



DOCTRINE

ROOTED IN TRUTH

Glory of Eternity

- The suffering of this world does not compare to the glory of eternity
- Romans 8:18–22 and 2 Corinthians 4:16–18
- God's big-picture story of salvation:
- Creation (Genesis 1–2): God created the world good.
- Fall (Genesis 3): Evil entered the world and marred God's good creation.
- Redemption (The Gospels): Jesus redeemed us (Galatians 3:13).
- Final Kingdom (Revelation 21–22): One day, everything will be perfect.

Glory of Eternity

- The first two chapters of Genesis and the last two chapters of Revelation are like bookends, the first creation and the new creation.
- This is what Jesus came to do in the end. Not only to redeem individual people from the bondage to sin but to redeem all of creation.
- God's big-picture story is not only about our personal reconciliation with God or even the church as a community.
- Ultimately, it's about God's reconciling all of creation to Himself.

Glory of Eternity

- We live in the time between redemption and Christ's return.
- Scripture tells us that during this time we should expect suffering. Though we individually have been made new creations, the world around us is still broken; there is still evil, suffering, pain, sickness, war, oppression.
- Paul said creation "groans" like a woman in childbirth, waiting "with eager longing" for the new creation. As a woman must endure the pain of childbirth to celebrate the joy of a newborn baby, we must endure the suffering of this world to reach the kingdom of God.

Glory of Eternity

- This is what Jesus said to the seven churches in the beginning of Revelation, to each a variation of “those who endure to the end will receive eternal life in my perfect kingdom” (Revelation 2:7; 2:10; 2:17; et. al.)
- These churches were suffering intense persecution at the hands of the Roman government; they needed encouragement to persevere through it.
- They needed to look ahead to the prize of eternal life in heaven to keep pressing on with perseverance through the mess of this world (Philippians 3:14).

Glory of Eternity

- To the Roman and Corinthian churches, Paul encouraged believers not to lose heart, because no matter how bad the suffering we experience here, it is nothing compared to the glory that is to come.
- Heaven is so infinitely better than anything we could ever ask or imagine that when we get there, we will look back on this life as just a “light momentary affliction.”
- That may seem unbelievable to us now because the things we are going through really are hard.

Glory of Eternity

- Paul wasn't minimizing our pain; he was just saying the future glory of heaven is so amazing that we'll consider the pain we went through to get there to be totally worth it, as a mother does when she holds that newborn baby.
- She almost forgets the pain she went through because the result is so blissful. This doesn't mean our pain isn't real.
- It's so bad that all of creation groans with us. But it's nothing compared to the future glory of God's perfect final kingdom.

God's Final Kingdom

- God's final kingdom is a perfect new creation with His presence at its center
- Revelation 21
- Revelation 21–22 is the bookend to Genesis 1–2, the original creation and the new creation.
- The New Heavens and new earth come after the millennial reign of Christ, after His Second Coming and final battle with Satan.
- This is the final eternal kingdom of God which lasts into eternity, when God makes all things new.

God's Final Kingdom

- There are many similarities but also significant differences between the original creation and the new creation.
- This is God making something new (verse 5). Just as God had created the “the heavens and the earth” in the beginning (Genesis 1:1), He will create a new heavens and a new earth.
- This isn't “heaven” as in the spiritual realm, but the “new heavens and new earth” refer to creation. In God's final kingdom, we will have real glorified eternal bodies (1 Corinthians 15), and there will be a new perfect glorified earth.

God's Final Kingdom

- The Holy City being “prepared as a bride” represents the people of God. The metaphor of God’s relationship with His people as a marriage is found throughout Scripture.
- In the Old Testament, Israel was God’s unfaithful wife who cheated on Him with other “lovers” (gods), while He remained a faithful husband to her.
- In the new covenant, the Church is the Bride of Christ who is preparing for her wedding by remaining faithful to Him (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27).

God's Final Kingdom

- The 12 gates of the Holy City (the Bride) bear the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (just like the vision in Ezekiel 48:30–35) and the 12 foundations bear the names of the 12 apostles (verse 14; Ephesians 2:20).
- The city measures a perfect cube, just like the holy of holies in the temple, the dwelling place of God's Holy Spirit (2 Chronicles 3:8a).
- This city is huge; there is room for anyone and everyone who wants to come (Genesis 15:5; Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 11:28), but only those who truly know Jesus will enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:13–23).

God's Final Kingdom

- The precious jewels on the gates are from a promise in Isaiah, the imagery of the city God would rebuild for His people (Isaiah 54:11–12).
- The pearl was the most valuable jewel in ancient Rome; each gate being made of one single pearl would be a huge pearl, communicating the greatest value imaginable.
- Having streets of pure gold tells us that in God's kingdom even the "lowest" place will be more perfect than the most valuable thing in this world.
- Everything in the new earth is as pure as refined gold.

