

Kingdom Now & To Come - THE FULL GOSPEL MESSAGE (cont.)

More on the End Times – New Heaven, New Earth, & New You

Background from last week: we are raptured up to come back down with Christ!

Other previous background: the events of Revelation 20:11-21:5 pick up right after the millennium reign and final battle where the devil, the beast and the false prophet were thrown into the lake of fire.

Review notes on Heaven:

- Heavens are part of creation in Gen 1, not an eternal place God dwells. Originally heavens were the celestial realms. It went on to metaphorically symbolize God's transcendence, separate from the sinfulness of this world. (heavens=throne, earth=footstool)
- Genesis - heavens and earth are parts of creation together. After the fall of man (and creation with us) - heavens symbolize the removal of God beyond this world. Revelation 21 - heaven and earth are parts of new creation together and God's presence dwells with men (like in garden, but even more so)
 - Heaven begins to grow in understanding as synonymous with God's presence.
- Paul taken up to the third heaven is a way of describing a place where the transcendent mysteries of God's presence were manifested to him in visionary form (not levels of heaven that will one day separate us). 3 is a number meaning "divine perfection". That is the meaning of third heaven. A place so unlike our world in its divine perfection.

Preliminary notes on Hell:

- Bottomless pit of Rev 20:1 symbolizes as far removed from God and the heavenly places as possible. Infinitely removed (bottomless).
 - Hell is synonymous with the absence of God's presence - see 2 Thess 1:9
- A place symbolized in the core of this earth (Abyss- the deep, as close to the core of "this world"). The morphing of the concept of hell as a place of punishment went from Sheol (land of the dead), to Abyss (place of darkness opposite of transcendent celestial heavens- later in the intertestamental period to be associated with where spirits went once separated from body), to Hades (which is the Greek word for the land of departed spirits), to Hell (which is laden with concepts like Abyssal separation from God (lake of fire), punishment, torment)
 - Note Hades (the land of the dead) is not hell. Hell is when the Abyss gives up her dead and becomes the lake of fire.
 - See 1 Peter 3:18-20. Jesus did not go to hell after being crucified. He went "alive in the *spirit*, in which he went" (nothing said about his body in this prison for the dead), to the land/prison of the spirits of the dead (like the concept of Hades), and proclaimed the good news to those who were formerly disobedient (nothing is said of the faithful here). Why would he do this? A good question for another time, but for now note that the proclamation of the gospel victory over death is not synonymous with extending them salvation. The spirit of our Lord testified to the victory of the gospel, in the land of the dead, is all we can derive at this point.

The Personhood of God, pt. 16 – The Work of Christ

- Jesus describes hell as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Revelation 20 describes it as the place for Satan and his army to be punished, but Jesus says the wicked will join them (Matt 25:41).

Hermeneutic tool: the end of one thing is also the beginning of something new. Apocalyptic literature (like Revelation) and origin literature (like Genesis 1) are similar and often use varying degrees of metaphor and symbolic numbers.

Example: Water and fire are both agents of purification, birth and punishment. Earth created by water (2 Peter 3:5 – the formless void before waters were separated), destroyed by water (flood), anointed by water (Red Sea= Paul says was a baptism for Israelites and punishment for Egypt). Fire is associated not only with punishment but of refinement through Spirit (Matt 3:11 = refiner's fire of the Holy Spirit, presence of God as flame, presence of God is simultaneously punishment for wicked and refinement for faithful)

Revelation 20:11-21:5 study

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

- Earth and sky = heavens and earth of original creation
- SEE 2 Peter 3:7 and Rom 8:18-22. Creation is longing for its fiery finish because the fire is the process of renewal...new creation.
- !! We think of the fires of judgment only as negative, but for those clothed in Christ, the fires are the purification that leads to new birth! We are ok with the old self being “crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20) because that is how the new self rises from the ashes (“no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me”).
 - Agricultural metaphor: “slash & burn” to fertilize soil for the seed to produce new fruit
 - Note we are the firstfruits of this process creation is longing for.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

- Note the righteous and the wicked all stand before the throne of judgment (including those in the book of life)
- See also 2 Cor 5:10 = There is judgment for our actions

Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

- Again, Hades is not Hell. The Abyss (the sea) and Hades were known as the land of the dead.

Revelation 20:14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

- Abyss (sea of the dead) now becomes the lake of fire (hell) where devil, beast, and false prophet were thrown...along with those Jesus mentions in Matthew 25:41 (see above)
- Second death is an eternal one.
- But see rev 20:6 – those who received the first resurrection (died before Jesus returns) have no second death (they are in the book of life)

The Personhood of God, pt. 16 – The Work of Christ

Revelation 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- While all are accountable for their actions and judged according to our deeds, those clothed in Christ are written in the book of life and the fires of judgment are purification of new life, not second death. Wickedness is still judged – EVEN OUR OWN!
- But like creation in Rom 8:19 above, we who are in Christ long for this process to complete our glorification
 - !! See Rom 8:29-30, 1 John 3:2-3 = the new you!

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

- Sea - ocean, land of dead, or place of divine punishment? Context is in 20:13 – “sea gave up the dead who were in it”

Revelation 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

- New Jerusalem - bride of Christ (the Church) Just as we are now the temple of God's Holy presence (1 Cor 6:19), we are the new Jerusalem (as old Jerusalem housed the old temple). We are raptured up, to descend together (metaphor of wedding procession)

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Revelation 21:4 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 21:5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

- Paradise is the new earth (heaven=presence of God...now with men = God changes location, not us)
- New creation - a reality in us, as the firstfruits all creation will receive (see Romans 8:18-23). God declared his creation good in the beginning, and will redeem it all. He plan for creation will not be thwarted!
- New heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem (body of Christ), new temple (the body), AND NEW YOU!