

Bible Doctrine

Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith

Lesson 51: The New Heavens and the New Earth

Chapter 34

Revelation 21:1-5

December 31, 2023

I. Hints of heaven in the Old Testament: dwelling in the presence of God.

- A. Ps. 16:11, *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*
- B. Ps. 27:4, *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*
- C. Isa. 65:17-19, *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.*

II. The fuller development in the New Testament: dwelling with the resurrected Christ in resurrected bodies in a resurrected universe.

- A. Jn. 14:2-3, *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*
- B. Rom. 8:19-22, *For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*
- C. 2 Pet. 3:10-13, *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*
- D. Rev. 21:1-5, *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

III. The statement of the doctrine.

- A. Isa. 46:9-10, *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*
- B. "Our resurrection bodies will be part of the renewed creation. In the new heavens and new earth, there will be a place and activities for our resurrection bodies, which will never grow old or become weak or ill. There is nothing inherently sinful or evil about the physical world that God made or the creatures that He put into it, or about the physical bodies that He gave us at creation. Though all these things have been marred and distorted by sin, God will not completely destroy the physical world (which would be an acknowledgment that sin had frustrated and defeated God's purposes), but rather He will perfect

the entire creation and bring it into harmony with the purposes for which He originally created it. Therefore we can expect that the new heavens and new earth will be fully perfect, that is, once again 'very good.' And we can expect that we'll have physical bodies that will once again be 'very good' in God's sight, and which will function to fulfill the purposes for which He originally placed man on the earth. . . It is not unlikely that people will continue to work at the whole range of investigation and development of the creation by technological, creative, and inventive means, thus exhibiting the full extent of their excellent creation in the image of God. In this way, we will continue the process of learning that was begun in this life, in which a life fully pleasing to Him is one that includes continually increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10)." Wayne Grudem

C. The faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honor. The Son of God will profess their names before God his Father and the holy and elect angels; all tears will be wiped from their eyes; and their cause—at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil officers—will be acknowledged as the cause of the Son of God. And as a gracious reward the Lord will make them possess a glory such as the human heart could never imagine. So we look forward to that great day with longing in order to enjoy fully the promises of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Belgic Confession, 1561

D. What shall be done to the righteous at the day of judgment? At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and forever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment. Westminster Larger Catechism #90, 1648

IV. Implications of the doctrine.

A. "In the beatific vision it is Christ whom they see; and further, it is His face which they behold. They shall not see the skirts of His robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah; they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of His garment, or to sit far down at His feet where they can only see His sandals, but they 'shall see His face;' by which I understand two things: first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, His all in all, as they never understood Him before." Charles Spurgeon

B. "As resurrected people, we'll live on the New Earth, not a non-earthly angelic realm for disembodied spirits. . . And we will reign with Him as righteous people ruling the earth to God's glory. That was exactly His design from the beginning. The Bible begins and ends with God and humanity in perfect fellowship on earth. Because we've already lived on earth, I think it will seem from the first that we're coming home. The New Earth will strike us as familiar because it will be the old earth raised, as our bodies will be our old bodies raised. The New Earth will be the home we've always longed for. Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' The carpenter from Nazareth knows how to build. He's built entire worlds, billions of them. He's also an expert at repairing what's been damaged—whether people or worlds. Romans 8 tells us that this damaged universe groans, crying out to be repaired. Jesus is going to repair it, and we're going to live with Him on resurrected ground. He's going to repair this earth because He's no more given up on it than He's given up on us." Randy Alcorn

C. "There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind." C.S. Lewis

D. "The creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse, toward whom He might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of His nature, and to whom He might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love and grace that was in His heart, and in this way God might be glorified. . . Every Christian friend that goes before us from this world is a ransomed being waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be an infant of days that we have lost below, through grace, to be found above. There the Christian father, and mother, and child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary, and then shall never end. There we shall have the companionship with the saints of the Old and New Testaments, and those of whom the world was not worthy. And there above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely; and with the Holy Spirit, our sanctifier, and guide, and comforter; and we shall be filled with all the fullness of the Godhead forever." Jonathan Edwards, *The End for which God Created the World*, 1750