

SESSION 14: NEW CREATION

All the Apostles, who themselves were Jews by birth, realized that God had done something new in Christ. Their past was just a shadow, a sign post pointing to this day they were now experiencing! And when the light comes, shadows disappear. When the destination is reached, sign posts have served their purpose! This is what the early Church understood.

In this session, we are going to look at New Creation—how the gospel writers portrayed it, and how the early church understood it!

If Mathew, in his gospel, portrayed Jesus as having fulfilled Israel's calling and purpose, then John in his rather different gospel, portrays Jesus as ushering in New Creation!

For example:

- John begins his gospel with the words, "In the beginning..." creating a parallel with the opening words of the Book of Genesis, chapter 1:1 "In the beginning..."
- John goes on to refer to Jesus as the light of all mankind (1:4) and the true light that gives light to everyone (1:9), echoing Genesis 1: 3, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."
- In John 20:22, Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and they were born again (Jn 1:12-13). This echoes God breathing into Adam, and Adam became a living soul. Remember Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born again before he could see the kingdom of God (Jn 3). Nicodemus was perplexed by Jesus' statement and asked if a man can enter his mother's womb a second time. Jesus seemed surprised at his response and after further elaboration said, in disbelief, "You are Israel's teacher and do you not understand these things" (:10). Why was Jesus so hard on Nicodemus? Because New Creation was not a hidden idea. It's what the call of Abraham was all about, and it was all through the law and the prophets, in particular in Isaiah 60 to 66. In Isaiah 65:17, for example, God says, "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth..."
- John records Jesus' final words on the cross, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). These echo the words of Genesis 2:1, "By the seventh day, God had 'finished the

work' he had been doing, ..and God rested from all his work." And now with Christ's 'finished work,' the true rest, the true Sabbath, had been ushered in!

- The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had "their eyes opened," when they meet with the risen Jesus as recorded in Luke 24:31, echoing Genesis 3:7 and symbolically reversing the fall, when Adam and Eve had their 'eyes opened' when they sinned against God.
- The Resurrection was on the first day of the week (Mk 16:9), indicating new beginnings in the purpose and plan of God.
- The disciples meet on the first day of the week, (Acts 20:7, 1Cor 16:2). For the disciples, Jesus' resurrection signaled a new beginning for their lives and in their journey with God.

Christ Fulfills what the Old Testament Points Towards

When the light shines, shadows disappear. When the destination is reached, sign posts have served their purpose! The Old Testament provided the shadows, the pictures, the sign posts. Christ and the New Testament provides the reality and the destination!

Paul, the converted Pharisee, says in Colossians 2:16-17, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

And in Galatians 6:15, Paul says, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." These external ordinances of circumcision, Sabbath day, etc. were but shadows and sign posts. Christ is the reality and the fulfillment!

Then we have the Book of Hebrews, written primarily to Jewish believers, which talks so much about the Old Testament as shadows. For example, Hebrews 10:1 says, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves."

So, Christ fulfills all that the Old Testament points to!

What Exactly did Christ Fulfill? What is this Reality, this New Creation, that Jesus has Brought About?

Is it being in heaven, with Jesus, forever, when we die? Hardly! It's new heavens, new earth, new humanity and eternity! It's the full realization of God's before-the-world-began dream!

Paul talks about new-creation in so much of his writings. For example, Paul says, in Ephesians 4:10, "He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe." Paul is explaining here that Jesus—the resurrected Jesus—now fills the entire universe. Jesus, being the first-born of New Creation, now fills the entire universe (both heaven and earth) with New Creation!

And what might this New Creation look like? New Creation is just like this present creation but, oh so much better! Paul explains New Creation in terms of the reconciliation of all things. In Colossians 1:19-20, Paul says, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

So, firstly, New Creation is the reconciliation of all things, not the 'doing away' of all things as many Christians have thought. And it's not the reconciliation of just some things. 'All things' includes people, families, nations, societies, authorities, the natural world of animals, sea creatures and birds, and in fact, all of nature. Indeed, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever." (Rev 11:15)

Secondly, 'all things' includes the heavens and not just the earth (:20) 'all things, whether things on earth or things **in heaven**.' This undoubtedly includes invisible heavenly things such as 'rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm' (Eph 4:10), but it must also include physical things such as the world of planets, stars and solar systems—the entire cosmos. There was a time when the earth was "formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep," (Gen 1:2). Then God's Spirit hovered over all this emptiness and darkness and God began to say, "Let there be..." and after six days this empty, formless planet was a beautiful creation pulsating with life!

If God, in Christ, has also reconciled the heavens as well as the earth, and he fills the heavens as well as the earth with new-creation, then it stands to reason that the heavens, the entire cosmos, will be made new. God, the Bible says, is making all things new (Rev 21:5)! It will be the easiest thing for God to once again speak the words, "Let there be..." and this time to the entire universe, which at this present time is 'formless and empty with darkness over the face of the deep!'

Thirdly, Paul attributes all this New Creation and reconciliation to the 'work of the cross.' Again, in Colossians 1:19-20, we read, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, **by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.**" This is the more complete understanding of the work of the cross! The cross is not about getting a few people saved so they can go to heaven for all eternity. Christ's work on the cross achieves this incredible reconciliation of 'all things,' on earth and in heaven. It achieves New Creation!

And fourthly and finally, Paul refers to all of this as a mystery. In writing to the Church at Ephesus he says, "...with all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." (Eph 1:8-10)

And, God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit and the scriptures, has made known to us the mystery of his will. The question is, do we truly understand this incredible, amazing mystery? Have we grasped the life-transforming knowledge of this mystery, and the understanding this mystery would truly bring, the way it did for the first disciples?

Is this Reconciliation of All Things a Done Deal? YES, YES IT IS!

Is it fully realized? No, it's not!

New Creation will be fully realized when Jesus returns. Acts 3:21 says, "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to **restore everything**, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

Or in Paul's words, "to be put into effect (i.e. New Creation, the reconciliation of all things, to be put into effect) when the times reach their fulfillment." (Eph 1:10)

So, New Creation has now come! In Christ it is a done deal. Jesus has inaugurated New Creation through his resurrection. It is, however, yet to be fully realized—fully manifest! This full realization and manifestation of new creation awaits Christ's return! That is, **now** it is a done deal but **not yet** fully realized!

So what's going on now in this New Testament age? What is God's agenda for this age? Well, if the return of Christ is the ultimate event that ushers in the realization of New Creation, then this age is the penultimate event—the second to the last major event!

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:11, in talking about Israel and what they went through in the wilderness, says, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the **culmination of the ages has come.**"

So, Paul is saying two things here: Firstly, that the culmination, the end, the climax of all the ages from Adam until now has come in this age. The New Testament age is the last age before New Creation is fully realized. Hallelujah! Secondly, all that happened to Israel, in the wilderness, are lessons for us in preparation for the full realization of New Creation at the return of Christ!

Just as the wilderness was preparation for Israel to enter the Promised land, so this age is preparation for us to enter our Promised Land, our true inheritance in Christ, the double portion of the first born, adoption to sonship, to rule and to reign with God over God's new and eternal world, over a reconciled heavens and earth!