



St Helen's  
Bishopsgate

# New creation weekend away

RML Overview

10 – 12 May 2019

Name: .....



- Often mentioned as a key idea, e.g. John 18:36, Mark 8:34-38, Hebrews 11:1,13-16, Romans 8:18-23, 2 Peter 3:10-13, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:19, Philippians 1:21

- Vital it's the NT that focuses on this idea

The Bible as a whole shows that Jesus' return and the new creation is crucial

- The Bible's big plot shows the new creation is the key

- A great theme in the Bible is God making promises and this theme shows the new creation is crucial

- Another key theme in the Bible is God rescuing His people and this also shows the new creation is crucial

- Yet another great Bible theme is God's anointed king Jesus – and this too shows the new creation is key (e.g. Jn 18:36, Eph 1:10)

In 2s and 3s, how do you feel about the new creation, honestly – excited, wanting to be there, disinterested in it, hoping it doesn't come too soon because you have so much you want to do before Jesus returns, angry that God is more concerned with a new creation than this one, etc? Why?

## **WHAT IS THE NEW CREATION AND WHY IT'S GREAT**

Most Christians don't understand what the new creation will be like

What the new creation will be

- A creation, like this one but better (e.g. Is 25:6-8, 60:17-22, 1 Cor 15:42-49, 2 Pet 3:13)





- So we should expect things often to be hard here on earth since this is not our home and God has not promised us an easy & blessed life here (Mk 8:34-38)
  - We have a journey to finish as we head home, just like Israel in the desert
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - We have a job to do while we remain in this world (Phil 1:21-25)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- There are blessings now, but fewer than we'd expect
  - Most of the blessings God gives us now are to help us to keep going to the end or to help us in the job He has given us to do
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - However, there is one blessing that is a foretaste of the new creation – our relationship with Him

All this is exemplified in Jesus who suffered in this world but is now glorified in the new creation (Heb 12:1-4)

In 2s & 3s discuss what you think of the idea that you are strangers here on earth – Excited? Terrified? Unhappy? Something else?



### 3. Don't lay up treasure on earth (Mt 6:19-21)

- These will pass away
  - But don't despise the good things of this world
  
  - But also need not be too concerned with what happens to this world

In 2s and 3s, think about what it might mean for you to lay up treasure in heaven and where you are in danger of laying up treasure on earth

In your groups, think about the following questions:

- In what ways would your lives look different if you really understood that God is focusing on a new creation and that is where we belong, even now (don't just think of evangelism)?
- How can you in practice do more to lay up treasure in heaven?
- In what ways are you in danger of storing up treasure on earth?

## **New creation 3: living in the light of what matters**

2 questions

### **WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LAYING UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN, NOT ON EARTH?**

- Philippians speaks about living as citizens of heaven while on earth, similar to laying up treasure in heaven (1:27, 3:20-21, but N.B. in 1:27 see footnote)
  
- 1:21 says what it means for Paul to live as a citizen of heaven while on earth

### **To die is gain**

- Explained in 1:23b – to die & go to be with Jesus is much better
  
- Unpacked in chapter 3 – he forgets all he had in this world & strains forward to the new creation (3:11-17)
  
- What happens without this mindset? – we end up as enemies of Christ's cross, headed for destruction (3:18-19)
  - In the end seeking treasure now inevitably involves sacrificing our Christian lives
    - The damage is done gradually

On your own or in 2s or 3s, think about:

- What things of this world are you seeking and how do you spend time, energy & mental capacity on them?
- What it would look like for you not to set your mind on earthly things but rather really want to be with Jesus in the new creation?

N.B. don't think about how hard it will be to change

### **To live is Christ**

- Explained in 1:22 and 1:24-25
  - I.e. for Paul living means labouring to help other Christians in their faith
  - Regardless of the cost and joyfully (1:12-14, 15-18)
  
- Unpacked in chapter 2 (2:4-11, 19-22, 29-30)
  - Key is Paul's & Timothy's & Epaphroditus' attitudes & passions
  
  - We lay up treasure in heaven by being concerned for Jesus' interests, i.e. growing his church.
  
