

Renewed Creation

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Integration Question: *Where do believers spend eternity? In heaven? On the new earth? To what extent will it resemble this present creation?*

Theological Statement

In Revelation 21-22. John is given a vision of the day Jesus makes all things right and His people dwell with Him forevermore in a renewed heaven and earth. He records, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea...And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:1, 5). There are two words in the Greek that English Bibles translate “new”, *neos* and *kainos*. *Neos* almost always describes an object’s newness of age in regard to the recency of the objects creation. On the other hand, *kainos* is exclusively used to describe an object that is new in value, quality, nature, or an object that has been renewed or renovated. In other words, *neos* is used to describe an objects chronology while *kainos* is used to describe an object’s quality. We see these two terms used in the same story in Mark 2:22 (and its counterparts in Matthew 9:17 and Luke 5:37-39), saying “No one puts new (*neo*) wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new (*neo*) wine into new (*kainos*) wineskins.” As ancient farmers or rural wine connoisseurs and sommeliers can attest, new wine, in terms of age, cannot be poured into qualitatively old wineskins or else, as fermentation happens, the new wine will burst the old wineskin. No matter how recent the wineskin was derived from an animal (*neos*), if it has been used before, it cannot house new wine. Only *kainos* wineskin, even if it is fifty years old, can hold new wine. An example of this concept is when someone sells a ten-year-old MacBook computer. As they prepare to sell it, they clear its hard drive, factory reset the computer, clean and repolish the keyboard and exterior.

When it is finally ready to sell, although they cannot claim it is new (*neos*), they can confidently say it is renewed (*kainos*).

In Revelation 21, the word used to describe the new heavens and new earth is *kainos*, which theologically signifies that the present earth will not be destroyed and a new earth, in terms of its age, will be created. Rather, on that day when Jesus consummates reality as we know it, He will bring about such a change that the earth and heavens will be renewed in its value, quality, and nature. The renewed creation is where all who put their faith and hope in Jesus will eternally dwell. This is something to rejoice and be encouraged over (1 Thess. 4:13-18). What is even more exciting is that we do not have to wait for a *kainos* creation to walk in right relationship with Jesus or experience God's presence. In fact, Paul says that "if anyone is in Christ, the *kainos* creation has come: The old has gone, the *kainos* is here" (2 Cor. 5:17). While I believe there will be a physical renewed creation, I believe Christians can experience the spiritual reality of its purpose, that is, Christians can live in and with God's relational presence right here and right now because of the completed work of Jesus on the cross.

Ministry Application

One of the most pertinent applications from this theology is the important understanding, and sharing, the Gospel. Too often the Gospel is watered down and offered to people at a fraction of what it really is. For example, so many people believe the Gospel is about going to heaven when they die, or they think it is solely about being forgiven of sins. Unfortunately, this kind of gospel that many people believe in, does not Christians to live in the fullness of Jesus while. Now, the Gospel is not less than being forgiven of sins, but it is so much more. The Gospel is that through Jesus' life, death, and

resurrection humanity can be restored back to right relationship with the Father and experience His presence now through the indwelling of His Spirit. Said plainly, the Gospel is the present reality that we get to experience relationship with Jesus. Jesus said that eternal life is not about getting to leave this place, but about knowing and living in intimate relationship with God exactly where we are (John 17:3). A renewed creation means we get to live free of any sin, in an unmarred universe. It is where we will only be able to live in an abiding, eternal relationship with the Creator. While the theology eschatology should never make anyone not excited about a renewed heaven and earth, we should caution anyone from wanting to leave this place in pursuit of something more because the reality is, we get to experience God's presence now.

I have had conversations with many people who believe earth is going to burn up and a new (*neos*) one will replace it. As a result, these people do not take good care of stewarding this planet or themselves. Their mindset is solely on the place with pearly gates in the clouds. Unfortunately, I am not so sure Scripture reveals that to be the end state, which means they have not fully bore God's image in the presents reality of His inaugurated Kingdom here on earth. Admittedly, I am not exactly sure if what we do now to earth or our own bodies has any impact for renewed creation, but it does reveal a heart posture of not living in an abiding, present surrealness with Jesus now. If we are really walking in right relationship with Jesus, we should be the best examples of stewarding this planet and our bodies. This means we do not trash our house, land, or other places because "one day it will all be burned up and we will be given another one." Similarly, we should take care of our body, eat healthy, exercise, and recover, not eat glutenous or without self-control because, as many people have shared with me, "one day we will have a new body."