



Resurrection (Part 3): I Want A New Earth

Revelation 21:1-4

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Everyone gets a new body! Both the righteous and the wicked will receive a body in which they will spend eternity. Perhaps you have never thought in those terms before, but I hope by now the reality of that is starting to impress itself upon your thinking.¹

If we get a body in which to spend eternity, then where will we be? What will that eternal state be like? Will it be a physical place or a spiritual realm of sorts? These questions will be answered as we look at what the Bible says about a third resurrection, the resurrection of Creation.

The Purpose of Creation

God did not create matter simply to throw it away in the end. The purpose of this creation is to show forth the glory of the Creator. Even in its present fallen state, **“the heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”** (Psalm 19:1) However, this is only a glimpse, and a marred one at that.

The reason we have a body is that we might glorify God with it. (1 Cor. 6:19-20) *“God created the universe*

¹ Part 1 of this series focused on the resurrection to life for believers and the redemption of our body. Part 2 focused on the resurrection to damnation faced by unbelievers who will spend eternal punishment in a body. The first two articles in this series can be accessed at our website: www.kootenaichurch.org. It is not my intention in this series to discuss in detail the timing of these events, but instead to focus on the nature of these events. For more information on my eschatological views of when these Resurrections take place, see our doctrinal statement titled “We Believe: The Doctrinal Statement of Kootenai Community Church” also available at our website.

*and all that is in it as an emanation or manifestation of the fullness of His glory.”*² God is not backing out of that plan. He will see that intention through to its realization. God will glorify Himself through human beings, human bodies, and through a perfect creation.

Once again, Christianity does not view matter as inherently evil. As John Piper writes, *“Christianity is not a platonic religion that regards material things as mere shadows of reality, which will be sloughed off as soon as possible. Not the mere immortality of the soul, but rather the resurrection of the body and the renewal of all creation is the hope of the Christian faith. Just as our bodies will be raised imperishable for the glory of God, so the earth itself will be made new and fit for the habitation of risen and glorified persons.”*³

But I Like This World!

During the summer months I enjoy waking up to a pot of fresh brewed coffee as the sun is just coming up over the mountains. A couple times a week, I pour some coffee, slip on my shoes, and take a leisurely stroll around my yard.

I see the birds flirting from tree to tree. The dew on the ground, the gentle breeze, clean air, and the warmth of the sunshine in the coolness of the morning are all reminders to me of God’s goodness, grace, and glory. I walk through my garden marveling at the design and care of God in His creation as plants grow and prepare

² John Piper, Future Grace (Sisters: Multnomah Books, 1995), 373.

³ Piper, 374.

to produce food. I walk through the fruit trees examining the progress of the harvest. I thank God.

During some of my morning strolls, I can almost find myself thinking, "How could creation be any better than this?" Then I have to remember that this creation is marred, twisted, and dominated by sin. It lies under a curse (**Romans 8:20**) and groans to be free from it. All around me I can see death, disease, and the disfigurement of something glorious. My peaches have scabs, my tomato plants fight blight, my cherry trees will be a home for worms and my apple trees produce twisted, gnarled and deficient fruit. Sin and its effects.

Yet I still love creation. I love this world. It is beautiful in so many ways! Could it possibly get better than this? Yes! Most certainly! And it will. In fact, we live in the shadow lands. It is a mere image, a shadow of the beauty and glory that is to come.

The Resurrection of Creation

God's intention is to make His eternal dwelling among men on a new earth. **Revelation 21** describes an enrapturing picture of that future blessing,

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.'" (21:1-4)

What does John mean when he says that the first heaven and the first earth passed away? Does he mean that this earth on which we live will cease to exist?

Part of the answer is given to us by Peter in his second epistle where he writes, **"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be**

destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:10-13)

We are looking for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Before there will be a new heavens and a new earth, this one must "pass away." Peter tells us that this creation will be "burned up." Three times he says that there will be a destruction of this present world. Notice the wording,

v. 10 - "elements will be destroyed with intense heat"

v. 11 - "all these things are to be destroyed"

v. 12 - "the heavens will be destroyed by burning"

Does this mean that the earth we live on and the heavens we live under will be totally done away with? Will God start over with a totally new creation? How are we to understand the terms "destroyed," "burned up," and "pass away?"

