

New Heaven and New Earth

Revelation 21:1

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-09-09

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Text Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a tremendous white throne and the One who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the sky fled away; and no place was found for them.

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; also, the ocean was no more.

Introduction

Someone encouraged me last week to not spend so much time whopping the false views and to spend more time explaining my own view. So that I will do. No whoppings today - simply my exegesis of a somewhat controversial verse. How you understand this verse will profoundly affect how you understand chapters 21-22. Thankfully, the controversies have nothing to do with whether you are Premil, Postmil, or Amil, Futurist, Preterist, or Recapitulationist. You will find people in all of those schools on different sides of these questions. Even in my own camp people are on different sides of these questions.

Briefly, here are the key questions people differ over. Do chapter 21-22 deal with history, or with eternity, or with both? Does the phrase “the new heavens and new earth” mean that the first heaven and the first earth are replaced with something brand new or does it mean they are redeemed and changed? There is a world of difference between those two. Is there birth and death in the new heavens and new earth for at least a while (as Isaiah 65-66 indicates) or does the new heavens and new earth have no death (as Revelation 21:4 indicates)? And if Isaiah’s new heavens and new earth are different from this book’s new heavens and new earth, why does John quote the Isaiah passages as if they are the same? And I’ll deal with these questions as we go through the text.

I. This comes after Judgment Day (Greek Καὶ - v. 1a)

The first word in verse 1, which Pickering translates as “Now,” is John’s usual term for sequence - Καὶ, which can be translated as “Then” or “And.” I believe that verse 1 is describing what he saw after Judgment Day was complete. And even without the Καὶ, if verse 1 explains that the first heaven and first earth had already passed away at this point, it is clearly placing this

chapter after chapter 20:11 when the heaven and earth passed away. So I do side with those who say that chapter 21 and the first five verses of chapter 22 take place in eternity.

But as we will see, it is not as simple as that for a number of reasons. I'll just give you one. In coming weeks we will see that most of the things in this chapter were accomplished by Jesus before Judgment Day. Not all the things, but most of them. So even though the vision shows the eternal state of the new heavens and new earth, it is important to see that this is the final state of a trajectory that has been happening for a long time history. That is the only way you can reconcile the "new heavens and new earth" passage in Isaiah with this passage.

In coming weeks we will see that at least ten aspects of the present millennium can be found in chapters 21-22 and even more can be found in Isaiah 65-66. In fact, some of the things in the Isaiah parallel passage could only happen in history - such as giving birth, sinning, and dying. Now, those aren't mentioned here, but they are in the Isaiah passage. This is why some commentators believe that everything in Revelation 21-22 refers to history - to the period of the millennium. After all, the Isaiah passage forms the background to these chapters and is quoted in these chapters. So they say that it must refer to history even though some of it may seem like eternity.

On the other hand, I can show you at least five things in these two chapters that absolutely cannot happen in history, and that indicate eternity. For example, verse 4 says that there will be no more death, sorrow, tears, or pain. And this is why some commentators insist that everything in chapters 21-22 has to begin in eternity. But that's where they make the mistake - inserting the word "begin." I agree that its in eternity, but it doesn't begin there.

So all commentators admit that there are things in these passages that point to history and other things that point to eternity. So that has made some commentators confusingly say that both history and eternity are being referred to at the same time here. But as we will see, that doesn't solve the problem. So which is it? Eternity, history, or both?

Well, the dilemma completely vanishes if you understand the Postmillennial concept of gradualism. Colossians 1:19 indicates that the purpose of Christ's current reign is to redeem and reconcile all things to Himself. He right now is in the process of making all things new. How does He do it? 1 Corinthians 5:17 says that he starts by making all things new in each individual. It says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." So a radical entry into

the new heavens and new earth happens every time a person is converted. He is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.

But as time goes on it moves from the individual to the corporate and finally to the full earth being gradually renewed as the world is Christianized. According to 1 Corinthians 15:25-28, every enemy except death will be successfully subdued before the Second Coming. So that is why Revelation 20:11b introduces the passing away of heaven and earth right in the middle of the discussion of the resurrection. Romans 8 is another passage that indicates that the last vestiges of the creation's groaning would cease when death ceases. You cannot separate the two.

