

The Doctrine of Heaven

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[0 : 00] Thank you very much indeed, Principal Boyd, for your warm words of welcome, and I thank all of you for your welcome here today.

I have to confess that it's the first time I've been to the School in Theology, but I've so enjoyed the few hours I've been here that I hope I'll be back again on many occasions.

I am, however, somewhat apprehensive as I stand before you to present this paper on the doctrine of heaven. I'm apprehensive because I realise that some of the comments and remarks I make are controversial.

That is because of the nature of the subject you have given me and because of the way in which I've chosen to treat it. However, I trust that as a result of our study this morning, our thinking will be stimulated.

What do you understand by heaven? Ask that question, and the answer given by the great majority of Christians will probably be something like this.

[1 : 08] Heaven is where you go when you die. Heaven is the place where the believer's soul goes at death. It is there he spends eternity. Much evangelical preaching focuses upon this.

It calls upon sinners to repent and to believe upon Christ so that their souls will enter heaven at death. Salvation is thought of principally as the soul going to heaven.

This is presented as the Christian hope. Heaven after death. There is, of course, truth in all this. It is correct as far as it goes.

But I maintain that it is a serious diminution, a toning down of the Christian doctrine of heaven. Certainly there is so much about heaven that our minds cannot at present comprehend.

There is so much that just has not been revealed to us. But the Bible permits us to say much more than this.

[2 : 14] The Bible's doctrine of heaven is grander and more glorious by far. It should fill us with optimism and hope and rejoicing. It should fill us with optimism and hope and rejoicing.

Not only with regard to our own personal future. Or even only with regard to the future of the church. But with regard to the future of the universe.

While the Bible undoubtedly does speak about the souls of believers entering heaven at death. Its emphasis is certainly upon what lies beyond that.

Upon the final consummation. Cosmic renewal. The new heavens and the new earth. The emergence of a regenerated universe.

That will be peopled by the saints of God. God. Eternally the church shall inherit this new universe. God will be with them. And that is heaven.

[3 : 13] But what can we say about the believer's soul after death? The biblical teaching is so beautifully and so succinctly put in the shorter catechism.

The souls of believers are up their death made perfect in holiness. And do immediately pass into glory. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not one that receives tremendous prominence in scripture.

It is there of course. Although we do not find anywhere the term immortality of the soul. Much of the preoccupation with the immortality of the soul.

The immaterial part of man distinct from his body. Owes more to Greek philosophy than to biblical revelation. The classic treatment of this is Plato's Phaedo.

The soul is superior to the body. Indeed the body is the soul's tomb. At death the soul of the righteous man returns to the heavens.

[4 : 19] But his body disintegrates. It is his soul that is indestructible. It is his soul that is immortal. His body is totally destroyed. And that forever.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized. That this is not biblical doctrine. God has a glorious purpose for the believer's body.

At the very heart of the Bible's message concerning man's future. The doctrine of the soul's immortality is however a biblical doctrine.

Louis Berkhoff clearly demonstrates this by means of a number of powerful arguments. He states, Even if the Bible does not explicitly state that the soul of man is immortal.

And does not seek to prove this in a formal way. Any more than it seeks to present formal proof for the existence of God. This does not mean that scripture denies or contradicts or even ignores it.

[5 : 28] It clearly assumes in many passages that man continues his conscious existence after death. In fact, it treats the truth of the immortality of man very much as it does that of the existence of God.

That is, it assumes this as an undisputed postulate. Where do we find it taught in the New Testament that the soul of man lives on after his body dies?

It is the Greek word *psuche* that translates soul, that is translated soul in the New Testament. We reject the ideas associated with this term by the Greek philosophers who used it with reference to that part of man that lives on after death.

But what of the New Testament use of the term? Our Lord says, And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

There is an aspect of our being that our opponents who may kill us cannot touch, and that lives on after the death of the body. We have the same word used twice in the book of the Revelation.

[6 : 51] In Revelation 6.9 we read, And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

Again in Revelation 20.4 we read, Sometimes it is a term *pneuma*, spirit, that is used with reference to that part of man that survives death.

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, cried the dying Stephen. Ye are come, says the writer to the Hebrews, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

Psuche and *pneuma*, soul and spirit, are terms the New Testament uses to describe that aspect of man that lives on after death.

They are terms that can be used interchangeably. We believe in a bipartite view of man. It is right then to speak of man's soul as exist, or spirit, soul or spirit as existing after death.

