

We Will All Be Changed

REVIEW: If you have been with us for the last few weeks you know that we are finishing up our series on how we will all be changed. We started the series on the very upbeat topic of death. We looked at what death is for the believer as described by scripture, why death is a part of the world, and the fact that it is okay and even natural to miss those that have died.

Last week we looked at heaven - how we can not even begin to fully comprehend the glories of heaven. We also looked at the reality of heaven - it is a real place, it is remote from this world, and it is a far better existence than this world. We saw the value of heaven, the splendor of heaven, its mystery, and the healing and comfort in heaven. We are citizens, right this very moment of the kingdom of heaven - if we have trusted Christ as our Savior.

INTRO: Today I want to talk a little about eschatology. That is the end times, or the end of this world, and the beginning of eternity.

I. Studying eschatology

- A. It is a two edged sword to study the end times theology
- B. It certainly has its merits which I will get to in a minute here, but there are certain drawbacks that keep me from going after doing large preaching series on eschatology
 - 1. One of the reasons I do not dwell on eschatology much is that people become so passionate about things that we can only know so much about
 - a) For example, in my first church we had a man that loved eschatology
 - (1) He would talk with you for long periods of time about it
 - (2) To the point where you wanted to run from the conversation
 - (3) One day after going to another church in the area for a “singspiration” he engaged me in a long conversation about who it was that would rebel at the end of the millennium if there were nothing but Christians left on earth
 - (a) Of all the things to be worried about or get into an argument about
 - (b) Seriously, is this how Christians should spend their time?
 - (c) There are people dying without Christ, headed for an eternity without Christ, and we are arguing tiny points of theology that we can’t even prove 100%
 - (d) If ever there were an argument in which I would have to agree with people that the church is irrelevant, watching Christians argue over theology that is partial conjecture would be it
 - 2. Eschatology can be a huge distraction from where our efforts need to be in this world

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- C. Does this mean that eschatology is not important? Of course not!
 - 1. We certainly need to understand where life is going, and how things will end!
 - 2. Do you want to know the number one reason why? BECAUSE GOD PUT IT IN THE BIBLE!
 - a) If we ignore the end times theology
 - b) If we ignore the book of Revelation and say it is too hard to understand
 - c) What we are doing is turning our backs on something that God has communicated to us
- D. So when it comes to end times theology, my biggest encouragement is not to lose the forest for the trees
 - 1. Don't get bogged down by details and endless debates over things that can't be proven completely
 - 2. There is a big picture, and we need to understand that
 - 3. We even need to understand the details - just don't get caught up in them
 - 4. So, big picture:
 - a) God will judge this world - that is clear
 - b) We do not know exactly when
 - c) We do not know exactly how - yes there are many details given and we can take some educated guesses as to how, but we can't be too dogmatic about it
 - 5. Take educated guesses, form opinions about the details, but never let the details distract you from the ministry God has called you to here and now
 - 6. In fact, the things we do understand about the end times should serve as motivators for us in our mission for God here on earth
- II. So today, rather than get bogged down by the trees, we are going to look at the forest, or the big picture in regard to how God will renew all things
 - A. For starters, I hope that I do not have to do much work to display to you that the world is a broken place
 - 1. God created it perfect
 - 2. Adam and Eve messed it all up and sin and death entered the world, and the world has been broken ever since
 - B. This brokenness affected the nation of Israel as well
 - 1. God called Abram to become a great nation
 - 2. As his family grew into a great people, and a nation, God gave the people laws that governed every area of their lives
 - a) The reason He gave them all of these laws was because they were a nation

