

3



Method of Interpreting the Scriptures

Review

In the last chapter, I explored the confusion that John the Baptist and the disciples experienced when Christ did not set up his messianic kingdom while he was on this earth. The prophets had predicted that during the messianic kingdom, the world would be characterized by peace, justice, righteousness, and prosperity. The Messiah would usher in an age of righteous humanity for Israel and all nations. The disciples knew their Scriptures and were expecting Christ to overthrow the tyrannical Roman government and establish a Jewish-led kingdom in its place. They even made fools of themselves by jockeying for positions of power in what they thought was the imminent reign of Christ.

Instead, Jesus Christ allowed himself to be crucified by the Romans. And when he was resurrected, his disciples had hoped he would then overthrow the oppressive Roman Empire and establish his messianic kingdom. But he left this world and ascended into heaven, leaving his followers in this demonic, fallen world. As a result, the world remains characterized by strife and war instead of peace, injustice instead of justice, unrighteousness instead of righteousness, and systemic poverty instead of abundant prosperity. We continue to experience an age of unrighteous humanity on a cursed earth.

PART 1: Understanding the Adamic Order of Being

Before theologians make a biblical case for their respective eschatology, they often explain their methods of interpreting and analyzing the Scriptures to discern God's endgame. This field of study is known as "biblical hermeneutics." The objective is to properly read and interpret biblical data and develop it into a rational theology of the future.

When developing their eschatology, many theologians prefer to analyze the Scriptures based on which passages are literal and which are figurative. But this is not always helpful because they then argue about what is literal or figurative without advancing the discussion. For example, in Revelation 20 John has a vision of Satan bound by a great chain and locked up in a pit when Christ's reign begins:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. (Rev. 20:1-3)

I do not think any of these theologians believe that an evil spirit such as Satan would literally be bound with a steel chain. This is obviously a metaphor describing some event involving Satan. But what is John attempting to convey with this portrayal of Satan's imprisonment? Is the millennium that follows this event a literal earthly kingdom, or is it a metaphor for Christ's current reign over the saints in the celestial realm of heaven? The bottomless pit, or abyss, is depicted in the Scriptures as a kind of spiritual prison for demons. Like a criminal in his day, John described Satan being bound with a chain and thrown into a pit, which is then shut and sealed. Satan is a fallen angel, and he has been operational in this world ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, allowing Satan into the world. He is a powerful and clever evil spirit, and he influences every aspect of human activity. Humans are spiritual beings with sinful natures, so it does not take much for Satan to influence us to think and perform sinful acts that are contrary to God's will.

The question is not whether the binding of Satan with a great chain is metaphorical or literal, because both camps recognize it as meta-

phorical. Rather, does this elaborate metaphor describe a complete removal of Satan from this world in a future millennium, or a partial removal of Satan today for the purpose of salvation?

Premillennialists believe John is using the metaphor of the binding of Satan with a chain to convey the fact that, at some point in the future, Satan and all the demons are going to be completely removed from this world so that mankind can experience an age of righteous humanity during Christ's millennial reign.

Amillennialists interpret this metaphor to mean that Satan is only partially bound. They interpret the binding of Satan as a repetition of Christ's parable of the binding of the strong man. Satan is bound so that Christ can rob him of those held captive by demon possession (Luke 11:21–22). Once we are rescued from Satan's dominion, however, we remain in Satan's demonic world of temptation, influence, and control. Amillennialists believe John is describing a similar partial binding of Satan in the present millennial age. This enables Christ to rescue his chosen people from all nations from Satan's lies and deceptions to bring them into his righteous millennial kingdom today. Yet, Satan is still able to roam the world seeking to devour Christians and non-Christians alike.

I believe premillennialists have the better argument that this metaphor describes the complete removal of Satan from this world when Revelation portrays him as bound and thrown into a bottomless pit, which is sealed for a thousand years.

Today, when someone commits a heinous crime, people often say that the evildoer should be locked up in a maximum security prison and the key thrown away. This expression means that the criminal would be completely removed from society and prevented from ever harming anyone again. This punishment would not be a form of probation or community service, where he could still roam the world looking for victims. If he is released from prison in fifty years and commits another horrible crime, many would say to kill the evildoer.

John seems to be describing a similar series of events. Satan is locked up for a thousand years by an angel in a maximum security prison made just for demons, where he has no contact with unbelievers or believers. Since his place of imprisonment is completely sealed, he cannot escape and harm anyone. The angel that imprisoned him is the only one who holds the key to free him. After the thousand years have

ended, he is let loose on the world once again to lead one last rebellion among unbelievers against God's people, who have recovered from war. Then he is recaptured by an angel and sent to the lake of fire for eternal destruction, never to be heard from again.

The book of Revelation is full of similar metaphors. They just need to be properly interpreted. For example, at the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation, Christ appears in heaven riding on a white horse. Premillennialists interpret this event to be the second coming of Christ on the clouds when he returns to this earth to establish his millennial kingdom. But in chapter 6, when I critique premillennialism, I will demonstrate that when one carefully reads this passage, it becomes clear that John never depicts Christ leaving the celestial realm on his white horse and descending to the earth. Rather, he is depicted as remaining in the celestial realm when he defeats the Antichrist and his armies and sends an angel to bind Satan. He then rules the world during the millennium from his throne in heaven.

God's Covenants

When developing a theology of the future, theologians also like to analyze the Scriptures based on God's covenants with Israel. Amillennialists believe God's covenant with Israel to restore them to an abundant promised land was conditional upon the Jews accepting their Messiah. Since the Jews largely rejected him, they consider this covenant null and void. And the nation has been permanently exiled. The temple's destruction in AD 70 is proof of this rejection.

