

JOINING HEIRS WITH CHRIST: RULING the NEW EARTH

Mt 5:5; Ro 8:18-21; Rev 22:5; Dan 7

I. JESUS IS FINALLY LORD—and His Kingdom will come to be on earth

- A. “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:11-16)
- B. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” (Rev 5:5-14)

II. BIBLICAL BACKGROUND: LAND’S IMPORT in OT—one its central themes

- A. *Erets*/earth 4th most frequently-used noun in OT
- B. Overview of OT (cf. Brueggemann’s *Land*)—promises & settlements
 1. Original Land-Grant to Adam & Eve—“let them have dominion” (Gn 1:26)
 2. Promise to Abraham—“the land that I will show you” (Gn 12:1)
 3. Promise to Moses—“a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3: 8)
 4. Occupied by Joshua—“the land which I am giving to them” (Jos 1:2)
 5. Ruled by kings: Saul, David, Solomon; then “divided kingdom”
 6. Lost in exiles—first Israel, then Judah occupied by invading empires, then exiled
 7. Regained by Ezra & Nehemiah—Second Temple established
 8. Lost with Temple destruction, 70 A.D.
 9. Restored as state of Israel, 1948
- C. Walter Brueggemann’s *The Land* stresses opposing trajectories evident in I Kings 21:
 1. Kings (e.g. Ahab & Jezebel) generally rule for own aggrandizement
 2. Stewards (e.g. Nabath) treasure inheritance, stewards land for Lord
- D. For Christians—OT clue to ultimate “Promised Land”

III. SECULAR BACKGROUND: LAND’S IMPORT in HUMAN HISTORY

- A. Ancient history—constant movement, struggle, wars
- B. American history
 1. Turner’s “Frontier” thesis re America’s development
 2. High Plains legacy—cf. Hal Borland’s *High, Wide and Lonesome: Growing Up on the Colorado Frontier*
- C. Deep hunger for a place, some land of one’s own, evident always & everywhere

IV. ULTIMATELY, THE “NEW EARTH’S” LAND WILL BE OURS TO RULE—Rev 22:5

- A. Fulfilling, finally, God’s design for Adam & Eve—“till the earth,” serve as stewards, each accepting assigned positions, tasks—“A place in God’s creative order has been reserved for each one of us from before the beginnings of cosmic existence. His plan is for us to develop, as apprentices to Jesus, to the point where we can take our place in the ongoing creativity of the universe” (Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*).
 1. Enable, sustain “liberated creation” (Ro 8:18-21)
 2. Contributing to various kinds of “culture,” e.g. education, art, music, science, athletics
 - a. “Heaven, as the eternal home of the divine Man and of all the redeemed members of the human race, must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structure, conditions, and actuates. Its joys and activities must all be rational, moral, emotional, voluntary and active. There must be the exercise of all the faculties, the gratification of all tastes, the development of all talent capacities, the realization of all ideals. . . . Heaven will prove the consummate flower and fruit of the whole creation and of all the history of the universe” (A.A. Hodge).
 - b. “When God created Adam, He placed him into a land and gave him dominion over it. Land is basic to dominion; therefore, salvation involves a restoration to land and property. . . . This is why Biblical law is filled with reverences to property, law, and economics. . . . Man is not saved by being delivered out of his environment. Salvation does not rescue us from the material world, but from sin, and from the effects of the Curse. The Biblical ideal is for every man to own property—a place where he can have dominion and rule under God” (David Chilton: *Paradise Restored*).
- B. Fulfilling Daniel’s prophecy (Dan 7)
 1. Following earthly kingdoms (e.b. Hellenistic, Roman)
 2. Son of Man installed, ruling over all
 3. Saints rule forever (vv. 17-19)
- C. Fulfilling Jesus’ promise: “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Mt 5:5)

SOME (POSSIBLE) ASPECTS of the HEAVENLY NEW EARTH

Ro 8:21-23; Rev 14:2-3

I. ANIMALS—Is 11:6-9, 65:17, 66:22

- A. Souls (non-material forms informing all living creatures)
 - 1. Hebrew *nephesh* (soul) used for both man and beast
 - 2. Aristotle & Aquinas & many thinkers believed animals have souls, but not “rational souls”
 - 3. Gary Habermas & J.P. Moreland: “It wasn’t until the advent of the seventeenth-century Enlightenment . . . that the existence of animal souls was even questioned in Western civilization. Throughout the history of the church, the classic understanding of living things has included the doctrine that animals, as well as humans, have souls” (*Beyond Death*, p. 106)
- B. Animals were saved in Noah’s Ark & the subsequent covenant included them—thus they were clearly important to God (Gn 9:9-17)
- C. Animals featured throughout Scripture—Elijah & ravens (I Kings 17:4-6); Jonah & fish (Jonah 1:17); Balaam & donkey (Num 22); Sabbath rest for animals as well as man (Ex 20:9-10)
- D. Animals praise God—e.g. Ps 148; Ps 150; Rev 4:8-9
- E. Stewardship (caring for all creation) quite clear—Adam named animals & was entrusted with their care
- F. John Wesley Sermon #60
- G. Will Rogers: “If dogs aren’t in heaven I want to go where they are.”

II. ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- A. Music (Rev 8:7-13)
 - 1. Temple’s musical instruments foretaste (I Chron 25:1-8) & singing (Is 38:20, Rev 14:2-3)
 - 2. Earthly classics enjoyed in heaven (e.g. Bach, Handel; Luther; Gaither, *et al*)
 - 3. N.B. Robert Reilly: *Surprised by Beauty*
- B. Dance (Jer 31:12-14; Lk 15:25)
- C. Stories
 - 1. History—Psalms; family lore; national grandeur; Church; Providence evident
 - 2. Novels & plays—earthly classics preserved & new artistic works created
- D. Art: pictures & statues
- E. Comedy—Luther: “If you’re not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don’t want to go there.”
 - 1. Humor & laughter always good, so heavenly laughter assured
 - 2. Greek Orthodox celebrate “Easter Monday” to emphasize goodness of laughter
 - 3. C.S. Lewis: “And there was greeting and kissing and handshaking and old jokes revived (you’ve no idea how good an old joke sounds after you take it out again after a rest of five or six hundred years).”
—*The Last Battle*, p. 179
- F. Sports & play
 - 1. Sports—Eric Liddell: “He made me fast, and when I run I feel God’s pleasure To give up running would be to hold Him in contempt.”
 - 2. Games of all sorts (e.g. chess) enlarge joy

III. FULFILLING PERSONAL POTENTIAL—Willard, p. 440

- A. Personality unveiled & unleashed
- B. Real vocation perfected
- C. “The Best Is Yet to Be”—revising Browning lines: “The best is yet to be / The next of lives, for which the first was made.”
- D. *Plus Ultra*—Spanish coins, following Columbus’ landfall—“More Beyond”

IV. CRAFTS & TECHNOLOGY

- A. Bezalel example of Spirit-Filled Craftsman (Ex 31:1-6)
- B. Jesus’ role as carpenter
- C. Possibly never-ending technological developments as human genius expands
- D. Traveling through “new heavens” include encountering other worlds & creatures (as imagined in science fiction)

John Wesley, Sermon #60—"General Deliverance"

They "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into glorious liberty,"—even a measure, according as they are capable, — of "the liberty of the children of God."

A general view of this is given us in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. When He that "sitteth on the great white throne" hath pronounced, "Behold, I make all things new;" when the word is fulfilled, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God;" — then the following blessing shall take place (not only on the children of men; there is no such restriction in the text; but) on every creature according to its capacity: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things are passed away."

3. To descend to a few particulars: The whole brute creation will then, undoubtedly, be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in paradise, but to a degree of it as much higher than that, as the understanding of an elephant is beyond that of a worm. And whatever affections they had in the garden of God, will be restored with vast increase; being exalted and refined in a manner which we ourselves are not now able to comprehend. The liberty they then had will be completely restored, and they will be free in all their motions. They will be delivered from all irregular appetites, from all unruly passions, from every disposition that is either evil in itself, or has any tendency to evil. No rage will be found in any creature, no fierceness, no cruelty, or thirst for blood. So far from it that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isaiah 11:6, &c.)

4. Thus, in that day, all the vanity to which they are now helplessly subject will be abolished; they will suffer no more, either from within or without; the days of their groaning are ended. At the same time, there can be no reasonable doubt, but all the horridness of their appearance, and all the deformity of their aspect, will vanish away, and be exchanged for their primeval beauty. And with their beauty their happiness will return; to which there can then be no obstruction. As there will be nothing within, so there will be nothing without, to give them any uneasiness: No heat or cold, no storm or tempest, but one perennial spring. In the new earth, as well as in the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but everything that the wisdom and goodness of God can create to give happiness. As a recompence for what they once suffered, while under the "bondage of corruption," when God has "renewed the face of the earth," and their corruptible body has put on incorruption, they shall enjoy happiness suited to their state, without alloy, without interruption, and without end.

6. May I be permitted to mention here a conjecture concerning the brute creation. What, if it should then please the all-wise, the all-gracious Creator to raise them higher in the scale of beings. What, if it should please him, when he makes us "equal to angels," to make them what we are now, — creatures capable of God; capable of knowing and loving and enjoying the Author of their being. If it should be so, ought our eye to be evil because he is good. However this be, he will certainly do what will be most for his own glory.

7. If it be objected to all this, (as very probably it will,) "But of what use will those creatures be in that future state?" I answer this by another question, What use are they of now. If there be (as has commonly been supposed) eight thousand species of insects, who is able to inform us of what use seven thousand of them are. If there are four thousand species of fishes, who can tell us of what use are more than three thousand of them. If there are six hundred sorts of birds, who can tell of what use five hundred of those species are. If there be four hundred sorts of beasts, to what use do three hundred of them serve. Consider this; consider how little we know of even the present designs of God; and then you will not wonder that we know still less of what he designs to do in the new heavens and the new earth.

11. From what has been said, I cannot but draw one inference, which no man of reason can deny. If it is this which distinguishes men from beasts, — that they are creatures capable of God, capable of knowing and loving and enjoying him; then whoever is "without God in the world," whoever does not know or love or enjoy God, and is not careful about the matter, does, in effect, disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast. Let such vouchsafe a little attention to those remarkable words of Solomon: "I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, — They might see that they themselves are beasts." (Eccles. 3:18.) These sons of men are undoubtedly beasts; and that by their own act and deed; for they deliberately and wilfully disclaim the sole characteristic of human nature. It is true, they may have a share of reason; they have speech, and they walk erect; but they have not the mark, the only mark, which totally separates man from the brute creation. "That which befalleth beasts, the same thing befalleth them." They are equally without God in the world; "so that a man" of this kind "hath no pre-eminence above a beast."