[8 : 26] But this existence is temporary and incomplete. Body and soul, or body and spirit, belong together. The hope the Bible holds before us is not our existence as mere disembodied spirits.

Overwhelmingly, the Bible's emphasis is on the resurrection of the body. Body and soul are separated at death, but it is a separation that is temporary.

Body and soul will be reunited at the resurrection. That, I repeat, is the Christian hope. What can we say of the soul of the believer in this intermediate state between death and resurrection?

There are those who talk of a soul sleep. The soul is in an unconscious state during this period. But surely Paul could not describe this as far better than this present existence.

The believer's soul at death goes to be with Christ, which is far better. He enters into the conscious enjoyment of his master's immediate presence in heaven.

[9 : 50] Lazarus, at his death, went to Abraham's bosom. That was the place of blessedness and happiness where he was while his brothers were still on this earth.

He had conscious existence there. Clearly, it is a reference to the intermediate state. The dying thief became convinced that the dying Jesus was truly the Messiah.

He would establish one day, sometime in the distant future, a glorious kingdom. And so he prayed, Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. But Jesus assured him he would not have to wait until some future date.

Today, today shalt thou be with me in paradise. The redeemed thief went that day to paradise. paradise.

The term paradise is found also in 2 Corinthians 12.4. Paul had an experience 14 years before he wrote 2 Corinthians in which he was caught up into paradise.

[11 : 01] Paradise is a place into which bodies as well as disembodied spirits can enter, for he was unsure whether he was caught up into it in the body or not.

He was caught up into paradise, into the third heaven, into heaven, the abode of the souls of the blessed dead. We are further teaching about the intermediate state in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. There, Paul talks in verse 8 about being absent from the body and present with the Lord. They are aorist infinitives that are used in verse 8 in contrast to the present tenses of verse 6 that speak of being at home in the body and absent from the Lord.

We can certainly conclude, therefore, that Paul's teaching is that the believer, as soon as he dies, enters heavenly bliss. He goes home to be with the Lord.

God is the God of the patriarchs. Jesus reminded the Sadducees that God had said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

[12:20] God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died and were buried, but they are alive now. Their souls are in heaven.

They are in the intermediate state, awaiting the final resurrection. After death, the believer is no longer in the body. He is delivered from the body and all the pains and imperfections and sins that troubled him in the body.

He is made perfect in holiness. He enjoys a very close fellowship with the Lord. He is present with the Lord. *Pros ton kurion*.

Pros indicating a special closeness of fellowship. This is glory. Glory beyond our power to comprehend now. This is our destiny if death claims us before Christ comes.

We enter upon the first phase of a glorious, heavenly, eternal existence. I say the first phase because it will await completion at the consummation.

[13:34] Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide. Glorious indeed is the state of believers now in heaven.

They reign with Christ. In Revelation 20 verse 4 we read and I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God and which had not worshipped the beast neither his image neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years and again in verse 6 they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Now I know that I tread controversial ground here but I believe that those teachers and commentators who interpret the millennial reign of the saints with Christ as a reference to the activity of the saints in glory now are interpreting the scriptures correctly.

This is the view not only of non-millenarian scholars like Antony Huckerman and Louis Berkhoff but even of the great B.B. Warfield post-millenarian though he was.

In Revelation 20 and verse 4 John it appears sees two groups of deceased believers a wider group and a narrower group. There is the wider group of all deceased believers and the narrower comprising the martyrs.

[15:27] They all share Christ's reign. In this connection it can be said that they also judge. Judgment was given unto them. In some sense they share in Christ's judging activity.

Having suffered with him on earth they reign with him in heaven. Verse 4 says of those people that they lived and reigned with Christ.

They came to life at Cezanne. I take it that this is a reference to their transition through physical death to the glorious life of heaven.

This is the first resurrection. They are now throughout this gospel age they reign with Christ. The rest of the dead the unbelieving dead did not come to life.

They have no part in this first resurrection. Where is heaven? Where is this heaven where the souls of believers reign with Christ?

[16:39] Is it a place? Is it right to say that it can be localized? Christ is there in the body. So are Enoch and Elijah.

But the Bible gives us no detailed answer. Speculation would be unhelpful and irreverent. We respect the silence of scripture. The condition of the saints of God in heaven now in the intermediate state is very glorious.

They are in a glorious condition but they are still incomplete. They are without their bodies. God's purpose for their bodies has not yet been fully realized.

