4-5, 7)

2. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning (commencement) chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13)

3. "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (1 Pet. 1:20)

E. Before God ever created the paradise of Eden, He, knowing that man would fall, predetermined a plan of redemption that would be fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This ought to confirm to us

the point made earlier in this study; that our focus in the early chapters of Genesis should not be on the paradise of Eden but on the relationship of God with man.

F. A Jehovah's Witness might argue that while man sinned, God is going to restore the earth to its original paradise-like setting. In response, one might ask, "Is there going to be law in this new paradise world like there was in the Garden of Eden? Are we going to have free-will like Adam and Eve did in the original paradise?" If the answer is "yes" and if nothing will have changed between the original paradise and the future paradise earth, then why did God even cast Adam and Eve out at all? Or, can the saints of the future paradise earth also expect to be cast out as soon as sin reenters the picture?

G. To take Genesis 2 and say that God's eternal plan involves the restoration of paradise earth, or even that the physical earth is key in the redemptive purposes of God, is a gross perversion of the text!

### III. The Fate of the Earth: Destruction

A. While the Jehovah's Witnesses teach and believe the concept of paradise earth, the Bible clearly indicates that this earth will one day be destroyed. Not only will the governments and human systems of the earth be destroyed, but the earth itself will melt and burn up.

1. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

a. When Jesus returns, the earth, the earth's works, and the heavens will all be destroyed. They will melt with "fervent heat" and be "dissolved." This leaves no room for the "paradise earth" doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

b. In response to this passage, the Jehovah's Witnesses will often say that this is only in reference to earthly governments and human systems, but notice that verse 10 says "the earth and the works." So it will not only be the "works" of the earth, but the earth itself that will be destroyed. There is no way around this.

c. Furthermore, Peter says that the "heavens" will be destroyed. Question: What do the heavens have to do with earthly governments? In other words, if it is only the governments and human systems that will be destroyed, and if the earth will remain, then why does Peter say that the heavens will also be dissolved?

2. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." (Rev. 21:1)

3. "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but Thou remainest and they all shall wax old as doth a garment." (Heb. 1:10-11)

4. "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Mt. 5:18) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (Mt. 24:35)

5. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." (Ps. 102:25-26).

6. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." (Is. 51:6)

7. These verses all establish that the present earth will be literally destroyed, not preserved!

B. We also know that our hope as Christians is laid up in heaven, not in paradise earth. In other words, we are promised heaven as our home, and heaven is continually emphasized. Never do we find God telling Christians that our hope is in a rejuvenated earth.

1. “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven...” (Col. 1:5) “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” (1 Pet. 1:4)

2. “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also.” (Jn. 14:2-3)

a. Where did Jesus go? He ascended into heaven (Ac. 1:10-11). Jesus, when He went to heaven, would prepare a place for His disciples. He will one day return to retrieve His people that they may be in heaven also, not on paradise earth.

3. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country...But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb. 11:13-14, 16)

3. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus...” (Heb. 6:19-20)

a. The word “forerunner” (prodromos) means “a runner ahead, that is, a scout.” Jesus entered “within the veil” as a runner ahead or scout. In other words, Jesus paved the way for the saints of God to enter in behind Him.

b. Now where is “within the veil?” What is He “scouting” out? Hebrews 9:11, 14 indicate that Jesus entered the more perfect tabernacle “not made with hands.” These verses, along with so many others, confirm that Jesus is in heaven! Therefore, Hebrews 6:20 tells us that we should anticipate heaven, not paradise earth!

4. **We are earthbound guests with an heavenly destination:** “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” (1 Pet. 1:17) “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek on to come.” (Heb. 13:14) “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 3:20)

5. Our reward is in heaven (Mt. 5:12; Heb. 10:34).

6. We are to lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth (Mt. 6:20; 19:21).

7. NOTE: Jehovah’s Witnesses DO believe that heaven exists, and they DO believe that there will be saints in heaven (144,000 will be in heaven while the rest, the majority, will be on paradise earth). So they may agree with some of these verses that speak of heaven. Let’s take a moment, however, to address the “144,000” argument:

a. Jehovah’s Witnesses use Revelation 7:4 to justify their teaching that only 144,000 will actually go to heaven while the rest of the saints remain on paradise earth. It is first of all important to understand that this is a book of signs and symbols (Rev. 1:1, 20). Therefore, we must look at 7:4 as a symbolic verse. Yes, it mentions “144,000” but the number is symbolic, not literal. Furthermore, Revelation 14:1-4 ought to settle the dispute, as it specifies that the 144,000 were male, Jewish virgins!

b. The fact is, there is no biblical evidence that only a small portion of saints will experience heaven while the rest experience paradise earth. The only real proof that the Jehovah’s Witnesses have is in Revelation, a symbolic book that pertains to a period of tribulation late in the first century, not the end of time (1:1-4, 9).

