

8B

RELIGION



In a new situation Revelation 21:1-7

A. New Creation (vv. 1, 2)
1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

The transitional phrase then I saw juts forth in the text. This phrase extends as a point to hang our hope upon as nails fastened in a sure place. Throughout the book of Revelation we have been alert both to what is seen and what is heard, for the message is the combination of these two.

This scene here is that of a new heaven and a new earth in contrast to the first heaven and first earth. In John's vision of the future, the old situation has passed away. This is the realization of Isaiah 65:17.

This present world has been good, but it is not sufficient for the eternal structure. It groans under the weight of sin. In 2 Peter 3:10, 12, the apostle tell us how this physical world will be destroyed. Even the Garden of Eden was not complete enough to provide the fullness of relationship that God has in view for his people. The word new emphasizes quality.

We see another contrast between the old and the new creations with the image there is no more sea. The sea was a figure if great threat in the minds of ancient people. The sea separates John from his loved ones as he is exiled on the island of Patmos. It is the sea that the beast of Revelation 13:1 comes with the purpose to overcome the saints. For John and his contemporaries, the sea is the epitome of evil, of all things bad and harmful.

Thus the situation that John pictures is one in which all opposition is gone—anything that would trouble the servants of God or anything that would separate them from God. The relationship "in a new heaven and a new earth" is realized in the its fullness without sea.

2. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as beautifully as a bride dressed for her husband.

The scene of "renewal" continues in such a marvelous way. John's first-century readers know about old Jerusalem, of course, with all its unholy and injustice. Even now in the 21st Century we can see that earthly Jerusalem is a place torn by violence and fear. What a refreshing contrast it is then to anticipate a New Jerusalem. Abraham also hoped to see this city.

Not only is he city new, it is also holy and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The text expresses the rejoicing there is in the climax of marriage. Faithfulness has been pledged and tested. The beautiful result is that bride and husband are thus to dwell together forever. The resulting fellowship is worth all earthly struggles.

A different kind of initiation



Derrick Newman, Lavar Kelly and Jamarr Morris have left a violent past behind and dedicated their lives to Christ with the help of The Urban Restoration.

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Former gang members have turned their lives from gangs to God with the help of a local ministry.

Derrick Newman, Lavar Kelly and Jamarr Morris have all been in gangs or were approached to join.

Looking at the three boys, they look like average teens dressed in baggy jeans, white tee shirts and sneakers. But unlike many of their contemporaries, these three have turned their lives over to God. They spend afternoons at the Urban Restoration Ministry, working with other kids, making music and staying away from the gangs that they were once members of.

"People were making up stories about what they do in the gang. They said I didn't have to do anything to join," said

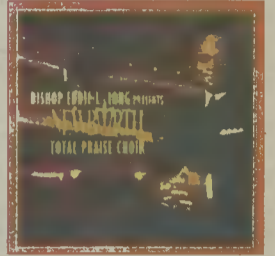
15-year-old Newman.

But what he wasn't told was that to join the Bloods - a street gang - he was going to have to be jumped in. In other words, he was violently beaten. It didn't take long for the then 13-year-old to realize gang life wasn't for him. Newman watched as his friends committed crimes like carjacking, robberies and even shootings.

One day he was invited to play basketball at Urban Restoration, which changed his that's life. Newman got out of the gang; again he was beaten violently in a ritual called jumping out. Newman's time at the center opened his eyes to a new life.

"In my time here, I finally realized what Jesus has done for me in my life," he said.

Please see MINISTRY/7B



Bishop Eddie Long presents The New Birth Total Praise Choir Spirit & Truth Kevin Bond, producer EMI Gospel

☆☆☆

Kevin Bond is an extraordinarily gifted writer and producer. He's been Grammy nominated a number of times and I think he's even won a couple. So naturally aspirations are high for his home church choir's debut project.

Maybe that's why this project is a bit of a letdown. There's nothing wrong. Several of the songs are as strong as anything Bond has produced or written.