Their bodies too must share in the glory that is to be. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory.

But their bodies, being still united to Christ, to rest in their graves till the resurrection. Being justified by faith, we possess many marvelous blessings.

[17 : 54] We have peace with God, we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of glory. We exult in the hope, the sure and certain hope of heaven.

What is this hope? This hope that looks beyond the glorious intermediate state of which I have been speaking. It is first of all the hope of the return of Christ.

The doctrine of the second advent is one of the most frequently taught doctrines in scripture. You find it on almost every page of the New Testament.

It is mentioned in every book of the New Testament except the epistle to the Galatians, the very short epistle to Philemon, and the very short letters of second and third John.

Clearly it is in Christian theology a doctrine of monumental significance. It always strikes me as strange that we don't hear from our pulpits more preaching about the second coming.

[19 : 06] It seems to me that we have allowed the fantastic notions and excesses of dispensationalist teaching to frighten us off from dwelling as often as we should upon the biblical teaching concerning our Lord's return.

He will return in person. This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go.

His return will be public. Every eye shall see him and it will be majestic. Not as a tiny babe will he come the second time.

His parousia will be the coming of a great dignitary, the coming of the King of Kings in divine regal splendor. The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God.

He will come attended by the holy angels. His coming will signal the final consummation of all things, the establishing of the eternal order.

[20 : 18] This is why I find it quite impossible to talk of the doctrine of heaven without talking of the Lord's return. What is the Christian's hope?

hope. It is the hope of the Lord's return. It is the hope also of the resurrection of the saints. My putting it in these terms is no indication that I am inclining towards dispensationalist teaching.

At the Lord's return there will take place the general resurrection, the resurrection of the righteous and of the reprobate. But in talking of the doctrine of heaven, it is of course the resurrection of the saints that we keep in view.

The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life.

The Lord himself shall descend from heaven and the dead in Christ shall rise first. The term first indicates that they will rise before being taken up.

[21 : 26] It is not at all pointing to another resurrection at a later date. At the second coming, God's people shall rise from their graves. That should give us great comfort when we bury our loved ones who have died in Christ.

It should fill our own hearts with rejoicing. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is of prime importance.

It is taught in the Old Testament. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.

Isaiah 26 verse 19. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12 2. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

[22 : 31] Psalm 17 verse 15. It is taught frequently and with unmistakable clarity in the New Testament. The classic treatment of it is in 1st Corinthians 15.

The believer rises to a new mode of existence. He is resurrected, not resuscitated. Yet there is continuity between the resurrection body and the body that is laid in the grave.

The resurrection body bears to the body that is laid in the grave a relationship similar to that that exists between the harvest of golden grain and the seed that is sown at sowing time.

It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption. This present body has within it the seeds of corruption and decay and death.

It will certainly die. The resurrection body will be incorruptible. It will not be liable to any disease. It will never die. It will be a perfect body.

[23 : 43] This body is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. This body is the body of our humiliation. Philippians 3.21.

The believer will rise with a glorious body, a body of glory. It will be fashioned after the pattern of the Lord's own resurrection body of glory.

It will be without sin. This present body is not inherently sinful. Matter is not in itself evil, but sin dwells within this body.

There will be not a vestige of sin in the body with which you will rise. Doesn't that thrill your heart? This body is sown in weakness.

It is raised in power. We are all conscious of the weakness of this present body. We receive constant reminders of it. In the resurrection body there will be no trace of weakness or defect.

[24 : 48] This body is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. This does not mean, of course, that there will not take place an actual physical resurrection from the grave.

Such a resurrection will most certainly take place. The term spiritual here does not mean non-physical. It is used as a contrast not to physical but to natural.

The resurrection body will be a spiritual body in that it will be directed totally by the Holy Spirit. This emphasizes for us again that there will be in it no sin.

In his book Pauline Eschatology, Gerhardus Vos claims that spiritual, the word spiritual in 1 Corinthians 15 and 44 should be spelt with a capital S to make obvious the intended reference to the Holy Spirit.

It is by the Holy Spirit's power that Christians will rise, just as it was by his power that Jesus rose. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also bring to life your mortal bodies by his spirit, by the agency of his spirit that dwell in you.

[26 : 17] Romans 8 11. Indeed, Christ's own resurrection is the pledge and guarantee of the Christian's resurrection.

resurrection. He rose the first fruits of his people, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

God made us at the first creatures with physical bodies. The body itself is not evil, although this present body has been sadly affected by sin.