8. It is absurd to state that all of the promises of heaven pertain only to 144,000 saints, and it is even more absurd in light of the fact that there is no “second promise” of paradise on earth for those that don’t get to go to heaven.

C. Finally, it is worthy to note that the word “paradise” is only used three times in the Bible, and never is it in reference to some future earthly paradise. Let’s notice the uses of this word:

1. “And Jesus said unto Him [the thief, CH], Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” (Lk. 23:43) Was Jesus referring to an earthly paradise? If so, the thief was going to experience it that day; but even the Jehovah’s Witnesses acknowledge that “paradise earth” is yet future. On the other hand, this verse makes sense if Jesus had in mind some spiritual realm after the point of death.

2. “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago...such an one caught up to the third heaven...How that he was caught up into paradise.” (2 Cor. 12:2-4) Paul, possibly speaking of himself, says that this unnamed man was caught up into the third heaven, or paradise. In the Bible, the word “heaven” is used in three different ways, 1) in reference to the sky where birds fly, 2) in reference to the stars and 3) in reference to the abode of God. The paradise here is the third heaven, or the abode of God! This paradise is not earthly, but heavenly!

3. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” (Rev. 2:7) This would appear to be the best passage for the Jehovah’s Witnesses, because, after all, there is nothing in the text that demands an *heavenly* paradise. BUT the Witnesses do not take advantage of this point. Instead, they acknowledge that Rev. 2:7 is in reference to heaven, not earth...

a. *Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 2*, pg. 576, “Revelation 2:7 mentions a ‘tree of life’ in the ‘paradise of God’ and that eating from it would be the privilege of the one ‘that conquers.’ Since other promises given in this section of Revelation to such conquering ones clearly relate to their gaining a heavenly inheritance (Rev. 2:26-28; 3:12, 21), it seems evident that ‘the paradise of God’ in this case is a heavenly one.”

D. The biblical evidence is clear! The Christian does not look forward to a rejuvenated earth, but a blissful heaven which has been prepared by Christ for His people (Jn. 14:1-4). The earth will be destroyed, and Christians will obtain their reward of eternal life in an heavenly paradise!

#### IV. Prooftexts of the Jehovah’s Witnesses

A. There are many verses in the Bible that speak of **the righteous inheriting the earth**. Psalm 39:9 says, “For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth,” and then in verse 11, “But the meek shall inherit the earth.” Jesus mirrors this statement in Matthew 5:5.

1. We can see why the Jehovah’s Witnesses use these verses to support their perverse “paradise earth” doctrine. After all, they believe that the righteous will literally inherit the earth and dwell in a garden-world like Adam did in Genesis 2.

2. But these verses are not saying that the righteous will literally inherit the earth. So what are they saying? Have you ever heard anyone say, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world?” This famous phrase refers to the importance of mothers and their role in raising children and shaping young minds, but does the phrase literally mean that mothers will rule the world? Not at all! It is a hyperbolic statement meant to emphasize importance and value. It is the same with the verses listed above. The righteous and meek inherit the earth in the sense that their godliness elevates them to true greatness and value!

B. The Jehovah’s Witnesses will also point out that **the earth itself will remain forever**. Psalm 37:29 says, “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.” Later, in Psalm 104:5, the psalmist writes, “Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever.” Consider also Psalm 28:69 and Ecclesiastes 1:2-4.

1. Again, this appears to support the Watchtower Society and its “paradise earth” doctrine, but the question that we must ask is, “what does the word ‘forever’ mean?” Is God saying that the earth will forever exist? Or is He saying something different?

2. Let us notice some other things in the scriptures that are said to last forever:
  - a. The Levitical priesthood (Ex. 27:21); but it has ended (Heb. 7:11-17).
  - b. Priestly garments in the tabernacle (Ex. 28:42-43); the heave offering (Ex. 29:28).
  - c. The Jews' possession of the land of Canaan (Ex. 32:13); but they lost it!
  - d. The feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23:41); but we are not bound to it now (Col. 2:14-16).
  - e. The point is this: the word "forever" doesn't always literally mean "forever." Rather, it is used in the Old Testament in reference to a long period of time, and more specifically, a time frame that has in mind the plan of God (i.e. Israel was to observe the statutes of the law of Moses so long as they were bound to the law of Moses, but the law of Moses has been replaced by the law of Christ today).

