Fulfilled Prophecies

The New Heaven And Earth: No More Pain, Tears, Or Sin



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the most misunderstood promises in the Bible is God's declaration that there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain in the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:4).

† Futurists believe this promise describes a future world where nobody gets sick, nobody suffers, nobody dies, and every physical tear is permanently removed after Christ returns.

† But is that what John was describing, or was he announcing the end of the Old Covenant world and the establishment of

God's eternal dwelling with His people?
† The answer depends on understanding what was passing away, what was being made new, and what kind of death and sorrow the prophets were addressing (Isaiah 65:17-19; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
† The New Heaven and New Earth aren't promises that human bodies will never experience physical pain. They're the promise that the separation, condemnation, and covenantal death associated with Adam and the Old Covenant have been overcome through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:18-21; Romans 8:1-2).
† The question isn't whether Christians still cry. We know they do. The question is what God promised to remove and when He promised to accomplish it (Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 22:6-10).

The First Heaven And Earth Passed Away

Revelation 21:1
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.
† John wasn't describing the destruction of the physical universe. He was describing the passing of the Old Covenant order and the establishment of the New Covenant creation in Christ (Hebrews 8:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
† The first heaven and earth represented the former covenantal arrangement, with its earthly sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, and separation from God's presence (Hebrews 9:6-10; Hebrews 12:26-28).
† The removal of the sea symbolized the removal of separation and disorder, not the disappearance of every physical ocean from the planet (Isaiah 57:20; Revelation 21:3).
† The physical earth continues, but the covenantal world governed by the Law of Moses has passed away (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Hebrews 8:13).
† This distinction is essential because futurism assumes John was predicting a completely different physical planet rather than

a completely transformed covenantal relationship with God (Galatians 4:24-26; Hebrews 12:22-24).

God's Dwelling Is Now With His People

Revelation 21:2-3
And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
† Notice that the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. John wasn't describing believers leaving the earth to occupy a distant heavenly city (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22).
† The central promise is God's presence with His people, not the removal of His people from the physical world (Ephesians 2:19-22; 2 Corinthians 6:16).
† Under the Old Covenant, God's presence was represented by the Most Holy Place, where access was restricted by the veil and the priesthood (Hebrews 9:7-8).
† Through Christ, believers now have direct access to the Father by the Holy Spirit, without an earthly temple or sacrificial priesthood (Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The New Jerusalem is the covenantal dwelling of God with His redeemed people. Its fulfillment isn't postponed until the end of human history (Hebrews 12:22-23; Revelation 22:14).

What Does No More Pain Or Tears Mean?

Revelation 21:4
and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.
† This is the verse futurists most frequently use to argue that the New Heaven and New Earth cannot exist today because people still experience sickness, grief, suffering, and physical

death.
† Their argument assumes that every expression in the passage must describe a physical condition rather than the covenantal transformation John was revealing (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:1-3).
† But John connects the removal of tears, death, mourning, and pain directly to the passing away of the former things. The context is the removal of the former covenantal order (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 12:27-28).
† The tears represent the sorrow associated with sin, condemnation, exile, and separation from God's presence under the former order (Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 35:10).
† The mourning includes the grief of a people living under covenantal judgment, awaiting the promised redemption and restoration through their Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 21:28).
† The pain represents the suffering and anguish connected with that former covenantal condition, including the judgment and distress surrounding the end of the age (Matthew 24:8; Luke 21:22-23).
† John wasn't promising that Christians would never again experience a headache, lose a loved one, or shed a physical tear. He was announcing the end of the covenantal condition that separated humanity from God (Romans 8:1-2; Ephesians 2:13-18).
† Physical suffering remains part of mortal human existence, but it no longer represents condemnation or separation from God's love for those who belong to Christ (Romans 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
† The promise is that the former covenantal sorrow has been removed because God's redeemed people now live in His presence through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:3).

