



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XII
Issue 297

The Three Heavens and Earth

by – Frank Neil Pohorlak (1907-1988)

Two great convulsions divide the history of the heavens and the earth into two grand divisions. One is found at the forefront of revelation; the second is near its finish. The heavens and earth were destroyed by water (Genesis 1:2). In the future this will be effected by fire. The past was a physical regeneration; the future will be a chemical recreation. Water, in the form of seas, is found only on the present earth. It was not on, but about, the previous one. It will be abolished in the third earth (Revelation 21:1). — A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary*

Whenver the subject of the heavens is brought up, our thought processes, being channeled by tradition, direct these heavens into a mental rut. The result may be a picture of one heaven up on top of another heaven, a sort of atmospheric cake made up of heavenly layers.

In this study we shall present for your consideration evidence that, as to material basis, the Scriptures speak of three heavens and earths. They are not one *on top* of the other, but one *after* the other.

The limits of this work preclude an exhaustive treatment of this important subject. We merely wish to stimulate your thinking and to guide your heart into fields of refreshing, mature spiritual food, to say nothing of fostering and developing profitable study habits in the things of God (II Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:12-14). Let us proceed to the proof.

FIRST HEAVEN AND EARTH BEGIN GOD'S MATERIAL CREATION

The first heaven and earth mentioned is in the opening sentence of God's inspired Autographs.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1, AV).

The first "the" is not in the original language texts, and "heaven" is plural, heavens. The earth is really the dry land (Genesis 1:9-10).¹ It does not include the sea. The

statement is not concerned with time in the absolute sense; it refers rather to that which God begins to do. We might paraphrase or freely translate it,

To begin with, God created the heavens and the earth.

Or, if we treat the words "*In the Beginning*" as the title,² we may read,

God creates the heavens and the earth.

Hence the first thing on His creative program as to material basis was the heavens and the earth. These are the two spheres mentioned in His Word which reveal Him as operating during the eons.

*That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are **in heaven**, and which are **on earth**; even in Him* (Ephesians 1:10).

(see **THREE**, page 2729)

Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament, 1890 (henceforth referred to as *Wigram's Hebrew*).

2. Robert P. Markham, *Ancient and Modern Titles of Books of the Bible*, The Bible Translator, April 1967 (Vol. 18, No. 2), pp. 86-94; July 1967 (Vol. 18, No. 3), pp. 133-145.

The Three Heavens and Earth.....	2725
Editorial.....	2727
The True Basis of World Peace	2732

1. *yahbahshah* or *ibshe*, dry. *Wigram's Englishman's Hebrew and*

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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Dear Saints,

It has been a while since I last wrote an editorial in these pages. It seems that either the material that we have used here fills up each issue – leaving me no more room – or, more often, I have just found myself lacking the additional time to write one. Regardless, it is in my heart to correct this situation, and speak to you in a more personal way more frequently.

MY MOTHER

My mother, who lives with us, turned 83 a few weeks ago. She spent this week in the hospital, as her cancer has returned and she is weak. Once the results from her tests are all in, a determination will be made for her treatment. We are thankful, though, that she can continue to be with us, and that we can care for her; this is what family is about.

IT'S OUR TURN

Throughout the 1600 years covered by Bible history, God recorded for us His amazing work in the servants whom He chose. He used commoners for His divine purpose and will; such ones as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, Esther, Mary, Peter and Paul – to name a few – just ordinary men and women used in extraordinary ways.

Although the text of Scripture has been permanently closed, this in no way means that God is done with His work in the lives of men. Neither does it mean that He is no longer recording the history of His executed will among His chosen. For the chosen men and women recorded in the Scripture, their lives are now over. They each had their turn in the unfolding of the divine drama. *Now it is our turn.* We are the Jobs, Sarahs, Joshuas, Timothys and Lydias of our day. We are the chosen instruments of God's administration today.

As I write these few words to you my heart is so full, and I rejoice that Father has truly "*opened great and effectual doors, but there are many adversaries*" (I Corinthians 16:9). I value your continued prayers, and am so thankful for those of you who write and speak words of encouragement to me and my family, and for those of you who support us in this work financially. Without Father's use of you as co-laborers it simply would not happen.

MY UPCOMING BOOKS

Currently I have 15 books in print, and 11 bound volumes of the *Bible Student's Notebook*. Before year's end, I plan to have eight new books completed, *D.V.*

Wife Loving

The Husband's Paramount Privilege

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He Is

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The Glorious Presentation of the Saints

De Kerk in Puin

The Dutch version of our book, "*The Church in Ruins*"

This last book will be my second that has been translated into Dutch, thanks to our dear brother Wim Janse. His diligent efforts for the truth mean so much.