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- (1) While some laws were about faith
 - (2) Many laws were about domestic disputes, property, and a whole host of other areas of life
 - b) I point this out because I am so tired of people telling me that some things aren't sinful because I wear a shirt of multiple fabrics
 - (1) In case you don't get that, the OT law says that you are not to wear clothes made from more than one fabric
 - (2) The problem is that God gave the laws for reasons for the nation of Israel
 - (3) Many of those laws, especially the moral code is still in affect, yet the others parts of the law are not binding on us as believers in Christ
 - (a) That is a very over simplified view
 - (b) It takes the Bible and reduces it to a rule book, with no respect for history, culture, or complex relationships that existed at the time
 3. Now, back to the main point, how did Israel do in keeping these laws that the Lord gave?
 - a) That's right, epic failure!
 - b) They could not keep the law, which only pointed out their desperate need for a Savior
- C. Enter the prophets
1. In the middle of this epic failure, the prophets begin to speak life to Israel
 2. They begin to focus on what God had for them in the future
 3. Allow me to give you some examples
 - a) Isaiah 35:1 "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom."
 - (1) The desert will be glad; the wilderness will blossom
 - (2) In the original, wilderness comes first, and desert second.
 - (a) The word for wilderness refers to any uninhabitable land (including desert)
 - (b) So as is often true in Hebrew, the author is using synonyms to speak of the same thing
 - (3) The point is, that when God renews the earth, the desert, the barren land will spring to life and be glad
 - b) Amos 9:13 - the mountains will drip with sweet wine
 - (1) Now I have been to the top of several mountains in my life
 - (2) Very few of them have much life to speak of - in fact, to try to sustain life there would be very difficult without outside help

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- (3) Amos' point is that when God restores, the mountains will produce life - and sweet life at that
 - c) Isaiah 65:19 (Revelation 21:4) - The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more
 - (1) Realize that what Isaiah is referring to is earth bound
 - (2) We often think of that as being in heaven, and in fact if you read careful Rev. 21 you understand that the no more tears or crying is in reference to where we will live eternally - the new heaven and new earth
 - d) Isaiah 11:6-9 - this describes animals that were never meant to hang out together hanging out together
 - (1) I dare say that if I entered some of your homes, someone in here probably has a statue or a painting of the wolf and the lamb lying down together because the image brings us comfort because it means things will be decidedly different
 - (2) We have no idea how this will happen - if the wolf realizes that the vegetarian lifestyle really is for him - all we know is God told us that the order of things that we know here will be very different and peaceful there
 - (3) The end of this verse is repeated in Habakkuk - the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord like the waters cover the sea
- D. Now, enter Jesus in the history of salvation
- 1. Jesus begins to do miraculous things that all testify to what this restoration will look like
 - 2. Jesus cast out disease - something absent from the new heavens and new earth
 - 3. Jesus rose people back to life - a sign of new life
 - 4. Nature itself submits to Jesus - and with good reason
 - 5. Jesus even tells the disciples a little of what life will be like
 - a) He will sit on the throne
 - b) The disciples will sit with Him and judge the nations
 - c) This is speaking of significant roles played in eternity
- III. The curse the world is under will be lifted - Romans 8:18-23
- A. The Bible is clear that all of creation was subjected to frustration
- 1. It is waiting for the day that it will be liberated
 - a) So if you have ever seen Disney's animated "Beauty and the Beast" you are getting a glimpse of what this may be like - the Hollywood, stylized version
 - b) Take a look: VIDEO: Beauty and the Beast