God's Final Kingdom

- The gates will be wide open (the invitation is for everyone), but nothing impure will ever enter this city because evil will be destroyed forever and only the righteous will enter – not righteous by their own good works, but those who have been made new perfected creations in Christ through the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15).
- “Only those whose names are written in the book of life” refers those who belong to Jesus, who have been set apart for Him, those who have endured to the end (Revelation 3:5; 20:12).

God's Final Kingdom

- God invites “all who are thirsty” to come drink from the water of life for free, just as He had said in Isaiah 55. Jesus is this living water; whoever believes in Him will never thirst again (John 7:37–39).
- Jesus is the only way to Father and the glorious Holy City (John 14:6–7).
- This is a free gift offered to all people, but not all will take it. Many will turn to other things to “quench their thirst,” to try to satisfy.
- This is God's kingdom; only those who are citizens of His kingdom will dwell there in His presence.

God's Final Kingdom

- There will be no temple in New Jerusalem because God Himself will be the temple; His dwelling place will be directly with His people.
- The city won't need sun or moon because the Lord will be its light.
- God will be so close that He Himself will wipe every tear from our eyes.
- This is why and how there will be no more suffering, evil and pain.
- Because God's presence is goodness.

God's Final Kingdom

- All of this points to the glory, holiness and perfection of this Holy City.
- But the reason for its glory and perfection is because God will be there.
- The thing that makes the Holy City so great isn't the streets of gold or the jeweled walls.
- It's the fact that God is there. It is God's presence that makes heaven glorious, because He is glory.
- It is God's presence that makes it good, because He is goodness.

God's Final Kingdom

- The final kingdom isn't about getting the inheritance of a mansion in the sky.
- It's about being with God, in His presence, in perfect fellowship with Him, with no barriers.
- This is what God has been doing for His people throughout the whole big-picture story, making a way for them to dwell in His presence – in the garden, in the tabernacle, in Christ, and finally in His kingdom.
- Because His presence is the place of goodness and the fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- All people are invited to join God in His eternal perfect kingdom
- Revelation 22:1–5,12–17
- This is like restoring an old historic home. You don't make it exactly the same as it originally was. This is like what we see in God's description of the new creation.
- We recognize some of the original in it through all the Eden imagery. Yet, there are enough differences that it is clear He is not just restoring the old creation; He is making all things new (21:5).

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- The original creation was a garden, but in the new creation, we find a city.
- Human beings can cultivate and help grow a garden, but we think of it as more of a natural place while we think of cities as being manmade.
- Both Eden and the Holy City were made completely by God, but in using the imagery of a city in the final kingdom, God was acknowledging the history of humanity that has occurred since the Garden and how people have participated with Him in building His kingdom.

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- In the original creation, there was day and night and sun, moon and stars.
- But in the new creation, there will be no more night and no more need for sun, moon and stars because God Himself is our light.
- In the original Garden, a river flowed from Eden and watered the Garden. In the new creation, the river of the water of life will flow from the throne of God and the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city and the tree of life will be watered by the River of Life (22:1–2).
- All these things point to God as our source of life, of everything we need.

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- In the original creation, in the middle of the Garden there were two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- In the new creation, there will be only one tree, the Tree of Life.
- In the original Garden, humanity could choose either good or evil.
- In the new creation, because God has destroyed evil forever, choosing evil will no longer be an option; there will be only good (Revelation 20:14; 21:1).

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- If we look back at the Fall, we see God banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden so they couldn't eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in their fallen state (Genesis 3:22–24).
- But now, because people have been redeemed and made new in Christ, they can have full access to the Tree of Life and live forever in their perfected state (1 Corinthians 15) because there will no longer be any curse (Revelation 22:3).

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- In the new creation, the Tree of Life will be on both sides of the River of Life, reminding us of the descriptions in Psalms of those who delight in God's law being like trees planted by streams of water; they flourish with or without rain because they are watered by God's Word (Psalm 1).
- The Tree of Life has 12 crops of fruit; it's fruitful all the time.
- All of this shows us a world in which all things will be reconciled to God, and all people will live in peace and harmony with one another and with all of creation in God's presence forever.

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- Revelation closes with two uses of the word “come.”
- Jesus reminds us that He is coming soon, and the Spirit and the Bride invite all who are thirsty to come drink from the River of Life.
- Jesus is coming back in judgment (v. 12) and those who are condemned will not enter the Holy City (v. 15), but the way of salvation is open to everyone of every nation, tribe and tongue.
- We have only to respond to the invitation.

Eternal Perfect Kingdom

- This is the simple truth of the Gospel. This is the “happy ending” of the big-picture story of the Bible.
- All who accept His free gift will live forever in God’s presence in His perfect kingdom with all of their needs provided, in joy, peace and harmony with all of humanity and all of creation.
- As the Bride of Christ, we should also join with the Spirit in inviting others to come, to accept His free gift and be saved.

Resources