Amillennialists claim that a new covenant with all God's people, regardless of race, has replaced this old, obsolete covenant. Repentant Jews simply join the body of Christ. And Christ and his church are the new Israel. There is no future restoration of the nation of Israel. The Jewish and Gentile believers who make up the church are all destined for the eternal kingdom of heaven, not a Jewish-led messianic kingdom on this earth.

Premillennialists argue that the hard-hearted first-century Jews do not have veto power over God's plans for Israel and this world. They believe there will indeed be a future dispensation when the Jewish people will repent en masse, which will lead to the restoration of Israel and all the nations in the messianic kingdom.

Again, I believe premillennialists have the better argument, for there is solid biblical evidence that the rejection of Israel is a temporary abandonment, and that repentant Israel will again be used by God to usher in the messianic kingdom. Or as Isaiah says:

“For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you [unfaithful Israel], but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer. . . . “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and *my covenant of peace shall not be removed*,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you. . . . “In righteousness you shall be established [as a righteous nation in the messianic kingdom].” (Isa. 54:7–14)

According to Isaiah, this future repentance by Israel is followed by the messianic kingdom being realized on this earth when the nation will experience a time of peace and righteousness. That is how Isaiah defines God’s covenant with Israel based on God’s unconditional love.

Paul also alludes to a future time when Israel will repent and believe in their own Messiah, which not only leads to the personal salvation of individual Jews, but also to the salvation of all of Israel, or the nation itself. Paul is probably referencing Isaiah’s prophecy:

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel [“I hid my face from you”], until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in [then “I will have compassion on you”]. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins [a “covenant of peace” with Israel when Christ establishes a righteous nation].” (Rom. 11:25–27)

This future repentance and conversion of the Jews described by Isaiah and Paul leads to the messianic kingdom for the whole nation. Despite this biblical evidence, many theologians continue to debate whether God’s covenant with Israel was conditional or unconditional.

As such, this method of interpretation has not been able to resolve the debate over God's plan of redemption.

Already and Not Yet

When developing a theology of the future, many theologians adhere to the theme of God's inaugurated kingdom that "already is, in this present age, and is yet to come, in a future consummated kingdom" when Christ returns to usher in his kingdom. But these concepts clearly have some overlap. For example, John says:

Beloved, we are God's children now [already, in the current covenant, dispensation, or inaugurated kingdom in this age], and what we will be [in the eternal age to come] has not yet appeared [yet to come in a future dispensation or age]; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him [transformed into an immortal, glorified body like his resurrected body], because we shall see him as he is [in his consummated kingdom]. (1 John 3:2)

John is teaching that even though we remain in mortal bodies on a perishable earth, we have already become God's children and are already in the inaugurated kingdom of God. He is also describing the rapture of the saints when Christ returns and our natural bodies are transformed into eternal bodies like his glorified body. We will then enter God's consummated kingdom in all its glory.

Theologians, however, then argue over what is yet to come when Christ returns to rapture the saints. Premillennialists would say he ushers in his messianic kingdom on this earth for the raptured saints. While amillennialists would say he ushers in his Father's eternal kingdom of heaven for the raptured saints. These are very different views on the future. As a result, the "already and not yet" approach has not helped resolve the debate over God's endgame.

Historical-Grammatical Method

The historical-grammatical method of interpreting the Scriptures is universally accepted by evangelical theologians. This method looks at the original intended message the author wanted to convey to his

readers based on the original Hebrew or Greek words and their proper translation into English, Spanish, and so forth. It also considers the context of their overall writings and the historical context of when they wrote the book or letter. I have found it extremely rare that a poorly translated Hebrew or Greek word leads to a misinterpretation of the text. Today's modern translations are excellent, and the scholars who work on these translations should be commended. The historical context, however, always needs further exploration, for it is very important when determining what these biblical writers meant.

Consider the doctrine of pretribulation premillennialism as an illustration of this method of interpretation. These theologians believe the rapture can occur at any moment. This doctrine is based on the following verses in a letter from Paul to the young church at Thessalonica:

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, . . . And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. . . . For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thess. 4:16–17—5:2)

In the book *Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulation*, the authors claim:

- “Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians contains the central Pauline teaching on the pretribulation rapture.”
- “The return of Christ could be at any moment.”
- “There are no signs or events that make it possible to predict when it will occur.”
- “Paul believed the rapture was imminent (it could happen at any time).”¹

In short, this view asserts that Paul taught that there are no prophetic events that must occur before Christ can return to rapture the saints.

Some seminaries, such as Dallas Theological Seminary, include this interpretation as part of their doctrinal statement that must be

¹ John F. Hart, ed., *Evidence for the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 20, 82, 168.

adhered to by all their professors. The popular *Left Behind* fictional series of novels is also based on this premise.

The idea that an event will happen suddenly can mean it could occur at any moment. But it could also simply mean that it will occur very quickly. For example, when God saw how violent and depraved mankind had become during the days of Noah, he prophesied that a flood would soon destroy that generation. But the flood could not happen at that moment because Noah and his family had to first build the ark to be prepared for the flood. Until Noah finished the ark, the flood was not an imminent event. There were prophesied events that first had to take place. When the flood did come, it only came suddenly on those who were not prepared for God's judgment.

Let's now see what Paul meant to teach the Thessalonian Christians based on the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. For the rapture to be an imminent event for us today, it must have been able to occur at any moment for the Thessalonians, to whom the letter was originally addressed. Paul wrote this letter in AD 51. If he had meant to teach a pretribulation rapture as claimed by these theologians, then Christ could have returned in AD 51 or soon after that date to rapture the saints.

But Christ himself taught that there is a specific event that must take place before he returns. And that event had not yet occurred in AD 51 when the letter was written. Before Christ ascended to heaven, he informed Peter and the disciples that Peter would live to be an old man and would be martyred before he came again:

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) (John 21:18–19)

In other words, Christ taught that Peter would grow old and be martyred before Christ returned to rapture Peter and the saints. Therefore, Christ could not return until Peter was old and was martyred. Peter would be among the saints who were asleep when Christ returned.