Let me help you anticipate where we are going by listing some of things that pass away on Judgment Day. According to both chapter 20:11 and this verse, it has to include not only the death of individuals on the earth but also death in the stars. The reason I believe it has to include stars is because of the wording of the new heavens and new earth in 2 Peter 3 and because this passage uses the term "heavens" (plural). I believe on the last day of history God will melt (but not do away with) the earth. And though he will use the same material, He will refashion it so that no signs of the curse or of death will be in it. For example, the huge compartment in the middle of the earth known as Hades will be done away with. Why? Because that was where dead souls were and where demons were. There will no longer be human bones or dinosaur bones in the earth. Verse 1 says there will be no ocean. And thus verse 23 indicates that there will no longer be the need for a moon. The moon is absolutely essential for the cleansing of the ocean. It produces the tides.¹ The sun impacts tides a bit, but not nearly to the extent of the moon. So ocean will be gone, moon will be gone, and verse 23 indicates there will be no sun either. 2 Peter 3:10-13 indicates that the very stars and galaxies will be refashioned since they too have death - the death of stars and other signs of the curse that astronomers can clearly see in the sky. All of that will be done away with on Judgment Day. Romans 8:18-25 indicates that the last remnants of groaning affected by the fall will be removed from the universe when death is destroyed. I associate all those things with death. Now, I know I am jumping ahead in anticipating other facets of this verse, but I am explaining why I can see this as being in eternity, even though many of the new things that you see in eternity were already renewed before eternity. This is the last stage of renewal.

¹ For some introductory information on the moon's relation to tides see <https://creation.com/the-moon-the-light-that-rules-the-night> and <http://www.icr.org/article/moon-faithful-witness-sky/> and <https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/moon/tides.html> .

And many of the best commentaries agree. Beale is no Postmillennialist. He is an Idealist. But he sees the evidence that I will point out so strongly that he cannot escape from this conclusion. In his commentary, he captures perfectly the Biblical theology of redemption when he says this:

As seen in Rev. 3:14, the Isaiah prophecy [that stands behind Revelation 21-22 - he is referring to Isaiah 65-66] has been inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Christ in a more radical way than ever before. It has also been inaugurated throughout the church age as people believe in Christ and become a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. 2 Cor. 4:6; similarly Gal. 6:15). Rev. 21:1 asserts that the inaugurated Isaiah prophecy will be fulfilled consummately at some future time.

So if you see the gradual renewal of all things as being at the heart of Isaiah 65-66, you can see chapter 21 as being the final result. But if it is the final stage of renewal, then many of the things in this chapter had to have been fulfilled in history and then continue into eternity. That’s the only way it can be both/and - if it is looking at things that were renewed in history from the vantage point of eternity.

That interpretation perfectly reconciles Isaiah 65-66 with Revelation 21-22. It also gives added meaning to 1 Corinthians 15:58, which ends the chapter on Christ gradually subduing all things to Himself all the way up to the final resurrection with these words: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Christ doesn’t replace our labors or anything else that His grace is reconciling now. He finishes it on Judgment Day. Our labors and the rest of the things we have done will last into eternity. That’s why Revelation 14:13 can say,

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.

Their works remain. So, is this eternity? Yes. It comes immediately after Judgment Day. But it showcases much of what had already been accomplished by Christ’s grace before the final resurrection of chapter 20, which occurs at the Second Coming.

II. John sees eternity in time (“I saw”) and also hears that God is already making (present tense) all things new in the first century (v. 5)

Next, it says, “Now I saw...” John sees eternity while he is still in time. The “I saw” refers to a vision that he received in time - in AD 66. Why is that important? Because it clues us in to the fact that God interrupts the vision from time to time to explain in the present tense what he is doing in history. And those things in history contribute to this eternal state. For example,

verse 5 uses the present tense when it says, Then He who sat on the throne said, “Take note, I make everything new!” And He says to me, “Write, because these words are true and faithful!” Literally it is, “I am making all things new.” It is in the present tense while John is writing. In AD 66 He was already in the process of making all things new. Now, we would expect that from Isaiah 65-66. And in verse 6 he says that coming to salvation (which you can’t do in eternity) and drinking from the living waters is part of the making of all things new. And in verse 7 he says that overcoming in this life is also part of that process. By the time you get to eternity, overcoming is a thing of the past. So it is one of several clues on how to read what is going on in history and what is going on in eternity. So the vision is in history, the making of all things new is in history, and the command to write the vision down was in history. Death is the last enemy conquered in history. This chapter shows that everything Christ redeemed in history will remain forever (yes, even into eternity), and nothing of that which was unredeemed can remain. He doesn’t redeem Hades, so it has to go. For some reason He doesn’t redeem the moon, so it has to go.

