

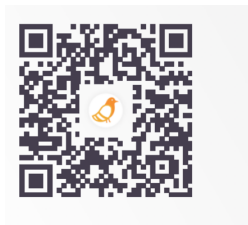
Aside: the main purpose of Bible teaching and study



- There are positive lessons to the first part of the OT as well

In 2s & 3s, discuss how you feel about God needing to go to these lengths to break into our echo chamber

- In your groups, think about the following questions:
- How has this weekend changed our attitude to the new creation?
 - How in practice can we understand the new creation even more, so we don't fall back into the echo chamber of this world? – be specific
 - Extra question if you have time – how has this weekend changed our understanding of what we're seeking to get out of our Bible studies?



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ALLTHINGSNEW

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NEW CREATION 1 – THE FUTURE MATTERS

INTRO – AIMS FOR THE WEEKEND

- To see how important the new creation is in the Bible
- To see how thrilling the new creation is
- To see that it's so thrilling that we build our entire lives around it

HOW THE BIBLE SHOWS THE NEW CREATION IS KEY

The new creation is very big in the NT

- It gets mentioned a lot in the NT
- The NT's statements about it are very strong (e.g. John 18:36, Mark 8:34-38, Hebrews 11:1,13-16, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:19, Philippians 1:21)

BIG SUMMARY – WHOLE BIBLE

- The problem: 2 parts
- The solution we intuitively think
- God reveals the solution that will work
- God accomplishes the solution that will work (Heb 9:28)

I.e. the new creation is essential to God's plan to reverse the Fall, just as essential as the cross

WHY DOES GOD DO IT THIS WAY?

- Not because God made a mistake (Deuteronomy 31:16-18)
- God does things the way we intuitively think is right to teach us that a solution in this world won't work
 - It's not easy to persuade us that what we are hearing in the echo chamber of this world is a lie

GOD'S SOLUTION REVEALED

God reveals his real solution to the fall as he ends the "this world" part of his plan

- Many important truths revealed at this point of the story for the first time
 - E.g. a king who will bring perfect peace (Is 9: 6-7) and a sacrifice who will fully deal with sin (Is 53:4-6, 1:10-14)
- And a new creation in which God will solve the futility of this fallen world (Is 65:17-25, Is 25:6-8)
- All these promises come as a package – fully forgiven people with a perfect king get a new perfect world as the only place they can properly experience God's promised blessings

God's plan shifts focus to a new creation because only there can the problems of this fallen world be properly dealt with

In 2s & 3s, discuss how you feel about God solving the problems of this fallen world in this radical manner

- Vital it's the NT that focuses on this idea

The new creation is crucial in the Bible story

- The Bible is a story, the account of God and what he's doing with a plot that develops over time
 - This story is the only way to understand both God and ourselves
- The story begins with God creating this world, but it being wrecked by human rebellion & God's response of cursing this world (Gen 3:14-24)
 - The rest of the story is about how God fixes this by dealing with both our rebellion and this cursed world through a salvation that He gradually reveals more & more fully
 - Rebellion is dealt with at Jesus' first coming & the curse at his second – God's rescue is only complete when Jesus returns (Rev 21:1-4, 22:1-4)

NEW CREATION 4 – WHY THE FUTURE MATTERS

Why is the new creation big in the NT, but not early on in the OT?

- No explicit mention until around the end of the nation of Israel at the exile
- Not arbitrary – this shift from this world to the new creation at this time is deliberate
- This shift happens in the middle part of the OT where the story of salvation forward in several crucial ways

THE PROBLEM MADE CLEAR

The first part of this shift happens in the wisdom literature

- Wisdom becomes important in the time of Solomon who was king when Israel was at her most successful and most blessed
- The promises God had made to Abraham and the good things he had offered Israel through Moses had apparently all been fulfilled

Ecclesiastes is an example of how these books are beginning the process of shifting the focus of what God is doing from this world to a new creation

- In the rescue that matters, Jesus' rescue of us, what we are rescued for is the new creation (e.g. John 14:1-3)

So the new creation is just as important as the cross, the means of getting there. To focus on one and not the other is to focus on only half the story

The NT attitude to the new creation (Rev 22:20)

In 2s & 3s, how do you feel about the new creation, honestly – excited, wanting to be there, disinterested & rarely thinking about it, hoping it doesn't come too soon because you have so much you want to do before Jesus returns, angry that God is more concerned with a new creation than this one, etc? Why?

WHAT IS THE NEW CREATION & WHY IT'S GREAT

Most Christians don't understand what the new creation will be like

- New creation is a creation, like this one but better (Is 25:6-8, 60:17-22, 1 Cor 15:42-49, 2 Peter 3:13)

- It will be full of purpose, but without the hardship, pain and frustration that accompanies purpose here (Is 65:17-25)

- The highlight will be that we will be with God & Jesus & relate to them perfectly (Rev 21:1-4, 22:1-5)

We don't understand what the new creation is like because many of the descriptions of it are in the OT prophets and also because the descriptions are poetic, meant to fire our imaginations

- We need more than information about the new creation, we need to meditate on it so our imaginations are captured by it

Spend a few minutes on our own or in 2s or 3s thinking about 20 things you are looking forward to in the new creation in the light of what we have been thinking about (tip – think about bad things here you are excited will not be in the new creation as well as good things you like here which will be better there, don't be too cautious)

- So change is easy – all we need to do is listen more to God's truth about the new creation and how wonderful it is

– This involves reading & meditating on the Bible's teaching about the new creation

– E.g. use Bible passages to help us imagine life in the new creation (be bold – it's poetry, 1 Cor 2:9)

- Summary: we're in a propaganda war and we're losing for one reason only – we spend all our time living in the enemy's echo chamber & listening to his propaganda

- Another way to change our mindset is to begin investing in the new creation (Mt 6:19-21)

Final thing: change is gradual – whether in a negative & positive direction

In 2s & 3s & over supper, think about the following question:

- How in practice can we be better at grasping how wonderful the new creation is so we don't lose the propaganda war?