Yet when Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians in AD 51 teaching them about the rapture, Peter was only middle-aged. He was

not martyred in Rome until eighteen years later in AD 69, when he was an old man. If Christ had returned to rapture Peter and the saints in AD 51 when Paul wrote his letter, then Peter would have been middle-aged and very much alive. And Jesus would have been a false prophet!

Or if Paul had intended to teach that Christ could return at any moment in AD 51 while Peter was only middle-aged and still alive, then he would have been a false teacher! Of course, Christ was not a false prophet and Paul was not a false teacher.

Obviously, Paul did not intend to have his letter to the Thessalonians be understood as teaching an any-moment rapture. Therefore, based on the historical-grammatical method of interpretation, pre-tribulation premillennialism is the false teaching. Yet, one could fill a small library with books by theologians teaching this doctrine.

In fact, the book from which I previously quoted making the case for the any-moment rapture contains chapters from ten different scholars, and yet none of them wrestle with Christ's prophecy and this obvious contradiction to their interpretation of Paul's teachings.

Two Creations

I believe there is a method one can use to analyze the Scriptures that does have the potential to resolve the confusion over God's end-game. And it is a method theologians have not recognized or utilized in formulating their respective eschatology. This method of interpreting and organizing the Scriptures into a logical biblical theology of the future is based on two creations and two kingdoms of the triune God:

Two creations:

1. The Adamic creation
2. The new creation as sons of God

Two kingdoms of the triune God:

1. The Son's earthly kingdom for the restored Adamic creation in this Genesis age
2. The Father's heavenly kingdom for the new creation as sons of God in the eternal age to come

The Adamic Order of Being

The Bible describes different kinds of creatures, or what I refer to as “orders of being.” For example, angels are a unique order of being. They are spiritual beings without bodies. Each angel represents an individual spirit or person, such as the angels Gabriel and Michael. They are immortal creatures because as spirits they do not need outside nourishment to sustain their lives. And without bodies they cannot experience marriage. The archangel Michael does not have an angelic wife nor newborn angels crawling around heaven.

Humans are a different kind of creature. We are spiritual creatures like angels, but our human spirits are contained within male or female bodies. And our natural bodies are mortal because we need outside air and food to sustain them. In addition, humans are creatures with sexual bodies who reproduce their kind, producing other embodied spiritual humans as sons and daughters. In the beginning, God created the Adamic order of being:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. . . . And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” . . . Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 1:26—2:24)

Man is defined as male and female individuals, who marry in sexual union as one flesh, become fathers and mothers, who reproduce more male and female human beings. These humans, in turn, fill and subdue the earth with their offspring.

Moreover, the Adamic order of being is defined as being made in the image of God. God is three persons in companionship but joined together as one God with one will. Mankind reflects this image as two persons joined together in a marriage companionship as one flesh. Further, God rules over and manages his dominion of heaven, and like God, man rules over and manages his dominion on this earth on God's behalf.

But unlike God, man is not omniscient. Adam and Eve could care for the garden in the region of Eden, but the world was way too big

for them to subdue and manage by themselves. That is why they were to multiply, having sons and daughters who would fill the untamed earth, subdue and develop it, and then properly manage it. They would develop these wilderness areas into Edenic gardens, and create beautiful, sustainable human and animal habitats.

Genesis further reveals that God fashioned a male body of flesh and blood for Adam out of dust. God, who is Spirit and Life, then breathed spiritual life into his physical body and he became a living, embodied, spiritual creature. The person who would be known as Eve was then made from Adam's rib with a female human anatomy. They were sexual, spiritual creatures with natural bodies of flesh and blood designed for marriage and reproduction. Most important, as spiritual creatures, they were a man and woman of God in fellowship with their Creator.

In short, as defined in Genesis, we are sexual, spiritual creatures with natural bodies that are either male or female. We experience marriage, and through sexual union we reproduce sons and daughters as we fill and subdue the natural earth. In the Adamic order of being, marriage and reproduction are central operating functions of our nature as human beings on this Genesis earth. Even if we do not marry, we are products of the union of a man and a woman.

When we think of Adam and Eve before the fall, we consider them a righteous man and woman of God. In a way, they were also sons of God in that they were fathered by him and, as sons, they inherited certain character traits from him. But, technically, they were not "sons of God" in the New Testament sense. For example, as a man of God, Adam would not have addressed God as "Abba, Father" as Jesus did as the Son of God.

As human beings, they lived in an Edenic paradise and would have lived forever in fellowship with God if they had not disobeyed him by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This did not, however, necessarily make them immortal beings by nature. Even before the fall, Adam and Eve were mortal beings who needed food and outside nourishment from the natural earth to sustain their natural bodies. Hypothetically, before the fall, if Adam and Eve had decided to stop eating food, they would have eventually starved to death. They were not immortal creatures, even in their sinless state.

When Adam and Eve broke God's commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they became sinful creatures

separated from the life of God. They were cursed by God; their natural bodies would now experience death. A curse was put on the Genesis earth as well, causing a change in its ecological system:

Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Gen. 3:17–19)

As a result of their insubordination and disobedience, they were driven out of their Edenic paradise. And their existence outside the garden would involve some level of misery to produce sustainable food. Even with food, however, they would eventually die. Over time, their human bodies would age, weaken, die, and rot in the ground. Nature itself was now under a curse and became degenerate.

Before the fall, the world was God's dominion over mankind. But Adam and Eve's rebellion enabled Satan and his demonic host to enter this world, and it became his dominion. Satan became the de facto god of this fallen world. And he has a great deal of influence on sinful mankind, who became his spiritual children. Satan and his rebellious followers began to rule this world independent of God. With this regime change, the world has never been the same. The earth was God's kingdom before the fall, and it was a short age of righteous humanity on an Edenic earth. But after the fall, the world became Satan's kingdom or dominion, and it became an age of unrighteous humanity on a degenerate earth.