III. What is the relationship of the “new” to the “first” earth and heavens?

And that concept of renewal is reinforced by the next word, “new.” There are some people who think these verses mean that God is completely replacing the first heaven and earth with something brand new and unconnected to the old.² And just reading the English, it does seem that way. But many commentaries from every school of eschatology³ say that this is completely contradicted by both the meaning of the word “new” and by numerous other Scriptures.

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- 2 Those who say that the new heaven and earth are a complete replacement and not a redemption include Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 8–22 An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995; Bratcher, Robert G. and Howard A. Hatton. *A Handbook on The Revelation to John*. New York: The United Bible Societies, 1993; Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1966; Aune, David E. *Revelation. Word Biblical Commentary, Vols. 52a and 52b*, edited by Ralph p. Martin. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997 and 1998.
- 3 Those who believe that the current heavens and earth will be renewed include J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20* (JSOT Press, 1992). J. Webb Mealy, *The End of the Unrepentant* (Wipf and Stock, 2012); Alford, Henry. *Alford’s Greek Testament, an Exegetical and Critical Commentary. Vol. 4. 1875*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980; Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. *The Book of the Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990; Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963; Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text. The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

A. The newness of the “new” = καινός, not νέος. It speaks of redemption and renewal, not replacement.

The word “new” in “new heaven and a new earth” indicates renewal, not replacement. There are two words for “new” in the Greek - νέος and καινός. The dictionary defines νέος as:

New, recent. New in relation to time, that which has recently come into existence or become present.⁴

That is the word that you would expect to be used if this was a brand new universe that completely replaced the old universe in one day. But John deliberately uses the word καινός, which the dictionary defines as, “qualitatively new.”⁵ The Big Kittel Dictionary distinguishes between the two words this way:

Of the two most common words for “new” since the classical period, namely, → νέος and καινός, the former [which is νέος] signifies “what was not there before,” “what has only just arisen or appeared,” the latter [which is καινός] “what is new and distinctive” as compared with other things.⁶

So the very use of the word καινός would indicate that this is a renewed heaven and earth. Why is that important? Because it was the Gnostic heresy that denied any connection between Christ’s first body and His new καινός body. It was the Gnostics who wanted to escape the physical world for a non-physical world that was entirely new or νέος. They wanted no part with the redemption of creation; they wanted to replace creation. But Romans 8 indicates that the whole physical creation eagerly waits for the Second Coming when the groaning of this sin-afflicted universe will finally be 100% redeemed and restored. Romans 8 insists upon redemption, not replacement. And the difference between those two concepts profoundly affects whether we have an escapist theology or a conquering theology. Typically escapists deny a gradual application of redemption and insist instead upon a cataclysmic replacement of everything at one sudden point in history. The church father, Augustine, totally disagrees. In his City of God he says, “For this world will pass away by transmutation, not by absolute destruction.”

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- 4 Zodhiates, Spiros, ed. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. Revised, Accordance electronic ed., version 1.2. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/CWSD-NT#11716>. See discussion in Trench, Richard Chenevix, Synonyms of the New Testament. Accordance electronic ed. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, 1894. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/Trench-Synonyms#533>
- 5 Zodhiates, Spiros, ed. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. Revised, Accordance electronic ed., version 1.2. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/CWSD-NT#9051>; See discussion in Trench, Richard Chenevix, Synonyms of the New Testament. Accordance electronic ed. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, 1894. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/Trench-Synonyms#533>
- 6 Behm, Kittel, Gerhard and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Accordance electronic ed., version 2.8. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964. https://accordance.bible/link/read/TDNT_Complete#11841

(City of God 20.14)

So look at again at chapter 20:11. You can understand why some people say that this means total replacement. Nothing of the old remains. And I agree, depending on what you mean by old. That is what it says. It says, "Then I saw a tremendous white throne and the One who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the sky fled away; and no place was found for them." On the surface that seems to indicate replacement, not redemption. But it doesn't. Standing before this throne are many representatives of the first heaven and earth. Demons are there; they were in the first heaven. Gog and Magog is there. They were in the first earth. Dead planets and stars are there. So they all need to flee from God's presence. But that doesn't make all angels, all men, or all of the planets flee. Whatever is redeemed remains.