Why Futurists Expect All Physical Suffering To End

2 Peter 3:13
But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens

and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
† Futurists combine Peter's promise with Revelation 21 and conclude that Christ must return in the future to destroy or recreate the physical universe.
† They reason that because disease, war, disasters, and physical death still exist, the promised New Heaven and New Earth cannot have arrived.
† However, Peter was writing about the coming Day of the Lord, the dissolution of the former order, and the establishment of the promised dwelling place of righteousness (2 Peter 3:10-12; Hebrews 12:26-28).
† The righteousness that characterizes the new creation is the righteousness established through Christ, not a claim that every person on earth has become morally perfect (Romans 3:21-26; Romans 5:17).
† Futurism treats the continuing existence of physical suffering as proof that prophecy remains unfulfilled, but that conclusion depends on assuming the prophecy concerns the elimination of all biological suffering.
† Peter's first-century audience was awaiting the fulfillment of God's covenant promises, not a prediction that human beings would never again experience physical discomfort (1 Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 10:36-37).

Isaiah Explained The Tears Before John Did

Isaiah 25:8
He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken.
† John's language wasn't new. Isaiah had already connected the removal of tears with the defeat of death and the removal of God's people's disgrace (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Revelation 21:4).
† The promise concerned redemption from the condition brought by sin and the restoration of fellowship with God (Romans 5:12-21; Hebrews 9:15).

† Paul applied Isaiah's prophecy to the victory over death accomplished through Jesus Christ, identifying sin as death's sting and the Law as sin's power (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).
† This connection is critical because the defeat of death wasn't merely about preventing human bodies from dying. It involved overcoming the power of sin and the condemnation associated with the Law (Romans 7:6; Romans 8:1-2).
† Isaiah's removal of tears describes the triumph of redemption, not a guarantee that redeemed people will never experience ordinary human grief (Psalm 30:5; Romans 8:35-39).

The New Creation Was Promised Through Isaiah

Isaiah 65:17-19
For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing And her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.
† Isaiah directly connects the New Heaven and New Earth with a new Jerusalem, rejoicing, and the removal of weeping.
† John uses this same prophetic framework because Revelation announces the fulfillment of promises already given to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-19; Revelation 21:1-4).
† Isaiah's vision also continues with references to birth, aging, and death, demonstrating that the prophetic description cannot simply be reduced to a future physical world without mortality (Isaiah 65:20-23).
† The removal of weeping describes the reversal of covenantal judgment and the joy of God's restored people (Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 61:3).
† The former things were the conditions of the old order, while the new creation brought the promised righteousness, fellowship, and joy found in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).

† This is why the New Heaven and New Earth must be understood through the prophets rather than through modern expectations about a physically perfect planet.

Jesus Promised To Turn Their Sorrow Into Joy

John 16:20-22
Truly, truly I say to you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy! Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one is going to take your joy away from you.
† Jesus promised His disciples that their sorrow would be transformed into joy, not that they would never experience physical hardship again.
† His immediate promise concerned the grief of His approaching death and the joy of seeing Him again, beginning with His resurrection (John 16:16-22; John 20:19-20).
† That joy continued as the disciples experienced the blessings of redemption even while facing persecution and suffering (Acts 5:40-42; 1 Peter 1:6-8).
† Jesus used the pain of childbirth to illustrate sorrow giving way to joy. The suffering was real, but it wasn't permanent (John 16:21; Romans 8:22-23).
† The first-century covenantal transition also involved birth pains as the former age approached its conclusion and the promised kingdom reached its full establishment (Matthew 24:8; Hebrews 12:26-28).
† The joy of redemption doesn't require the elimination of every physical tear. It rests upon the accomplished work of Christ and the certainty of God's presence (Romans 5:1-2; Philippians 4:4-7).

What Death Was Destroyed?

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

† Paul explains the kind of victory Christ accomplished. Death's sting is sin, and sin's power is the Law.

† If the destruction of death meant that human bodies could no longer physically die, then Paul's explanation of sin and the Law would be disconnected from his conclusion (Romans 7:7-11; Romans 8:2).