Recreation or Regeneration?

John's description of "a new heaven and a new earth" is not meant to communicate a place that is totally other than this present earth, but rather a renewed universe.

The word **new** (*kainos*) means "new in quality," "different," or "unlike anything previously known."⁴ If Peter and John wanted to speak of something that was new in origin or time, they would have used *neos* instead of *kainos*. Therefore, the expression **new heaven and new earth** "means not the emergence of a cosmos totally other than the present one, but the creation of a universe which, though it has been gloriously renewed, stands in continuity with the

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Peter and Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 131.

present one.”⁵

Further, the word destroyed used by Peter does not have to mean “put out of existence.” Instead, it may mean that there is such a change in them that their present condition passes away. As John Piper remarks, “*We might say, ‘The caterpillar passes away, and the butterfly emerges.’ There is a real passing away, and there is a real continuity, a real connection. . . . We might say, ‘The flood destroyed many farms.’ But we don’t mean they vanished out of existence. . . . And so what Peter may well mean is that at the end of this age there will be cataclysmic events that bring this world to an end as we know it - not putting it out of existence, but wiping out all that is evil and cleansing it by fire and fitting it for an age of glory and righteousness and peace that will never end.*”⁶

So does the future hold a complete disappearance of the old before being replaced by the new or a renovation of the old resulting in the new? **Revelation 21:5** says that “**he who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’**” The most natural way of taking that statement is to understand that the Lord is promising a complete renovation of the existing creation.⁷

What Does Paul Have To Say?

Paul’s description of the grand hope for the material world and our bodies shows us that what is in store for this earth is not a total annihilation, but a regeneration.

We see this in **Romans 8:19-23**, “**For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan**

5 Hank Hanegraaff, *Resurrection* (Nashville: Word Publishing), 87.

6 Piper, 376.

7 Thomas, 439.

within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

In that passage there are two things that Paul promises will be redeemed; creation and our bodies. Let me take those in reverse order.

We have already looked at the promise in Scripture of the resurrection of our body. Paul is well aware that we are shackled to “this body of death” (**Rom. 7:24**). The longing of the child of God is for the “**redemption of our body**” (**8:23**). We “groan” and “**wait eagerly**” for this final redemption.

Paul applies the same language to creation. Notice the imagery that Paul uses:

v. 20 - creation subjected in hope

Due to Adam’s sin, God placed the entire creation under a curse in hope knowing that someday, He would remove that curse and redeem this creation.

v. 21 - creation to be set free from its slavery to corruption

As Piper writes, “*Therefore creation is not appointed for annihilation. It is destined for liberation.*” Clearly, Paul cannot be saying that this creation will be destroyed in the sense of annihilated or ceasing to exist. Rather it will be set free from its corruption. The curse will be removed and the futility will be destroyed. It will cease to exist as we currently know it, but will pass into its glorious liberty. The old will **pass away** being purged by fire. He will make all things new.

v. 22 - creation groans

This creation does not groan under the curse and eagerly wait for its annihilation to be free from its corruption. This creation groans under a curse in hope of being set free from its bondage and experiencing its ultimate redemption with the “sons of God.”

v. 23 - we ourselves groan. . . waiting eagerly. . . for the redemption of our body.

There is an obvious and essential connection in the passage between the redemption for which creation groans and the redemption for which we groan. Just as our bodies will not be thrown away and cease to exist, but will be resurrected to a new, sinless, glorious, and

eternal state, so will the creation which also groans and waits for that day of redemption.

