

GOD GLORIFYING CIVILIZATIONS

- A. Introduction: We are discussing heaven. We have many misconceptions about heaven which rob us of the joy and hope that should come from knowing we are going to heaven. We think of heaven as ethereal, wispy, and other worldly. We think we won't be ourselves and we won't remember or recognize each other. All we'll do is worship God. We'll be like the angels. Etc., etc. None of those ideas are biblical.
1. As with most topics, heaven is easier to understand if you consider it in terms of the "big picture".
 - a. God made men for sonship, for relationship (Eph 1:4,5). God made earth as a home for His family and for Himself (Isa 45:18). God's intention has always been to live with His family on earth. That is how the Bible begins and ends (Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3). Jesus died so that man and God could be together (I Thess 5:10).
 - b. The human race and the earth itself has been damaged by sin (Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:19-23). The ultimate purpose of redemption is to restore God's entire creation (men, and the earth itself) to what it was originally meant to be (Col 1:19-21).
 2. Death is present in God creation (the human race and the earth) because of Adam's sin. Gen 2:17; etc.
 - a. At death the inward man and outward man separate. Men without physical bodies cannot live in this material world. At death, men, minus their physical bodies, pass into another dimension.
 - b. Those who are in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ go to a place called heaven.
 1. Even though heaven is invisible to us, heaven is a real place with real people who do real things -- many of the same things we do on earth.
 2. There is continuity of identity and memory in heaven. People look like themselves. They do not lose their memories of their life history and relationships.
 3. As wonderful as heaven is, the present heaven is temporary. God did not make men to be disembodied spirits who live in an immaterial, spirit world. God made men to live in a physical body in a physical world. God made men to live on a physical earth. God made the earth for men.
 - a. In connection with the Second Coming of Jesus, all who live in the present heaven will return to earth -- earth that has been transformed, reclaimed, and redeemed from the curse of death. They (we) will be reunited with their (our) original body and live with the Lord forever on this earth.
 - b. The new earth will be earth, the earth we know and love. It will be new but familiar, transformed but recognizable, just as a new creature in Christ is new but familiar and recognizable.
 1. In Rev 21 John saw the new earth. v5--Notice, God did not say: I am making all new things. He said: I am making all things new!
 2. Redemption is not about replacing God's original creation with something else. It is about reclaiming it and restoring it. Jesus came to bring resurrection to His entire creation -- to give life to what was dead and complete the plan of God for His family.
 - c. In the Rev 21:1-3 John describes seeing God's throne, God's city, the New Jerusalem, coming out of the present invisible heaven to the new earth. The city does not replace earth, it comes to the new earth. God brings His home, His tabernacle (dwelling place) to the home He made for men.
 4. In this lesson we want to continue our discussion of what life will be like when heaven comes to earth.

B. One of the things we see in heaven -- both in the present invisible heaven and the future new earth -- is continuity. On the new earth there will also be continuity of nations, cultures, and civilizations. Life on the new earth will be new, but familiar.

 1. When Jesus returns He is not going to destroy the kingdoms of this world (Rev 11:15). He is going to take control of them -- every people (race), nation, and language (those who share cultural and national identity). He will rule the universe as King of kings from His capital city on earth, New Jerusalem.
 - a. Jesus will put His men, His under-rulers, in charge of the nations of this world. He will give them the greatness of the kingdoms. Rev 5:9,10; Dan 7:13,14,18,27
 1. v27--What is the greatness (splendours--Jerusalem Bible) of a kingdom? Yes, it is the power

and authority it wields, but it is also its cultural output. Think about it. What made the USA “great”? What made Rome “great”?

