Chapter 57: The New Heavens and New Earth

What is heaven? Is it a place?
How will the earth be renewed?
What will it be like to live in the new heavens and new earth?

A. We will live eternally with God in new heavens and a new earth
After final judgment, believers enter into the full enjoyment of life in God's presence forever. (Mt 25:34; Rev 22:3)
Christians often speak of living with God "in heaven" forever, but biblical teaching is much richer: new heavens and a new earth. (Isa 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev 21:1-3)

1. What Is Heaven?
   Heaven is the place where God most fully makes known his presence to bless. (Is 66:1; 1 Pe 3:22; Mt 6:9)
2. Heaven is a place, not just a state of mind (Acts 1:11; Acts 7:55-56; John 14:3)
3. The physical creation will be renewed and we will continue to exist and act in it (Rom 8:19-21; Heb 1:11-12; Heb 12:26-27; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Re 20:11; Re 21:1)
   It seems preferable in these passages to think that the earth is to be changed and renewed.
   - Difficult to think of God annihilating his original creation as this seems to give the devil the last word by scrapping what was originally "very good"
   - Passages above may simply refer to the burning up of some of the things on the earth in its present form, not its very existence
4. Our resurrection bodies will be part of the renewed creation
   - In the new heavens and new earth there will be a place and activities for our resurrection bodies, which will never grow old or become weak or ill. There is nothing inherently "unspiritual" about the physical world that God made and called "very good" (Gen 1:31).

     Question: What good will it do to have a body in heaven?

     People will probably work at the whole range of investigation and development of creation through technological, creative, and inventive means, thus showing more and more of the potential of human beings created in the image of God.
     (Most of our enjoyment of what God has made involves our physical bodies.)
     Randy Alcorn example of Adam & Eve tasting a mango (p. 194)
   - We will eat and drink at "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). Jesus will once again drink wine with his disciples in the heavenly kingdom (Luke 22:18). The "river of the water of life" will flow "from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city" (Rev 22:1). The tree of life will bear "twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month" (Rev 22:2).
   - Music is prominent in descriptions of heaven, so it is possible both musical and artistic activities will be done to the glory of God.
   - Since God is infinite and we are finite, we may expect that we will be able to go on learning about God and his relationship to creation for all eternity.

   An excellent book on this topic:
   Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Tyndale House, 2004)
   - much emphasis on the truly physical nature of new heaven, new earth

- says people who think of heaven as only “spiritual” are following Plato (about 427-347 BC) and Greek philosophy, not the Bible -- this kind of heaven would be boring!
- Alcorn uses his imagination to think of what the true heaven will be like (many examples)

5. The new creation will not be “timeless” but will include an unending succession of moments Though the New Jerusalem will never experience night, Revelation relates many actions that involve a sequence of events. (Rev 21:24-26; Rev 22:2)

B. The doctrine of the new creation provides a great motivation for storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (2 Peter 3:11-13; Matt 6:19-21)

C. The new creation will be a place of great beauty and abundance and joy in the presence of God (Rev 21:1-27; Rev 22:5)

The most important feature of the heavenly city is that we will be in the presence of God and enjoy unhindered fellowship with him. Rev 21:23; Rev 22:3-4; Ps 16:11)