

Study Guide: “The New Heavens and the New Earth”

Carter Sanger, May 2009

Introduction

Have you ever tried to work on a puzzle without a picture of what it is supposed to look like? What was that like?

Read Revelation 21:1-4.

I. Heaven Revisited

- The Bible speaks of people being saved. The usual follow-up question to that is, “*from what?*” You can answer that question at many levels but the main thing we are saved from is God’s judgment. What about the other half of the question. *To* what are we saved?
- Where do people go when they die? How would you describe this place? What do you think it will be like? Why do you think it will be like that?
- Read Matthew 3:2 and 6:9. How is heaven used in this context?
- Read Matthew 18:13. How is heaven used in this context?

Sometimes heaven is used to indicate the sky, but most often it is used as an indicator for the place from which God governs. Matthew often uses it as a substitute for the word God out of respect for Jewish tradition. Heaven is not meant to indicate some spiritual place in the clouds as our culture has defined it. It is also never mentioned as a destination for God’s people.

Read Revelation 21:1-3. What is man’s final destination according to this verse?

II. Creation Revisited

- Read Rev 21:1 again. When you read the word “new”, what comes to mind?
- Verse 1 is explained in verse 4. It is new because “*the former things have passed away.*” Compare this verse to 2 Corinthians 5:17. What does “new” mean in this context? A Christian is a “new creation” but he is still the same person. Other Biblical language used for the same thing: “born again,” “released from sin,” “washed in the blood of Christ.” How does this help understand “new heavens and new earth?”
- Read 2 Peter 3:10. This verse creates confusion about the present earth. Does this mean it will cease to exist after the burning mentioned? Verses 6-7 provide the context of verse 10. How is the world after the flood described? What is the result of this burning (end of verse 10)?
- Read Romans 8:18-23. What does tell you about creation? Does it expect to die out? What is it waiting for? What is it that these “sons of God” have that creation longs for?

III. Mission Revisited

- Do you treat a rental differently than you treat something you own?
- Have you ever heard the expression, “oh well, it’s all going to burn”? What impression does that give about our work in this world?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. What does that have to say about the work we do in the present world? What is the key to work “not being in vain”? According to 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, what are our works likened to? What is the key to doing work that survives the coming fire?
- Read Luke 12:33. What example is given for work now that will be like silver and last through the fire?
- Does this change the way you see your current work?

Wrap-up

- Think about the Lord’s prayer. What is the first petition that sets the stage for all the rest? How does this bring into view the final picture?