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2. So all of creation is similar to this in that it is under a curse and eagerly waiting for the day that the curse will be lifted
- B. But there is something else to notice in verse 23 - we are waiting too
 1. It says we are the first fruits of the Spirit - We are those that have partaken of salvation
 2. Yet we groan inwardly as we too are eager for our adoption to sonship (or our adoption to be complete) - the redemption of our bodies
 3. So let me make this real easy and clear: what Paul is saying is we already possess salvation through the Spirit, but we are still waiting for our full adoption to be finished and us to receive not just our spirit's renewal but our bodies as well
 - a) Its like a kid that knows he is being adopted, is excited, has the relationship with the family already, has even watched as the papers were filled out
 - b) But now he has to wait for the day he leaves the orphanage or adoption center and becomes part of the family in the fullest sense
 - (1) He was already a part of the family
 - (2) But now, he receives in full, what it means to be part of that family
 - c) That's us - we are waiting to not only change our address from here to the kingdom, but waiting for the curse to be lifted and for us to receive our perfect bodies as well
- IV. Allow me to go to one more place to show you what things will be like when we get to the eternal estate where we will live forever - 1 Corinthians 15:35ff
 - A. 35-44: This is kind of a long passage to say a few things
 1. Paul uses an agricultural illustration to say that this body will wear out
 - a) You have to love the youthfulness of youth
 - (1) They are completely unaware that their bodies are perishable
 - (a) They will do some of the craziest things
 - (b) And let's face it, those of us adults in the room did some crazy things when we were younger
 - (2) Now that I am older though, I become aware that I am very much perishable
 - (a) The fact is I can hurt myself laying down napping on the couch
 - (b) I sleep in the wrong position, or roll over some way and hurt myself
 - b) Face it, we go through stages: Being able to do it all, being able to do it all but it feels different after, not being able to do what you used to do, then you don't want to do what you used to do, and then you die.

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2. But here is the point Paul is making: The body is like a seed and eventually it will wear out and die
 - a) You can eat a healthy diet, you can exercise, run, bike, lift weights (other than yourself off the couch)
 - (1) Which by the way, is the responsible thing to do
 - (2) There are a lot of people that say that the church never preaches against gluttony
 - (a) A couple problems with this charge against the church - first being that gluttony is bigger than just food
 - i) Gluttony is over reaching in many areas including food
 - (b) Second, gluttony is not a major topic in Scripture
 - i) Should it be preached - of course, because its there
 - ii) But in balance with the Bible, Scripture is more concerned with humanity regaining a right relationship with God - which would then assist in humanity treating it other properly
 - (3) So back to the point, you can take care of yourself in every way - and that is the responsible way to live when you understand that we use and do not abuse the bodies God gave us, but these bodies will eventually die
 - b) But that gives way for our new bodies - our glorified bodies
 - (1) Just as the seed going in the ground and dying gives way to a new form of life, and a new body for the plant to live on
- B. 45-49: Paul is now contrasting Adam and Jesus
1. Where the contrast overlaps is the fact that Jesus became a human being so that we could have spiritual life
 2. Because He did so, and because Jesus received a spiritual, glorified body, those of us that are in Christ will receive the same - a spiritual glorified body
 - a) So if you have ever bought into the pop culture stereotype that we will be angels sitting in clouds strumming harps, or disembodied spirits in eternity - please get that out of your head
 - b) We will have a perfect and glorified body
 - c) What that looks like we don't fully know
 - (1) The Bible says we will be known as we were known - so somehow we will know each other
 - (2) If Jesus body is the prototype so to speak
 - (a) Jesus teleported from Emmaus to Jerusalem
 - (b) Jesus walked through walls

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- (3) Do I know that is in the future for us? No - that is speculation, but it is an educated guess (something we are not to get all bent out of shape about)
3. Think on this for a minute: Augustine in his book, *City of God* pondered the body in eternity
 - a) He mused on the idea that perhaps we would no longer have an immune system, or liver
 - b) Because those things are designed to filter out the viruses and junk in this world
 - c) When God makes all things new, we will have no need for those things
 - d) Again, all speculation, but interesting to think about
- C. 50-53: these verses can be easily overextended in the evangelical world
1. Their meaning is fairly simple and straightforward
 2. The dead will be raised to new life, an imperishable life, an immortal life, a life of no corruption at all
 - a) They are raised imperishable because the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable
 3. Because the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable, even those that are alive at this point in history (at the last trumpet) (there is a debate as to when exactly this happens) they must be changed to imperishable bodies
 - a) So let's assume you make it to this point in history
 - b) You cannot enter eternity in your present body - it must be changed to an imperishable one
 - c) Which only proves that we will all have new, perfect bodies that have been changed because of, and by Jesus Himself
- D. 54-55: There is a day coming when we get to mock death
1. This verse will get used on occasion at funerals, but really it is not that day when we get to mock death
 2. It is when we are clothed with immortal, imperishable bodies at the last trumpet
 3. It is when death has been fully and completely defeated in its truest sense, and is no longer a threat
- V. In the end, things will be completely renewed and changed
- A. Isaiah 65:17 - When the new heavens and the new earth come, we will not remember the pains of this life
1. I doubt we lose all memory
 2. I think we lose sight of that which was not perfect, because our attention and focus is fully on our Savior

