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A0639 – September 24, 2006 – Rev 21:1 – The Separation Of Good & Evil

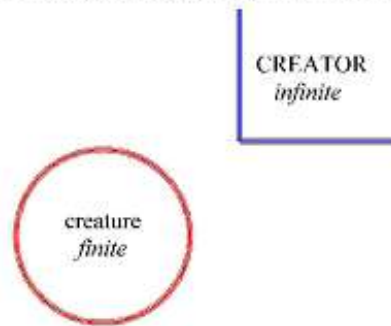
Revelation 21:1 And I saw (1SAAI) a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away (3PAAI) and the sea is (3SPAI) no longer.

The words **And I saw** indicate a new scene in John's vision. The great white throne judgment has faded into the background and **a new heaven and new earth** appear.

This signals the final separation of good and evil, a crucial element in the biblical worldview. Let's review the concept of worldview. What is a worldview? A worldview is the set of beliefs through which a person perceives and interprets the world (like a colored lens through which the world is perceived and interpreted). One's worldview colors his perception and interpretation of reality.

Everyone has a basic set of beliefs or presuppositions which are assumed to be axiomatic (self-evident, obvious). They are cardinal to a person's worldview. It is through these beliefs or presuppositions that a person perceives and interprets the world (e.g. purple balloon vs red balloon). At bottom there are only two basic worldviews; biblical and pagan. Either you perceive and interpret the world through the lens of the Bible or you perceive and interpret the world through a pagan lens (rationalism→the mind is supreme or mysticism→experience is supreme). The biblical worldview is unique with respect to our text today. The biblical worldview is built on the presupposition that the word of God is self-authenticating and the final authority. We perceive and interpret reality through the lens of the biblical text. And the biblical text gives a coherent picture of the plan of God from Genesis to Revelation. The biblical worldview begins and is founded upon the Creator-creature distinction.

CREATOR-creature DISTINCTION



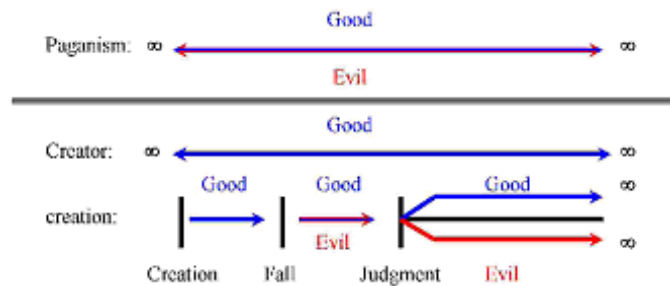
This is the most ancient doctrine. Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth”. God is not a part of His creation but is distinct from the creation. So, the Creator-creature distinction teaches that there are two levels of reality; the sphere of the Creator and the sphere of the creation. The pagan, whose mind is at enmity with God, and does not perceive the world through the lens of the Bible, erases this distinction and links all life together. He teaches there are only degrees of differences. There is only one level of reality. All pagan worldviews have distorted the doctrine of Creator-creature and replaced it with the chain or continuity of being.



In the Creator-creature distinction there is a sharp distinction between the Creator and the creation. The eternal Creator created everything good (Gen 1:31). When temporal creatures sinned against the personal God sin and evil were introduced into the creation. Sin and evil have a beginning, are abnormal and reap devastating affects on all creation. Fortunately, sin and evil are confined to the creation and since the Creator is distinct from the creation. Neither sin nor evil contaminated His nature. By way of contrast, in the Continuity or Chain of Being all life and non-lifeⁱ are connected on a continuum. All life is connected by procreation and/or transmutation of form over vast ages of time. In this worldview the universe is eternal and uncreated. The concept of sin is not permitted by the pagan mind because sin implies responsibility to a higher being. At most we make mistakes but these are not sinful. They are simply inevitable since we are victims of our environment and not personally responsible. Put bluntly, if there is no personal God to sin against there is no sin. The pagan mind is very adept at adopting a worldview that

provides a safe place to sin. We don't want sin with guilt (objective and subjective). We want to sin without guilt (objective and subjective). Paul described the pagan mind as "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness" and said that when they do this although they "profess to be wise they become fools" (Rom 1:18-22).

One of the hurdles of the pagan worldview is how to account for evil. Typically, evil is perceived as a normal part of the universe and as an inescapable fact of human existence. This means that rather than being personally responsible for sin and evil we are victims. The best mankind can hope for is that one day technological advances will outpace the degeneration of an evil universe (i.e. entropy). However, this surreal goal is unattainable by humanistic means. Ultimately there is no escape from evil and we are victims.



The biblical worldview of the Creator-creature distinction solves all the difficulties of eternal evil. It posits that evil had a definite beginning. Since evil had a beginning it is temporal and one day, the Creator has decided, on the basis of the propitiatory work of His Son, Jesus Christ, that evil will be separated from good for all eternity. Only the biblical worldview has any eschatological hope of escaping evil because only the biblical worldview has the concept of atonement for sin.

This is very important because if you really understand this diagram then you understand that the pagan has no hope. This is the reason philosophies and religions outside of biblical thought are in a state of utter despair intellectually and spiritually. They have no real answers to the problem of evil. And, as long as they refuse to believe in Jesus Christ they truly have no hope. So, what we have here with the creation of the **new heaven and new earth** is an idea that is completely absent from paganism. And we believe on the basis of the self-authenticating Scriptures that the separation of good and evil will be a reality and not just imagination.