But this is an important verse to show that not one iota of the unredeemed universe will survive. Dinosaur bones cannot survive into eternity. Nothing of the sin-cursed universe can remain in the presence of God's throne. Will the non-elect be cast out of the universe? Yes - they must flee because they are part of the first earth. They cannot be anywhere near our redeemed universe. But that doesn't mean that redeemed mankind flees. Redeemed mankind will remain because he is already a part of the new. Will disfigured faces, broken arms, and other aspects of the Fall flee from our bodies and from the throne? Yes. That's part of the old first universe afflicted by the curse. You will see things fleeing from your body. Why? Because you are remaining at the throne. Hebrews 12:26-29 tells us that all through new covenant history God has been and will continue to shake the heavens and the earth and gradually remove everything in this old creation associated with sin and death so that only that which cannot be shaken may remain into eternity. But it clearly affirms that everything that Jesus redeems in this old creation will remain for eternity. That's Hebrews 12:26-29. It is very clear that there are many redeemed things in this universe that will remain. And what does Jesus redeem? According to Romans 8 - He redeems every kind of thing, including the planet earth and the stars above. Everything lost by Adam will be renewed by the Second Adam, Jesus. Does it mean that every single star will be redeemed and retained? No - no more than every human will be redeemed and retained. There will be the non-elect who will be cast out, and there may be aspects of the old physical creation that will not remain. But there is still some connection between the first heavens and the new heavens, the old earth and the new earth.

B. Otherwise, many Scriptures of the permanence of creation (Gen. 8:21; Ps. 78:69; 93:1; 96:10; 104:5; 148:4,6; Eccl. 1:4), the redemption of creation (Rom. 8:18-25), and the renewal/restoration of creation (Isaiah 65-68) are contradicted.

And if this were not the case, there would be a contradiction to a massive number of Scriptures. I've just given you a tiny sampling. Let me read some of the Scriptures that affirm the permanence of the creation and deny that this creation will cease to exist.

Gen. 8:21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

He affirms two things He absolutely will not do. He will not destroy every living thing on the planet ever again. Second, He will not curse the ground. Yet that is precisely what the replacement view says God will do. They say that He will curse and judge a sin-filled earth with fire. That's a curse and a judgment. They also say that everything on earth will be destroyed and nothing will make it into eternity except for the remnant.

But we saw over the last two weeks that Christ will come back to a redeemed earth that is 100% Christian and with only one enemy left to be destroyed - death. He's not going to destroy the redeemed facets of the earth. So if that which is decaying is redeemed by Christ on Judgment Day, it need not be destroyed. It can be made new, or renewed. But it is the same earth that is renewed. Is this not what Romans 8 says?

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits [creation is not dreading the Second Coming. Paul says that it eagerly waits] for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; [So there is hope for this creation, not an obliteration of this creation. Verse 21 goes on:] 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

That is why there are physical aspects of earth and the heavens that can remain while the sin-cursed aspects flee away from God. Nothing of the sin-cursed first heavens and earth will remain; only that which is redeemed by Christ has the right to be called "new" just like nothing in our old life can remain, but only that which Jesus redeemed and made a new creation can

remain.

And by the way, we too will endure the fire according to the 1 Corinthians 3 passage that I read last week, but that fire is said to be a blessing; a glorification process. Yes, the Judgment that precedes it will be embarrassing, but the fire will not. In fact, let me read it again:

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Judgment Day will be the purification and glorification process of the saints, making everything from the first creation (including evil memories) to flee from that throne and leave us as glorified saints who are prepared to enjoy God fully. The fire is not a curse, but a blessing. Anyway, let me read some other Scriptures:

Psa. 78:69 And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has established forever.

The earth is not transitory; it is established forever. Only redemption could accomplish that.

Psa. 93:1 The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. So the fleeing away in chapter 20:11 is possibly a metaphorical fleeing away of the last remnants of the heavens and earth that have not yet been subdued under Christ's feet allowing the rest to remain. On the other hand, at the end I will explain how it could be something literal we will actually see.

