

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 87 – REVELATION 21 - NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

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***We have finally reached that point in the narrative where God has achieved His goal of creating “man in His image” and as a consequence, God and man can dwell face to face in the New Jerusalem.***

- ◆ Although the stunning description of heaven in Revelation 21 with its streets of gold and foundations of precious stones is meant to impress John's readers, to focus on the splendour of the surroundings is to miss the real intention of life in heaven.
- ◆ As we have seen through this series, God has gone to extraordinary lengths to bring about this final conclusion of bringing God and humanity face to face.
- ◆ So the focus of the whole exercise is not to impress us with the splendour of the heavenly surroundings, but rather the reality of living with our God, face to face, sharing in the life and love of the Trinity (Revelation 21:3).

***So what insights can we discern from scripture on what life will be like in heaven.***

- ◆ 1) We will inhabit new heavens and new earth.
- ◆ We started this series speaking about the two dimensions of life in the cosmos, physical life in chronos time, and spiritual life in eternal time.
- ◆ Jesus injected Himself into chronos time in order to shatter the stranglehold sin and death had on humanity but also to establish the new creation based on heavenly eternal time.
- ◆ Our inclusion in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis then for the creation of the “new humanity” which will live on into eternity.
- ◆ ***2 Corinthians 5:17-18 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.***

***But it is not just man that is redeemed by Jesus' resurrection; it has implications for the whole of fallen creation.***

- ◆ As discussed earlier, because of Satan's rebellion and Adam's sin, mankind's destiny and the whole creation were set on a trajectory of decay, corruption and death (Romans 8:20-22).
- ◆ And neither the natural world nor humanity can do anything about it; it is beyond our control.
- ◆ But it is not beyond the control of the one who is the source and creator of life who is Lord of both chronos and eternal time.
- ◆ ***1 Corinthians 15:45-49 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.***
- ◆ Notice Paul's distinction between the two dimensions. The created first Adam was given life in a physical body in time and space, the second Adam, Jesus, not only was raised immortal, but has the power to give spiritual life to others, ***a life-giving spirit.***
- ◆ ***V.46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.***
- ◆ As the purpose of the decaying four-dimensional world of time and space is now redundant, it is no longer necessary for a humanity that has passed from mortality to immortality.
- ◆ So God puts the sad decaying period of rebellion and sin to the torch and replaces it with the new heavens and the new earth.
- ◆ ***2 Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.***
- ◆ This reality is echoed in Revelation 21.
- ◆ ***Revelation 21:1 [A New Heaven and a New Earth] Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.***
- ◆ And as there is no longer an old decaying world to live in, God will provide us with a glorious spiritual body especially designed to inhabit the eternal dimension of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)
- ◆ 2) What kind of body will this new heavenly creature have?

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- ◆ We have covered some of this in an earlier session on the resurrection, so we don't need to spend a lot of time on it
- ◆ However, the time is coming when we will have the same type of immortal body as the risen Christ has
- ◆ **1 John 3:1-2 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**
- ◆ Incredibly, humans will be infused with the very spiritual life of the Godhead so we can share in their existence as their children.
- ◆ Although we are limited in what we can know at this time as we just read, there are some things we can know.
- ◆ The apostle Paul gives us some insight into the spiritual realm in 1 Corinthians 15.
- ◆ The first thing he explains is, we will have a body, and we will not be disembodied spirits floating around in space.
- ◆ Our new spiritual bodies we will have will be perfectly suited to the spiritual environment of the new heavens and the new earth.
- ◆ **1 Corinthians 15:49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.**
- ◆ So in the same way we are presently in the image of the earthly man Adam, one day we will be in the image of the heavenly man, Jesus Christ.
- ◆ **V.50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**

**But although it will not be a flesh and blood body, the spiritual body we will have still retains an important connection to our discarded physical bodies.**

- ◆ When Jesus appeared out of nowhere to His disciples in the upper room after His resurrection with His new spiritual body, He was still recognisable as Jesus (John 20:19-20).
- ◆ So not only is Jesus raised immortal, but also we see his "personhood" transcending death in the miracle of the resurrection.
- ◆ In other words, there was a continuation of His personal being and existence of the man Jesus before and after His resurrection.

**But don't for a moment think this was the true glorified spiritual body that appeared to the disciples. This was merely a shadow of the now glorified Jesus Christ.**

- ◆ A better description of the glorified body of the risen Christ is found in Luke 9 when He was transfigured before Peter, James and John.
- ◆ **Luke 9:28-30 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.**
- ◆ Here was the living Christ in all His divine glory, the same body He will have on His return, and we will then see Him as he truly is, because **"we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).**
- ◆ The amazing truth that humans will also have a glorious spiritual body is confirmed here at the transfiguration.
- ◆ **V.30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.**
- ◆ Both Moses and Elijah, humans, also appeared with glorified spiritual bodies.
- ◆ But notice here too there is some connection between the old mortal bodies and their new spiritual bodies as both of these men were recognizable as Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:3-4).
- ◆ But just as a plant is so much more glorious than the seed from which it grew, so it will be with our glorified spiritual bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35-37).

**But there is an important reason why we need "bodies" and it goes back to God's purpose for us – to be created in the image of God.**

- ◆ In other words, to be a true human is to have the same nature and character of the Trinity.
- ◆ The Father, Son and Holy Spirit share a deep, intimate personal relationship between them.

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 87 – REVELATION 21 - NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

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- ◆ This is difficult for us to grasp in our four-dimensional world, but this relationship is so intimate that they are what they are only in relationship to each other and it can be said that they live in and through each other.
  - ◆ Try to wrap your mind around that concept!
  - ◆ But it seems that even in our present corrupt state God has created this same desire in us so that there is another life longing to break forth in us.
  - ◆ ***Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT) He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.***
  - ◆ There is this basic yearning to want to share our existence with others, in other words, to share intimate relationships with others.
  - ◆ Unfortunately, because of our selfish, fallen nature, instead of wanting to live and share our existence with one another and to live for the other, we resort to manipulating and control to achieve our own selfish ends and this of course disrupts relationships.
  - ◆ This will all change with our new glorified spiritual body, which is made in the likeness of Jesus Christ.
  - ◆ ***Romans 6:5 (NKJV) For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.***
  - ◆ He of course loves us so much He sacrificed Himself just so He could live and share His existence with us and we with Him.
  - ◆ This is ultimately what love is, and why God describes Himself as love (1 John 4:8).
  - ◆ So contrary to the dehumanising messages of our age, these newly created humans will reflect the divine nature of the community that is at the heart of the Trinity.
  - ◆ Real personhood revolves around a community in relationship, not in the false concept of this age, individualism.
  - ◆ We need each other and can only truly be ourselves in relation to one another, that is why relationship breakups or the death of a loved one is so painful, part of us dies with them.
  - ◆ True humanity is to embrace relationships, a relationship with God and with other beings.
  - ◆ But love is a medium or expression that necessitates separate entities or persons without which it cannot exist.
  - ◆ God too, is a trinity of three persons for this very reason, to be able to express love to one another.
  - ◆ So if we are to love, praise, serve and live with God, we will need a body to express these characteristics in the spiritual dimension of heaven.
  - ◆ It is with these new spiritual bodies in relationship that we will reflect and participate with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the inner life of the triune God, or to put it another way, we will enjoy Holy Communion with one another.
  - ◆ We will share in his rule, his love, his judgment, his salvation, his mercy, his grace, his healing, and his wisdom.
- There is another benefit of having this remarkable spiritual body and that is, it is incapable of sin. We will look at that next time.***