

# New age or new universe

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now let's turn to the passage we read in the book of Revelation, Revelation chapter 21, and especially some words in verse 5.

He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new. I am making everything new. There's something in each one of us that likes new things. I've never met anyone yet who doesn't like a new car, or a new house, or new clothes.

All sorts of new things that we like. We like also new discoveries, or new inventions. And there have been plenty of those things throughout the whole of this century.

There are all kinds of reasons why we may like new things. Of course, there are some more questionable reasons. There are the things like the status that goes along with having something new.

[ 1 : 19 ] And I'm sure that's got a lot to do with the way we like to have a new car, or a new house, or something like that. But also, there's a restlessness within us.

We get fed up with old things. And we want new things, even perhaps sometimes, although the new things aren't really any better, or much better than the old.

But also, of course, there is an aesthetic reason. That is, something to do with the love of beauty. Because something that is old can become worn, and shabby, and ugly.

And this longing for something new is a longing for something more beautiful. All kinds of reasons why we might like something new.

But I think all these reasons testify to the fact that there is something wrong. There is something wrong with the world.

[ 2 : 23 ] Something wrong with human nature. Perhaps with both those things. There is something wrong that causes this desire to have something new.

There is a nagging feeling in our hearts that things are not as they ought to be. Now, the Christian message has a great deal to say about new things.

It talks about the new birth. Of how a person becomes a Christian. It talks about the new nature that a Christian has.

And it talks, as it does here, of the new universe. Or the new age that God one day will institute. But of course, it's not only Christians who talk about things being new. And about the need for a new order of things. For instance, at the present time, we're hearing a great deal about what is called the new age.

[ 3 : 34 ] And I'm sure there must be a good deal of confusion in people's minds as to how this may relate to the Christian message about the need for new things.

Because very often, those people who speak in terms of the new age will use spiritual language. They will even use the name Christ and talk about Christ consciousness.

And so, it may be very easy for us to become confused as to what is right and what is wrong as people talk in these terms.

Now, until quite recently, I think there was a good deal of pessimism in people's minds concerning the future. There were so many things to be concerned about.

There was the Cold War. There was the threat of nuclear war. So many troubles. So many fears concerning the future. Well, still, there are many of these fears, although some seem to have abated for a while.

[ 4 : 43 ] But as we near the end, not just of this century, but as we near the end of this millennium, many people are turning to a kind of optimism.

And this is where this new age thinking comes in. The belief that we are on the threshold of a new age. A kind of utopia.

And it's very appealing to people after such pessimism for so long. But of course, we have to be careful. The expression new age is used often very loosely.

I saw quite recently a report in a newspaper about a new age crofter. And well, that made me prick up my ears and take a little closer look at it. But all it was talking about was really that this was a very go-ahead crofter somewhere in the Highlands who was very much into computers.

And he was using his computer to do all sorts of things. Well, the expression can be used very loosely like that. The idea that we're living in an age of technology.

[ 5 : 50 ] But that's not, strictly speaking, what the expression means. And I want to look with you first at the new age, a false new order. However, before we come to consider what is being said here by God, I am making everything new.

Because so often it is only when we contrast the false with the true that we see the true in all its glory. Well, the new age.

What is this new age that we hear about? You can hardly pick up a newspaper or a magazine, but you see some reference to this. Well, there are a mixture of influences that have gone to make up this new age thinking.

And that's why it's so difficult to pinpoint. There is, of course, the influence of astrology. Now, that's not astronomy, which is the respectable science, studying the stars, but astrology, which is the kind of thing you get in the stars, in the newspapers, or magazines, and also something that people take at a far more serious level than that.

Well, according to that belief of astrology, the history of the world is divided into various ages. And they say, we are passing out of the age of Pisces, the age of the fish, into the age of Aquarius, the age of the water carrier.

[ 7 : 16 ] Now, you might think, well, that's a load of garbage. But they make it sound all very convincing, especially to people who don't know a great deal about history, or about theology, or any of those things.

They say, the last 2,000 years are the age of Christianity. And so it has this symbol of the fish, which was a symbol that the early Christians used, because the letters made up a statement, the first letters of the word made up a statement about the Lord Jesus.