The world lost its glory as God's dominion when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, letting Satan into this world. Therefore, the world needs redemption if God's kingdom on earth is ever going to be restored. We need to be freed from Satan's dominion of darkness, freed from our sinful nature, freed from the curse of death, and freed from the curse on nature. Humanity is in desperate need of salvation from its current fallen condition.

The serpent, or Satan, was one of the key characters in the fall of humanity. Satan was a fallen angel, the leader among many fallen an-

gels, or demons. At the end of the world, they will all be cast into hell. There is no record of any hope of salvation for Satan and the demons. Christ did not die on the cross for their sins. The fact that God did not establish a plan of redemption for fallen angels is very important to remember as we consider God's plans for humanity.

God's Response to Fallen Man

After the fall, God had several options for how he could deal with the tragic condition of fallen mankind. It is important to consider these options to understand his plan of redemption.

The first option is that God could have demonstrated his wrath against Adam and Eve and their sinful descendants by destroying this Genesis creation and letting mankind go the way of Satan and the demons, with no hope of salvation. After we died, our spirits would have been destined to hell. God did not have to save any of us.

A second option is that after he destroyed mankind and this Genesis creation, he could have created the children of God as a totally new creation. He could then have created a totally new kind of heavens and earth as the eternal home for his new creation. The children of God would not be like the Adamic creation, where male and female humans filled an Edenic earth with their sons and daughters. They would be embodied creatures, but like the angels, they would be nonsexual creatures who do not experience marriage and reproduction of their kind.

A third option is that he could have decided to have mercy on mankind and institute a plan of redemption whereby mankind would be forgiven of their sins and reconnected to their Creator. Then, through some process of resurrection and restoration, mankind could have returned to a restored Edenic earth. The human experience would have continued in a restored Genesis creation with mankind as male and female, experiencing marriage and reproduction. As we filled and subdued the earth, the world would have become an Edenic paradise. We would have operated properly as men and women of God under the renewed Lordship of the Creator.

But there is a fourth option revealed in the Scriptures. God will not only restore humanity for an extended period, but he will also take these same redeemed Adamic creatures and create a new order of being as children of God. After a long restoration of this creation, the human

experience would come to an end on the last day, and the transformed sons of God would then inherit a new earth as their eternal home. In other words, rather than the children of God being created in heaven from nothing, God chose to create them from a preexisting human creation. God, by his own volition and wisdom, decided to institute a plan of redemption to accomplish both a restoration of this Genesis creation and a new creation for his people.

The Old Testament prophets portray the messianic kingdom as a restored paradise for a redeemed humanity. And the traditional Jewish understanding of resurrection in Jesus' day was of a resurrected human body of flesh and blood that would again marry and have children in God's restored kingdom on earth. That is why the liberal Sadducees, who did not believe in an afterlife or a resurrection of the body, thought they were asking a clever question when they asked Jesus whose wife the woman who had seven husbands would be in the messianic kingdom.

But the resurrection of the natural body is an essential part of the Old Testament vision. In Ezekiel's famous vision of the valley of dry bones coming to life, he foresees the departed Jewish saints being resurrected into male and female human bodies. Like the creation of Adam, they also have spiritual life breathed into their reconstituted natural bodies as they reenter a restored nation on this renewed earth:

Thus, says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live [resurrection of the natural body], and you shall know that I am the LORD. . . . And I will bring you into the land of Israel. . . . They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived [an earthly kingdom]. They and their children and their children's children [marriage and reproduction] . . . (Ezek. 37:5–25)

I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. . . . And they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden [restored Edenic earth]." (Ezek. 36:30, 35)

Ezekiel's vision of the messianic kingdom is a graphic depiction of the restoration of the Adamic order of being. It foresees a resurrection of human beings into their natural bodies, who will marry and reproduce offspring on a Genesis earth that is restored to an Edenic paradise. The messianic kingdom is portrayed by the prophets as a restoration of the Adamic order of being to its original glory before the fall.

PART 2: Understanding the New Creation as Sons of God

The Old Testament vision of redemption is focused on the eventual restoration of this Genesis creation. But the New Testament reveals a new perspective on God's plan of redemption. Christ and the apostles shift their focus from the messianic kingdom on this Genesis earth to the new heavens and new earth in the eternal age to come. When we accept Christ and are born again, we not only become restored men and women of God, as defined in Genesis, but we also become sons of God in a new creation destined for the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven.

When responding to the Sadducees' question about the feasibility of a future resurrection of a natural body (such as the one described by Ezekiel), Jesus revealed that in heaven the sons of God will have non-sexual, immortal bodies instead of sexual human bodies like Adam's and Eve's. And, like the angels, we will not experience marriage and reproduction as we now do as descendants of Adam. In this remarkable and stunning revelation, Jesus is introducing a new order of being for his followers:

The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage [the Adamic order of being in this Genesis age], but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead [followers of Christ] neither marry nor are given in marriage [in the eternal age to come], for they cannot die anymore [immortal body], because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection [a new order of being as eternal sons of God]. (Luke 20:34–36)

In Jesus' day, a son left his parents to marry, and a daughter was given in marriage by her parents. Jesus said that neither will occur in the eternal resurrection to make it very clear that the human experience of

marriage will no longer exist when the sons of God are resurrected into new kinds of immortal bodies. Like angels, we will be eternal creatures that do not marry or reproduce. But unlike angels, our spirits will remain embodied.

Jesus revealed to us that on the last day, the Adamic order of being as male and female actually comes to an end. And in heaven, the immortal sons of God will live an embodied existence, but will not marry, reproduce, and fill the new heavens and new earth with their offspring.