- Christians throughout the whole of the church's history have lived on earth in this radical way

– Jim Elliot – ‘He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose’

- The key is the **desire** to be in the new creation with Jesus and the **attitude** that the best use of our lives here is to win and build up people who will be in the new creation

– This will result in all sorts of different actions depending on our situation & circumstances

On your own, or in 2s and 3s, think about:

- If you really did think the new creation was infinitely more important than this one & that the whole point of life now is to win & build Christians, what could you do with the situation, opportunities & gifts God has given you? – be specific

N.B. again don't think about how hard it will be to change our attitudes & desires

## HOW CAN WE BECOME THIS SORT OF PERSON?

- How can we gain this attitude & desire? – if we really ‘get’ the new creation change will follow

– When we really think something is great, our attitudes to it and to everything else changes

- Biblical application is not about getting us to do what we don't want to do – it's about helping us to want it as we really understand God, what he's doing and his new creation
  
- So need to grasp that God is focusing on His new creation & how wonderful it is & that we belong there
  - **Hard** because the world, the flesh & the devil are working against this – waging a propaganda war against us
  
  - **Easy** because key to grasping just how wonderful the new creation is & that we belong there is simply to know more about it, e.g. by reading and meditating on the passages in the Bible about the new creation (1 Cor 2:9)
  
- Another crucial way to change our mindset is to begin investing in the new creation (Mt 6:19-21)

In your groups, think about the following questions:

- How in practice can we be better at grasping how wonderful the new creation is so we don't lose the propaganda war?

- If you really did think the new creation is infinitely more important than this one and the whole point of life now is to win and build Christians, what could you do with the situation, opportunities and gifts God has given you? – be specific

## **New creation 4 – how the future came to matter**

### **INTRO – PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION**

How does the new creation become a big issue in the Bible?

- It gets no explicit mention for a very long time – not until around the time of the end of the nation
- How does the Bible story move from focusing only on this world for most of Israel's history in the OT period to focusing massively on the new creation in the NT?

The importance of understanding there is progression in the story of salvation

The movement from God apparently focusing on this world to clearly focusing on the new creation happens in the middle of the OT

### **THE QUESTION POSED**

The role of the wisdom literature which becomes prominent in Solomon's time

Job: the story of a righteous man who God is pleased with but who suffers (Job 1:1, 2:1-10)

- God is just, but Job hasn't sinned, so something doesn't make sense. In fact, the wicked often prosper (e.g. Job 21:7-15), so something is seriously wrong (Job 42:7)
  
- Job has little awareness of anything beyond this world, which is why things don't make sense
  - In fact, wisdom can't be found in this world (Job 28:1-2, 12-15)
  
- I.e. in this world we cannot square a just and powerful God with the observation that righteous people often suffer and wicked people often prosper
  - The problem is particularly acute when put together with the Mosaic covenant which speaks only in this world terms and says that if Israel obeys she will be blessed and if she disobeys she will be cursed

Ecclesiastes shows that if this world is all there is then life is pointless, since everyone dies and so there is little reason to be wise, or righteous or rich (Eccl 2:12-17)

- Even if one is blessed in this world it is a disappointment (Eccl 2:4-11)

So the wisdom literature shows us that if this world is all there is then we have problems

Nothing more has yet been revealed (Eccl 3:19-21)

In 2s & 3s discuss how you feel about God's stark revelation that if this world is all there is then life is futile & pointless and God is a liar

## THE ANSWER REVEALED IN THE PROPHETS

Isaiah also points out that there is a major problem with God's plan as it's being worked out in this world – every time God rescues Israel in this world it's only temporary

But in Isaiah God reveals that there will be a proper solution – a king who will bring everlasting peace (9:6-7), and a sacrifice who will deal with sin (53:4-6)

- God also reveals He will be making a very different world – death defeated (25:6-8, 26:19) & a new creation (65:17-25)
- The whole of God's solution is a package deal – forgiven, sin-free people get a new creation as the only place they can be properly & permanently blessed

This also deals with all the other questions raised in the wisdom literature (e.g. Is 66:1-2,22-24)

So God's plan shifts to focus on a new creation because only there can the problems of this fallen world be properly dealt with

In 2s & 3s, discuss how you feel about God solving all the problems of this fallen world in such a radical manner

## SUMMING UP

Until the time of David and Solomon, it looks like this world is all there is

- But if this is right there are problems as we see in the wisdom literature
  
- In the prophets, God reveals that He will make a new creation as the way he will resolve these problems

I.e. the new creation is essential to God's Word being true, to God being just and to the fulfilment of God's plan to reverse the Fall, which is why it is the focus of what God is doing

- All this shows why God is not focusing now on reforming this world – the first part of the Bible has shown that the problems of a fallen world cannot be dealt with in this world

N.B. the shift from this world to the new creation doesn't mean God made a mistake initially – this world picture needed so we understand reality

- But now real solution has been revealed it's wrong to focus on the 'this world' picture

In your groups, think about the following questions:

- Do we understand how God's plan moves from a focus on this world to a focus on the new creation and why this is necessary part of God's plan?
- If God's justice, promises, etc are now generally only seen working out in God's new creation and not in this world, what should be our attitude to this world?
- How has this weekend changed our attitude to the new creation?