

NEW (i.e. RE-NEWED & RE-FINED) EARTH

Acts 3:21

I. BIBLICAL PROPHECIES

- A. Jewish expectations (cf Isaiah: 9:7; 11:1-10; 60:19-20; 62:5-10; 65:17-25; 66:22)—Ultimate *SHALOM*
- B. Christian Hope (cf. Rom 8:19-23; Heb 12:26-28; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev 21:1-4)
 - 1. All creation delivered from “bondage of corruption”
 - 2. Final Re-Creation in accord with, perfecting First Creation

II. RE-NEWED, NOT DESTROYED

- A. The “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21)
- B. God’s Original Intent finally realized
- C. Theologians’ conclusions:
 - 1. Anthony Hoekema: “In his redemptive activity, God does not destroy the works of his hands, but cleanses them from sin and perfects them, so that they may finally reach the goal for which he created them. Applied to the problem at hand, this principle means that the new earth to which we look forward will not be totally different from the present one, but will be a renewal and glorification of the earth on which we now live” (*The Bible and the Future*).
 - 2. John Piper: “When Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10 say that the present earth and heavens will ‘pass away,’ it does not have to mean that they go out of existence, but may mean that there will be such a change in them that their present condition passes away. We might say, ‘The caterpillar passes away, and the butterfly emerges.’ There is a real passing away, and there is a real continuity, a real connection” (*Future Grace*).
 - 3. Herman Bavinck: “According to Scripture the present world will neither continue forever nor will it be destroyed and replaced by a totally new one. Instead it will be cleansed of sin and re-created, reborn, renewed, made whole. While the kingdom of God is first planted spiritually in human hearts, the future blessedness is not to be spiritualized. Biblical hope, rooted in incarnation and resurrection, is creational, this-worldly, visible, physical, bodily hope. The rebirth of human beings is completed in the glorious rebirth of all creation, the New Jerusalem whose architect and builder is God himself” (*The Last Things*).

III. “FAMILIAR . . . LIKE HOME”

- A. Alcorn chart re 13 false assumptions vs. biblical data
- B. For Adam & Eve & us it will be a HOMECOMING
- C. For St Peter: “the restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).
 - 1. The prophets envisioned? Jewish vision of earthly Messiah ruling over restored earth
 - 2. The “things” to be restored? All “good” creatures “great and small” described in Genesis 1?
- C. For St Paul: “the creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Ro 8:21)
 - 1. Figurative language re purely human “spiritual” wonders? (Adam Clarke view)
 - 2. Realistic prescription for restoration of all things? (Randy Alcorn view)
- B. For us: fulfilling our deepest natural desire for perfected world (free from sin & death), right for us, our true HOME —“The New Earth will not be a non-Earth but a real Earth” (Alcorn, p. 164).
 - 1. PLACE: a familiar place, eliciting comfortable feeling (think of returning to favorite place, feeling “right at home”)—a Place perfectly prepared for us by our LORD (the Master Craftsman), our “mansion” in glory—
 - a. Urban?—“heavenly city” with streets of gold, choral assemblies
 - b. Rural? —“he maketh me to lie down in green pastures”
 - 2. PERSONS: with loved ones (family, friends, familiar fellowships)
 - 3. POSITIONS: rightful roles, serving others
 - 4. PEACE: relaxation, rest, comfort, at-ease, security

WHAT WE ASSUME ABOUT HEAVEN

- #1 Non-earth
- #2 Unfamiliar, otherworldly
- #3 Disembodied
- #4 Foreign
- #5 Leaving favorite things behind
- #6 No time and space
- #7 Static
- #8 Neither old (like Eden) nor new and earthly, just strange and unknown
- #9 Nothing to do, floating on clouds
- #10 No learning or discovery; instant and complete knowledge
- #11 Boring
- #12 Loss of desire
- #13 Absence of the terrible
(but presence of little we desire)

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HEAVEN

- #1 New Earth
- #2 Familiar, earthly
- #3 Resurrected (embodied)
- #4 Home (all the comforts of home with all the innovations of an infinitely creative God)
- #5 Retaining the [past] good[s]; finding the best [still] ahead
- #6 Time and space
- #7 Dynamic
- #8 Both old and new
- #9 A God to worship and serve; a universe to rule; purposeful work to accomplish; friends to enjoy
- #10 An eternity of learning and discovering
- #11 Fascinating
- #12 Continuous fulfillment of desire
- #13 Presence of the wonderful
(everything we desire and nothing we don't)

—Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, p. 161