2. When He returns, Jesus is going to purify human culture so that it does what it was always supposed to do: glorify God. The cultures and civilizations on the new earth will be new but familiar, cleansed but recognizable.
 - b. Fallen mankind failed at their God-given task of glorifying God through their civilizations and cultures. In the new earth glorified men and women will produce cultures and civilizations which glorify God. But they won’t start from scratch.
 1. Cultural developments that were sinful will be eliminated. Those that were not sinful, but simply used for sinful purposes or by people with sinful motives, will be purged to do what God always intended.
 2. Nothing that glorified God will be lost. Redemption is big!! Ps 90:17--Confirm for us the works of our hands. (NASB--marginal note: give permanence)
2. Culture is the “sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another”. (Webster’s Dictionary). That involves clothing, jewelry, technology, art, music, crafts, literature, science, education, industry, food production and preparation, etc.
 - a. Man was not just to be a caretaker of the earth. Angels could have done that. Man was to create and shape the culture of earth. Gen 2:19
 - b. God made men to reign on this earth. To reign means to subdue the earth. Gen 1:28--Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it [with all its vast resources]; and have dominion. (Amp)
 1. Subduing the earth means taking the resources of earth and producing things that glorify God.
 2. It was God’s intention that men would fill the earth and then reign over it -- use its resources to produce God-exalting cultures and civilizations.
 - c. God made men in His image (Gen 1:26). God creates, beautifies, and decorates. Creativity which produces culture is part of the image of God that men bear even in their fallen condition -- this desire to discover, create, build.
 1. Men made in the image of God, even in their fallen condition, went out to subdue the earth. They produced farming, metallurgy, and musical instruments (Gen 4:20-22). They ventured out on the sea (Gen 10:5). They developed government; they became hunters, built cities and empires (Gen 10:8-12). They discovered new lands (the plain of Shinar--Gen 11:2).
 2. In Gen 11:3,4 there was an explosion of knowledge and technological developments as men attempted to build a great tower. What they did was not wrong. Why they did it was wrong.
3. Glorifying God is more than attending a worship service, passing out tracts, or having a “ministry”. Any righteous or right actions we take using our God-given talents reflect back to Him.
 - a. Matt 5:16--In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (NLB); Let your light so shine ... that men may see the beauty of your life and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Rieu).
 1. Isa 26:12--O Lord, you mete out peace to us, for it is you who have accomplished all we have done. (NAB)
 2. Cor 10:31 speaks of glorifying God in what you eat, drink, and do. Do all for the honor and glory of God. (Amp); Do everything to glorify God (Beck).
 - b. Jesus, as a man, pleased and glorified His Father in everything He did (John 8:28,29). That means when Jesus made something in the carpenter’s shop, when He ate dinner, when He drank a cup of wine, He brought glory to God because He lived in union with and submission to His Father.
 - c. Part of our created purpose is to bring glory or honor to God in all that we do in this life and the life to come. When heaven comes to earth we will reign on the new earth by subduing it, by using its resources to produce God-glorifying cultures and civilizations.

C. Let’s begin to talk about the kinds of things we’ll do in our God-glorifying cultures and civilizations.

1. We will work on the new earth.
 - a. Work predates sin. The first time a Hebrew word for work is used in connection with man is in Gen 2:5 (till) and Gen 2:15 (dress).
 1. Gen 2:5--Cultivate (Spurrell); farm the soil (Taylor). Gen 2:15--The Lord placed the man in the Garden of Eden as its gardener, to tend and care for it. (Living Bible)
 2. This word means to work, to serve. The labor can be focused on things, other people, or God. The word does not have connotations of toilsome labor, but rather of a joyful experience of liberation. Ex 3:12; Josh 24:15
 - b. Work that is tedious, toilsome, and unfruitful is part of the curse of sin which will be removed when the earth is transformed at the return of Jesus. Gen 3:17-19; Rev 22:3
 - c. On the new earth we will do work that is meaningful, not toilsome, in the beauty of God's creation in perfect fellowship with Him. We will serve the Lord (Rev 22:3). We have reduced serving God to knocking on doors, passing out tracks, and attending church services.
 1. Col 3:22-24 tells slaves to obey their masters and do what they do as unto the Lord because they serve Him. In other words, menial tasks, the slave "job", was called service to the Lord.
 2. Col 3:24--Serve means to be a slave or to be devoted to and obey. You can do that while you work as a slave or bake a cake, mow the lawn, or clean out the garage.
 3. Micah 6:6-8--God doesn't want the religious ritual (There will be corporate worship in heaven -- another lesson). God wants men to walk with Him: Do what you do with the consciousness that I am your Lord and I am with you. On the new earth He will be with us because His home will be our home and we will do all that we do for His glory.
2. What kinds of work will we do? Many specific jobs are mentioned in the Bible.
 - a. Isa 65:21; Amos 9:13,14; Micah 4:4--Men will build homes and farm. That means producing and assembling the materials used in the houses and the items needed to decorate the houses and make them comfortable. That means assembling and producing objects needed for farming as well as the objects needed for storing, preparing, and eating the food produced.
 - b. Luke 19:11-19--Some people will work in government and administer the cities on the new earth.
3. There will be travel and people will work in the industries connected with travel -- roads, ships, vehicles, inns, restaurants. Micah 4:2; Isa 60:4-9; Rev 21:24
 - a. The fact that there are streets in the capital city suggests a place for vehicles: horses, wagons, etc. We know there will be ships. Why not cars and airplanes? None of these are inherently evil.
 - b. Won't we be able to dematerialize as Jesus did? Maybe. That may be something Jesus did as God. Let's not think about it for a moment as we try to "demystify" the new earth and remove the "otherworldly" element.
4. There will be businesses (one of the elements of a city) on the new earth. Business in and of itself is not sinful. Business involves trade and manufacturing, both of which will exist on the new earth.
 - a. Isa 60:5-9;13,16 speaks of merchants from foreign lands bringing commodities to Jerusalem.
 - b. Ps 72 is a prayer of David for Solomon, but it switches to prophecy about the Messiah. Solomon and his reign was a prophetic type or picture of the Messiah and His kingdom.
 1. v10,11 speak of merchants bringing commodities to the King's kingdom. The context in which the original hearers would have heard this was the kinds of items brought to Solomon.
 2. II Chron 9:21 refers to gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks coming to him from Tarshish. I Kings 10:10 says the Queen of Sheba brought Solomon gold, spices, and precious gems.
5. Business in and of itself is not sinful. It comes out of normal human interaction: I have something you need but can't provide so I make it. I have an idea and create something you want or need. You have more skill at doing something than I do so you do it or make it.
 - a. One might ask: Why would we need businesses and goods and services on the new earth? Technically, we don't need homes or food or drink -- but we will have those things to enjoy.
 - b. Even in this fallen earth many people are in business for reasons other than to make a living. It's