If the resurrection is not the resurrection of a physical body, Satan has scored a great victory. God will have had to change human beings into non-physical creatures.

But that is not so. God's redemption includes the body. It is not souls he saves, it is people.

Believers alive on this earth when the Lord returns will at the moment of his return be changed.

[27 : 28] They will be clothed upon with their bodies of glory without ever going through the physical process of death at all. It is in these resurrection bodies of glory that we shall eternally serve God in heaven.

It is impossible to deal at all adequately with the doctrine of heaven without also discussing the resurrection of the body. What is the Christian hope?

It is the hope of the Lord's return. It is the hope of the resurrection of the saints. And it is the hope too of the rapture of the saints.

This term rapture is one dear to the hearts of the dispensationalists. In their scheme of things the Lord comes and snatches away his own saints in a secret rapture before the seven year period of the great tribulation.

But the term properly understood is a perfectly respectable one. Dead believers shall be raised, living believers shall be changed, and then we shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

[28 : 48] 1 Thessalonians 4 and 17. The term to meet Isap and Tason was used of the official welcome accorded a visiting dignitary to an important city.

Some of the townsfolk went out to meet him and to escort him into the city. Raised and changed believers shall meet the Lord and escort him on his return to earth.

Thousand thousand saints attending swell the triumph of his train. The saints meet the Lord in the air never to part from him.

What is the Christian hope? It is the hope of the Lord's return. It is the hope of the resurrection of the body. It is the hope of the rapture of the saints.

And it is the hope too of a new universe. This present universe shall be destroyed.

[29 : 51] The heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

Nevertheless we according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth whereim dwelleth righteousness.

2 Peter 3 10-13 The biblical expression new heavens and a new earth designates the entire universe.

The universe as we know it shall be destroyed. There shall be a new universe. This is the regeneration spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 19 and 28.

Old Testament and New Testament talk of a new heaven and a new earth. Is the present universe to be utterly annihilated so that there is no continuity between the new and the old?

[31 : 02] Or will the cosmos be renewed? Annihilation or renewal? Undoubtedly the destruction of the universe of this universe will be accompanied by cataclysmic events.

The passage I have quoted from 2 Peter makes that plain. Nevertheless the biblical data supports renewal rather than annihilation.

The universe will undergo rejuvenation. Of great significance surely is Paul's teaching in Romans chapter 8.

Creation he tells us is waiting on tiptoe with outstretched head in eager expectation looking forward to the revelation of the sons of God.

Creation itself is going to be set free from its bondage to decay and experience the glorious liberty of the children of God. The whole creation is groaning as in the pain of childbirth.

[32 : 09] It is this present creation that is going to be liberated. If this cosmos is to be annihilated Satan will have scored a great victory.

But his influence has not been so utterly devastating and corrupting that God's creation has to be blotted out of existence. The very earth on which Satan has done his worst shall be purified, rejuvenated, and renewed.

There will be found in it not a trace of his vile influence. 2 Peter 3 and 13 and Revelation 21 1 talk of new heavens and a new earth.

Ranon kainon kai gain kainain. The adjective is kainos not neos. It is neos that means new in origin. Kainos indicates a newness of quality. The universe will be gloriously renewed but there will be continuity between the new and the old.

[33 : 24] The analogy between the new earth and the believers resurrection body is significant. Our resurrection bodies will be different from our present bodies gloriously different.

There will be discontinuity but there will be continuity as well. We shall be raised. There will be a glorious new earth but that does not mean that all continuity with the present earth will be destroyed.

Creation will be wondrously renewed. This doctrine of the new earth gives meaning to much of Old Testament prophecy.

I find myself very much in sympathy with Anthony Huckama who writes in his fascinating book The Bible and the Future it is an impoverishment of the meaning of these passages to make them refer only to a period of a thousand years preceding the final state.

But to see these prophecies as describing the new earth which awaits all the people of God and which shall last forever is to see these passages in their true light.

[34 : 36] In Genesis 3.15 we have the famous promise I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

Here we have the promise of the coming redeemer and of a marvelous redemption. Adam's fall meant that the earth over which man ruled and was over which man ruled was under a curse and that our first parents were expelled from their earthly paradise.

Surely the promise involved the removal of the curse and paradise regained. Man would again sinlessly exercise dominion over the earth.

Does this early promise Genesis 3 and 15 not imply a new earth? In the book of Genesis we read of God's covenant with Abraham.

