

## **When Heaven Gets Better – The New Heavens and Earth**

**Sign Title: When Heaven Gets Better**

**June 6, 2010**

If you are new to Faith, I would like to welcome you. My name is Kurt and I am one of the pastors at here at Faith E Free.

You just saw a video showing some of the questions we will be answering this summer in our teaching series on the Mysteries of Heaven. Last week we answered the question, “What happens one minute after you die?”

We talked about death, the separation of the body to the grave and the soul to a place called Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament. For some that is a place of torment, for others it is a place of comfort and companionship. Last week we learned one particularly great joy. The resurrection of Christ brought those in Paradise, the place of comfort and companionship in Hades, home to be with Christ in heaven.

While the Scriptures hint that we will have some kind of a body in this intermediate state in the afterlife, while it will be great to be with Christ, we know the body of body we will have at that time is not the kind of physical body we have now. While it will be great to be in God’s presence in heaven and to see the risen Jesus, it isn’t God’s desire for us to remain disembodied from our tangible bodies.

God’s plans future plans involve heaven getting even better than it is now. God will eventually defeat sin, death and Satan. He will create a new heaven and a new earth where heaven and earth are not separated but they are united together as one. This is called the unshakable kingdom that will last forever.

The New Heavens and Earth will have a capital city called the New Jerusalem and our souls will be restored to physical bodies that are similar to the bodies we have now but they will be incorruptible and indestructible, that means they will last forever. At that time, we will reign under Christ and rule with Christ in the new heavens and earth. It will be that way forever. This is a pretty exciting prospect.

Next week we will study the capital city of the New Heavens and Earth called the New Jerusalem and when I return from vacation we will study our resurrection bodies and learn what it will be like to have our souls reunited with incorruptible and indestructible bodies for eternity. This morning, I want to take some time to give us a fly over of the New Heavens and the New Earth so we can learn what we have to look forward to. To begin, I want to introduce this topic by reading Revelation 20:11-21:8. This is a longer passage and I am not going to teach from it line by line but it will give us a good overview of the way God wraps things up.

Revelation 20:11-21:8

**The Bible has a big picture.**

If you are new to the Bible, one of the most helpful things to know is the big picture of God's plans. Conceptually, the Bible is like a shelf of books that is held up by two book ends.

<b>Creation Past</b> Genesis 1-2	<b>Present</b> Genesis 3 - Revelation 20	<b>Creation Future</b> Revelation 21-22
-------------------------------------	---	--

There is a theme God introduces to us in this overview. Something good is introduced in Genesis 1-2. It ruined by sin but God sets out to restore it through Christ. When we get to Revelation 21-22 God completes his restoration process through Christ *but makes it better than it was before*.

- Original pure mankind → Fallen, corrupted, dying mankind → Vastly improved, perfect, sinless, undying, exalted through Christ mankind.
- Original pure earth → Fallen corrupted earth → Renewed, incorruptible, vastly improved sin free earth.
- Original Adam ruled the earth → Satan usurps reign from Adam, Christ (second Adam) conquers Satan's rule on earth but doesn't fully exercise his rights → Christ exercises his full rights to rule and re-delegates the right to rule to redeemed man over a vastly improved new creation.
- God is in heaven but walks with man in Garden of Eden. Earth and heaven are separate. → Man cut off from God because of sin but God restores that relationship through Jesus → God fuses heaven to with new earth and God dwells with man permanently.

When God fixes things after they are broken, he makes them better than before they fell apart. Many of us know this somewhat intuitively through the Holy Spirit working in our heart when it comes to our personal life, but most of us don't know that God is not just in the business of restoring us but he is in the business of restoring the earth.