Psa. 96:10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; [notice this next phrase] The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously."

Psa. 104:5 You who laid the foundations of the earth, So that it should not be moved forever,

Psalm 148:4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. 6 He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

Eccl. 1:4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.

IV. Thus a transformation, not an abandoning of the universe

Now let's go back to Revelation 21:1. This verse gives even more indications that it is a transformation, not an abandoning of the universe.

A. It is still a heavens and an earth, though renewed (v. 1c)

It is after all called a renewed heavens and earth, not a neos something else - perhaps another planet. It's still an earth.

B. Israel (γῆ) now fills the globe just as Jerusalem/Zion fills the world (21:9-27)

But there is something special about this world. John no longer uses his normal words for this planet. This is not οἰκουμένη, and it is not κόσμος. John finally uses the word previously reserved for the land of Israel (γῆς) to refer to the whole planet. And by this he indicates that Israel has expanded to fill the whole world, and Jerusalem or Zion has expanded to fill the whole world. Later in this chapter John will make a big point of this merging of land and heaven and filling of the world with Zion.

And God had already anticipated this with His promise to Abraham. Abraham was promised Palestine as his inheritance. But Hebrews 11 is quite clear that Abraham never received it. He was a stranger in that land. So was God unfaithful to His promise? No. Palestine was never intended to be the full promise. It was simply a down-payment of what Abraham would one day enjoy in eternity, and the down-payment was given to his descendants as a pledge that Abraham would yet inhabit the world. My proof of that? Romans 4:13 gives God's intent in that promise to Abraham. If the world has been completely taken away, then God for sure will never fulfill His promise to Abraham because Palestine will never have been a part of that so-called new replacement. Romans 4:13 says, "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world (that's the Greek word κόσμος) was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." For that verse to be true, γῆς has to become κόσμος in eternity. God's intention was to give Abraham the world (the cosmos), for the whole world will be Israel and Zion in its fullest manifestation. If you get the whole world, then you get the down-payment, or Palestine, as well. So this is the eschatological γῆς.

C. The first sin-cursed heavens and earth have passed away (v. 1d)

ἀπέρχομαι = "to discontinue as a condition or state" (BDAG)

But even the word that is used for "passed away" has as one of its dictionary definitions "to discontinue as a condition or state."⁷ What condition or state

⁷ Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 3d, Accordance electronic ed., version 2.5. Chicago:

is discontinued? The condition of being sin-cursed. But of course, we will see in a moment, that the removal of sin, the effects of sin, and every memory of sin and death will make for some rather radical changes on that day. But the word “passed away” does not need to mean replacement. It can mean “to discontinue as a condition or state.”

By analogy compare 2 Corinthians 5:16-19; Gal. 6:15

But just by way of comparison, consider what is said in 2 Corinthians 5:16-19. He shows the old and the new in Jesus; the old and the new in a convert, and the old and the new in this world. It says,

... Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Christ received a new body, but was it related to His old body? Yes it was. The old body came out of the grave and in some ways looked the same, yet in other ways was quite different. After His resurrection, His glorified body was able to pass through locked doors. It was the same, yet different. It was *καινός* new. And when Phil Kayser got converted at age 18, was he still Phil Kayser? Yes, and yet he was a totally new Phil Kayser. The old passed away and all things had become new. Galatians 6:15 indicates that when we get converted, we are ushered into the new creation that is progressively expanding as the kingdom of heaven invades earth and changes earth. Every single day without exception this new creation is expanding as people get converted. And the more they are sanctified, the more the new creation is expanding. Eventually this new creation will be amazingly different, as the last point shows. Isaiah 65-66 indicates that animals will become tame and start eating vegetables and grass. Humans will tend to live much longer, some even to a thousand years. And there are many other blessings that will be experienced in history.

The progressive and ultimate transformation of the universe will be radical

But despite all those changes that will already have happened in history, there will still be a lot that will need changing on Judgment Day. Both the progressive and the ultimate transformation of the universe will be radical.