† The victory concerns deliverance from sin's condemnation and the death associated with separation from God (Romans 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:1-6).

† Christ defeated death through His resurrection and brought His people into the life of the New Covenant (2 Timothy 1:10; Romans 6:4-11).

† The corporate resurrection of God's covenant people reached its promised fulfillment at the end of the Old Covenant age, when the former order passed away (Daniel 12:1-3; Matthew 24:34).

† Christians still experience physical death, but physical death no longer separates those in Christ from the life and presence of God (Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:21-23).

† This is the difference between the biblical victory over death and the futurist expectation that no human body will ever die again.

Why Sin Still Exists Outside The New Jerusalem

Revelation 22:14-15

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral persons, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves

and practices lying.
† This passage creates a serious problem for the futurist interpretation of a completely sinless physical planet.
† After John describes the New Jerusalem, he still identifies people outside the city who practice wickedness (Revelation 21:8; Revelation 21:27).
† The distinction is covenantal. Those washed by Christ have access to the city, while those remaining in unbelief and rebellion have no share in its blessings (Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:12-13).
† The New Jerusalem is holy because everyone belonging to it has been cleansed through Christ, not because every human being on the planet has stopped committing sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1:7-9).
† Sin still exists in the world, but sin doesn't reign over those who belong to Christ as it did under the former condition of bondage (Romans 6:12-14; Romans 8:1-2).
† The open gates and invitation to enter show that the blessings of the city remain available through Christ (Revelation 21:25; Revelation 22:17).
† If John were describing a future earth where every sinner had already disappeared, the continuing invitation to come and receive the water of life would be difficult to explain (Revelation 22:17).

The New Jerusalem Was Already A Present Reality

Hebrews 12:22-24
But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.
† The writer didn't tell believers that they would someday come to the heavenly Jerusalem. He declared that they had already

come to it.
† The New Jerusalem was already a covenantal reality for believers through Jesus Christ, even while the Old Covenant system was approaching its final removal (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 8:13).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 publicly demonstrated the removal of the former covenantal order (Matthew 24:1-3; Luke 21:20-22).
† The heavenly Jerusalem wasn't built from physical stones. It was established through Christ, who brought His people into direct fellowship with God (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5).
† If believers had already come to the heavenly Jerusalem in the first century, its existence cannot be postponed for thousands of years into our future.
† The completed transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant explains why John's vision describes the former things passing away (Hebrews 12:26-28; Revelation 21:4).

Revelation Said These Things Were Near

Revelation 22:6-7
And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
† John wasn't announcing events that would remain unfulfilled for thousands of years. He was told that the things revealed must soon take place.
† The time statements establish the original audience's expectation and cannot be separated from the promises of the New Jerusalem and the removal of the former things (Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:10).
† Jesus had already identified the generation that would witness the judgment upon Jerusalem and the fulfillment of the things He foretold (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).
† The New Heaven and New Earth belong to that same first-

century covenantal fulfillment, not to an indefinitely postponed destruction of the physical universe (Hebrews 10:37; Hebrews 12:26-28).
† The passing of the Old Covenant order in AD 70 marked the completion of that transition and the full establishment of the New Covenant age (Hebrews 8:13; Luke 21:20-22).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, writing in The Jewish War, Books 5-6, described the famine, suffering, violence, and destruction that overtook Jerusalem during the Roman siege of AD 70.
† His account provides historical evidence of the terrible distress that accompanied the judgment Jesus had warned would come upon that generation (Luke 21:20-24; Matthew 24:21).
† Josephus recorded the destruction of the temple, demonstrating the historical removal of the earthly sanctuary that had stood at the center of Israel's Old Covenant worship (Hebrews 9:1-10; Matthew 24:2).
† Tacitus, in Histories, Book 5, also described the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the destruction associated with that conflict.
† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, chapters 5-7, connected the destruction of Jerusalem with the judgment foretold by Jesus and preserved the tradition that Christians had departed Jerusalem before its destruction.
† These writers don't establish the spiritual meaning of Revelation by themselves, but they confirm the first-century historical setting in which the Old Covenant order came to its end.