They used it as a kind of secret sign. And so they say, these 2,000 years, that was the age of Christianity. But now we are on the threshold of a new age, an age of great enlightenment and freedom, when all the restrictions of Christianity will be superseded.

Well, some ideas of the new age come, as I say, from astrology. But many of the new ideas also come from Eastern religion. The idea that all is one.

There are no distinctions between God and man, or between man and nature, but all is one. That again comes from Eastern religion. Or the idea of reincarnation, that you are born back into this world in another form.

[ 8 : 35 ] In Eastern religion, you could be born back in any kind of form, an animal, an insect, even a stone. But new age thinking tends to apply it just in terms of coming back as another person, which is a little bit more attractive than coming back as an insect.

But a stone, certainly, and that's maybe why their version of it is proving more popular. But also, there are other influences. The influences of animism, the belief in spirits, and a spirit world.

Or much more in the West, the occult, witchcraft, and all those things, all those influences now being made to look very respectable by people writing in this whole area.

Even more respectable, many of these writers who are putting forward new age thinking are taking scientific ideas, whether from the world of physics and the discoveries that have been made in physics during this century, or in the world of biology and theories that are being put forward there, such as the Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock, talking about the whole world as being one great organism.

And he gave it this name, Gaia, which is the ancient Greek word for the goddess of the earth. So you see, there's this tremendous, we might say, hodgepodge of ideas, but those ideas are kind of coalescing and coming together to form some sort of worldview.

[ 10 : 04 ] something that is challenging the Christian worldview and something that is becoming more and more powerful and influential. Now I just want to mention some of the main beliefs of this new age thinking.

The first belief is, of course, that a new age is dawning. And this is why it's so attractive to people in light of all the pessimism that we've had in the past and all the dire warnings about what's going to happen.

New age thinkers are optimistic. They say we're on the threshold of an age of personal enlightenment, a time when people can really explore all their potentials.

We're on the threshold of an age when there will be a great sense of oneness amongst human beings throughout the world and a great sense of oneness between human beings and nature so that a lot of the crises that are talked about in terms of the environment and ecology, all of these will be solved in this new age.

They talk in terms of there being one world where everything will be harmony and enlightenment.

Well, it's very attractive. And then they say that this will be achieved by a new consciousness.

[11:27] They don't really talk in terms about a new thinking because they're really against thinking. They're really against rationally thinking things out. But they say a new consciousness, a new awareness, a new feeling about things.

They say what is wrong is that we have had a lack of this awareness. And that lack of awareness has been due to things like Christianity and like rational thinking.

You see, it is saying that is the thing that belongs to the past. We must get rid of that. What we've been suffering from, they say, is metaphysical amnesia. There's an expression for you.

It really means they're saying we've forgotten. We have forgotten that we are divine. We have forgotten that we are God. We have forgotten that we are all one with God and with nature.

We have forgotten this interconnectedness of all things. We are divine. Nature is divine. Again, it's very attractive.

[12:33] there is no God up there over and above you to judge you. You are God. You make your decisions and your choices and you tune in to the rest of the universe and the rest of nature.

And also, of course, they speak of a new hope. They speak, as I mentioned already, of a great cosmic worldwide hope of this new age dawning.

That's very attractive. But they also speak of individual hope. You see, for so long, the blunt choice between people was really a choice between some form of Christianity that promised life after death or humanism that said, no, death is the end.

That's it. You have your lot in this world and that's the end. But you see, people didn't want to accept one or the other and it's much more attractive the kind of thing that new age thinking is putting across.

Reincarnation. There is life after death. You come back as someone else. You are really a spirit and the spirit never dies. It will be reincarnated as something else.

[13:51] Now, this is where the idea of reincarnation in new age differs from the idea of reincarnation in the East, in Eastern religion.

In Eastern religion, you came back, according to their thinking, into another life or another being, according to our strict and rigid law of justice.

In other words, if you had lived an evil life, according to this law of karma, you would come back as something appropriate to that evil life that you had lived.