University of Chicago Press, 2000. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/BDAG#6247>"

In terms of sin (vv. 8, 27)

First, it will be radical in that there will be a total absence of sin in eternity. Verse 8 indicates that the cowardly and unbelieving and sinners and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters, and all who are false, will eventually have no place in this new creation. They will be cast out. They will be one of the things that will flee from Christ's throne so that there will be no place found for them in this universe ever again. Why? Because they are associated with unredeemed first earth. Verse 27 says, "But anything 'common' or anyone perpetrating an abomination or a lie will absolutely not enter her; only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." So clearly, once Judgment Day has happened, the new heavens and new earth will be 100% sinless. Awesome!

In terms of the effects of sin (v. 4; 22:3)

Likewise, all of the effects of sin will be removed. Verse 4 says, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Some people try to explain that as being fulfilled in our present life. They say we fulfill that verse because we have no tears of repentance. I don't know about you, but I still have to repent of sin. And this indicates no tears from pain either. That will be awesome. No pain, no tears, no crying, no sorrow, and no death. Chapter 22:3 says, "And there shall be no more curse..." That is clearly eternity since the curse is still at work in our lives today. So every effect of sin (or result of sin) will be removed at the end of Judgment Day. What an awesome day that will be.

In terms of the reminders of sin (v. 1e, 4)

But it seems that even the reminders of sin will be gone. Certainly the ocean, which showcases non-stop death of fish and other critters will be gone. Verse 1 says, "also, the ocean was no more." Why? Because death can be no more. And verse 4 gives as its reason why there will be nothing to sorrow over, "because the first things have gone." Isaiah 65 makes clear that the "first things" don't pertain to everything in the previous world. It's not everything that will be forgotten, but the sin-cursed things. It says, 16...Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes. 17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

The former things are defined as "the former troubles" that are forgotten. After the embarrassment of Judgment Day is all finished, God will wipe away the memory of every sin you have ever committed, everything that you

have cringed over, and every painful memory. There will be no more memory of sin and the curses of sin. But the memories of things redeemed will certainly be there because they are part of the things that cannot be shaken that Hebrews 12 says must remain. As we will see in the coming weeks, this view of Revelation 21:1 resolves every tension that you find in commentaries in these chapters. It also gives motivation to produce those things by Christ's grace that will never be shaken so that they can make it into eternity.

Of course, Isaiah indicates that there is an amelioration of even disease and death during history, but not a final conquering of it. If you read Isaiah 65-66 sometime, you will see that it prophesies a time in history when some people will live as long as 1000 years old, and still be healthy.⁸ I imagine that a lot of genetic studies need to take place before that will happen. But there are at least a handful of geneticists who think that a 1000-year lifespan may be possible in a generation or two. One biomedical gerontologist, Audrey de Grey, thinks this is possible that someone born today may experience it. Now most geneticists think he is being overly optimistic on when it can

⁸ Some commentators come to this conclusion based on four things: 1) Isaiah 65:22 says, "For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." This is in the context of God's grace lengthening life (see next two points). To liken the extension of life to the trees of Israel implies exceedingly long life. How long did the trees of Israel and Lebanon live? Fir trees (Isa 60:13) lived to be well over 1000 years. The oldest living Juniper (Jer. 48:6) has been dated at 1500 years old. The cedars of Lebanon (Ezra 3:7) lived 1000-2000 years. Examples have been found of olive trees (Amos 4:9) that are over 2000 years. Examples of Evergreen Oaks (Hebrew *אֵילָן*; Latin *Quercus calliprinos*) living between 1500-2000 years is plentiful. The Mount Tabor Oak (*Quercus ithaburensis*) is also known for incredible longevity. The Cypress Tree (Is. 44:14) has been known to grow several thousand years (including one near the Iranian village of Shiraz that is believed to be 5000 years old). The Terebinth (Isaiah 44:13-14) was also noted for its extreme age, with Sr Moses Montefiore describing a Terebinth that was still quite vital at almost 1000 years old. The range of modern acacia trees appears to range between 200 and 750 years old. The Kermes Oak of Gush Etzion, Israel, is about 500 years old. Sycamore trees have been known to live for 600 years. Fruit trees are the shortest living, with the pomegranate living about 200 years, and the fig tree and carob tree living about 100 years. But it is clear that long life is not measured in the range of fruit trees