“What happens to our bodies and what happens to the creation go together. And what happens to our bodies is not annihilation but redemption: ‘We await the redemption of our bodies.’ Our bodies will be redeemed, restored, made new, not thrown away. And so it is with the heavens and the earth.”⁸

Physical Bodies in a Physical Heaven

Perhaps you used to think of heaven as some nebulous ghostly place where spirits wander around together, passing through each other, where you would reach out to shake someone’s hand only to find nothing to hold on to. Do you picture clouds with ghost like figures riding about the expanse of the sky? Bring your thinking down to earth. Literally. God is going to resurrect, redeem, restore this universe, this world, just like He will your body. You will live here! You will walk on grass, heavenly grass and feel it on your feet. You will walk on streets, stand by rivers, see mountains, trees, people. There will be a city with gates that you will walk through. You will eat with Paul, Peter, and John. You will be able to walk, run, jump, swim, stand, sit, kneel, and SING!

There will be no sun or moon, for the glory of God will illumine it.⁹ There will be no night. The river of life will be here alongside the tree of life. If you think this world is beautiful...wait till you see it after God makes it all new! This world is nothing compared to the eternal state. This world has been cursed by sin, infected by thorns, destroyed by the flood, and ravaged by war, bloodshed, and man’s abuse. Yet this is still beautiful.

We will be raised in a physical body which will dwell on this physical earth (made new) for all of eternity, and our God will make His dwelling with us on this redeemed earth. We will get a new heaven and a new earth!

Allow me to indulge in a little “sanctified speculation.” I want to have a garden on the new earth. I’ll be able to

tend it without having to worry about weeds! Weeds won’t exist without the curse. It will grow REALLY good with 24 hours a day of daylight. I’ll be able to garden all year long. I’ll never get sore.

I want to have not one, or two peach trees, but a field full of peach trees. I get lost in wonder when I eat a peach off my peach tree. Imagine what a home grown peach will taste like when it’s not under the curse! Apples, cherries, nectarines. I won’t have to spray any of the trees!

Won’t it be nice to be able to go swimming without the risk of drowning. Want to go mountain climbing and not have to fear falling and dying? Ever wonder what it would be like to snuggle up next to a lion and take a nap? That would be cool!

I want to play football. I think there will be football in heaven since it is God’s sport. I know it is God’s sport since it is played with eleven men on the field, and eleven is the number of the disciples minus the traitor. With my glorified body, maybe I won’t be picked last!

I want to get better at darts and ping pong and learn to ride a skateboard.

Will we really be able to do all this cool stuff on the new earth? Perhaps. Or maybe all these great things that we enjoy now will be to boring and trifling to occupy our time then. Maybe all these things we think are so great now are merely shadows of the greatness to come.

I close with an excerpt from a poem written by John Piper titled Justified Forever:

*And as He spoke, the throne
Of God came down to earth and shone
Like golden crystal full of light,
And banished, once for all, the night.
And from the throne a stream began
To flow and laugh, and as it ran,
It made a river and a lake,
And everywhere it flowed, a wake
Of grass broke on the banks and spread
Like resurrection from the dead.
And in the twinkling of an eye
The saints descended from the sky.
And as I knelt beside the brook*

⁸ Piper, 378.

⁹ Read Revelation 21-22 for this grand picture of the eternal state.

*To drink eternal life, I took
A glance across the golden grass,
And saw my dog, old Blackie, fast
As she could come. She leaped the stream -
Almost - and what a happy gleam
Was in her eye. I knelt to drink,
And knew that I was on the brink
Of endless joy. And everywhere
I turned I saw a wonder there.
A big man running on the lawn:
That's old John Younge with both legs on.
The blind can see a bird on wing,
The dumb can lift their voice and sing.
The diabetic eats at will,
The coronary runs uphill.
The lame can walk, the deaf can hear,
The cancer-ridden bone is clear.
Arthritic joints are lithe and free,
And every pain has ceased to be.
And every sorrow deep within,
And every trace of lingering sin
Is gone. And all that's left is joy,
And endless ages to employ
The mind and heart, and understand,
And love the sovereign Lord who planned
That it should take eternity
To lavish all His grace on me.*

*O, God of wonder, God of might,
Grant us some elevated sight,
Of endless days. And let us see
The joy of what is yet to be.
And may Your future make us free,
And guard us by the hope that we,
Through grace on lands that you restore,
Are justified for evermore.¹⁰*

Without Wax-



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¹⁰ Piper, 381-382.