Christ described the two creations, or orders of being:

1. The Adamic order of being as defined in Genesis
2. The new order of being as sons of God

Christ also described two ages:

1. The human experience in this Genesis age
2. The new creation in the eternal age to come

This is an extraordinary revelation about God's plan of redemption. And Jesus' description of the eternal resurrection of the sons of God must have dumbfounded his Jewish audience. In this Genesis age, humanity is by definition a sexual creation involving persons embodied in male and female natural bodies. We are designed for the union of marriage and reproduction. And the messianic kingdom was defined by the prophets as a restored human paradise on this Genesis earth.

Yet Jesus revealed that in the eternal age to come, the sons of God will be resurrected into immortal bodies that will not experience marriage. Our immortal bodies will be categorically different from the current Adamic bodies of flesh and blood that are designed for filling the natural earth with their offspring.

But heaven will not be some "spiritual bliss" in an ethereal realm that is devoid of real bodies. Rather, the eternal bodies will be real bodies in a real place. Nor will our individual spirits lose their identity as a person. We will each be the same person, but in a new kind of glorified body.

On this earth, Peter's spirit was in a male human body, and he was a husband, father, and likely a grandfather. When he became a Christian, however, he became a man of God. As a restored man of God, he learned how to be a loving husband to his wife and a loving

father to his children. But when his spirit was regenerated by the Holy Spirit, he was also born again as a new creation as a son of God. When Peter is raptured to heaven, his regenerated spirit will then dwell in a new kind of nonsexual, immortal body. And he will be a son of God in a loving companionship with other eternal children of God.

The Scriptures define eternal life for believers as follows. Upon regeneration by the Holy Spirit, each believer receives an eternal living spirit as a son of God. When our bodies die, our regenerated spirits are taken to heaven, where we wait for a resurrection of our bodies, which sleep in the earth. At the final resurrection, our eternal spirits then enter into a new kind of eternal body like Christ's resurrected eternal body. And after this perishable earth is destroyed, the embodied sons of God then dwell on the imperishable new earth. In this eternal habitat, the eternal sons of God will enjoy eternal fellowship with the triune God, who is Life. When we tell non-Christians that they can inherit eternal life if they believe in Christ, we mean that life for the saints is an eternal embodied life on an eternal new earth in eternal fellowship with the living God in his eternal home.

In stark contrast, the Scriptures define eternal death for those who reject Christ as follows. Unbelievers are living, breathing people, but they are spiritually dead because as sinful creatures they are separated from the spiritual life of God. When their mortal bodies die, their unregenerate spirits are then held in hades until Judgment Day. At the general resurrection, they will be resurrected in souls and bodies, judged, and sent to the eternal lake of fire, which is defined as the second death. Eternal death is eternal separation from the life of God.

But let's get back to the life of a believer and God's plan of redemption. While we remain on this earth, we are experiencing the two orders of being concurrently. According to the Adamic order of being, I am one flesh with my wife, my female companion on this earth. But since my wife is a believer, she is also a fellow child of God in the new creation. When Christ comes again, our natural bodies will be transformed into eternal bodies adapted for heaven. At that time, my wife will no longer be my female partner in marriage. She will, however, be an eternal fellow child of God. Until then, the new creation as sons of God is temporarily superimposed onto this creation until we are taken to heaven.

Paul picked up on Christ's new perspective on redemption:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:26–28 NIV)

In heaven, the sons of God will have no ethnic, class, or sexual distinctions. Paul taught that the new order of being as God's children is a distinctly "new creation" that begins now while we are still humans, but it is ultimately destined for heaven:

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed [when our mortal human bodies die], we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens [an eternal body in the eternal kingdom] . . . From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh [the Adamic order of being] . . . Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:1, 16–17)

As a new creation, we are waiting for a new kind of eternal body in a new kind of eternal home with God.

Adam and Eve were the first humans and the beginning of the human experience on this Genesis earth. But the resurrected and ascended Christ is the firstborn of the sons of God on the future new eternal earth. The Adamic order of being as male and female given in marriage is in the image of the triune God. But as sons of God the Father, we are in the image of his Son: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29).

The Corinthian church was beginning to understand the concept of the new creation in which there is neither male nor female. But they seem to have attempted to implement the new order of being in the present age at the expense of the Adamic order of being. Some within the Corinthian church had begun to forbid sexual relations between husbands and wives, since we are now all brothers and sisters in Christ. They believed married couples should live as celibates as they waited for the eternal kingdom. Paul corrected them by teaching that even

though we are a new creation destined for heaven where marriage will no longer exist, they should continue to function in the Adamic order of being as long as we are living on this earth:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman [the Corinthians writing to Paul].” . . . [then Paul’s response] The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Cor. 7:1–4)

The Corinthians were confusing the two orders of being. Paul taught them that while we remain on this earth living as both a man and woman of God *and* a child of God in the new creation, husbands and wives should continue to function as God intended.

Many evangelical feminists make the same kind of mistake the Corinthians made. They assume that because we are now a new creation in Christ with no distinction between male and female, then wives should no longer live in a submissive role to their husbands. The equality in the new creation trumps the hierarchy in the old creation. Rather than forbidding sex in the marriage relationship, these feminists forbid the submissive role of the wife now that we are a new creation in Christ with a fundamental equality between male and female. This is a popular teaching today.

But Paul was not confused by the two orders of being. He understood that they operated concurrently while we remain on this earth. Notice that Paul taught that a wife should submit to her husband even though they are now in Christ as a new creation that is neither male nor female: “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord [in the new creation]. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them” (Col. 3:18–19). Even though we are now in the Lord as a new creation, it is still appropriate that a wife should submit to her loving husband.

In the new order of being, the wife will ultimately not be submissive to her husband because in heaven marriage between a man and a woman will no longer exist. In the meantime, while the children of

God are living in this Genesis creation, they should continue to function in the Adamic order of being. Husbands and wives should fulfill their marital duties to one another, and wives should continue to be submissive to loving husbands. Paul understood that the two creations operated concurrently while this creation continued to exist.

