

“Heaven”

VII. “Ruling on the New Earth”

Recap important points:

-There are two stages of heaven: Intermediate and Eternal Heaven (New Heaven and New Earth)

-When mankind fell, creation fell. Both are under the curse of death.

Therefore, both were redeemed through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

-Jesus’ physical resurrection is the model for our physical resurrection.

-This present Earth will not be annihilated, rather restored, resurrected, redeemed, transformed from this *prototype* to the final New Earth.

-We will rule with Jesus, under His authority, on the New Earth.

-God’s original plan had no “oops” in it. Redemption was part of His original plan, and God’s original plan will be realized (Revelation 21:1).

-When we (the Church, the Bride of Christ) are presented to him, we will be wearing our acts of service, ministry and righteousness, as our Fine Linen (Revelation 19:8).

In part 7 we will focus on “Ruling on the New Earth” by answering 3 main questions:

- 1. What does God’s eternal Kingdom involve?**
- 2. Will we actually rule with Christ?**
- 3. How will we rule God’s Kingdom?**

Augustine once said, “Why do we not know the country whose citizens we are? Because we have wandered so far away that we have forgotten it. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the king of the land, came down to us, and drove forgetfulness from our heart. God took to Himself our flesh so that He might be our way back.”

What does God’s eternal Kingdom involve?

***If you were to describe a kingdom, what elements would you include?**

Why is it when we think of God’s Kingdom, we often think only of a ruler and subjects, but we leave out the territory and the culture? We tend, once again, to spiritualize it, perceiving it as otherworldly and intangible. But Scripture tells us otherwise.

God’s kingdom involves things we see on this present earth, only without the corruption of sin and evil.

**But didn't Jesus say his kingdom wasn't earthly?*

In **John 8:23** Jesus said, "I am not of this world." Notice he did NOT say, "I am not *in* or *on* this world." He was speaking of his place of origin. "I am not of (Gk: *ek, ex* – primary preposition denoting origin) this world."

In **John 18:36**, before Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of (Gk: *ek, ex*) this world...but now (Gk: *nun* – primary particle of **present time**) my kingdom is from another place." Jesus is telling Pilate that God's Kingdom is happening right now, in another place, the place from which Jesus came!

-In the passage, Jesus did not mean that his kingdom wouldn't be on this earth after it is transformed, rather his kingdom isn't of the earth as it is *now*, under the Curse.

-From the structure of the language, God is *holding* his kingdom for us, waiting for the New Earth, where He will deliver his kingdom to the earth and heaven will come down on the earth (**Ephesians 1:10, Revelation 21:1-2**). Although Christ's kingdom isn't *from* the earth, it extends *to* the earth, and one day it will *fully include* the earth and be centered on it.

-Be careful to distinguish between what's "worldly" and what's "earthly" and physical. God's creation is earthly (Genesis 1:31). The product of fallen human culture is worldly (**Romans 12:1-2, Titus 2:12**). The battle of **Christoplatonism** and **Naturalism** rears its ugly head and convinces many Christians that anything earthly is worldly. NOT SO! Just as "sin" and "flesh" are not synonymous. Jesus had flesh (Gk: *sarx*) but He did not sin (**1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 2:14, 2 John 1:7**). Likewise, our *bodies* can be instruments of righteousness, or instruments of sin (**Romans 6:13,12:1**).

A New Earth means God's Kingdom involves *land*.

We've talked previously about God's Kingdom having things one would find in a country and a city. But we must understand, in a continuing effort to battle against Christoplatonism, that **there will be actual land in the eternal Heaven**.

Just as some confuse "flesh" and "sin" or "earth" and "worldly", some confuse "land" with "this present earth." Remember, God created the earth, and gave humans dominion over it. Author David Chilton writes, "Land is basic to dominion; therefore, salvation involves a restoration to land and property. Man is not saved by being delivered out of his environment. Salvation does not rescue us from the material world, but from sin, and from the effects of the Curse. The Biblical idea is for every man to own property – a place where he can have dominion and rule under God."

God's kingdom involves people ruling the land.

Consider **Proverbs 2:21-22**, "For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land."

Proverbs 10:30 says, “The righteous will never be uprooted (Heb: to waver, to fall into decay), but the wicked will not remain in the land.”

