

The New Heavens and the New Earth
Revelation 21-22

The last two chapters of the Bible (Revelation 21-22) are very similar to the first two chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-2). In fact, what God is doing throughout the Bible is restoring Paradise by His grace.

Genesis..

In the beginning (1:1)
 God created the heavens and the earth (1:1)
 Let there be light (1:3)
 The darkness He called "night" (1:5)
 The gathered waters He called "seas" (1:10)
 God made the two great lights (1:16)
 He also made the stars (1:16)
 Subdue [the earth]. Rule over (1:28)
 Tree of Life (2:9)
 A river watering the garden (2:10)
 You will surely die (2:17)
 Or you will die (3:3)
 A man will. . .be united to his wife (2:23-25)
 Shown a garden into which sin entered (3:6-7)
 Walk of God with man interrupted (3:8-10)
 Initial triumph of the Serpent (3:13)
 Cursed. . .cursed (3:14, 17)
 I will greatly multiply your pain (3:16-17)
 God banished him (3:23)
 He drove the man out of the garden (3:24)

Revelation...

I am. . .the Beginning and the End (21:6)
 I saw a new heaven and a new earth (21:1)
 God gives it light (21:23)
 There will be no night there (21:25)
 There was no longer any sea (21:1)
 Does not need the sun/moon (21:23)
 The Morning Star (22:16)
 And they will reign forever (22:5)
 Tree of Life (22:2)
 River of the Water of Life (22:1)
 The free gift of the Water of Life (22:17)
 No more death (21:4)
 The bride of the wife of the Lamb (21:9-10)
 Shown a city into which sin will never enter (21:27)
 Walk of God with man resumed (21:3)
 Ultimate triumph of the Lamb (20:10; 22:3)
 No longer. . .any curse (22:3)
 No more. . .pain (21:4)
 They will see His face (22:4)
 I saw the Holy City (21:2)

With the fact that God is restoring Paradise through the person of His Son, the question comes: How? When? Where? The answer to this three-fold question is also three-fold in nature.

The Replacement View of Eschatology (Future)

This view is often called Premillennialism and adherents argue from Revelation 21-22 and **I Corinthians 15:22-28** that since there is a lengthy gap between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of his people (v. 23; it is now almost at 2,000 years), so also there will be a gap between the resurrection of Christ's people (at the time of the Second Coming) and "the end" (*to telos*, v. 24). In other words, when Paul says in v. 24, "then comes the end," he does not mean "thereupon" or immediately after the resurrection of believers described in v. 23, but only after the millennium or 1,000 years later.

At the close of the millennium, i.e., when "the end" comes, Christ will deliver up the Kingdom to God the Father (v. 24a) after having abolished all rule and authority and power. The 1,000 years of reign (millennium) is the Kingdom ("Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.") After the millennium, the present Heaven and Earth are transformed by fire into a new eternal form. In his inspired writings, the apostle

Peter graphically describes the way God terminates the millennium in order to make room for the eternal kingdom, known to us as the New Heavens (universe) and Earth. *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (II Pet. 3:7-9 KJV).

The Renewal View of Eschatology (Ongoing)

This view teaches that the Kingdom of God is given to us to be enjoyed and experienced now, not just then (heaven). The knowledge that there is supposed to be enjoyment of the love of the King while living in His kingdom on earth NOW transforms the reader from a church going religious person waiting for heaven into a Christ-honoring relational person transforming the church.

Luke 17:20-21 is a clear statement of Christ about the Kingdom. “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There! for behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst.”

Jesus corrects a misunderstanding of the kingdom—namely, that it would come with such observable signs that it would be unmistakable: Rome would be overturned, Israel would be vindicated, and an earthly kingdom would be established. Jesus said, “No, it is not coming in a way that can be observed like that. There is a mystery about the coming of the kingdom. It is here in your midst without those kinds of observable signs. It is here because I am here. I am the arrival of the kingdom, even though I will not overturn the Romans or set up an earthly kingdom (yet!).”

Another clear statement about the presence of the kingdom is Matthew 12:28(cf. Luke 11:20). The Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (v. 24). But Jesus has a very different interpretation of what’s happening. He says in verse 28, “If it is by the power of the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” When Jesus does battle with Satan by the Spirit of God, and begins to plunder the strong man’s house (v. 29), freeing people from his bondage, the powers of the kingdom are at work and the kingdom is already present – as well as not yet. It’s not yet what it will one day be. “Be patient for God is not finished with His work yet.”

The Realized View of Eschatology (Past)

This view, often called the Preterist View, speaks of the Kingdom of God (spiritual, though tangible) existing NOW in both this realm and in its glorious eternal splendor in the eternal heavens. The “Old” way passed away in AD 70, and “all things were made new.” A preterist will teach that a Christian’s destiny after physical death is no longer Hades to await a resurrection and judgment. Death and Hades were done away with at 70 A.D. when the “death” that reigned over man (Rom.5:14) was reversed by the eternal “life” provided through Christ (Rom.5:17,21). Hades was a conscious waiting place for the biologically dead. At the 70 A.D. resurrection, souls in Hades were resurrected out of that waiting state, the righteous into the presence of Christ in His kingdom, and the wicked to eternal punishment. Since then, when the righteous die biologically, they continue living in the presence of God, while the wicked go away to eternal destruction.

Which view is biblical? The Christian is to be like the Berean and search it out for oneself.