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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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*“The earth abideth for ever.” What does this mean?”*

The passage referred to is Ecclesiastes 1:4, and the phrase which I have no doubt prompted the question is, 'abideth for ever.' If we are to understand this expression it is important that we read the entire verse.

*"One generation goeth and another generation cometh: and the earth abideth for ever" (English RV).*

*"A generation goes and a generation comes,' but the earth remains for ever." (RSV).*

I think that most readers of the "S.S." will be aware of the fact that this is a verse to which such people as the so-called and self-named 'Jehovah's Witnesses' turn, when they look for support for their theory concerning the future of the present earth.

In the first volume of his six-volume series which he entitled '*Studies in the Scriptures*,' and first published in 1886, Charles T. Russell, the father of what has become the present-day 'Watchtower' organisation, sowed the seed of the erroneous doctrine which declares that this present earth will not be destroyed, but will '*abide for ever*,' because it will be renovated and prepared for use as the paradise home of those who accept their 'Kingdom' message.

It matters not to the disciples of the "Watchtower" organisation that 2nd Peter 3:7 states plainly that,

*"the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men."*

Verse 10 of the chapter states, *"the elements will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it shall be burned up."*

Verse 13 states, *"According to His promise we wait for new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

Or, that Rev. 21:1 reads, *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . ."*

Bear in mind that the expression "*the first heaven*" does not relate to the dwelling place of God. It is the description, well understood in those days, of the sky which we see above us.

The dwelling place of God was described as '*the third heaven*,' as in 2 Cor. 12:2, or '*the heaven of heavens*,' in 2nd Chron. 6:18. Modern versions render this, '*The highest heaven*.'

The followers of the Russell doctrine refuse to take these verses literally, because Russell taught them that here the word 'earth' '*symbolises human government and social arrangements*,' (Studies in the Scripture, vol. 1, p.69).

Now, not only is this in direct conflict with what Peter tells us earlier, in 2nd Peter 3, it is a quite deliberate falsification of what the scriptures teach, perpetrated in order to establish a false doctrine.

Please look at verse 6 in that chapter. Notice the different Greek words, which are used.

We are told that in the days of Noah the '*world*' - (i.e., tge '*kosmos*,' the world system and its life) - perished. But, states Peter, the '*earth*' - (i.e. the '*ge*,' the physical planet itself) and everything on it will be burned up, with the very elements dissolving with fire.

#### ***The Contrast between Man and his planet.***

When Ecclesiastes 1:4 is dragged in to support the present-day "Watchtower" error, the clear and simple significance of the verse is missed. In it, the biblical writer declares that life on the earth is transient and full of change. Even in the world of nature there is constant movement and constant change, but there is no lasting progress.

As for Man, although he labours constantly neither he nor his works endure. But whilst one human generation follows another - (such is the brevity of Man's existence) - the earth itself remains. And it remains '*for ever*.' But the word '*olam*' does not mean '*eternally*.' It means '*age-lasting*.'

The earth will continue until the role designed for it in the plan of God has been fulfilled.

#### ***'For ever - Exodus 21:6***

To understand the meaning of the phrase "*for ever*," turn to Exodus 21:6, where the same Hebrew word '*olam*' is used.

This verse gives us the illustration of the treatment of a slave who, having served his master for six years, had the right to claim his freedom when the seventh year, the Year of Jubilee, came around.

According to the Law, no slave could be held for more than six years, except by his own agreement. Hence, if the slave chose, for whatever reason, not to claim the freedom to which the Law gave him a right, but expressed his wish to remain with his master, a ceremony described as *'the opening of the ear'* must take place. This is the custom described in Exodus 21:6. After his ear had been bored with an awl, the slave must serve his master *'for ever.'*

It goes without saying that this does not mean *'for ever and ever,'* or *'eternally,'* as that expression is used in Exodus 15:18 in relation to God's reign. It means that the slave must serve his master for the rest of his natural life; in other words, as long as he lives.

In Eccles. 1:4 the phrase *'for ever'* is used in a similar way. The existence of the present earth, also, will continue for just as long as the will and purpose of God decrees, and the scriptures make it abundantly plain that this means it will continue until Christ returns. Compare 2nd Thess. 1:7-10 with 2nd Peter 3:10 and 13. These verses describe the end of this present age and this present earth.

#### ***A Ridiculous Doctrine***

'Pastor' Russell died on a train, in 1916 and was succeeded to the leadership of the movement by J. J. Rutherford, a man who was capable of making statements as outrageous as those of Russell himself and whose flight of fantasy reached the heights of the absurd when, on Feb. 24th 1918, at Los Angeles, California, he preached a sermon which declared that, *'The World Has Ended - Millions Now Living Will Never Die.'*

This was to become the sub-title of a Book which set out the same notion, and the central theme of a campaign, which ran from 1918 to 1923. According to this theory, the earth would never pass away, in the sense of being destroyed, but would be 'renovated' and 'cleansed,' and this 'new' earth would become a paradise. This was the view of the 'new' earth, held by both Russell and Rutherford. What is more, Rutherford claimed that those who had suffered most in the recent (1914-1918) war, would be *'the first to enjoy the blessings of the new age.'*

Those who had lost their sight would see again, and those who had lost limbs would grow new ones!

And, of course! Millions alive at that time would never die!

I wonder how many of those who were alive when this ludicrous doctrine was proclaimed, are still walking around to day?

#### ***The name 'Jehovah's Witnesses'***

Incidentally, if you wonder why I have used such expressions as *'the followers of Russell'* and *'Russellites,'* instead of calling them *'Jehovah's Witnesses,'* the reason is that when this theory was first propagated those who accepted it were Russell's disciples. The name *'Jehovah's Witnesses'* is the latest of a variety of names by which they became known. It was adopted at a Convention held in Columbus, Ohio, August 24-30, 1931, at the instigation of J. J. Rutherford, in an endeavour to eliminate the class-system which Russell had developed among his followers.

Those present at that Convention were informed that 'new light' had been received on the parable of Jesus in Matt. 20: 1-16. The new interpretation said that eleven hours of the day during which the labourers were sent out to work in the vineyard, were the eleven years from 1920 to 1931, and the one-penny reward they *all* received was the new name *'Jehovah's Witness.'*

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*(Frank is to undergo heart bye-pass surgery next week, but hopes to resume "QB" as soon as possible. We wish him well and will remember him in our prayers. Ed.)*