How It Applies To Us Today
† We don't have to wait for a future physical universe to experience the blessings of the New Heaven and New Earth. In Christ, we're already part of the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).
† When we experience sickness, pain, or grief, it doesn't mean

God's promises have failed. It means we're still mortal human beings living in a physical world (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:35-39).
† When a Christian cries over the loss of someone they love, those tears don't mean the New Jerusalem is absent. God's presence remains with His people even during their suffering (Psalm 34:18; Romans 8:38-39).
† When we face physical death, we don't face the covenantal condemnation that Christ removed. We belong to Him in life and in death (Romans 8:1; Romans 14:8).
† The promise of no more tears means the former sorrow of separation from God has been overcome through Christ. We now have peace with God and direct access to His presence (Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:18).
† The promise of no more pain doesn't mean every disease has disappeared. It means the former covenantal anguish and condemnation don't define our relationship with God (Romans 8:1-2; Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The promise of no more death means that death has lost its covenantal power over those who have eternal life in Christ (John 11:25-26; 2 Timothy 1:10).
† The promise of a holy city doesn't mean sin has vanished from the physical earth. It means those who belong to Christ have been cleansed, reconciled, and brought into God's dwelling (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 12:22-24).
† We aren't waiting for God to begin dwelling with His people. Through the Holy Spirit, He already dwells among us (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).
† The New Heaven and New Earth are the fulfilled reality of God's covenant promises, and their greatest blessing isn't the absence of physical discomfort. It's the permanent presence of God with His redeemed people (Revelation 21:3; Revelation 22:3-5).

Q & A Appendix

Q: If Revelation says there will be no more pain, why do Christians still get sick?
A: Because the promise concerns the removal of the former covenantal sorrow and condemnation, not the elimination of every physical illness. Christians still experience bodily weakness, but nothing can separate them from God's love (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:35-39).

Q: Why do futurists believe all physical pain and tears must disappear?
A: They interpret Revelation 21:4 as a literal description of a future physical world after Christ returns. They assume the absence of pain and death requires the end of all sickness, mourning, and biological mortality. The Fulfilled View understands these expressions through Isaiah's covenantal promises and the removal of the former order (Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 65:17-19; Hebrews 8:13).

Q: Does no more tears mean Christians will never cry again?
A: No. Christians can still grieve and experience emotional pain. The promise describes the removal of the former sorrow associated with condemnation and separation from God. Our joy in Christ remains even when we experience trials (John 16:20-22; 1 Peter 1:6-8).

Q: If death has been destroyed, why do people still die?
A: Christ destroyed death's covenantal power over His people. Physical death continues, but those in Christ aren't separated from Him by death (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:21-23).

Q: Does the New Heaven and New Earth mean there is no more sin anywhere?
A: No. Revelation still describes sinners outside the New Jerusalem. The city represents those cleansed and reconciled through Christ, while sin continues among those outside His

covenant blessings (Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:14-15).

Q: What exactly passed away in AD 70?
A: The Old Covenant order, including its temple-centered worship, priesthood, sacrifices, and national covenantal administration, reached its final historical removal with Jerusalem's destruction (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8-10; Luke 21:20-22).

Q: Are we living in the New Heaven and New Earth today?
A: Yes. From the Fulfilled View, the New Heaven and New Earth describe the completed New Covenant creation. Believers have come to the heavenly Jerusalem and now enjoy direct access to God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 12:22-24; Ephesians 2:18-22).

Q: What is the greatest promise of Revelation 21?
A: The greatest promise isn't that human beings will never again feel physical pain. It's that God dwells with His redeemed people, and the former covenantal separation has been removed forever (Revelation 21:3-4; Hebrews 10:19-22).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Revelation 21:1; Revelation 21:2-3; Revelation 21:4; 2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 65:17-19; John 16:20-22; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Revelation 22:14-15; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 22:6-7
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7

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