

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

On March 9, 2012, we received the following comment:

“The great multitude will live on earth, it is their hope. So there are 2 hope, heavenly hope for 144,000 Christians, and the hope of eternal life on earth for all other Christians who survives.

“Who represents the great multitude, can be ascertained from the description in Revelation, chapter 7, and the scriptures that clearly are parallel. In Revelation 7: 15-17 says that God 'turns up his tent over them', they are led to "sources with the water of life" and that God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes." In Revelation 21: 2-4, there is a parallel expression: "God's tent is with men," "He will wipe every tear from their eyes" and "death shall be no more." This view does not apply to circumstances in heaven, 'the New Jerusalem comes down from', but the conditions on earth among men.”

To the author, we thank you for taking the time to post your comments. You could have easily clicked exit and left, and we would not have had the opportunity to respond. So, we sincerely thank you.

If you have read our site, you know that we believe that there is only one hope for Christians and that is the heavenly hope. In support of our position, we provided two series of articles, **“The Royal Priesthood and the Holy Nation,”** and **“Observing the Oneness of the Faith.”** Each series contains several scriptural references in both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures that show the one hope for Christians. If you have not read those articles, we encourage you to do so. You will get a fuller explanation for our position and you might find them very enlightening.

We note that in support of the “earthly hope,” you cite only to the book of *Revelation*. You do not address the several statements made in *2 Corinthians*, *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, etc., all which state that all Christians should be pursuing the heavenly hope. For example:

“One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the **one hope** to which you were called; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons**, who is over all and through all and in all.” – *Ephesians 4:4-6*

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, should be dissolved, we are to have a building from God, a house not made with hands, **everlasting in the heavens**. For in this dwelling house we do indeed groan, **earnestly desiring to put on the one for us from heaven.**” – *2 Corinthians 5:1-5*

“For there are many, I used to mention them often but now I mention them also with weeping, who are walking as the enemies of the torture stake of the Christ, and their finish is destruction, and their god is their belly, and their glory consists in their shame, and **they have their minds upon things of the earth.** As for us, **our citizenship exists in the heavens,** from which place also we are eagerly waiting for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will refashion our humiliated body to be conformed to his glorious body according to the operation of the power that he has, even to subject all things to himself.” – *Philippians 3:18-21*

“We thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ always when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in connection with Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the holy ones **because of the hope that is being reserved for you in the heavens.** This [hope] you heard of before by telling of the truth of that good news which has presented itself to you, even as it is bearing fruit and increasing in all the world just as [it is doing] also among you, from the day you heard and accurately knew the undeserved kindness of God in truth.” – *Colossians 1:3-6*

“If, however, you were raised up with the Christ, go on seeking the things above, where the Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Keep your minds fixed on the things above not on the things upon the earth.**” – *Colossians 3:1-2*

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for according to his great mercy he gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. **It is reserved in the heavens for you,** who are being safeguarded by God’s power through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last period of time.” – *1 Peter 1:3-5*

In addition to expressing the cherished heavenly hope held out to all Christians, the scriptures counsel **against** pursuing earthly things. It goes so far as to tell us that if we are mentally inclined to consider a hope other than the heavenly hope, we should pray about it and God will help to readjust our thinking:

“Brothers, I do not yet consider myself as having laid hold on [it]; but there is one thing about it: Forgetting the things behind and

stretching forward to the things ahead. I am pursuing down toward the goal of the **prize of the upward call** of God by means of Christ Jesus. Let us, then, as many of us as are mature, be of this mental attitude; and **if you are mentally inclined otherwise in any respect, God will reveal the above [attitude] to you.**” – *Philippians 3:13-15*

In fact, we do not believe you can point to any scripture that tells Christians to pursue everlasting life on earth. If you are aware of any such scripture, please bring that to our attention.

