

# Resurrection and New Creation

Revelation 21:1-5

## INTRODUCTION:

This morning we pick up where we left off last week concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We looked primarily at the evidence of the resurrection. Today, we will look more at the results of the resurrection in the sense of what it kick-started in the grand scheme of God's renewal plan. Let's go back to a quote we ended with last week.

### **N.T. Wright**

Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present....All our language about the future ... is like a set of signposts pointing into a bright mist ... the New Testament image of the future hope of the whole cosmos, grounded in the resurrection of Jesus, gives as coherent a picture as we need or could have of the future that is promised to the whole world, a future in which, under the sovereign and wise rule of the creator God, decay and death will be done away with and a new creation born, to which the present one will stand as mother to child.

Today's talk may sound new to many, or in some way, maybe a little strange to what some have heard in the church where the focus has been simply to get to heaven when you die. This talk may be one to go back and listen to on several occasions to familiarize yourself with the biblical narrative of Scripture. We will come to see that the end goal of Scripture is not going to heaven when you die, but that heaven ultimately returns and rejoins the earth where the two dimensions of God's creation become again one seamless and unified vision of God's creative reality.

Let's first begin with the idea of a Cosmic Temple. What are Temples? It is the dwelling place of the divine. Where the divine's presence is made known and realized.

**John H. Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate**

“God has given us a privileged role in the functioning of his cosmic temple. He has tailored the world to our needs, not to his (for he has no needs). It is his place, but it is designed for us and we are in relationship with him.”

“...when we adopt the biblical perspective of the cosmic temple, it is no longer possible to look at the world (or space) in secular terms. It is not ours to exploit. We do not have natural resources, we have sacred resources. Obviously this view is far removed from a view that sees nature as divine: As sacred space, the cosmos is his place. It is therefore not his person. The cosmos is his place, and our privileged place in it is his gift to us. The blessing he granted was that he gave us the permission and the ability to subdue and rule. We are stewards. At the same time we recognize that the most important feature of sacred space is found in what it is by definition: the place of God’s presence. The cosmic-temple idea recognizes that God is here and that all of this is his. It is this theology that becomes the basis for our respect of our world and the ecological sensitivity that we ought to nurture.”

So, what does this mean really?

It means that when we read Genesis 1, we are reading how God was creating a Temple, a dwelling place, for Himself and His creatures, putting one special creature that was created in His Own Image in charge. In the ancient world, the last thing to put in the temple was the image of the God it represented. This is exactly what we see on Day 6 in Genesis. This purpose of representing is at the core of what it means to be human which is to be a representative of God to Creation, but also a representative of Creation to God. The first image-bearers were put in charge of Creation to be good stewards. Remember Adam was the Gardener in the Garden of Eden.

### ***N.T. Wright on the Image-Bearer***

*I remember when I was a small boy being ill in bed, and my mother lined up a mirror in the doorway of my room so that through that mirror I could see her and other family members coming and going in the hallway outside my room so that I didn't feel so isolated and alone. And the point about the angled mirror is that you can see in both directions.*

*It seems to me that God has put humans like an angled mirror in His world so that God can reflect His love and care and stewardship of the world through humans and so that the rest of the world can praise the creator through humans. And the way this comes out in many Biblical passages is to see God's people, you get this in Exodus 19, you get this in the Book of Revelation, you get it actually in Paul as well, see God's people as the royal priesthood, the priesthood because they are summing up the praises of creation, presenting it before God.*

*When humans praise God, they ought to realize that they are doing so as the representatives of the whole world, reflecting the rest of the world to God. But when humans are looking after creation and bringing God's healing restorative justice to creation in all sorts of different ways. There they are reflecting God into the world so that the image of God is not, I think, something about us, our memory or our conscious or our imagination or our spirituality or our reason, the theologians have tried all that as though there was something about us which is exactly like God.*

