

external righteousness will prevail upon the earth, Revelation 20 teaches clearly that there will be those whose hearts are not right before God and who do not avail themselves of the wonderful offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, for at the end of the Millennium these will join in the uprising against Christ which will be led by Satan when he is released for a little season. Even in that glorious millennial period no one will be saved simply by his environment. Since the fall of man there has not been and will not be a time when anyone can be saved apart from a personal relation of his heart to Christ, or on any other ground than the merits of Christ's atoning death.

The only real objection to considering this passage to be a description of the Millennium is based on the words "new heavens and a new earth" in verse 17. This leads to consideration of the third possible interpretation. We note at once that it is impossible to take the entire passage as a description of an eternal state, after death has been completely eradicated, in view of the declaration in verse 20 that there will still remain a very small amount of sin and death in the world. The idea that this might be a picture of an eternal condition after sin is entirely eradicated would surely never have been suggested if it were not for the phrase "new heavens and a new earth" in verse 17.

There are various possibilities for the interpretation of this phrase. To take it simply as a figurative picture of the renewed heart of the believer would surely be carrying figurative language too far. The passage has too much stress on the condition of the physical creation for that to be a possible view. On the other hand, to take it as a technical phrase which always describes a time after the judgment of the wicked is to introduce a very dangerous principle into the interpretation of Scripture. We must never assume that a phrase is a technical phrase referring always to one particular time or event, unless we have absolute proof that this is the case. Before being sure of the exact meaning of a phrase we must see what is involved in each passage in which it is used.

We have already seen that "new heavens and a new earth" does not have to mean something entirely new and different from anything that had previously existed. In verse