- Isaiah 65:20 says that a person who dies at age 100 will be considered to be a child in comparison to others. "“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.” For death at 100 to be considered both a curse and as being so premature that it is as if a”child" (NKJV) had died, lifespans will of necessity be multiples of 100 many times over.
- The same verse indicates that old men will fully live out their days, which will be a reversal of the impact of the curse (cf. last word of v. 20) upon Adam, who was 70 years short of 1000 (Gen. 5:5). Psalm 90 also compares 1000 years to a day (cf. 2 Pet 3:8) and ties it in with the curse impacting man's greatly shortened lifespan. If the millennial reversal of the curse affects lifespans, the implication is that what Adam could not achieve may be able to be achieved in the millennium.
- Though Jubilees is an apocryphal book, it shows the Jewish understanding of this prophecy. It says, "And the days will begin to increase and grow longer among those sons of men, generation by generation, and year by year, until their days approach a thousand years, and to a greater number of years than days. (Jubilees 23:27)

happen, but Isaiah says that it will happen. Isaiah prophecies that eventually moms won't give birth to stillborn children or even to children who are non-elect. It prophesies a time when the wolf and lamb will feed together and when the lions will be vegetarians. Isaiah 11:8 prophesies that vipers will no longer be poisonous and will be safe around children. There are massive changes in store during history for planet earth as God progressively reverses the curse. But the last enemy of death must wait till Judgment Day to be dealt with, and all cosmic death will be reversed at the same time.

But I would like to distinguish my position from that of some Postmillennialists who deny that the earth and universe will be renovated with fire. They just see a smooth transition from history into eternity where you hardly notice the change. But there seems to be a rather pronounced transition that will happen on Judgment Day that includes earth and heaven melting with fire. I'm not super-dogmatic on this, but I am pretty strongly convinced. And so I want to briefly make this clarification. Let me read you some sample Scriptures that still convince me that there will be a renovation of everything by fire. First, a background verse.

Psa. 102:25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 26 They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics is at work in this universe and eventually the sun and stars will grow old. They will be like an old garment. Science tells us that they can only last so long, and the Bible tells us that is true. So this passage indicates the decay in our universe will necessitate it perishing in some sense, and yet it insists that there is enough of the previous that remains that it speaks of God changing the earth and the heavens rather than totally replacing it. And the Hebrew word for change (chalap - חָלַפ) means "be different, diverge,"⁹ to change, to violate, to renew,¹⁰. And in the Hiphil specifically "to cause to succeed; to receive anew... to give anew... to sprout afresh."¹¹ The ESV dictionary shows that it is a word that means renewal. So it is used in Psalm 90:5 of the grass being renewed in the morning. So it is not a total destruction, but a renewal; it's not a curse, but a

9 Tengström, Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Revised; Accordance electronic ed., version 1.2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/TDOT#20411>.

10 Baker, Warren and Eugene Carpenter. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament. Accordance electronic ed., version 1.2. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/CWSD-OT#3743>

11 "to cause to succeed: to receive anew: חָלַפ Is 4031 Sir 4330, to give anew Is 5811 (rd. עֲצַמְתָּהוּ יְיָ); חָלַפ to sprout afresh Jb 147 metaph. חָלַפְתָּ to sprout (cf. Nu 1723) Jb 2920; —Is 411" Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Accordance electronic ed., version 3.4. Leiden: Brill, 2000]. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/HALOT#7123>

blessing.

And many Scriptures seem to indicate that this blessed renewal will happen by fire. 2 Peter 3:10 says,

2Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Later he says,

...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

And some people object that this sounds like every person on earth being destroyed, and that would clearly contradict the promise from Genesis 8:21 that I read earlier. We saw that that verse promises that God will never again destroy every living thing as He did in the Flood and He will never again curse the earth.

But I would point out three things that I think reconcile the two passages. First, this destruction by fire happens after we are given resurrection bodies, so our resurrection bodies will not be destroyed. Fire cannot harm them. No problem there. With a Christianized world, no one living will be destroyed. It's not going to be the same as the Flood where everyone was destroyed. Only the resurrected wicked will be.

Second, I see no reason why God cannot preserve every animal and other aspect of creation in the same way He will preserve our resurrected bodies. Who knows? He might even transform the animals alive at that time and glorify them. There do appear to be some kind of animals in the new heavens and new earth, but they appear to be glorified animals.