Consider these OT passages from Scripture that have the theme of the Earth belonging to God and His people:

“You made [mankind] ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.” (**Psalm 8:6**)

“He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth.” (**Psalm 25:13**) **It’s worth noting that Jesus said the same thing in **Matthew 5:5**, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*

“...The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace...” (**Psalm 37:11**)

“I will preserve You (Messianic reference to Jesus, describing God as the Redeemer of Israel, or Jacob. Remember God’s covenant with Abraham: *I will be your God and you will be my people*, was broken by Israel. Jacob deceived his father, wrestled with God, walked away with a limp, and had a name change to *Israel*. When Jacob, or Israel, limped away, he limped away with God’s restoration and blessing.) and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit desolate heritages.” (**Isaiah 49:8**)

“The man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land (Heb: *erets* – land, earth, soil. It’s the fourth most frequently used noun in the OT, appearing over 2500 times, thus reflecting its centrality) and possess my holy mountain.” (**Isaiah 57:13**)

*With the understanding that God’s Kingdom involves land (and everything that it represents: trees, rivers, rocks, sand, dirt, plants, etc.) and people (and everything that humans “bring to the table”: culture, music, art, communication, relationships, worship, etc.), it begs the next question:

Will we actually rule with Christ?

Jesus said in **Luke 12:32**, “Be not afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

God is the sovereign ruler of the universe, yet He chooses not to rule the universe alone. He has established a hierarchy: responsibilities are given to the angels under the hierarchy of Michael, the archangel (**Jude 1:9, Revelation 12:7**). God created humans in His image and made them creators and rulers over the earth, carrying out God’s divine will. His delight to entrust Earth’s rule to us did not cease when mankind sinned. **Ephesians 1:10** says that God’s plan is to “bring all things in heaven and on

earth together under one head, even Christ.” Notice, bring all things TOGETHER. That means the events of human history are not meaningless. Rather, they are heading toward the fulfillment of a divine plan involving a New Earth with culture and citizens that glorify God.

Revelation 5:1-10 depicts a powerful scene.

In the Intermediate Heaven, God has sealed up, with seven seals, His plan for distributing His estate. In this scene, the entitlement of the estate belongs to the earth and its inhabitants. God had intended humans to rule the earth, but because of sin, we lost that privilege temporarily (**Revelation 5:4**). Only Jesus, in His perfection, is qualified to open the scroll, unveiling God’s continued plan for His Kingdom (**Revelation 5:5-9**). The scene culminates with a statement about Jesus’s followers: “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth,” (**Revelation 5:10**).

If we understand that God’s plan is for people to rule the earth and exercise dominion over it, then it won’t surprise us to find on the New Earth that nations still exist and kings come into the New Jerusalem bringing tribute to Jesus (**Revelation 21:24,26**).

Revelation 11:15 says, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.” Notice, Christ doesn’t destroy the world’s kingdom or even replace it. God will transform, renew, resurrect, the world’s kingdoms into his own. In other words, God won’t obliterate the earthly kingdoms, He will transform them. Alcorn writes, “This is a revolutionary viewpoint, standing in stark contrast to the prevalent myth that God’s kingdom will demolish and replace the kingdoms of Earth rather than cleanse, redeem, and resurrect them into his eternal Kingdom.” **Revelation 21:24-26**, states, regarding the New Jerusalem, “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut...The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”

*Notice: there will be kings and there will be kingdoms. All will be subject to Jesus! Alcorn writes, “The King will delight to entrust the rule of the nations to those who served him faithfully when Earth lived under sin’s shadow, before its triumphant and eternal deliverance.”

*This is why it is so important to live a life that serves Jesus, right now, right here! Remember, our righteous acts will go with us to heaven, and will be our wedding dress when we are presented to our Bridegroom, King Jesus!

Because of **Christoplatonism**, and, quite frankly, bad teaching, it's still hard for Christians to imagine that we will rule the New Earth. So let's consider some more Scripture:

In **Luke 19:17**, Jesus tells a parable where a man is given the responsibility to rule over cities.

In **1 Corinthians 6:2-3**, we're told that the saints (followers of Jesus, Gk: morally pure) will judge the earth (Gk: *kosmos* – the arrangement or world system, actions of earth's inhabitants. *Kosmos* is also used in **John 3:16**. Compare with *ge*, which means land or soil). It also says the saints will judge the angels. The form of the verb "judge" implies that we won't simply judge them a single time, but will continually *rule* them.