Paul also taught that the Genesis creation itself is longing for our transition to our eternal home, when our Adamic bodies will be transformed into bodies like Christ's:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. . . . you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our [human] spirit that we are children of God [the new creation], and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [of the eternal kingdom of heaven], . . . For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, . . . in hope, that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies [into an eternal body in an eternal kingdom]. (Rom. 8:14–23)

The Holy Spirit within us informs our regenerated spirits that we are already sons of God. We can now call God "Abba! Father!" As God's children, we are eager to dwell with our Father in his eternal kingdom, where Christ has already ascended. The Genesis creation also longs for our transformation from Adamic creatures to our new creation as sons of God. And the Genesis creation itself will somehow be carried over into the eternal kingdom. Paul did not go into detail about which features of this Genesis creation will carry over into the eternal earth, probably because it remained a mystery to him.

The Corinthians must have been curious as to what kind of non-sexual bodies we will have in heaven. They could envision what a restored human body would be like, but what does an immortal and imperishable body look like? But in his first letter to the Corinthians,

Paul calls the Corinthians foolish for even asking about what kind of bodies we will have in heaven:

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” You foolish person! . . . what you sow [the Adamic body] is not the body that is to be, . . . Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed [into a new kind body], . . . and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed [into a new kind of eternal body adapted for the eternal kingdom]. (1 Cor. 15:35–52)

Some popular books about heaven go into considerable detail about how we will continue to possess most of the features of our current natural bodies and how the eternal new earth will contain most of the features of this current Genesis earth. These authors claim that much of human civilization and culture will carry over to the new earth. We will continue to attend symphonies and even sporting events in heaven. These are all speculations that have no biblical basis.

These authors take the elaborate visions of the messianic kingdom found in the Old Testament and apply them to the eternal kingdom of heaven. All these visions, however, pertain to the restored earth during the millennium, not to the eternal new heavens and new earth. It is foolish to presume that we can know what heaven will be like, just as it is foolish to speculate about what our raptured bodies will be like.

Paul was given extraordinary revelations by the Holy Spirit and was once caught up into the third realm of heaven. But even then, he could not explain what he had seen and experienced (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1–4). If the nature of the paradise of heaven was a mystery to Paul, then it is surely a mystery to us. In fact, Paul warned us not to go beyond God’s revelations: “I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us *not to go beyond what is written*” (1 Cor. 4:6). Theologians who engage in this unwarranted speculation about the nature of the eternal earth would be wise to heed Paul’s warning when writing about the nature of the eternal kingdom of heaven.

Christ in His Glorified Body

One of the reasons some theologians tend to impose features of the Adamic creation onto the new earth is because of how they understand the nature of Christ's resurrected body while he was still on this earth. Christ was raised into a body of flesh and blood that could be seen and touched. The disciples even ate breakfast with him. He was a male human being before he died, and he was a male human being after he was resurrected.

But after he ascended to heaven to the Father's right hand, his human body went through a process of transformation and glorification to adapt it to the glory he had with the Father before he came into this world. And Paul, who got a glimpse of the glorified Christ after he had already ascended to heaven, taught that the post-ascended Christ is in a glorified body that no man in his natural body has seen, or even can see. That is, until Christ returns and we, too, are transformed into glorified bodies like his resurrected body:

To keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light [in his glorified body], whom no one has ever seen or can see. (1 Tim. 6:14–16)

According to Paul, now that Christ has ascended to heaven and is in his glorified body, no one has seen the risen Christ. In fact, it is impossible for anyone in his natural body to approach and see Christ's immortal body. John also taught that we will not know what kind of resurrected bodies we will have until Christ comes again, and we are given glorified bodies like his eternal body:

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are . . . Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared [unknown, glorified bodies]; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is [in his glorified body]. (1 John 3:1–2)

Before Christ ascended to heaven, John saw the resurrected body of Christ that appeared to him and the disciples in the Upper Room. He even watched him eat some broiled fish. But instead of referencing Christ's pre-ascended body that had appeared to him, John referenced the unknown, post-ascended, glorified body of Christ as a model for our future bodies.

Yet, many theologians ignore these teachings and incorrectly assume that our raptured bodies will be like Christ's nonglorified body of flesh and blood that the disciples saw in the Upper Room. They then extrapolate from this unbiblical assumption that our raptured bodies will be just like Christ's body while he was still on this earth—an immortal, natural body. And we will inherit a restored natural earth as our eternal habitat. But I cannot find a single verse in the New Testament that references the pre-ascended body of Christ as being representative of our future eternal bodies.

These theologians often set up a false dichotomy when discussing the nature of our eternal bodies and eternal home:

1. Our raptured, eternal bodies will be modified versions of Christ's pre-ascended body of flesh and blood, and we will dwell on a restored Genesis earth for eternity.
2. Or we will have immaterial spiritual bodies, and we will dwell in a boring ethereal realm of heaven with our spirits floating around like angels.

But the Scriptures plainly teach that our future bodies are neither modified Adamic bodies nor disembodied spirits. The correct view of our future eternal bodies and eternal home is that when Christ comes again, our natural bodies will be transformed into a real but presently unknown kind of immortal body like the unknown, glorified body of Christ. And the embodied eternal sons of God will dwell in a real but presently unknown kind of eternal habitat.

In other words, the nature of our eternal bodies *and* our eternal home remains a profound mystery. Theologians need to learn to live with this mystery. And they should stop imposing features of the Adamic body onto our future eternal bodies, and features of this Genesis creation onto the eternal new earth. Chapter 11, "The Final Resurrection," deals with the important topic of the nature of our future eternal bodies and why it should not be modeled on the pre-ascended Christ.