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B. How does the renewal occur?

1. There is a idea out there in the evangelical world that the earth will be destroyed by fire, and a new one put out in its place
 - a) And I may stretch or blow a few minds, because quite frankly mine was stretched too, until someone showed me this
 - b) And part of this is also about method of interpretation
 - (1) I am proudly a biblical literalist meaning I interpret the Bible literally as a general rule
 - (2) There are those out there, and for this very reason we will discuss, that make fun of literalism using reductio ad absurdum reasoning - which is a false argument in this case
2. Go to 2 Peter 3:10-13
 - a) There is a lot of talk about fire, so this seems like an open and shut case - the earth will be destroyed by fire
 - b) But wait! There is one word this all hinges on, and that is the word “new” in verse 13
 - (1) There are several words for new in Greek, each with slightly different nuances
 - (a) This is where a couple of simple Greek study helps are handy
 - (2) The two most common are “neos” and “kainos”
 - (a) Neos - sounds like what it is - we have the neonatal ward at the hospital, we call someone new to something a neophyte
 - i) It means new origin
 - (b) Kainos on the other hand means new in quality
 - (3) So if you build a new house for yourself - that is new in origin
 - (4) If you buy an older house and fix it up, that is new in quality
 - c) The word used here in Peter, again in Revelation, and everywhere the renewal of the earth is spoken of in scripture the word for new in quality is used
 - (1) So we will not have a new earth as new in origin, or freshly built
 - (2) We will have a new earth as in renewed - one that has been remade, or made anew
 - (a) Which brings us back to “Beauty and the Beast”
 - (b) The lifting of the curse
 - d) Some of you may be thinking, “But what about that language of fire”
 - (1) This is that biblical literalism thing
 - (2) This is apocalyptic language, so can very well be symbolic
 - (3) The fire may simply refer to the burning off of sin, unrighteousness and the curse that the world has been under
 - e) Its more like a blacksmith or silversmith that is purifying metal

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- (1) That is what Jesus is doing to the earth
- (2) Purifying it by fire

VI. When all is said and done, where do we end up for eternity?

- A. We end up in perfect, glorified bodies that are imperishable
- B. We end up reigning and ruling with Christ
- C. On a perfectly remade, renewed world in which there is no sickness, no fear, no disease, no need to lock the gates because there is no one to harm us
- D. And with that picture in mind I take you back to Romans 8:18
 1. These present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that is to come
 - a) This is something I still have to learn
 - b) I get frustrated at these present sufferings, and I don't even know suffering
 - (1) Paul was beaten, stoned, left for dead, shipwrecked, had a snake bite him when he finally got on land
 - (2) My sufferings are far from suffering - and I am still learning that these are "light and momentary" compared with the glory that is to come
 2. If this description of heaven doesn't get you going, if this does not serve as a motivation to obey, no matter how difficult, nothing will
 3. The glory that is to come for all of us that have put our faith in Christ, far out weighs any difficulty that life, or obedience to Christ may throw at us in this life
 - a) A lesson we all need to soak in
 - b) We all need to allow that to overtake our hearts and our lives as we live out this life for Jesus