**Why restore all things?**

Most Christians have an incomplete view of salvation. They believe Christ came to save them from their sin so they can go to heaven rather than hell when they die and that is the end of the story. For God to stop the story line there would be for God to obtain incomplete redemption. Christ didn't die just to redeem us but as part of our restoration he will redeem everything Satan has destroyed.

and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. Acts 3:20–21 (NIV)

God doesn't concede ground to Satan, when God wins, he wins completely and victoriously and restores what Satan ruined! According to Scripture, sin has a pervasive nature to it. It doesn't just affect us internally but it affects us externally and results in our death. It doesn't just affect us but sin affects the earth. Geological disasters are the affects of sin. Tsunamis are the result of sin. Sin doesn't just affect the earth, but it affects the entire created order. Somehow, our sin, like ripples from a rock thrown in a pond, radiates to affect areas outside our planet and to the farthest reaches of our solar system.

When God restores things, he doesn't just save our souls for heaven, he promises to restore our bodies, he will restore the earth and even the solar system will be remade free from the affects of sin.

that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Romans 8:21 (ESV)

When Christ fused himself permanently with a human body and died for sin to redeem us, he didn't just redeem us but set in motion a process to free the

creation from its bondage to sin. Christ didn't die for the creation, he died for us but as part of Christ's victory over sin for us, creation will eventually enjoy the victory over sin Christ obtained.

Did you realize creation is cheering for you? When Christ pours out the full measure of his love for us at the restoration of all things, creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay as an overflow of God's love for us in his restoration of all things. This is amazing!

God does not concede ground to Satan. He restores ALL things and makes them better than they were before.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain. Isaiah 66:22 (ESV)

This new heavens and earth will be permanent. It will remain forever. There is not another step in redemption after that, it is completion of the perfect and flawless picture of redemption.

### **Will the Earth be destroyed or renewed?**

I want to dig in a little deeper to discuss something not all of us are aware of but we should talk about. Historically there is a fair amount of discussion on how God will bring about the new heavens and earth. Historic Lutherans believe God will utterly destroy our universe and make a new one from scratch because our earth is so ruined by sin. There are some gifted and respected preachers who teach this. There are some verses that at first, appear to teach this.

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, Psalm 102:25–26 (ESV)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 2 Peter 3:10 (ESV)

It sounds like sin has won and God needs to throw away the entire creation and start again. The more I studied this, the more I do not believe this is right. I believe God will not destroy our planet and solar system so he can start again, but he will restore it. As we saw earlier. He will liberate creation from its bondage to decay, not destroy creation and start again.

In 2 Peter, when Peter says the earth will be burned up and dissolved, just before this passage he says it will be similar to the days of Noah when God destroyed the earth with a flood. With the flood, God didn't destroy the earth, he renewed the earth.

Interestingly, the Greek word for *new* used in the phrase *new heavens and earth* in Revelation 21 is a specific Greek word. It doesn't mean *new* as in something that never existed before but *new* as in something that already exists but now appears in a new way. It is a renewed earth, not a completely different earth.

It is a little like the TV show, *Overhaul'in* on TLC. They take an old car from the 1950's or 60's that doesn't run and should be just thrown in the junk yard and they completely restore it. They give it a new paint job, they put high performance shocks and tires on it. They put a huge engine under the hood and give it custom upholstery. By the time they are done, it is not a new car, it is the same car but it is immensely better than it was when it was driven off the show room floor fifty years ago. This is what our God will do with this creation.

If God was forced to annihilate the present cosmos because Satan and sin had so ruined creation that God could not redeem it, Satan would have won a great victory. Satan would have succeeded in so devastating God's creation that God could do nothing other than blot it out of existence.

Satan does not win victories over God. Satan is defeated. God will reveal the decisiveness of Satan's defeat when he renews, fully restores and vastly improves the very earth and the very people Satan sought to destroy.