It is but one administration of his everlasting covenant of grace. To Abraham God said and I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.

[35 : 56] Genesis 17 verse 8. God's promise was to Abraham and to his descendants to Abraham and to the Jewish people.

But we learn from the New Testament that the true descendants of Abraham are those who have a like faith with Abraham and they are those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and they come not just from the Jews but from every nation under the sun.

Truly in him are all nations of the earth blessed. Genesis 12.3 The temporary narrowing of the scope of the covenant of grace was with a view to its ultimate glorious widening to include all nations.

So too with a promise concerning the land. God promised Canaan to Abraham and to his descendants forever. But Abraham never owned any part of Canaan except the burial cave of Machpelah.

Did the promise fail then? Certainly not. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise.

[37 : 15] For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11.9 and 10. What is this city which hath foundations for which he looked?

It is the holy city the new Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven. The true fulfillment of the promise of an inheritance made to Abraham and for which he looked is found in the new earth that is yet to be.

The patriarchs all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country and truly if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out they might have had opportunity to have returned but now they desire a better country that is unheavenly wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he hath prepared for them a city that heavenly country it is the new earth again we see the narrowing of the scope of the covenant as it was made with Abraham it focused upon Canaan but its true fulfillment is far wider not

Canaan but the earth the renewed rejuvenated earth Canaan as the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews remind us is a type of the eternal Sabbath rest that awaits the people of God the promise made to Abraham the promise of Canaan as an everlasting possession has great significance for us all for all believers it must not be confined as dispensationists confining to the possession of Palestine by believing Jews during the millennium its scope is far far wider and grander than that listen to this quotation from Patrick Fairburn's typology of scripture he makes three points one the earthly Canaan was never designed by God nor could it from the first have been understood by his people to be the ultimate and proper inheritance which they were to occupy things having been spoken and hoped for concerning it which plainly could not be realized within the bounds of Canaan nor on the earth at all as present constituted two the inheritance in its full and proper sense was one which could be enjoyed only by those who had become children of the resurrection themselves fully redeemed in soul and body from the effects and consequences of sin three the occupation of the earthly Canaan by the natural seed of Abraham in its grand and ultimate design was a type of the occupation by a redeemed church of our destined inheritance of glory the meek shall inherit the land we read in psalm 37 verse 11 earth in the authorized version but preferably land in other versions Jesus rendering in the sermon on the mount is the meek shall inherit the earth God promised

[41 : 00] Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan Romans 4 and 13 says that the promise is that he should be heir of the world it seems to me that these promises fall into place when we give due prominence to the biblical teaching concerning the new earth Isaiah gives us several inspiring pictures of this coming new earth he sees the different nations of the world joining in Jehovah's worship in the second chapter of his prophecies the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and all the nation shall flow unto it they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore as long as this age lasts there shall be wars and rumors

of wars however one understands the millennium it will not be a period in which war will be totally banished from the earth but in the new earth they shall learn war no more that is heaven we have the same vision in

Isaiah 11 they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain it is a most glorious vision that we have here in this chapter what harmony there is to be at present nature is red in tooth and claw but violence and destruction and bloodshed will be replaced by perfect harmony everywhere the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them and the cow and the bear shall feed the young ones shall lie down together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatry's den what a marvelously thrilling picture I'm not arguing that we may not have figurative language here but that is not at all the same thing as saying the passage has to be spiritualized in spiritualizing it away we lose the main thrust of the message in its fullest sense

I believe this I believe this describes not the messianic age in which we now live not the conditions in some future millennium these conditions will be fully realized only when this earth has passed away and the new earth has emerged this is heaven the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea Jeremiah has a similar vision and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them Jeremiah 31 34 Habakkuk has it too for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea Habakkuk 2 and 14 earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord that surely cannot describe conditions ever realized in this age this is the new earth this is heaven one of the most magnificent passages in the Old Testament is Isaiah 65 verses 17 to 25 let me read it to you for behold

I create new heavens and a new earth and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind but be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create for behold I create Jehuzalem a rejoicing and her people a joy and I will rejoice in Jehuzalem and joy in my people and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her nor the voice of crying there shall be no more thence an infant of days nor an old man that hath not filled his days for the child shall die an hundred years old but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed and they shall build houses and inhabit them and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them they shall not build and another inhabit they shall not plant and another eat for as the days of a tree are the days of my people and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands they shall not labour in vain nor bring forth for trouble for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them and it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer and while they are yet speaking