In other words, your next life would be a kind of judgment on you for the previous life. Now, that in itself has tremendous problems because people in India will look at someone who is poor, a poor beggar by the wayside and they'll say, not according to our Christian belief, a poor man, we must try to do something to help him.

They will say, well, he must have been a very evil man in his previous life. He's been judged for what he did in his previous life. Terrible though that is, it still maintains some idea of justice, some idea of morality, some idea of righteousness.

[15:09] The New Age idea dispenses with all that. It says, you choose your life. You can choose whatever you want to be. death. And that, although it's very attractive, it is also totally destructive of morality and of concern for our fellow men.

Because now you look at the poor beggar by the wayside or the man living in a cardboard box in one of our cities and you say, not here's a poor man who needs to be helped, not even here's a man who was evil in a past life and who's been judged, but here is a man who who has chosen this life for his spiritual betterment and I must not interfere with him to change his circumstances because he knows obviously what he is doing.

Now these are some of the ideas and also some of the tremendous problems that exist in New Age thinking. things in New Age.

But let's look at it a little bit more positively before we come to what we are told here. In one sense we have to say that we are living in a new age.

I think many people who are older perhaps recognize this more than those of us who are younger. I included myself there amongst the younger, maybe I shouldn't have done that.

[16:41] But those who are older can see a tremendous change. Say somebody who has lived throughout most of the century. A tremendous change from the beginning of the century to the end of it.

All the changes in technology, changes in travel and communications and all those things. Undreamt of when they were children. But you know there are even greater changes in the way in which people think.

And I can see those changes taking place even in my lifetime. As I was a boy and a teenager the problem was wrestling against people who really didn't believe in any supernatural at all.

Now your problem as a Christian is in trying to get people to think about Christian spirituality instead of some other kind of vague spirituality.

And you know there were people who foresaw this kind of thing coming. C.S. Lewis was one of these men who seemed to have a great understanding of the way things were going.

[17:57] and I've come across this quotation from him. He was actually speaking about the writings of his friend J.R.R.

Tolkien who wrote the very famous book The Lord of the Rings which is a fantasy book an imaginary other world a kind of myth or legend.

And C.S. Lewis said this if this book succeeded this was just when it was written if it succeeded and if it sold well it would mean that it would inaugurate a new age.

Now when he wrote that word I think probably he had little hope of these things happening because he was very much wrestling against people who had this sort of anti-supernatural view.

But the fact is for whatever reason and we've no time to go into it this morning for whatever reason that book The Lord of the Rings contrary to any other book has sold more copies every year from the time it was published consistently.

[19:07] So now it is selling millions and millions throughout the world. And it's a book that is totally contrary to the idea that we just live in a natural world without any supernatural.

what has happened? Well we've no time to go into it all but the point is it has happened that people are open now to this concept of another world open to this concept of the supernatural and of course there are tremendous dangers there that are the dangers that they will go into something like the new age that they will act in a way that's inconsistent with Christianity they will forget that there is the reality of the devil there is an evil spiritual power as well as the power of God and there is the tremendous danger in new age thinking that there is a union between good and evil there is ultimately no distinction between the two but in spite of all these dangers there is this fact that we seem to be in my mind indeed living in a new age when people's thinking has changed and there is an openness to consider spiritual things and we as

Christians must seek to take these opportunities I come now to what our text says he who was seated on the throne said I am making everything new the Lord Jesus spoke about an age to come and this is what is being spoken of here this is if you like the true new age there is a need for such a new age there is an old order of things which is passing away and that old order of things cries out for the new it cries out for this new universe this new creation of which God speaks here what are the characteristics of the old order of things there is first suffering and death in verse 4 at that time God will wipe every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away but you see those were the characteristics of the old order of things those are the characteristics of this age in which we live there is suffering and there is pain and there are tears and there is death and so all these things cry out for a new age an age when there will be none of these things there is a tremendous need we know in our own experience we know those problems of pain and suffering and distress in our own lives and as we consider the lives of others and there is something in us that cries out for a world where these things will not be but also of course this present world order is characterized by evil and corruption in verse 8 we are told about those who will have no place in the new order the cowardly the unbelieving the vile the murderers the sexually immoral those who practice magic arts the idolaters and all liars their place