Christ looks at Satan and say, who has the last laugh. Praise be to God who has given us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **What will this new creation be like?**

Sometimes I am frustrated when I hear how the New Heavens and Earth are taught. Sometimes we are told there is no use even thinking about what they will be like because it will be greater than our imaginations can conceive. I struggle with that. If there is so much discontinuity between the old creation and the new creation, how are we to anticipate it? Everything we learned this morning is that the new earth will be in continuity with our current earth but immensely improved and freed from sin. God wants to let the things we savor most about this creation whet our appetite for the new creation.

### **Greater Creation Beauty**

After a long cold winter, how many of us burst with pleasure when we felt the brilliance of the sun, the warmth of the days and the magnificence of enjoying the lakes, the food and the friendship? All those are good things in God's

creation that lift our spirits. Why wouldn't he carry those same pleasures into the new creation but make them better?

I believe the continuity between the old and new creations will not just be in the experience of creation but I personally believe the best of this creation will be brought forward into the new creation and it will be brought forward not to be used for sinful purposes but for Christ's glorify. Someone who likes technology wonders if there will be computers in heaven. I personally believe there will be that kind of technology but it will be used for the glory of Christ. Will there be girls softball in heaven? Will there be football and wrestling in heaven? Why not? We also have an eternity to discover and enjoy games we haven't even dreamed of. Not only do I believe there will be technology, but I believe there will be creativity in heaven. Books will still be written. Paintings will still be painted, all to the glory of Christ. It will be continual creativity to the glory of God for eternity.

I love to learn something new about God each week, I know you do too. The more I learn, the more fascinated I become. Given eternity, will any of us exhaust all there is to know about God? No! God is an infinite being. There will always be something new to learn about God for all eternity. As eternity goes on., we will become increasingly fascinated with God.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.  
Psalm 145:3 (ESV)

### **Continual growth in joy and pleasure.**

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11 (ESV)



God is the creator of pleasure and joy. He is the creative spring from which all pleasures and joys flow. The pleasures and joys of a marriage were created by God. The pleasures of our creation were designed by God. If you like pleasure and joy, imagine pressing your face into the source of all pleasure and joy as it radiates in the new creation from the presence of Jesus.

Remember, when Christ created the original creation, he created it good and full of pleasure, the new creation will be even better and filled with greater pleasures. Because heaven and earth will be united as one, we will be able come before God and continually experience the cascading overflow of pleasure and joy that radiates from his presence.

#### **Freedom from the results of sin.**

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:4 (ESV)

Imagine the removal of all the destructive affects of sin in this world. No more broken legs, no more cancer, no more death, no more violence on the streets, no more nuclear weapons, no more poison ivy or venomous snakes.

It says he wipes away every tear from their eyes. The Greek here details that this is not a collective action but an individual action where God wipes away every individual tear that we have shed as a consequence of the devastation of sin upon our lives. What an incredibly caring God we have who will give us good things!

#### **How Does This Apply to Me?**

#### **Have a Hunger for the World to Come.**

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:13 (ESV)

For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. Galatians 5:5 (ESV)

To be honest, most of us are not looking forward to heaven. In some ways, I can understand that. The Bible doesn't give us a detailed fact sheet of life in the disembodied state when we go in the current heaven today. We know it will be amazing to be with Christ, but it is hard to conceive. It is hard to long for it.

If a young Christian's life is cut short, we feel terrible because there is so much in this life they didn't get a chance to experience. We believe that once we are dead, it is too late to enjoy the pleasures of creation. That is warped thinking. We are looking forward to the physical tangible pleasures that will be ours in the new creation. Those pleasures are similar to the pleasures of this creation but they brought to a much higher level through Christ's restoring and improving power. If you miss a pleasure in this life, you haven't missed it, you have only postponed it till eternity when you can enjoy it in an even better way.

Some people talk about needing to hug their spouse one last time before they die because once they are gone, they will never experience the embrace of their spouse again. That is simply not true. Do you think we will live on a tangible earth with tangible bodies all of which are vastly improved but God will not let us hug our spouse who is our best friend? Of course not. I love a hug from my spouse now, it will be great to have a vastly improved hug from her then!