Speaking of translations, I am glad to report that a couple of brothers are working on translating some of my writings into Spanish. This will be a wonderful expansion, for which we must give thanks to Father.

MORE BOOKS COMING FROM OTHER AUTHORS

As always, in addition to my own books, our family is also busy publishing the works of other authors as well. Books that will be available in the next few weeks, *D.V.*, are the following reprint and three new titles:

Bible in Brief

The Theme of the Scriptures

by – William C. Rebmann

Humanity in the Arms of a Loving Savior

and Important Related Matters

by – James Burson

Truth: Absolute and Relative

Simple Answers to Hard Questions and other Contradictions

by – Don Bast

Who Is in Charge Here?

God's Purpose in Creation and Discovering Our Role In It

by – Dan Sheridan

24/7

BIBLE STUDENT'S RADIO

We have been receiving encouraging words regarding our new audios that we have been producing in conjunction with our **Daily Email Goodies** articles. The good news is that these audios should be available along with other quality Bible teaching and music in an internet radio format. The details should follow here in the *BSN* soon.

LIVES TOUCHED

Speaking of our audios, here are a couple of recent touching responses from our listeners:

I have listened to all of your audios, and your marvelous materials have found a special place in my morning hour before I begin my day's work. Our wonderful Lord has given you a great gift and I am grateful that He has chosen you for this. – **OH**

I didn't think I would really like the audio format, but actually I enjoy it! I love your music choices! I'm glad you don't think modern music is evil. As a musician, I appreciate many styles of music, and really any style can be used for the glory of God. Keep up the good work! – **IL**

We also receive regular word from readers whose lives have been greatly impacted with the truth in our writings. Here is a recent example:

Your article regarding divorce really hit home and helped immensely as I was struggling ... after my own terrible divorce and remarriage.

That was something that I almost couldn't overcome. Through prayer and study, and guidance as you provided, I have come out of that terrible place where I felt, *not unsaved*, but unable to serve efficiently. ...

I am grateful for the information and your work to compile it. If it was not for you, I may still be in agony about a true yearning to minister but ashamed due to a personal catastrophe. – **OR**

TRIP TO NY

Through the foresight and arrangement of our dear brother Lenny Pappano we were afforded the unique opportunity to go to Rochester to teach about *the salvation of all* to a Bible college class.

My time in the class was slated for an hour. I was to make my presentation for 15 minutes, followed by 45 minutes of Q&A. As it turned out I was allowed to teach for 45 minutes followed by an hour of Q&A, as the instructor gave up his next class slot for the lively discussion.

The uniqueness of this opportunity was that it was an Independent Baptist college. I, too, had been an Independent Baptist, and was trained in a college just like theirs. So I came equipped to identify with them, and speak their "language." I began my time in telling them of my own Baptist experience and my coming from such a background to embrace the full success and victory of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. My testimony included a brief survey of a half-dozen of Paul's universal declarations.

It was not until I was in my thirties that I ever even heard of anyone who believed that God would restore all of His creation back to Himself. I can't image what may have happened in my life had someone planted the seed of this glorious truth early in my life.

These students should not easily forget that *someone* came to their college class and *insisted* that the verses of Paul's letters concerning the all-encompassing and successful work of Christ meant exactly what they said. I realize that the seeds planted during this trip may not see a harvest right away. No seeds do – this is not their nature – but perhaps years from now, as one of the students finds himself in the thick of pastoring, he will come face to face with these verses again and will recall our discussion, and with honesty come to embrace the truth that *Christ is truly greater than Adam*. This is our prayer.

While in Rochester we stayed in the home of our host (Lenny) and enjoyed wonderful, sweet fellowship and food. We were spiritually and personally refreshed.

Interestingly, Lenny and I were able also to have a two-hour breakfast with the local pastor to discuss *God's ul-*

imate reconciliation and Paul's distinct gospel and ministry. Lenny recalls:

So my favorite part of breakfast with the pastor and Clyde: the pastor said he believes absolutely in the cross. Then added, "Of course, the cross you guys believe in dwarfs the cross I believe in." You know those times in life when you want to wait for the next pause in conversation and say, "Dude, did you hear what you just said?" It was one of those moments.

