

## THE NEW CREATION

Paul wrote, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* (2 Cor 5:17). Clearly, he thought of the new creation as present with believers already. There is a sense in which this is so. Believers have begun at baptism to walk the new life (Rm 6:4). They put on *“the new man, (or the new self), which is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”* (Eph 4:24). Paul wrote to the Galatians, *“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation”* (Gl 6:15). Jesus ushered in the New Testament. He said that no one puts new wine in old wineskins. Jesus called His commandment to His disciples to love one another *“a new commandment.”* The cup in the Lord’s Supper is *“the New Testament”* in His blood. The commandment to love the neighbour as oneself was already a summary of man’s duty in the Old Covenant. What is new in Jesus’ *“new commandment”* is the new motivation, and the new standard for it. In addition to the standard *“as oneself”*, Christians now have as their model and motivation the kind of love that Jesus has shown to them (Joh 13:34). However, much of the present new creation is a matter of faith, not yet of sight.

Much of it is also still in the future. The epistle for today tells us that Christ’s redemption has not only taken care of sin and death, but also dealt with the suffering and futility that are in the world because of sin and death.

The New Testament often describes the newness of the future creation in negative terms. Sin will have no place in it. When the basic reason for all the troubles in the universe is done away with finally, all the innumerable troubles of the world will disappear. The weeping of children, the heartaches of mothers, the toil of man, the needs of the hungry and sick, the alarms of war, the groaning of creation, and all the other sufferings of this present world order will come to an end. In addition, the curse of decay and death in the world will also be taken away. Death is the ultimate reason why the writer of Ecclesiastes talks so much about the vanity of this present life. It takes the purpose and the meaning out of this present life.

However, we can say many positive things about the life to come, which is our hope. Many of the negatives also imply strongly positive meanings. The future creation will be so new and great that all the troubles of the past will be forgotten. God will make *“a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland”* (Isa 43:18-19). God will make all things new. The home of the redeemed will be the New Jerusalem. The redeemed will sing the new song. To him who overcomes the Lord will give *“a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it”* (Rv 2:17). There the inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us can never perish, spoil or fade (1 Pt 1:4).

There God will not merely re-establish the Garden of Eden as Paradise, but it will be much greater and better. John wrote: *“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations”* (Rv 22:1-2).

As Jesus spoke about Himself as a seed that goes into the ground and dies, and then produces much fruit, Paul also spoke of the resurrection body as a seed that dies and then rises as a new plant. The body will rise to incorruption, power, and glory (1 Cor 15:36, 42-44).

God’s new creation will be His *“no”* to the troubles of this world, and also His *“yes”* to His original purpose when He created the world. Through His Son, who is the image of the invisible God, the likeness of God will be fully restored in human beings. The physical human body will share in this new creation, but it will be spiritual and glorious. When believers reach the final stage of their adoption, which God began when He chose them in eternity, God will also *“redeem”* their bodies (Rm 8:23).

We should think about the resurrection of the human body in glory as part of God’s reconstruction of the material creation. That also is part of our Christian hope. God will liberate the present creation, animate and inanimate, which groans in birth-pangs together with the children of God, and bring it also into the glorious freedom of His children (Rm 8:21). Christians wait for a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell (2 Pt 3:21).

God Himself will be the focal point of the new creation. There will be no more temple, for God’s presence will fill the whole world. The city of God will come down out of heaven. That will end the opposition that has dominated the whole of this present age. There will no longer be a clash between God’s will and man’s will.

In the present age fellowship with God comes through what is unseen. In the cup in the Lord’s Supper the new testament in Jesus’ blood is believed, and, though really present, is not a matter of our senses, except, of

course, that our senses hear Jesus' words, which assure us that it is there. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve had close communion with God as well as being righteous and holy, and knowing God. In the heavenly Jerusalem *"the dwelling of God will be with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God"* (Rv 21:3). All of the covenants of God had as their central point that God will be their God and they will be His people. There it will be more than being His people, but being His children (Rv 21:7). What we shall be like is yet to be revealed. Believers will see God and the Lord Jesus, and be like their Lord. That will be the final realisation of God's coming to be with His people in the person of His incarnate Son.

The Scriptures express this in terms of splendour, light, and glory. Heaven and earth will be flooded with the brightness of God's face. There will be no more night in the world to come, nor will people need a sun any more. The Lord God will cause His unveiled face to shine upon us, and His glory will illumine the new creation. The New Jerusalem will shine with the glory of God, and the nations will walk in her light. The earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord (Isa 60: 1-3; Nm 14:21). The renewed mankind will gather in festival raiment, and the new world will be likened to a bride adorned for her husband. God, who delights in plenty, greatness, and beauty, will build for Himself a world to the glory of His name. Then the response to God's glory, in the sense of splendour, will be the glory of His people, in the sense of their praise.