will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur there will be no place for evil and for evil people in that new world but this world is characterized not only by suffering and pain and death but it is characterized by evil and corruption and those are the things that cause the pain and the suffering and the death those are the things also that cause us to cry out for a new age in which those things will no longer be that's what makes people so attracted to the false new age because it promises a world in harmony and a world without pain and a world where the fear of death is taken away but all those things are realities in this present age and a false new age teaching will not change them there has been all kinds of false teaching concerning a utopia to come in this world communism was the most recent and it has now been totally discredited it simply did not deliver what it promised a utopian age neither will the false new age teaching but nonetheless the cry remains in our hearts concerning these things the cry that rises in the old testament in the psalms how long lord how long will we go on enduring all these things there is this crying need for a new a really new age new age but what is the source of this real new world order this real age to come the source of it is not from below it is not from man or nature it is not even from the whole universe you see this is where new age thinking along with every form of humanist thinking goes wrong because it is based upon either man himself or man in conjunction with the universe and that's why it always fails because there is something intrinsically wrong in man there is something out of joint in nature that cannot be put right by ourselves this new

age this new world order this new creation this new universe comes not from below but it comes from above read the words he who was seated on the throne said I am making everything new God does it the one seated on the throne is God seated upon the throne from which the universe is governed and God does it God makes this new world order God acting in his sovereign power in his time and in his way you see many people thought that the end of the world would come with a nuclear conflagration well now that possibility seems to be receding and people forget that they said those things the end of the world will not come when man decides but when

[ 26 : 48 ] God decides and it will be in his way and in his time because he will do it and there is no power in man there is no power in earth there is no power in nature that is going to do these things God is going to do it I am making everything new then what about this renewal itself this making everything new well it is a renewal a re renewal now you might think in reading these words without too much thought and without comparing them to other things the Bible says that this is really stating that there is going to be an utterly and totally new universe but if you look carefully even at the words that are used here it does not seem to be so there is going to be at least a great similarity between the two the first heaven and the first earth passed away and I saw a new heaven and a new earth so at least there is a similarity heaven and earth there will still be something corresponding to heaven and earth in that new universe but even more than that the

Lord Jesus uses the expression the renewal of all things in Matthew 19 verse 28 he speaks about the renewal of all things literally the rebirth of all things not the rebirth of specific individuals but the rebirth the total rebirth when he is going to establish his kingdom in all its completeness so we are being told that there is going to be really a renewal a rebirth a total change of this present universe changing it into a new universe notice too we are told here it will be a renewing of everything I am making everything new now we like new things but they are only particular things we can never have a circumstance in which everything is new because even those things that are new are simply recycled old things we might say but here is a situation where everything will be new everything so what we have got to grasp here is not some narrow or weird concept concerning heaven we have got to recognize that God is doing something here on a majestic on a universal on a cosmic scale God is going to totally change the universe and make it new so that means every single aspect of the universe is going to be touched and changed look at those things that are mentioned here that are spoken of in symbolic terms there is going to be beauty and order in that new creation the results of the fall the destructiveness of man's sin and all those things are going to be done away with in every area the great pictures piled one upon another of this great city and its tremendous beauty beauty such as we can hardly take in the building materials are pictured as being precious stones even the most beautiful buildings in this world are not built of precious stones and pearls but that whole world is characterized by that beauty and order it is also characterized by the total integration of nature and of city think of that marvelous picture at the beginning of chapter 22 the city with the great street of the city and the river flowing down the middle of it and trees the tree of life growing on each side of it this tremendous integration and complementarity of city and nature in

this present age they work against one another grey concrete covering over beautiful countryside but there will be no opposition in that new creation there will be also nations and kings and their splendor in that great city every aspect of human life every aspect of the life that God has created will be in that great city in other words it's too great too tremendous for us to really take in but God says