But something's missing and I can't put my finger on that something. Is the choir not singing with passion. Are the soloists just going through the motions? Are the songs a bit too generic?

Maybe it's a combination of all of the above. Why would you have Vanessa Bell Armstrong lead a song and basically sing the vamp. "Suddenly" kicks, but where's the solo? Ted Wynn is wonderful on "Thank You For Your Grace" but the song sounds suspiciously like another. "We Worship Christ The King" is majestic but sounds too patriotic.

Maybe this songs too much like a T.D. Jakes CD. It's certainly set up as such. There a big picture of Bishop Eddie Long on the cover and he renders not a word of song or message. At least Jakes speaks on his choir's CDs.

This CD is good but should be great. The choir has a nice bright sound but come across as a bit stiff. Subsequent CDs will loosen them up. Maybe then Bond will save his best material for his own folks.

Ratings

Classic;	☆☆☆☆
Excellent	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆☆☆
Why?	☆☆☆☆
No stars - A mess	



Hezekiah Walker

HEZEKIAH WALKER, VIRTUE, FRED HAMMOND

3 gospel giants at Carowinds

By Amanda Ward
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Hezekiah Walker, Fred Hammond and Virtue all sing gospel and are Stellar Award winners. They will be singing praises unto the Lord on one night, on one stage at Paramount's Carowinds Joyfest 2004 Saturday at 6 p.m.

Walker has released many hit albums, such as "Focus on Glory," "Live in Toronto" and "Love is Live!" Through his music Walker is credited for getting teens and young adults

interested in gospel music.

"I have a heart for young people," Walker said. "I listen to what they are listening to and I follow what keeps them going and motivated. I like to bring Gospel and R&B together." Walker is known to create songs that are lively, positive and full of praises.

The Brooklyn, N.Y.-based Love Fellowship Crusade Choir was the first group Walker created. He renamed the group and now it is one of the most popular choral groups in contempo-

rary gospel.

Hammond, who is the CEO of Face to Face Productions, is successful in many more ways. Not only is he a gospel singer but he is also a bassist, producer and songwriter.

Hammond has many accomplishments such as three Stellar Awards, four Gospel Music Association Dove Awards and was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2001. He is known for energetic and live-

Please see GOSPEL/6B

CHURCH NEWS

White Dove Chapel provides a free lunch to anyone in need every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at their 993 Summers Road location between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Doors open at 9 a.m. for coffee and fellowship.

MAY 29
The Mecklenburg General Baptist Association Usher Ministry will host a workshop from 8:45 a.m. until 1 p.m. at Chappell Memorial Baptist Church, 110 Brad-

ford Dr.
MAY 30
Don Lewis will headline Friendship Baptist Church's Fifth Sunday Hymn Sing. The event begins at 5 p.m. at the church located at 3301 Beatrice Ford Road.

JUNE 1
Acclaim Summer Camp 2004 will run through July 30. This bible based camp features arts and crafts, bible/prayer classes, field trips and other activities.

To register, call (704) 639-1022.

JUNE 4
The Temple of Total Deliverance Ministries at 5521 Cannon Drive in Monroe will hold First Lady's Night, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The guest minister will be the Rev. Dekota McCullough.

JUNE 5
Unity of Charlotte will host a workshop titled "Treasure Mapping: A Spiritual Tool for

Demonstrating Good in Your Life" from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. During this workshop, participants will create their own treasure map as a spiritual tool for claiming their desires and dreams.

The Temple of Total Deliverance Ministries at 5521 Cannon Drive in Monroe will hold a gala to honor the Rev. Ernell T. Bryant. The gala begins at 6 p.m.

JUNE 6
The Temple of Total Deliv-

erance Ministries at 5521 Cannon Drive in Monroe will celebrate its second annual church anniversary at 6 p.m.

JUNE 7
Weeping Willow AME Zion Church, located at 2220 Milton Road will hold Vacation Bible School through June 11. Classes are available for all ages. Transportation will be provided in the Barrington, Sunridge and Milton Road areas. Call (704) 532- Please see USHERS/7B