*No doubt, a lot of that is true, but I think it's a much more creative, much more dynamic picture, the priests and the kings or kings and queens, reflecting God to the world and the world to God. I see the human vocation, the Christian vocation as being to recover, to recapture that image. Paul talks in Colossians about being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of the creator.*

*It seems to me if we actually looked at our own vocation vis-a-vis the world like that, all sorts of things about how we treat the world, how we act responsibly within it would appear in quite a different light which could be very healthy.<sup>1</sup>*

Ultimately what God is doing redeeming and transforming His creation to be His temple again through the work (the death, burial, and resurrection) of Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's resurrection sin has been dealt with on the cross and its wages (death) have been overturned so that the rest of Creation can be set free.

### **Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Romans 8:19-25**

<sup>19</sup> For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. <sup>20</sup> Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, <sup>21</sup> the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. <sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin

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<sup>1</sup> [www.biologos.com/](http://www.biologos.com/) Being an Image Bearer with N.T. Wright

and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. <sup>24</sup> We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. <sup>25</sup> But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

### **Revelation 21:1-5**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

<sup>5</sup> And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"

## **I. The Renewal of Heaven & Earth (1a)**

### **ESV Study Bible, Rev. 21**

The destruction of the last enemy, death, and the last judgement will finally lead to the renewal of the entire created order, heaven and earth, to be the perfect home in which the Lamb will live forever with his bride, the people whom he has redeemed out of all the nations through his atoning death.

A. This is where the final step of God's redemption scheme takes place.

B. Many have heard God will destroy the earth, but this doesn't seem to align with the Romans 8 passage we read earlier.

C. Many look to **2 Peter 3-10**: which states, "<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created."

<sup>5</sup> They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water.

<sup>6</sup> Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. <sup>7</sup> And by

the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment."

D. Considering Romans 8, we see creation still having a place in God's good future, otherwise one would have to conclude Satan bested God by forcing God's hand to destroy His handiwork. Also, the reference to 2 Peter 3 actually is referring to purification where the elements of the fallen world are destroyed by the fire of God's judgment. It's the idea of purifying a metal with heat. What is left is the good stuff.

E. Also, the word for "passing away" is the Greek word **ἀπέρχομαι** which literally means "goes away." This same word is the word Paul used in **2 Cor. 5:17** when he states "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." This doesn't mean the material of Creation ceases to exist but rather is transformed with the eternal material of New Creation properties. It is sort of like Creation has its own resurrection and transformation where all the stains of sin have been removed and restored to what its original state was in the beginning.

**J. Richard Middleton**, *New Heavens and a New Earth* pg 206,

Here Paul uses the verb **παύωμαι** for the ending of the old life, which is then replaced by a new life in Christ. Are we to believe that Paul thinks that the passing away of the old life is equivalent to the obliteration of the person, who is then replaced by a doppelganger? All the Pauline writings, not to mention common sense, suggest that no matter how radical the shift required for conversion to Christ, this describes the transformation rather than the obliteration of the person.

## **Meredith Kline**

Redemption is a recovering and restoring of the original. The person who experiences redemption in Christ remains the same person, even though the transformation from the sinner dead-in-sins to the saint alive-forevermore-in-Christ is so radical as to be called a new creation.

[God, Heaven, and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of the Cosmos and Telos \(Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006, p.22.](#)

## **C.S. Lewis**

He goes 'to prepare a place for us.' This presumably means that He is about to create that whole new Nature which will provide the environment or conditions for His glorified humanity and, in Him, Jesus Ascended for ours ... It is the picture of a new human nature, and a new Nature in general, being brought into existence. We must, indeed, believe the risen body to be extremely different from the mortal body: but the existence, in that new state, of anything that could in any sense be described as 'body' at all, involves some sort of spatial relations and in the long run a whole new universe. That is the picture — not of unmaking but of remaking. The old field of space, time, matter, and the senses is to be weeded, dug, and sown for a new crop. We may be tired of that old field: God is not.

