

How is hell eternal if there will be a new heavens and new earth where the former things have passed away?

When an individual passes from death to life, he is given a body fit for heaven or fit for hell (Matt. 5:29, 30). Men were created to live *forever somewhere* (Matt. 25:46). This world was made disposable (2 Pet. 3:7–12) by sin (Rom. 8:20–23). It will be renewed. The prophet Isaiah wrote inspired by the Holy Spirit: For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind (Is. 65:17).

Regarding this revelation of the new heavens and the new earth J. Vernon McGee wrote:

Here the creation of the new heavens and the new earth seems to precede chronologically the setting up of the Kingdom. But I think when we examine it closely we find that the remnant has already judged the Kingdom. The others have been judged and do not enter the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus made this clear in Matthew 25:34 when He said, "... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The others were to be cast into outer darkness and would not enter the Kingdom.

Now at the end of the millennial Kingdom—that is, at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, after that final rebellion—the creation of the new heavens and new earth takes place. You see, after the Rapture and during the Millennium tremendous changes in the earth will be made. The desert is going to blossom as the rose. But when you get to the new heavens and the new earth, there will not be any sea and there actually will not be any desert. It will be a new earth. We will have traded in the old model and gotten a new one.

And regarding 2 Peter 3, McGee continues:

...[W]e find that there are three worlds. There is the world that was—that which was destroyed by the waters of the Noahic flood. Then there is the present world, which is going to be destroyed by fire. And finally there will come into existence the new heavens and the new earth.¹

The meek (or the gentle) shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). Christians preach forgiveness toward our brethren (Lk 24:47) because it is forgiveness which makes salvation real (Luke 1:77). Believers are to be meek (meekness, the Greek word *πραῦς* (*praus*) is not weakness by the way).

The apostle Peter wrote:

But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pe 3:7)...But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the

¹ McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Prophets (Isaiah 36-66)* (electronic ed., Vol. 23, pp. 195–196). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness (2 Pe 3:10-11).

The apostle John wrote:

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Re 21:4

Regarding John's vision Matthew Henry wrote:

All the causes of future sorrow shall be forever removed: *There shall be neither death nor pain; and therefore no sorrow nor crying; these are things incident to that state in which they were before, but now all former things have passed away...*

...The subject-matter of this vision is so great, and of such great importance to the church and people of God, that they have need of the fullest assurances of it; and God therefore from heaven repeats and ratifies the truth thereof. Besides, many ages must pass between the time when this vision was given forth and the accomplishment of it, and many great trials must intervene; and therefore God would have it committed to writing, for perpetual memory, and continual use to his people...Observe...[t]he certainty of the promise averred: *These words are faithful and true* [v5]; and it follows, *It is done*, is as sure as if it were done already...He gives us his titles of honour as a pledge or surety of the full performance, even those titles of *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end* [v6].²

Anyone who reads the Book of Revelation receives a special blessing (Re 1:3) so one would do well to read it. It has promises of comfort for the believer and words of warning of God's wrath (Zech. 7:12) for the unbeliever and the make-believer.

Hell is described as an everlasting fire (Matt. 25:41), everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46), outer darkness (Matt. 8:12), everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:9) and a lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).³ To go to heaven men must repent (Eze 18:30-32; Ac 17:30) and believe on the Lord Jesus (Mk 9:23). Man's final state is determined by faith or unbelief (Jn. 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

² Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (p. 2484). Peabody: Hendrickson.

³ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index* (p. 283). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.