Another way we are blind to this is the language we sometimes use about our retirement years. We talk about needing to take trips and see the wonders of the world before it is too late to do this because we are old and sick. Understand me, I am not against anyone taking a special trip or going on vacation, but sometimes the language use sounds like we are not hungering for our future in the new creation. Maybe even worse, have we forgotten we have a future in the new creation? This life is not all their is. There will be places to go and things to see in the new world that will be similar to but even more fascinating than God's creation in this world. We will have eternity to enjoy it without ever getting sick and old!

#### **Live Life Now for the Greatest Joy in the Next.**

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 2 Peter 3:11 (ESV)

Peter says live a holy and godly life now because it will influence our experience in the next. While we are saved by faith in Christ alone, not by our works. What we do for Christ and the purity with which we live our lives for Christ will affect the richness of our experience in heaven. Too many people believe that once they are have given their life to Christ they can live as they please because they have a get out of jail free card for eternity. To some degree that is true but how we live now still affects the richness of our experience of joy in Christ. The more we hunger for satisfaction in Christ now, the more we will experience it later.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in

and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19–21 (ESV)

Another way to lay of greater joy for the next world is to give to God's word in this world. Last summer we studied this in our *Buried Treasure* series. What we sacrificially give to Christ's work in this world is not lost. It is transferred and invested in the next.

**Don't let the Devil Keep You from Grasping your Future.**

Satan's desire is to blind our eyes from what we have in Christ. He doesn't want us to learn this truth. He doesn't want us to know how much God loves us. He wants to keep us ignorant of God's plans for us. If Satan can keep you from grasping the good things you have in Christ, he will succeed in keeping you in bondage to sin and keep glory for going to God.

**He silences worship.** The more we understand God's incredible plans and love for us, the more we are drawn to worship Christ with a heart that overflows with thankfulness and love. Worship overflows out of a heart filled with thankfulness and we can feel it in our spirit as the Holy Spirit vibrates the very rightness of the words of worship in our hearts. If Satan can keep us ignorant of God's love and plans for us, we will not be drawn to worship God, we will be drawn to worship something else. That is called idolatry.

**He keeps us firm in the grip of sin.** Sinful addiction are addictions to finding satisfaction in lesser things. If you are struggling with an addiction to the empty satisfaction of something like internet porn that thrills you for a moment but leaves you empty and filled with shame the next, you are in the grip of finding satisfaction in lesser things. Understand who Christ has redeemed you to be.

Picture yourself fully forgiven through Christ because the creator himself died for your sin so you can sit at the feet of the one from whom all pure pleasures and joys flow. The pleasures of Christ are greater than the empty pleasures of sin, like internet porn. When we discover the pleasure of who we are in Christ, we will be done with the pleasures of lesser things. Satan's grip in your life because of sin will be broken because you have a greater, God glorifying pleasure.

**He steals the joy of sacrifice.** We sacrifice now for joy later. If Satan can keep us from realizing the joy that is ours through Christ later, there is no incentive to sacrifice.

## Conclusion

As we close, I want to leave you with the central thought of this message. God will not destroy this creation, he will redeem it. He will give us a new heavens and earth to live on that will be similar to this one but it will be changed to be vastly improved. This creation eagerly awaits the application of our redemption because when that happens, as a result of our full restoration, this creation will be freed from sin and vastly improved.

My friends, are you beginning to grasp the greatness of God's love for us through Christ?

## Prayer

While the New Heavens and Earth will be an incredible place, the center of the New Creation's capital city is called the New Jerusalem from which God rules the New Earth. What will it be like and what joys await us in it? Join us next week to find out.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching.

Feel free to contact him at [ktruck@gmail.com](mailto:ktruck@gmail.com) or visit his web at [www.christ2rculture.com](http://www.christ2rculture.com)

© Dr. Kurt Trucksess. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web site address (<http://www.christ2rculture.com>) on the copied resource.