The New Creation as a Restored Genesis Creation

The trend today among amillennial theologians is to impose a version of the restored Edenic earth, as envisioned by the prophets, onto the eternal new earth. Heaven is essentially a restoration of our humanity as originally intended in the garden of Eden. Many amillennialists contend that the millennium is therefore not necessary because the eternal new earth is the restored earth as envisioned by the prophets. And the new creation is a renovated and renewed Genesis creation. We are not going to heaven; rather, we are going to experience heaven on this Genesis earth. The triune God in all his glory is coming to this Genesis earth to dwell with a restored humanity. This is a serious mistake, for it greatly distorts God's plan of redemption.

The following quote from J. Richard Middleton, an amillennial theologian, is a good example of this flawed theology:

By attending to the basic thrust and movement of the [biblical] plot, we will discover that eschatological redemption consists in the renewal of human cultural life on earth rather than our removal from earth to heaven. . . . the dominant tenor of Scripture, which portrays the redemption of the entire created order and human redemption as the restoration of bodily life on earth—that is, the renewal of God's creational intent from the beginning.²

Middleton is attempting to make sense out of the Old Testament prophecies of a restored Edenic earth for a restored humanity by imposing these visions onto the eternal new heavens and new earth; the eternal kingdom essentially becomes a renovated and restored Genesis creation. There is no need, therefore, for a 1,000-year restoration of this earth before the eternal kingdom.

The amillennialist Anthony Hoekema also describes heaven as a renovated earth in his book *The Bible and the Future*:

2 J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 58, 237.

There will be a future fulfillment of these prophecies [of a restored Edenic earth], not in the millennium, but on the new earth. Whether they are all to be literally fulfilled is open to question; surely details about wolves and lambs, and about mountains dropping sweet wine, are to be understood not in a crassly literal way but as figurative descriptions of what the new earth will be like.³

According to Hoekema, there is no need for a 1,000-year messianic kingdom because the eternal new earth is the fulfillment of these messianic prophecies of a restored earth.

In contrast, premillennialists have traditionally taught that the millennium will be the restored earth as described by the prophets, and that after this Genesis earth perishes, it is replaced with a truly new earth. John F. Walvoord taught this view in his commentary on Revelation:

The new heaven and new earth presented here are evidently not simply the old heaven and earth renovated, but an act of new creation. . . . There is remarkably little revealed in the Bible concerning the character of the new heaven and new earth, but it is evidently quite different from their present form of existence.⁴

Walvoord's interpretation is correct. The new earth is a truly new earth. Unfortunately, progressive premillennialists today have adopted the amillennial version of the eternal earth as a restored Genesis earth. The Genesis earth is not annihilated by fire on the last day but is only purged by a surface fire. The millennium simply becomes a dress rehearsal for the eternal earth. These theologians observe that during the millennium, people will still get old and some sinners will even experience death at the young age of one hundred (Isa. 65:20). But after the earth is purified by fire on the last day, there will be no sin and no death on the eternal restored earth.

They compare this process to how gold is purified by fire. When contaminated gold is refined by fire, it does not result in some unknown, new kind of mineral. Rather, the refining process produces a

3 Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 276.

4 John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 311.

pure form of gold. Likewise, after the millennium on the last day, the earth is purified by fire, which will produce a perfect Genesis creation with no sin and no death. In theological circles, this is referred to as a “new creationist” approach. This is a poor choice of words, however, because these new creationists do not believe the new earth is a truly new creation. Michael Vlach, a progressive premillennialist, advocates this position:

A new creationist approach affirms that the coming new earth will be this present earth purged and restored. . . . All three relationships God placed man into at creation are fully restored [a restoration of humanity]. First, man is in proper relationship with his Creator [as a man and woman of God]. Second, man is in complete fellowship and harmony with other human beings [a restoration of human relationships]. And third, man's relationship with the creation is restored [on a purified earth]. All three relationships were marred at the fall, but now all three are complete.⁵

According to Vlach, the Genesis earth is only purged by fire, not destroyed by fire. And heaven is a complete restoration of our humanity on a restored Genesis earth. Darrell Bock, another well-known progressive premillennialist, also teaches the same doctrine:

In sum, the kingdom and covenants are two of the key ways God reveals how He will execute His plan to restore creation to its intended goal for God's own glory. God's kingdom program is a reclamation project, taking humanity to where it was designed to be all along.⁶

According to Bock, the kingdom of heaven is really a restored Edenic earth where mankind picks back up where he left off.

5 Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton: Lampion Press, 2017), 14, 505.

6 D. Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R. Kreider, eds., *Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 154.

Craig A. Blaising, another progressive premillennialist, states:

The consummation is viewed as a redemption and renewal of the present creation rather than its annihilation and replacement by a completely different, heavenly reality. . . . The holistic consummation of progressive dispensationalism can be described as a worldwide multinational kingdom order of redeemed peoples on a renewed earth.⁷

If Blaising were describing the millennium, I would agree with him. Redeemed humanity will indeed inhabit a renewed earth. But he is not describing the millennium; rather, he is describing the eternal new earth.

According to these amillennial and premillennial theologians, the sons of God will inherit a restored Genesis earth as the eternal kingdom, where we will experience the restoration of our humanity as “it was designed to be all along”; “the renewal of God’s creational intent from the beginning”; and “the renewal of the present creation” where all the relationships Adam and Eve would have experienced in the garden “are fully restored.” The “new creation” as sons of God is a restored humanity on a restored earth.

But Jesus informed us that in the kingdom of heaven, the sons of God will not experience marriage. And Paul told us that the new creation as sons of God is neither a male nor a female creature. These revelations represent a categorical change in our being. If the new creation does not include the most basic aspects of our humanity that began in Eden, how then can these theologians claim that the eternal kingdom will be “the renewal of God’s creational intent from the beginning” if we will not marry, reproduce, fill, and subdue the new earth with our offspring? How can heaven be a restoration of our humanity if we will no longer experience the Adamic order of being as male and female?