John says, **For the first heaven and the first earth passed away (3PAAI) and the sea is (3SPAI) no longer.** The separation of good and evil happens in two stages. Stage one is the 7-year Tribulation. During this stage the heavens and earth are partially restored to

prepare for the Millennial reign of Christ. Paul described the Tribulation as a coming like a thief and bringing sudden destruction.

1 Thess 5:2-3 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

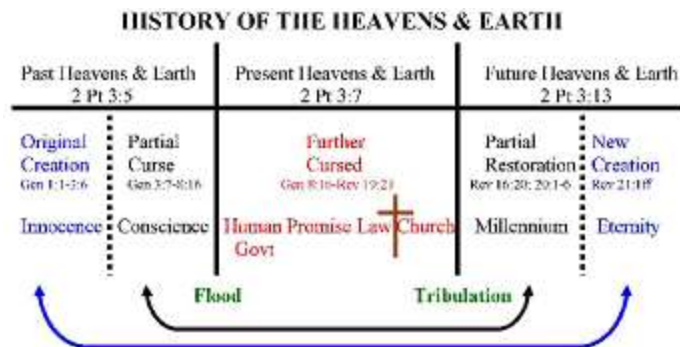
Peter spoke similarly and described the destruction as occurring by way of fiery judgments,

2 Peter 3:10 the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

That both of these passages refer to the Tribulation is clear from the phrase “the day of the Lord” which is the most common phrase referring to the Tribulation. When we study the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments we discovered that many of them burned up the heavens and earth. For example, the 6th Seal ripped the heavens back like a scroll and destroyed the earth; the 1st Trumpet burned up 1/3 of the earth; the 4th Trumpet destroyed elements of the sun and moon; 4th Bowl caused the sun to burn with intense heat; and finally, the earthquake of the 7th Bowl judgment caused “every island to flee away, and the mountains were not found” (Rev 16:20). After these Tribulation judgments the earth will have been partially renovated for the millennial reign of Christ. Thus, the stage one of the separation of good and evil is the Tribulation.

Stage 2 occurs after the Millennium and is described in Rev 21:1 by the words, **the first heaven and the first earth passed away (3PAAI) and the sea is (3SPAI) no longer.** There are two views as to what this means. Either the first universe will be dissolved and a new one created *ex nihilo* or the first universe will be disassembled and a new one re-created from the previously existing material. The evidence points to the latter theory, that the millennial heavens and earth will be disassembled and not dissolved. There are at least seven reasons for disassembly/re-assembly:

1. Peter taught there were three heavens and earths not four or more (2 Pt 3:5, 7, 13)



2. God promised a specific land to Israel as an everlasting possession (Gen 17:8). The fulfillment of this promise begins in the Millennium. If the land is dissolved after the Millennium then the specific land God promised them would not be their eternal possession and the prophecy would be unfulfilled.ⁱⁱ
3. God promised one of David's descendants an everlasting kingdom (1 Chron 17:14). David's descendant is Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1-25). The fulfillment of this promise begins in the Millennium. 1 Cor 15:24 teaches that after the Millennium, David's descendant, Jesus, will hand the kingdom over to God the Father. If the kingdom is dissolved after the Millennium then the kingdom would not be eternal and the prophecy would be unfulfilled.ⁱⁱⁱ
4. God promised one of David's descendants an everlasting throne (1 Chron 17:12, 14). The fulfillment of this promise begins in the Millennium. If this throne is dissolved after the Millennium then the throne would not be eternal and the prophecy would be unfulfilled.^{iv}
5. God promised that one of David's descendants would be an everlasting God-man (1 Chron 17:10b-14). This promise was fulfilled when Jesus received a resurrection body on Sunday, April 5, 33AD.^v If all aspects of the prior heavens and earth are dissolved then Christ's resurrection body must be dissolved. This would mean the prophecy of an eternal God-man would be unfulfilled.^{vi} Jesus Christ is therefore, the first part of the new heaven and new earth.
6. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul said, "if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor 5:17).^{vii} What can this mean except that those in Christ are no longer part of the old creation but are part of the new heaven and new earth?
7. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, John said, "I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining" (1 John 2:8). When we live according to our regenerate self the true Light of Jesus Christ shines through us. What can this mean except that the light of the new heavens and new earth is already shining?^{viii}

The Bible is clear that God's everlasting promises link the cross and resurrection of Christ in this order to the future order in the new heavens and new earth. Christ is the eternal God-man and all those in Christ are new creations. Together we form a vital link between the old and new creation. The bottom line is that history is connected to eternity. There is not a total disconnect. History is important and what happens in history ripples into eternity. This is what John means in verse 1 when he says he saw **the first heaven and the first earth passed away**. Contextually, this means the **heaven and earth** that were corrupted by sin^{ix} and evil **passed away**. In its place there is a new heaven and new earth that is uncorrupted and incorruptible by sin and evil. The lake of fire forms a stark contrast to the new heaven and new earth. There evil is confined for all eternity. Rather than doing away with evil God separates it from good forever.

Therefore, there will be an absolute separation of good and evil from the present order.

ⁱ The concept of life evolving from non-life is known as "spontaneous generation". This concept has been disproven in scientific laboratories. Nevertheless, scientists still insist that it must have happened because we are here and divine fiat is unthinkable!

ⁱⁱ Land has physical properties.

ⁱⁱⁱ A Kingdom has physical and spiritual properties.

^{iv} Throne has physical properties.

^v Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*.

^{vi} A resurrection body is not identical to our present bodies but it does have physical components.

^{vii} Those in Christ have regenerated spirits.

^{viii} Light has physical properties.

^{ix} While all sin was paid for on the cross by Jesus Christ the consequences of sin continue for both man and nature.

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