I am making everything new everything right across the scale there's no area of life no area of legitimate human interest that will not be totally represented there in a transformed way and notice too that it stresses that all potentialities will be realized in that world everything new all the potentials that we had in this life that were blighted or marred because of sin our own sin not other people's sin there they will be realized notice too that it says it stresses here that this is something that is a process I am making everything new the tense that is used here is a present tense which is a present continuous tense in

Greek a continuous process now yes there is a great event which John sees I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and so on a great event a great transformation there will be a great cataclysmic summing up of this age and a new age but God says I am making everything new that means that that new universe will not be like this old one where you get bored and fed up where you discover things and they no longer interest you after a while but there is going to be this continuous newness because God is going to be continuously making it new and finally what about the inhabitants of this new universe well it's quite clear that not all are to be in that new universe verse 8 by our sins we are all we are all under that judgment of hell how then can any be inhabitants of that great new universe that great city of

[ 34 : 58 ] God well in verses 6 and 7 we're told I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end to him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life he who overcomes will inherit all this and I will be his God and he will be my son nobody's going to gain entry to that new universe by their own cleverness by their own righteousness by their own efforts of any kind it's only those who admit that they are thirsty but here in this dry dusty world we are choking with thirst and we are longing for that water of life which is offered freely to us in the Lord Jesus Christ so today we are being invited to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and to know that change which is spoken of in scripture as being born again being totally and utterly changed for it is only those who know the new creation in their own lives who will be in that new creation that new universe now of course we've dwelt upon the tremendous attractions of the new but the new can be frightening some of you have just arrived in

Aberdeen here and everything perhaps seems new and strange to you and it can be a wee bit daunting a wee bit frightening and you know it's the same as we speak of these new things it's the same as we speak of this new thing of the gospel it's the same as we speak of this new birth it perhaps feels a little bit threatening but if there's only one way to achieve something it must be done those of you have come perhaps fresh to Aberdeen you've come for a reason you've come to study for a particular subject to enter perhaps a particular profession you have a goal in mind and you're going to endure the difficulties the newness and strangeness of things because you want to achieve something well it's the same here if you want to enter that new creation if you want to get to that kingdom of heaven if you want to experience that real new age then you must come simply and humbly to the

Lord Jesus you must come to that most perilous of positions where you lay yourself completely and utterly before the Lord Jesus you recognize that you in yourself are utterly undone you have nothing by which to save yourself but you appeal simply to his grace and to his love and you will discover if you do that that it is not at all perilous it is not at all the danger that you had feared but you will be like the prodigal son welcomed with open arms let us pray our loving heavenly father we pray that you would help us to be aware of all the problems that confront us today and the ways in which the Christian faith is being attacked and undermined the false options that are being offered to people to believe in that we might be able to distinguish the true from the false that by your grace we might be enabled not just to see those things in principle but that we would know them in reality by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ for ourselves knowing that new life which he alone can give and knowing that new hope which is offered only in him we pray your blessing upon those who perhaps this morning are challenged by these things to come to the Lord Jesus and be saved and we pray that they might know the grace to do that and that they might know that change in their experience which they will never regret we ask these things in Jesus name amen now we close by singing in

psalm 102 from verse 19 to the end of the psalm in the second version and the tune is herongate he from his holy place looked down the earth he viewed from heaven on high to hear the prisoners morning groan and free them that are doomed to die we sing from verse 19 to the end to God's praise he from his holy place looked down the earth he looked from heaven on high to hear the prisoners morning groan and free them that are doomed to die that die of und catch the ch submit good

A sample of the grace of all.

[ 41 : 57 ] My strength, the weak and the red.

My days of life is short as.

My God, O take me not away.

In this time of my days I said.

Thy years throughout all ages last.

[ 42 : 54 ] Of old now has been started. The earth's foundation burned and passed.

Thy mighty hands the heavens are made.

They perish as garments do.

But thou shalt evermore endure.

As that church now shalt change them so. And they shall all be changed the shore.

[ 44 : 13 ] But from all changes thou art free.

Thy endless years do last foray. Thy servants and their sin will be.

His saplings shall before me stay.

Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with each one of you now and forever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 45 : 21 ] Amen. Amen.