These theologians are greatly confusing the Adamic order of being, as revealed in Genesis, with the new creation as sons of God. The human experience is designed and built around man created in the image of God as male and female. Living on this earth as a sexual human being as a man or woman with an anatomy designed for marriage and

7 Bingham and Kreider, *Dispensationalism*, 210.

reproduction gets to the very essence and core of what it means to be a human. And it is the most important organizing principle of our communal life on this earth.

In this Genesis age, we are each a man or woman with a natural, sexual, mortal body on this Genesis earth. As human companions on this earth, we are male or female, son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, father or mother, grandfather or grandmother, uncle or aunt, and a male or female companion to our fellow human beings. These are very real human relationships, and they form the basis for our communal life on this earth. This is the community of man, and our current human society, culture, and civilization are built around these relationships.

Yet, in the eternal age to come as eternal children of God, none of these human relationships will exist on the eternal new earth. We are so accustomed to the human experience on this earth, it is hard to imagine a community and civilization in heaven without these kinds of relationships. But heaven will not be a restored humanity on a restored Genesis earth. Otherwise, all these relationships fundamental to the human experience would exist in heaven. Therefore, contrary to what these theologians erroneously assert, the eternal new earth will not be a restoration of our humanity on a restored Genesis earth.

Jesus' description of the eternal resurrection was not a minor or trivial detail about our eternal bodies in the new creation. It was quite profound, and his teachings should have a major impact on how we understand God's plan of redemption. But when I first read the theologians' books advocating these views, I was shocked to find that many of them do not even reference Jesus' description of the eternal resurrection of the sons of God, nor do they reference Paul's teaching in Galatians about the new creation that is neither male nor female. And when they do quote these Scriptures, they do not attempt to integrate these critically important teachings into a coherent biblical theology of the future. These theologians are simply not taking seriously the revelations about the new creation as sons of God.

The New Earth Is a Truly New Creation

From his celestial home, God created the current heavens and earth in space and time, and it had a presence before him. But on the

last day, John describes the utter annihilation of this Genesis creation when he says: “From his presence earth and sky fled away and no place was found for them” (Rev. 20:11). John is teaching that on the last day, this creation will no longer have a “presence” before God, and this cosmos will have “no place” in space and time. Earth and sky cannot be “found” because they will no longer exist. Therefore, the children of God must be destined for a totally new cosmos and creation to replace this Genesis creation that perishes on the last day.

As Peter says, God created this Genesis creation by his word out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), and he will simply say the word again and it will cease to exist (2 Peter 3:10–13). Then by his word that can create, destroy, and create anew, he will create a new heavens and new earth (*ex nihilo*) adapted for God’s children. A new order of being as eternal sons of God necessitates a totally new creation as its eternal habitat.

Within the Trinity, the Son of God is the Alpha, for he was the specific person of the Godhead who created this Genesis creation. And he is the Omega in that he brings it to an end. He is also tasked with creating the new heavens and new earth. When he brings this Genesis creation to an end on the last day, he will create a completely new creation for the children of God:

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” . . . “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end [of this creation].” (Rev. 21:5; 22:13)

As a new order of being, the children of God will inherit a new kind of body in a new kind of heavens and earth. The eternal earth will certainly have some continuity with this creation. But we are foolish to speculate what that continuity will be, and which features of this creation will carry over to the new earth.

As redeemed men and women of God, we are destined for a restored Genesis earth during the millennium, as envisioned by the prophets. When Christ returns after the 1,000-year restoration, the Adamic order of being and this Genesis creation will come to an end when it is destroyed by fire. The saints will then be raptured into indestructible

glorified bodies like Christ's and will be taken to their eternal home on the eternal new earth. The followers of Christ will not only experience a restoration of their humanity for a thousand years, but they will also get to experience a new kind of eternal paradise as sons of God in an eternal new creation. Now that is an amazing plan of redemption!

I believe that when we are in heaven looking back on the human experience, we will forever remember God's mercy. We will always remember what it was like to be a sinful fallen human being before God saved us. And we will remember the incredible blessings he bestowed on us when we lived on the restored Edenic earth as a restored man or woman of God during Christ's millennial reign. Paul alludes to this truth:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses [fallen human beings], made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that *in the coming ages* he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:4–7)

In the eternal age to come, God's love and mercy toward fallen humanity will demonstrate something about the character of God himself.

Summary

When we accept Christ, we are reconciled to God and are born again. We then become children of God in the new order of being—a new creation that is neither male nor female. But we remain citizens of this Genesis earth and continue to experience the Adamic order of being. Therefore, we currently live a dual existence as two orders of being—as a man or woman of God *and* as a child of God. As a believer and a descendant of Adam, I am a restored man of God in the Adamic order of being. At the same time, I am a child of God and a citizen of heaven, which is my ultimate eternal destiny.

Marriage between a male and a female is the central design feature of the Adamic creation and is fundamental to communal life on this earth, whether it is the nuclear family or the extended family of male

and female neighbors. But the eternal new earth will not be a restoration of our humanity on a restored natural earth. The new creation as sons of God is truly a new order of being, and its form and function are unknown until we experience the final resurrection.

This distinction between the Adamic order of being and the new creation as children of God may seem very simple and elementary. It is simple, but it has a profound impact on how we understand the nature of God's kingdom on earth and then in heaven. The next chapter explains how the two kingdoms of the triune God revolve around the two creations or orders of being.

God the Son's kingdom:

- The Son's 1,000-year messianic kingdom is a restoration of the Adamic order of being on a restored earth that occurs in this Genesis age.
- The departed saints inherit the Son's restored natural earth through a resurrection of their natural bodies at the first resurrection.

God the Father's kingdom:

- The Father's eternal kingdom (or the new heavens and new earth) is for the transformed eternal sons of God in the eternal age to come.
- The sons of God inherit the Father's eternal kingdom through a resurrection and rapture of their eternal bodies at the final resurrection.