You cite to the book of Revelation. So we ask: Why would the Revelation lead us to think something different from what the Apostles taught? Could it be that we are misunderstanding the Revelation? Let’s begin by looking to the introduction to the book:

“A revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place. And he sent forth his angel and presented [it] in **signs** through him to his slave John, who bore witness to the word God gave and to the witness Jesus Christ gave, even to all the things he saw. Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this **prophesy**, and who observe the things written in it, for the appointed time is near.” – *Revelation 1:1-3*

So we learn that the Revelation is **not** to be taken literally. ***It is a prophesy that is presented in signs.*** Let’s look at the scriptures you cite to:

“That is why they are before the throne of God; and they are rendering him sacred service day and night **in his temple**; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat down upon them nor any scorching heat, because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes.” – *Revelation 7: 15-17*

“I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And **God himself** will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.” – *Revelation 21: 2-4*

Based on your comment, it appears that you believe these scriptures are to be taken literally. However, a literal interpretation flies in direct conflict with other portions of the Bible. For example:

“But will God truly dwell upon the earth? Look! The heavens, yes, the heavens of heavens, themselves cannot contain you; how much less, then, this house that I have built!” – *1 Kings 8:27*

“And he added: ‘You are not able to see my face, because no man may see me and yet live.’” – *Exodus 33:20*

Clearly then, neither the throne of God, nor God himself could reside on earth with man.

You also comment that because it speaks of ‘sources with the water of life,’ or ‘wiping away every tear from their eyes,’ or that ‘death shall be no more,’ that these promises ‘do not apply to circumstances in heaven,’ but instead ‘refer to the conditions on earth among men.’ We wonder what you base that conclusion on? Is it not possible that there is no crying or death in heaven? Is it not possible that the anointed sons of the kingdom would dwell in a heavenly place near the Father? Is it not possible that the ‘sources’ or ‘fountains’ of the water of life would be in heaven? Further, we note that, if we take it literally, New Jerusalem indeed comes down, but it does not say that it comes down to earth. And, finally, where in the Revelation are Christians encouraged to pursue everlasting life on earth? We haven’t seen it.

It is truly, as Jesus said, a prophesy presented in signs – not to be taken literally. For if we are inclined to apply a literal interpretation, what shall we say about the numerous scriptural references throughout the Christian writings that tell us that every Christian must pursue the heavenly hope? (*Philippians 3:13-15*) (See also “**Observing the Oneness of the Faith.**”)

The only way to address that conundrum is to create a whole new story, such as, “The writings from Matthew through Jude are written only to anointed Christians who go to heaven, whereas the Revelation prophesies that there would be other Christians who will live forever on earth – but we won’t have the support for the earthly hope until new scrolls are opened.” Is that not going beyond what is written? Would we not be guilty of the perversion spoken of by Paul:

“I marvel that you are being so quickly removed from the One who called you with Christ’s undeserved kindness over to **another sort of good news. But it is not another;** only there are certain ones who are causing you trouble and wanting to pervert the good news about the Christ. However, even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to you as good news something beyond what we declared to you as good news, let him be accursed. As we have said above, I also now say again, Whoever it is that is declaring to you as good news **something beyond what you accepted,** let him be accursed.” – *Galatians 1:6-9*

Rather than create another story in order to support ‘another sort of good news,’ or assume that Jesus and the apostles left out something this important, isn’t it wiser to accept that maybe our interpretation of the Revelation may not be accurate?

We recognize that this may be difficult for some, especially if we have been holding on to, and preaching about, an earthly hope for a long time. We, too, were once of that opinion. But our universal view has expanded. We have a clearer understanding of the heavens, as well as our heavenly hope. We are preparing an article on “**How to Expand Your Spiritual Vision.**” We hope you get an opportunity to read the article once it is posted.

As the Society often says, ‘the light keeps getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.’ (*Proverbs 4:18*) We welcome you into that bright light. And “if you are mentally inclined otherwise in any respect, God will reveal the above [attitude] to you.” – (*Philippians 3:13-15*)

Your brothers in the faith.

“Elaia Luchnia”