NEW CREATION 2 – WHAT MATTERS IN LIGHT OF FUTURE

HOW CAN WE BECOME THIS SORT OF PERSON?

- How can we get this sort of attitude and desire?
 - If we really get that something is great, our attitude to it changes and everything else changes
- How do we really understand the new creation, it's importance & how wonderful it is?
 - both hard and easy
- **Hard** because the world works hard to persuade us this world is the thing that really matters
 - We are in the middle of a propaganda war – this world is an echo chamber filled with the idea that nothing matters apart from this world
 - This is fake news & misinformation

WHERE ARE WE IN THE STORY?

The first coming of Jesus was the beginning of the end, but all God intends will only be fully accomplished with Jesus' second coming

- **We're in the overlap of the ages**
 - We are like Israel in the desert in the Exodus (e.g. Heb 3:15-4:1, 4:6-11)
 - NT focuses so much on the new creation because Jesus could return at any point to bring it in fully
 - With OT promises must ask when they're for and where (e.g. 1 Peter 1:3-5)

WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT OF LIFE NOW?

We are strangers and exiles here on earth (Heb 11:13), we belong to the new creation (Phil 3:20-21)

- This means we should expect things often to be hard here on earth since this is not our home (e.g. Mk 8:34-38)
 - We have a journey to finish as we head home, just like Israel in the desert and a job to do (e.g. Phil 1:21-25)
- There are blessings now, but fewer than we'd expect
- Most of the blessings God gives us now are to help us keep going to the end
 - There is one blessing is a foretaste of the new creation – our relationship with God

All this is exemplified in Jesus who suffered in this world but is glorified in the new creation (Heb 12:1-4)

- So the second way we lay up treasure in heaven is by growing Jesus' church, regardless of the cost

Christians throughout history have lived on earth in this radical way

- Jim Elliot – 'He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose'
- Key is the **desire** to be in the new creation with Jesus and the **attitude** that the best use of our lives here is to win & build up people who will be in the new creation
 - This will result in all sorts of different actions depending on your situation and circumstances

On your own, or in 2s & 3s, think about:

- If you really did think the new creation is infinitely more important than this one & the whole point of life now is to win & build Christians, what could you do with the situation, opportunities, personality & gifts God has given you? Be specific
- N.B. again don't think about how hard it will be to get that attitude & desire

- So, laying up treasure in heaven means not seeking the things of this world (Mt 6:19-20,24)

On your own or in 2s or 3s, think about:

- What things of this world do you spend your time, energy & mental capacity seeking?
- What it would look like for you not to set your mind on earthly things but rather really want to be with Jesus in the new creation? – e.g. instead of daydreaming about a nice house here we could daydream about our new creation home

N.B. don't think about how hard it will be to change, we'll come to this later

To live is Christ

Explained in vv22 and vv24,25

- Labouring to help others in their faith, in every situation and joyfully (Phil 1:12-14, 15-18)

- Unpacked in chapter 2 (Phil 2:4-11, 2:29-30)

- Key is Paul's & Timothy's & Epaphroditus' attitudes & passions – they were concerned for Jesus' interests, not their own

In 2s & 3s discuss what you think of the idea that you are strangers here on earth – Excited? Terrified? Unhappy? Other?

HOW SHOULD WE LIVE NOW?

1. **Make sure we get to the new creation** (1 Cor 15:19)

- Don't be seduced by the world (Num 11:4-6)

- Don't give up because of hardship now (2 Cor 4:16–18) – all sorts of things may happen to us while we wait (Heb 11:32-40, Luke 21:16-19)

2. **Lay-up treasure in heaven**, i.e. invest in things that will last (Mt 6:19-21)

- The Bible tells us what will last

- God's church and the ministry that builds it will last (1 Cor 3:9-15)

– Love & holiness also last (1 Cor 13:8-10, 2 Peter 3:11-13) – connected to church

– Nothing else will last (Rev 21:1, 1 Cor 15:42-44, 50-53)

3. Don't lay-up treasure on earth (Mt 6:19-21)

- These will pass away

– But don't despise the good things of this world

– We needn't be too concerned with what happens to this world, but this does NOT mean we trash it

In your groups, think about the following questions:

- In what ways would your lives look different if you really believed that God is focusing on a new creation & that is where we belong, even now? – don't just think evangelism
- What might it mean for you to lay up treasure in heaven?
- In what ways are you in danger of storing up treasure on earth?

NEW CREATION 3 – LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT MATTERS

2 questions for this session

FIRST, WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LAYING UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN, NOT ON EARTH?

- Philippians speaks about living as citizens of heaven while on earth, similar to laying up treasure in heaven (Phil 1:27 [see footnote], 3:20-21, 3:17)

- What it means for Paul to live as a citizen of heaven while on earth (Phil 1:21-25)

To die is gain

- Explained in 1:23b – to die & be with Jesus is much better

– Unpacked in chapter 3 (Phil 3:11-17)

- Without this mindset we end up as enemies of Christ's cross, headed for destruction (Phil 3:18-19)

– Laying up treasure on earth leads in the end to sacrificing our Christian lives

– The damage is done gradually