C. Another proof-text of the Jehovah's Witnesses is Isaiah 45:18 which says, "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens: God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." The JW's argue that **God created the earth to be inhabited forever**. After all, if God is going to destroy the earth, why did He create it to begin with?

1. This verse doesn't say that the earth will be inhabited forever. It simply says that God created the earth to be inhabited, and it is inhabited!

D. Sometimes, the Jehovah's Witnesses contend that **Adam and Eve could have dwelt forever on the earth had they been faithful to God**. Therefore, God's plan involves paradise earth. The June 15, 1974 issue of *Watchtower* on page 376 says, "Not all of God's living creation is eternal. We know that plants, even long-lived trees, eventually die. (1 Pet. 1:24) And there is no Biblical evidence that God purposed for individual animals to live forever. Yet it was different with humans. God held out to our first parents the prospect of never dying." Does the Watch Tower have a point here? No!

1. It cannot be denied that Adam and Eve had access to everlasting life (physically speaking) in the Garden of Eden because of their access to the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22). However, it is an assumption that God would have desired it and allowed it. If Adam had been faithful, God may have had any number of plans for Adam, none of which are touched upon in Genesis.

2. Second, we already have seen that God predetermined before the foundation of the earth a plan of redemption involving the death of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-7). We can safely conclude, then, that God knew that man would fall to sin.

E. Jehovah's Witnesses (along with many denominational people) also want to point to **passages like Isaiah 11:6-10 which "speak of ideal living conditions on paradise earth."** Isaiah 11:6 says, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them," and then verse 10 mentions the reign of Christ. Many read this passage and incorrectly conclude that Isaiah was speaking literally of some future paradise on earth.

1. It is true that Isaiah 11:6-10 is speaking of the kingdom of Christ, but the kingdom of Christ was established in the first century in Jerusalem (Mk 9:1 → Ac. 1:4-8); it has been in existence ever since (1 Cor. 15:24-25; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:9). It is also interesting to note that Christ's kingdom is NOT of this world. Jesus says in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world." With these things in mind, we must conclude that the language Isaiah 11:6-10 is figurative.

2. Jesus referred to Herod as a fox (Lk. 13:31-32). Paul, in warning the Philippians of evil workers, said "beware of dogs" (Phil. 3:2). Other examples could be cited, but as we consider Isaiah 11, it should be clear that humans can be described as animals in figurative terms.

3. The point of Isaiah 11 is not that carnivores and herbivores will literally dwell together on paradise earth, but that in the kingdom of Christ, natural enemies will worship and serve together in peace!

F. Finally, many turn to Revelation 20:1-4 to teach that there will be a millennial kingdom established on the earth, but notice that the passage never says anything about a kingdom *on earth*. The fact is, Revelation 20 is symbolic, as is the rest of the book (Rev. 1:1).

## V. Conclusion

A. While the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the righteous will dwell on paradise earth forever, the scriptures clearly deny that concept. Let us summarize point-by-point what we have said in this study:

1. To say that God originally intended for the earth to be an everlasting paradise makes no sense in light of the fact that God issued forth law thereby creating the possibility for sin to enter in and ruin everything! Either God made a mistake in issuing forth law which led to the fall of man and the desecration of paradise, or He didn't intend for the earth to last forever. A question for the Jehovah's Witnesses: When God restores paradise earth, will there be laws for the righteous to follow as there were originally in Eden? If not, then you acknowledge that God DID in fact make a mistake originally. If so, then how do you know there won't be another apostasy leading to yet another loss of paradise?

2. Furthermore, the scriptures teach that the earth will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:9-13; Rev. 21:1).

3. We also know that *heaven*, not paradise earth, is the Christian's hope (Col. 1:5). This is taught throughout the New Testament, and never does it say that some will inherit heaven while others paradise earth.

4. The kingdom of Christ is here NOW (Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:9); it is a spiritual kingdom (Jn. 18:36).

5. The arguments and proof-texts of the Jehovah's Witnesses have been easily rejected.

B. Let us unilaterally stand for the truth of God's word (1 Pet. 3:15) and demand biblical reasoning, not human reasoning for the things we believe (1 Pet. 4:11).