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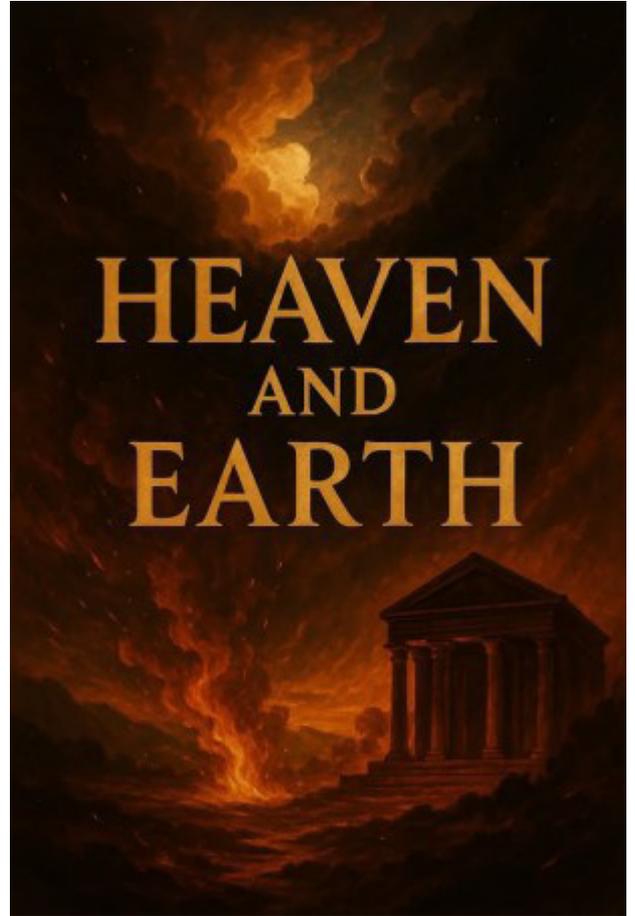
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Heaven and Earth - Heaven and Earth Have Passed Away



By Dan Maines

Heaven and Earth Have Passed Away *Understanding the Old Covenant Through Scripture, Not Tradition*

In Matthew 5:18, Jesus said, "Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." This does not speak of the physical heavens and earth, but of Israel and the Old Covenant system.

Scripture must interpret scripture. When we see the phrase "heaven and earth," we cannot force a 21st-century dictionary meaning onto it. Instead, we must go back to the Old Testament

to see how God used that language.

The Old Testament Defines "Heaven and Earth"

In Deuteronomy 31:30 and 32:1, God speaks to Israel: "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth." He is not speaking to creation, but to His covenant people.

In Isaiah 1:1-2, God says to Judah and Jerusalem, "Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth." Again, clearly symbolic language for His people, not the literal cosmos.

This pattern continues throughout the prophets: Isaiah 24:3-6, 24:19-20, Jeremiah 51:24-25, all describe "the earth" in the context of judgment on nations, particularly Israel.

Heaven = Rulers, Earth = People

Apocalyptic language often uses "heavens" to represent rulers or governing authorities, and "earth" to represent the people or nation.

Isaiah 34:1 says, "Let the earth hear, and all that is in it." This is directed at people, not dirt.

Sea often represents foreign nations (Daniel 7, Psalm 65:7, Revelation 17:15), while "earth" represents the specific land or people addressed.

The Temple Was Heaven and Earth to 1st Century Jews

According to Josephus (Antiquities 3.7), the Temple was understood symbolically: the outer court represented the sea, the inner court the earth, and the holy of holies the heavens.

When Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matthew 24:35), He was speaking of the destruction of that system—the temple, the sacrifices, the priesthood, not the universe.

Hebrews 8:13 confirms this: "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear."

Revelation and the New Covenant Reality

Revelation 21:1 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea."

What was the "first heaven and earth"? The Jewish temple system. The "no more sea" means the old division between Jew and Gentile is gone.

The new heaven and new earth represent the New Covenant, God dwelling with His people in the body of Christ, not in a physical temple (Revelation 21:2-3).

Jesus Fulfilled the Law, Then Ended It

Matthew 5:17-18 shows that not one part of the Law could pass until it was all fulfilled. That happened when heaven and earth,

Israel and the Old Covenant, passed away in AD 70.

Hebrews 1:10-12, quoting Psalm 102, speaks of the heavens perishing and being changed, pointing to the transition from the Old Covenant to the New.

Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 3:5-11 that the Old Covenant was fading and would soon vanish, while the New Covenant brings life and remains.

Do Not Fear the End of the World

Literal heaven and earth were never the issue. The "end of the world" in the Bible refers to the end of the Old Covenant age.

We are now in the age of the New Covenant with a new Adam (Jesus), a new Eve (the bride), a new city (the church), and a new temple (our bodies).

Revelation 21:4 says, "The first things have passed away." The old order, the sacrificial system, and temple worship are gone. God's dwelling is now with His people.

Final Thoughts

Heaven and earth have already passed away. If we misunderstand this, we will never understand Bible prophecy.

If the new heavens and new earth have not yet come, then the Law is still binding. But we are not under the Law. We are under grace, living in the age of the indwelling Christ.

Do not fear some future global end. Rejoice that God has made His home with us, and we are now His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16).

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