VISIT FROM MARTIN ZENDER & REBECCA TONN

Just before their trek from Ohio to Colorado for their wedding and new life together, Martin and Rebecca came to Windber to share a few days of rich fellowship with our family. I am encouraged by Father's hand in bringing the two of them together. It is my joy to regard them as fellow-laborers in the wonderful work Father has committed to us.

By the way, if *you* are ever in the area we would love to have you come and visit – we would enjoy your fellowship. Schedule permitting, you can even spend the night with us. You don't just have to be "in the area" either – you are welcome to make a special trip our way too!

300TH ISSUE OF THE BSN

In three more issues we will reach the milestone of our 300th issue. Some very exciting news concerning the BSN will be announced in this special issue.

My sincere love to each of you, my siblings!



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

THREE (continued from front page)

*Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things **in earth**, or things **in heaven** (Colossians 1:20).*

FIRST WORLD PERISHED BY WATER

All things did not continue as they were from the beginning of creation. The water which engulfed the earth was not there originally (Genesis 1:2; Job 38:8-11). God formed the earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). Peter writes,

Knowing this first, that in the last days scoffers will be coming with scoffing, going according to their own desires and saying, "Where is the promise of His presence? For since the fathers were put to repose, all is continuing thus from the beginning of creation" (II Peter 3:3-4).

Why should they make a remark like this? Peter states that this attitude on the part of the scoffers is because they want to,

Be oblivious of this, that there were heavens of old, and an earth cohering out of water and through water, by the Word of God; through which the then world [kosmos], being deluged³ by water, perished (:5-6).

3. Deluge (noun), *kataklusmos*, DOWN-SURGE, Matthew 24:38-39; Luke 17:27; II Peter 2:5.

Deluge (verb), *kataklyzo*, DOWN-SURGE, II Peter 3:6; c.f. *Concordant Keyword Concordance*, p. 71; c.f. *Wigram's Englishman's*

In this passage, does Peter refer to the flood of Genesis 6:1-8:22, or to an earlier event? The context in Peter says "from [the] beginning of creation." There can be no question as to which beginning was meant, nor as to which creation he was referring. The scoffers were contending that all continues as it was from the beginning (:3-4). They are reminded by Peter that the heavens of old, and the earth, were deluged by water.

We find this momentous event recorded at the very forefront of revelation. It follows the statement in Genesis 1:1 where creation begins with the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:2 continues,

Yet the earth became a chaos and vacant, and darkness was on the surface of the submerged chaos. Yet the spirit of God is vibrating over the surface of the water.

SECOND HEAVENS AND EARTH THEIR TRANSIENT NATURE

God is now seen rearranging the chaotic and vacant condition mentioned in Genesis 1:2. On the first day He began by commanding that out of darkness light should be shining (Genesis 1:3-5; II Corinthians 4:6).

On the second day He is making an atmosphere (AV, firmament; margin: expansion) that He is calling "heavens" (Genesis 1:6-8). The heavens and the earth which Peter says "are now" (II Peter 3:7), start at Genesis 1:6-8 (for ►

Greek Concordance of the New Testament, 1903, page 412 (henceforth referred to as "Wigram's Greek").

the heavens) and 1:9-13 (for the earth). They continue to this present time and are the second heavens and earth mentioned in Scripture. They embrace within their limits all of God's administrations from the restoration beginning in Genesis 1:3 to the end of the Kingdom eon, commonly called the millennium. This present heavens and earth, the second, are transient. We are reminded that they shall pass away.

Let us consult a concordance, such as *Wigram's Greek*, pp. 571-573.

ouranos, heaven

Matthew 5:18, "Till **heaven** and earth pass."

Matthew 24:35, "**Heaven** and earth shall pass."

Mark 13:31, "**Heaven** and earth shall pass away."

Luke 16:17, "it is easier for **heaven** and earth to pass."

Luke 21:33, "**Heaven** and earth shall pass away."

Hebrews 1:10, "the **heavens** are the work of Thine."

Revelation 21:1, "I saw a new **heaven** and a new earth: for the first **heaven** and earth were passed away."⁴

FIRE USHERS IN THE THIRD HEAVENS AND EARTH

The last reference above, showing the transitory character of the second heavens and earth, tells us,

I perceived a new heaven and a new earth, for the former [AV: first] heaven and the former [AV: first] earth pass away, and the sea is no more.

In full agreement with this passage are Peter's words that the present heavens and earth (which is the second of three) will be destroyed by fire.