[Miracles \(Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1960\), 151.](#)

## **II. The Removal of Evil (1b, 4)**

A. The sea for the Jewish person was the place of evil.

### **G.K. Beal**

The passing away of the old world is described additionally by the phrase **and there is no longer any sea**. Elsewhere in Revelation, the **sea** represents

the origin of cosmic evil (especially in the light of OT background; see 4:6; 13:1; 15:2; 16:3),  
the unbelieving, rebellious nations who cause tribulation for God's people (13:1; Isa. 57:20;  
cf. Rev. 17:1–2, 6),  
the place of the dead (20:13),  
the main arena in which the world's idolatrous trade takes place (18:11–19), and  
a literal body of water, part of the old creation (5:13; 7:1–3; 8:8–9; 10:2, 5–6, 8; 14:7).

The use here is likely a summarizing statement about how the various nuances of the sea throughout the book relate to the new creation. Therefore, it encompasses all of the above five meanings. That is, when the new creation comes, there will no longer be any threat from Satan, threat from rebellious nations, or death ever again in the new world, so that there is no room for the sea as the place of the dead. There also will be no more idolatrous trade practice using the sea as its main avenue. Even the perception of the literal sea as a murky, unruly part of God's creation is no longer appropriate in the new cosmos, since the new cosmos is to be characterized by peace... While all the above meanings of "sea" are in mind, the allusion to Isaiah 65 and the immediate context suggest a focus on the sea as representing figuratively the threat of evil and tribulation for God's people, a threat which no longer exists in the eternal state. The assertion that **there is no longer any sea** is further explained in v. 4, "and there shall no longer be any death."<sup>2</sup>

B. The place and possibility for evil has been eternally removed.

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<sup>2</sup> Beale, G. K., & Campbell, D. H. (2015). [Revelation: A Shorter Commentary](#) (p. 466). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

C. Another aspect to consider, and we will call this Jeff's theory of possibility which could be in conjunction with what is stated above but must also be mentioned in understanding Temple language, is that there was an element in the Temple structure called "The Sea." "The "sea" was a metal basin 7.5 feet high and 15 feet in diameter. It held 12,000 gallons of water for the priests to wash in."<sup>3</sup>

D. The symbolism, if referring to this, is that the priests who have been redeemed by the Lamb of God no longer need cleansing because we have been made clean by the blood of Christ.

### **III. The Arrival of the New City, the New Jerusalem (2-3)**

A. God's new dwelling arrives where He receives worship for all that is good, and His righteous government which reigns through the Sovereign rule of His Son and His followers is now on Earth with a Heavenly rule.

B. The New Jerusalem represents the Holy of Holies in the Cosmic Temple theme because it is the place where the presence of God is centered.

C. This description in Revelation mirrors that of the description, yet on a much larger scale, the dimensions of Solomon's Holy of Holies in the Temple.

#### **1 Kings 6:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> He prepared the inner sanctuary at the far end of the Temple, where the Ark of the LORD's Covenant would be placed. <sup>20</sup> This inner sanctuary was 30 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 30 feet high. He overlaid the inside with solid gold. He also overlaid the altar made of cedar.<sup>4</sup>

D. God's presence with humanity is the grand announcement of all Creation. It is the great inhale of spiritual oxygen in which we have all longed for in this fallen world.

### **IV. The Trials of Fallen Life are healed.**

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<sup>3</sup> Notes from p 605 of ESV Study Bible.

<sup>4</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (1 Ki 6:19–20). Tyndale House Publishers.

A. God removes all that which causes harm. We have seen this is the metaphor there is no longer any sea.

B. God is present to heal all hurts. Even the Tree of Life grows leaves for healing.

### **Revelation 22:1-5**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. *The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* <sup>3</sup>No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

C. God is pictured as healing the hurts that cause tears by taking his fingers and joyfully wiping away anything that has caused us hurt. This is a vulnerable act between God and humanity.

D. The old ways of the fallen world are no more.

E. Redemption for all of creation has been fulfilled through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### **John 3:16**

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”