I will hear the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock the dust and dust shall be the serpent's meat they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord it is very clearly indicated here that this applies to the new age the eternal order after Christ returns verse 17 tells us I create new heavens and a new earth so complete is the transformation that the former sin-ridden earth shall not be remembered and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind some dispute this interpretation on the basis of verse 20 there shall be no more thence an infant of days nor an old man that hath not filled his days for the child shall die an hundred years old but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed this cannot they say refer to the eternal order where there shall be no death and no sinner certainly this is a difficult verse but what does it say is it saying that there will be death on the new earth that surely is out of the question verse 19 says the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her nor the voice of crying you cannot say that that of a society where people die infant mortality and the premature death of adults cause much sorrow on this earth the first part of verse 20 is saying that such sorrow will be unknown in the new earth the third clause of the verse can be rendered as it is in the new international version he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth it is not really implied that anyone will die at a hundred this is the prophet's way of saying in his own telling way that was particularly meaningful to the people of his day at a hundred years is anything but a great age what of the final clause of verse 20 the word translated sinner means someone who has missed the mark usually of course the term is used in the scriptures in a strictly moral sense and then the word sinner is the accurate translation but can it not mean here one who has failed to reach a hundred years of age he who falls short of a hundred years shall be reckoned accursed is how Leupold translates the clause he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed is

the new international version rendering again it is not being implied anyone will fail to reach a hundred and be reckoned accursed it is a prophet's telling way of emphasizing how different it will be in the new earth with regard to this matter of lifespan we know of course it will be life that shall never end

[49 : 41] I do not believe that this explanation is special pleading it is the one demanded by the context in the following chapter we read for as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me saith the Lord so shall your seed and your name remain and it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another and from one sabbath to another shall all flesh come and worship before me saith the Lord the regular worship of God will be a characteristic of the inhabitants of the new earth this is stated in terms familiar to the people of Isaiah's day from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath the words are not to be taken in a strictly literal fashion a glorious future for the people of God is predicted in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48 it is given in terms that would be particularly meaningful to the exiled Jews of Ezekiel's day it describes a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem with its religious ritual and animal sacrifices

Ezekiel saw a river issuing out of the temple and the leaves of the tree growing on either side of it are for medicine for healing Ezekiel 47 verse 12 amazingly dispensationalists interpret this literally the temple will be rebuilt and animal sacrifices restored in the coming millennial age but it is surely crystal clear that this is not to be understood in that literal way indeed the similarity of the language and of the imagery in Revelation 22 settles it for me that Ezekiel's prophecy refers to the age to come the eternal order the new earth the new Jerusalem heaven itself and he showed me a pure river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river was there the tree of life which bore bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession

God says to his son in Psalm 2 he shall be given the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession he shall reign over the new earth the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever Revelation 11 15 his large and great dominion shall from sea to sea extend it from the river shall reach forth unto earth's utmost end there is to be a restoration of all things God's creation shall be marvelously renewed there shall be a new earth he that is Christ must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything as he promised long ago through his holy prophets Acts 3 and 21 when that time comes heaven shall come down to earth

God's dwelling place shall no longer be away from the earth the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God and the dwelling place of God shall be with men heaven and earth will no longer be separated as now the redeemed shall be in heaven while they live on the new earth in the new age heaven and earth are merged that as I see it is the Christian doctrine of heaven and I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea and I John saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying behold the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God and 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

Revelation 21 1 to 4 it is a breathtakingly magnificent picture that is presented to us here the redeemed church the holy city new Jerusalem comes as a bride adorned for her husband she is perfect utterly sinless a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing holy and without blemish sorrow and crying are no more the diseases the pains the partings the emotional disturbances the tragedies the experiences of anguish all inevitably a part of this present existence are passed away forever not a suggestion of a tear shall ever dim the eye of any citizen in the holy city we shall enjoy unbroken fellowship with God and with one another bliss beyond our ability now to imagine shall be ours forever and ever the splendor of the holy city is infinitely greater than anything we can ever experience in this age jasper gold sapphire chalcedony emeralds sardonyx chrysolite beryl topaz chrysoprases jacons amethyst pearl there is no temple there for we shall enjoy direct and continuous fellowship with our God we are social beings and we shall remain social beings the new Jerusalem is a city we shall know no solitariness or loneliness we shall be part of a