Yet the heavens now, and the earth, by the same Word, are stored with fire ... in which the heavens shall be passing by with a booming noise, yet the elements shall

4. Editor: The *Concordant Literal Translation* has "And I perceived a new heaven and a new earth, for the **former** heaven and the **former** earth pass away ..." (Revelation 21:1). The Greek word "protos," which the *King James Version* translates "first" in this verse, is translated in the *KJV* as "former" only three verses away in Revelation 21:4, "the former things are passed away."

be dissolved by combustion ... because of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved and the elements decompose by combustion (II Peter 3:7-12).

This gives place to "new heavens and a new earth" (13), the third referred to in Scripture. They embrace the day of God and are the last to be mentioned in His Word.

A SUMMARY OF OUR SUBJECT

Let us restate and condense our study of this subject up to this point. There were heavens and an earth before the present one; there will be heavens and an earth after this present one has vanished; consequently there are three heavens and three earths, not vertical in space, but rather horizontal in time.

The *first*, as originally created, was established of old by God's Word (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 33:6-9). He had surrounded them by the element which was to be used for their destruction – water. They lasted until the first deluge, the one spoken of in Genesis 1:2 (c.f. II Peter 3:5-6).

The *second* is the present heavens and earth. By the same Divine statement it has been constituted a store-house of fire towards the day of judging and destruction of irreverent men (II Peter 3:7). Then the elements shall be dissolved by combustion and the earth and the works therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10).

This gives place to the *third*, new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness is reigning and dwelling (II Peter 3:13). He Who is sitting on the throne said,

Lo! New am I making all! (Revelation 21:5).

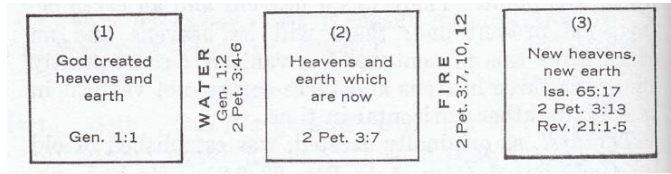
For, behold Me creating new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor shall they come upon the heart (Isaiah 65:17).

A PRÉCIS OF OUR STUDY

To begin with, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). This was followed by the first deluge by water (Genesis 1:2; II Peter 3:4-6). Then by the same Divine statement came the heavens and the earth which are now (II Peter 3:7). These are to be dissolved by fiery combustion (II Peter 3:7-12). Then following this, according to His promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness is dwelling (Isaiah 65:17; II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-5).

In this manner we are enabled to see that, as to mate-

rial basis, the three heavens and earths follow each other along a linear plane, through what is called “time.” Let us make a sketch of this.



LIGHT SHED ON A PERPLEXING PROBLEM

This light on the three heavens and earths may help us to solve a perplexing problem which is to be found in II Corinthians 12:1-4. There we read, “*caught up to the third heaven*” (:2, AV), and “*caught up into paradise*” (:4, AV). Here the verses seem to indicate a *direction* – a seeming contradiction to the Divine statements with which we have just dealt. We mention it because we want to be fair and present all of the evidence, even when it seems to be contrary to our position.

Two fundamental rules governing Scripture study need to be noted at this juncture:

- (1) It is impossible for one inspired Scripture to contradict another inspired Scripture dealing with the same subject, and,
- (2) No doctrine that does violence to any Scripture is true, for truth must accord with truth; seemingly discrepant statements of truth can always be harmonized when the facts are known. Bearing this in mind, let us proceed with our study.

The AV renderings in II Corinthians 12:2, 4, “*caught up*,” were intended to reflect the Greek terms *harpagēnta* “*caught up*” or “*snatched away*,” and *herpagē*, respectively, as found in extant editions of the Greek New Testament text.

Contemporary Bible translators, who followed the AV in these instances, should have consulted Thayer,⁵ Green,⁶ Arndt and Gingrich⁷ (to name just a few) in order to ascertain the basic meaning of the Greek verb in question *harpazō*, i.e., to *snatch away*, which allows for any direction. This agrees with the definition given in the *Concordant Keyword Concordance*, page 275, “seize with a sud-

den grasp and carry away, as a wolf its prey.”

Since the AV rendering of this passage creates more problems in its wake than it purports to solve, we should carefully consider it before embracing it. The usual solutions are, as offered by the AV and others on this passage in II Corinthians 12:1-4, to say the least, most unsatisfactory.

Our rendering is not merely an attempt to be novel or different. Instead, it offers a sane solution, one that harmonizes with the other Scriptures on the same subject. It should claim each student’s attention as a most reasonable answer to a problem bristling with as many thorny points as a porcupine has quills. It should receive earnest and thoughtful consideration by His drudges.

