



CHRIST AND THE NEW CREATION | JUNE 6, 2021 | CRAIG REES

Big Idea: Christians care for creation because Christ's death makes all things new, starting right now.

Key Scripture:

Isaiah 65:17-22
Isaiah 66:22-24

Ezekiel 34:22-31
2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Galatians 6:14-15
Colossians 1:15-20

Hebrews 3:7-4:11
2 Peter 3:3-13

1. Consider the theological framework that we have constructed in the previous 4 weeks of this series:
 - a. God, through Christ, created the heavens and the earth.
 - b. God values His creation. We care for creation because He cares.
 - c. Creation concerns are relational concerns. The Fall negatively impacted our world.
 - d. God will create a new heaven and a new earth, starting right now.

Which of these four truths inspire you the most? Which of these four truths challenge you the most?

2. In addition to the hope of a new heaven and a new earth, the Old Testament looks forward to the restoration of the Land. **Read Ezekiel 34:22-31 alongside 1 Peter 1:3-4, Ephesians 1:14, Romans 8:17, Revelation 21:7, and Hebrews 3:7-4:11.**

For those of you who like these conversations (and many of you do!), how do you understand this hope of land restoration to be fulfilled? Some Christians hold that the promise of Ezekiel will be literally fulfilled during the millennium, which is the period after Christ's return and before the final judgment. Others, using the New Testament passages cited here, claim that these promises have been spiritually fulfilled through the rest believers enjoy in Christ.

- a. How do you view this?
 - b. Is either a fully literal or a fully spiritual interpretation the only option?
 - c. Do either of these interpretations mean that a Christian can ignore working for the 'restoration of the land' or any land for that matter?
3. **Read Galatians 6:14-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.** While most Christians understand the term 'new creation' to apply to a new believer, there is far more to it. In both of these passages 'new creation' speaks to a new way of life that is typical of the new creation where God's rule and reign are fully experienced. To help you appreciate this, consider these two questions:
 - a. What does 'crucified to the world' in Galatians 6:14 mean and how does it relate to the 'new creation' of verse 15?
 - b. How does the 'new creation' truth in 2 Corinthians 5:17 connect to 'regarding no one from a worldly point of view' in verse 16?

Putting your answers together, how should the new creation God has made you to be contribute to the values of the 'new heaven' invading this 'world'?

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- 4. Read Colossians 1:15-20.** What do you think is meant by 'reconciling all things'? How big a redemption does Paul have in mind, here? In what ways may we have made our redemption too small if it only applies to individuals?
- 5. Read 2 Peter 3:11.** The word 'live' speaks to a way of life or lifestyle. Behavior is an important term for Peter (see 1 Peter 1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16). Since we know that God will make all things new, we are to conduct ourselves in a holy and godly way.
- a. How can a Christian develop the biblical focus of living daily in light of Christ's coming to make all things new?
 - b. What practical things can we do 'to speed up' the end?
 - c. Does the idea of heaven motivate you or tire you? How do we 'long for heaven' without missing the value of life on earth?
 - d. In light of 2 Peter 3:3-13, how should the realization that this world is coming to end influence our engagement with the 'world' in all areas, not just creation concerns?