2 Timothy 2:12 says that "If we endure, we will also reign with him."

Revelation 22:5 says that God's servants will "reign forever and ever." Notice, this is after the New Heaven and New Earth come together. This is the direct fulfillment of the commission God gave mankind in **Genesis 1:28**: to rule over the earth.

Consider these passages from **Revelation 2-5**:

2:10, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown (rule or authority) of life."

2:26, "To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations."

3:21, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."

5:9-10, "[You] have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on earth (Gk: *ge* – soil, land, region)."

Who does God say will reign? People of every tribe, language, people and nation.

Where will they reign? On Earth, not in some intangible heavenly realm.

Where on Earth? Likely with people of their own tribe, nation and language – cultural distinctives that we are told still exist on the New Earth (**Revelation 21:24,26; 22:2**).

It's important for us to remember all of this is possible because of Jesus. We must remember that because of the redemptive work of Jesus, we are God's children and heirs to His earth. What loving Father would rip his children out of all that is familiar, and cause them to exist in eternity in an unfamiliar, unearthly realm? Certainly not our Heavenly Father! Alcorn writes, "In fact, the inheritance that God grants us is the very same Earth over which epic battles have been fought since Satan's first attack in Eden."

*Currently, on this earth, we share in Christ's sufferings. But on the New Earth, we will share in Christ's Kingdom and rule with Him and co-heirs! Romans 8:16-17 says, "The

Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are his heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

This is why the Bible encourages us to rejoice and be thankful in our present sufferings. We have a New Earth to look forward to, and our focus must remain there (**Matthew 6:20**)! In **Romans 8:18**, the Apostle Paul writes, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

How will we rule God's Kingdom?

First and foremost, we must understand the importance of humility. Throughout Scripture we are told that God honors the humble and reduces the prideful. Those who will rule on the New Earth will be those who lived a life of humility and service, like Jesus did.

In **Matthew 5:3,5,10** Jesus says the humble, the meek, the persecuted will inherit the kingdom of heaven (including the earth).

1 Peter 5:5-6, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

Philippians 2:5 says we are to have the attitude of Jesus: humility and obedience

Our ruling in heaven (on the New Earth) will be in the form of **servicing**. We'll serve God and we'll serve others. It takes humility to serve, and if we don't live with humility on this earth, we won't be able to serve. If we don't serve on this earth, how can God give us more responsibility on the New Earth, or allow us to serve on a greater scale? He can't. He won't.

Isaiah 9:7 says, “Of the increase (Heb: *marbeh* – ever increasing) of his government and peace there will be no end.” How does a government increase? (1) By expanding into previously ungoverned territories or (2) by creating new territories (an option not available to us as humans).

But the kingdom of heaven will be continually expanding, increasing in territory and opportunity for serving.

Does this mean the Earth will literally grow and expand? Possibly.

Does this mean God will continually create new worlds for us to rule and for Him to govern? Why not? Remember, God created the heavens (universe, sky, lofty places) and the earth (land, soil, firmament). Man's sin did not stop God from being God. As creator, does He not have the right to continue His work?

Think about a human artist. Does he/she ever stop creating and expanding his/her art because of encountering difficulties with one piece of art?

Consider the parable of the talents in **Matthew 25:14-30**.

The one who was proven to be the most responsible was given more and more responsibility and influence. **Matthew 25:29** says, "For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." In **Matthew 5:12** Jesus says, "Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven."

Given this, can we not assume that if we prove to be responsible on this earth, we will be rewarded with more responsibility and influence on the New Earth? And if our opportunities increase, won't our wisdom, creative ability, happiness, influence, power, joy, culture, art, skills, etc also increase forever and ever? **And if all of that increases, is it really so hard to imagine that the Earth and the Universe will increase with us?!?!?**

So...

What does God's kingdom involve? Everything we can imagine, using our present earth as a prototype, a model, for a greater, resurrected, restored, renewed and transformed Earth.

Will we rule with Christ? YES! Because we are co-heirs with Him!

How will we rule? In humility and obedience, serving with great joy and increasing opportunities in an ever increasing New World that will never grow stagnant or old!!