And that is the third point. The fire comes to bless, not to curse. It renovates, it does not destroy. I kind of imagine that when the fire of 1 Corinthians 3 happens to each of us and we are purified of hay, wood, and stubble, we will stand amazed as the earth gives way beneath our feet and we are encircled with fire and emerge from it completely unharmed, but with every sinful memory, every vestige of the sin-cursed life purged away. This will not be a terror to us because our Judgment that I talked about last week will be finished and we will experience the sheer delight of being wrapped up in our consuming God of fire without being hurt. That's not a negative judgment. That's not a curse like the Flood was. That is a blessing and a renewal.

So for those three reasons, I think there is no contradiction.

And He will do all of that near the end of Judgment Day. It appears that everything will dissolve and reconstitute fairly rapidly. If God could create the universe with but a word from His mouth, He can certainly renovate the universe with the same word from His mouth in a short period of time. But it would be utterly inappropriate for the bones, idols, and other artifacts of sin and rebellion to remain buried in the earth into eternity. All that is connected with sin, curse, and death must flee away from Christ's throne. Only that which is redeemed can remain. That is yet another reason why I think fire must renovate it.

Some of you can picture things rather vividly in your minds. Try to picture this universe and every individual standing before the throne, and after judgment is finished you see streaks of black peeling off from each individual (as their memories of sin are shed) and those streaks of black are fleeing away from the throne leaving the new you there with no memory of the curse. And imagine streaks of black peeling off from the earth and from other portions of this universes and fleeing from the throne so that the old is no more and what is left is the new. That is 20:11b happening literally before your eyes. And once every vestige of black has fled away, what remains from this fiery matrix is a glorious planet surrounded by a glorious universe that we can explore for all of eternity.

And I look forward to that day. I don't want the memories that I cringe over to continue to be my memories. I look forward to the day when trillions of fossils will flee away and a perfect earth will remain. I look forward to the day when dying stars will disappear and be replaced with something even more glorious.

V. Four Applications

Let me end with four more quick applications. If everything I have said is true, and if God is going to redeem the universe rather than discard it, then it means that every facet of this universe is important to God and will experience the renewal of Christ's atonement. It means that Satan was not successful in ripping this universe out of God's hands. Christ has ripped it out of Satan's hands and will restore it to even better. It means that Christ will not be a failure in redeeming all things to Himself. Both Romans 8 and Isaiah 65-66 indicates that Christ's grace reaches far as the curse is found. This is such a critical antidote to the impotence and the escapism of the modern church. Christ's grace conquers; it does not abandon. So that's the first application: Christ's grace conquers; it does not abandon. It redeems; it does not discard.

Second, this should encourage you that when you grow in Christ personally, you are advancing the goal of all things being made new, whether others around you do or not. There is no need to be discouraged when others fail to avail themselves of the promises of all things being made new. You are a new creation, and as Paul says, the old things are passed away and all things in your life are being made new. How do you participate in the process of bringing all things in submission to Jesus and renewing all things? You start with yourself. How satisfying is that?! Every time you apply Christ's redemption to some facet of your motives, thoughts, words, and actions, you are adding to the new creation. Every time you take dominion in your work to the Father's glory, you are adding to the new creation. God's grace is producing new creation things in you that Hebrews 12 says cannot be shaken and will remain into eternity.

Third, if everything I have said is true, then we need to be in this battle for planet earth for the long haul. God's purposes of renewing all things began at the cross, were given a major impetus forward in AD 70 (when the third heaven was completely cleansed and when the first resurrection happened), will continue to gradually be applied over history, and will receive their final installment on Judgment Day. But these chapters will make it crystal clear that there is a ton of work that is left for God's people to do before the final installment (that chapter 21:1 talks about) can happen. Though we will not see death conquered in history, we can advance the length of life, advance health and medicine, advance our dominion over animals, birds, and insects. Though not all the effects of the curse can be removed, we should take great joy in ameliorating those effects of the curse that we are able to do by Christ's grace. Let's be in this for the long haul. Be passionate about taking Dominion.

Fourth, I hope these chapters will give you a vision of the glorious future that God has for us on planet earth. And most of that glorious vision will be reserved for my exposition of the remainder of these chapters. But even what we have seen today ought to be an encouragement of the comprehensive nature of God's covenant of grace. May it encourage us that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. Everything we do has the potential of advancing the "all things new" aspect of the Good News. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.