Here the *Concordant Literal New Testament* reads,

*Such a one was snatched away to the third heaven
... he was snatched away into paradise* (II Corinthians 12:2, 4).

This same verb is used of the description of the rapture (*harpagēsometha*, we shall be snatched away, I Thessalonians 4:17), and elsewhere in the New Testament (Matthew 11:12; 13:19; Luke 16:16; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; Jude 23; Revelation 12:5). None of the sheep will be taken away by force out of the hands of the Shepherd; saving is compared to conveying away suddenly, out of the fire, and so on, through the rest of the occurrences listed. The reader is invited to check them and thus satisfy himself that, what at first seemed to be contradictory to other Divine statements, serves instead to endorse them.

From this it seems obvious that the misleading rendering “*caught up*” was invented only for the purpose of supporting the erroneous idea that the three heavens were piled up, one on top of the other.

PAUL GLORIES IN THIS EXPERIENCE

The passage under scrutiny is Paul’s greatest ground for glorying. It is called forth here in this context for the first time because of its urgent need (c.f. II Corinthians 11:1-33). Going back fourteen years we find Paul on his first missionary journey after his separation at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). At Lystra he is stoned and left for dead (14:19). More than likely it is at this time that he is transported in spirit into the third heaven. This is the heaven viewed by John in Revelation 21:1. However, John does not enter into it, but confines his description to the new earth.

5. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1889.
6. *A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament*, Twentieth Edition.
7. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Fourth revised and augmented Edition, 1952.

Paul was snatched away into the third heaven, out into this future eon which follows the millennial eon of the Messiah's Kingdom reign, and there saw and heard things not lawful to be uttered. There he saw the supremacy of Christ,

An administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ – both that in the heavens and that on the earth (Ephesians 1:10).

He may also have seen and heard other matters which he does not reveal until he writes the prison letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians). He also enters the new earth and its park *paradeisos* which John describes in Revelation 22:2 (c.f. Revelation 2:7, "*the tree of life*," which is in the midst of the paradise of God, or as the *Concordant Version* reads, "*the log of life which is in the center of the paradise of God*").

The True Basis of World Peace

by – A.E. Knoch

The world is rushing to one of the greatest crises of human history. On all sides people are trying to make a new world. All of these efforts, without exception, are doomed to failure. Don't imagine that I am a pessimist. I am the biggest optimist you ever saw. There *will* be peace after a while, and it will be permanent. In the meantime there is going to be a terrible storm. It is said that in the middle of a tornado it is calm. This is the place and privilege of all who know the mind of God. I can see things going to ruin, yet be thankful for it and enjoy it. Not because people are suffering, but because of the prospect in view, because all of the travail that men are going through is preparing them to enjoy the glorious time at the consummation.

Now, the trouble with those who are trying to make a better world is, first of all, that *they do not know where they are*. If we only knew where we are, we would not be so distressed about where we are going. Things today are exactly where God intends them to be. When we see this, we have a chance to have peace – not the peace that men are talking about, but a *real* peace – the peace of God Himself. If you know God's plan, you will be satisfied with what God is doing, because He is riding the storm. He is controlling all events. The future is safe and satisfactory, no matter what the present may be.

We want to find out where we are; then we will be in a position to view the future and enjoy its tragic unfolding before our eyes. This holds true

for practically everything. For instance, today you will find there are all sorts of ideas about what the Bible teaches, and especially about its prophecies. Men have been prophesying, depending upon the Bible, as to who is Antichrist. These prophets fail, because they do not know *what God is about at the present time*. Most people forget that God is doing a number of different things in various times and eras. Generally we are concerned with His administrations and dispensations. The Pauline space is a small, very lonely place, but it is where we ought to be. Alas, how many saints of today still live in long past administrations, under law, or in the days of our Lord, or in the book of Acts! Many have never reveled in their own glorious grace in Paul's epistles! Even after some have heard this teaching over and over again, they still wander away into far poorer pastures.

The saints are not exempt from the fate of the nations to which they belong. I do not wonder about the way things are today. Why, that is just what is to be expected! I am not a politician. I have never voted. But I am going to be a politician in the future. When we go up to our destined place among the celestials, then we will reign with Christ.

I want a real peace. Peace without God is no peace. God has appointed a Man and He is the Prince of Peace, and until He comes, thank God, there can be no peace worthy of the name.

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