their passion. They want to help and to bless others or make society a better place to live; etc.

6. What about technology and machinery? There is an inherent idea that man-made objects aren't glorifying to God. But it is part of our God-given mandate to subdue the earth. Building, developing, creating machinery (tools) is found in every culture. It is one way we exercise dominion in the earth.
 - a. Machinery and technology produces "things". In the present heaven there are what we call "man-made objects" -- harps, trumpets, bowls, thrones, clothes, crowns. You can't go to a tree and pick a trumpet off of it. Someone has to take the natural resources created by God and make a trumpet.
 - b. Why is machinery not mentioned in the Bible? Why doesn't the Bible talk about factories or office workers or auto makers, etc.? None of those things, that kind of technology, had not been invented and developed yet. But, based on the principle of continuity, we can't rule them out.
 7. Our God-given creativity doesn't just produce art. It produces science and technology. There is no reason to think we won't use purified technologies from the old earth and invent new technologies as we explore, utilize, and enjoy God's creation.
 - a. Fallen men on a fallen earth have extended their dominion to the sky (we can fly) to the sea (we can cross the ocean on top of or below the water), and to outer space (we landed on the moon).
 - b. Remember the new heavens. Heaven in Greek and Hebrew includes the stars, planets, outer space.
 1. The billions of galaxies made by God will be restored to their original state just as earth will be. Currently, God is the only one who see most of it.
 2. Ps 19:1--There is no reason to think we won't explore the renewed universe as God reveals ever more of Himself to us through the wonders He created.
- D. Conclusion: We have much more to say about civilizations and cultures on the new earth but consider these points as we close.
1. What will we do when heaven comes to earth? What will life be like on the new earth? There will be continuity. We'll continue some of the same things we did on earth, with the same passions and drives.
 - a. Many of our gifts and talents are for the future -- not for this pre-life, but for the life to come, life on the new earth..
 - b. When you know this, you can see that we are no longer under the pressure of: If you don't do it now, if you don't do it before you are old, if you don't do it before you die, it will never happen.
 2. Part of the tragedy of life in a sin cursed earth is what appear to be lost opportunities: a beautiful singer who died at age two; a gifted writer who never learned to read or write because he was born a slave; a talented athlete who never played sports because he had to go to work in factory at age twelve when his dad died; etc., etc.
 - a. However, when you know that your destiny is the new earth (heaven on earth) you know that there are no lost opportunities -- just an occasional postponed one.
 - b. Redemption is big!! God is not going to lose anything -- including the talents, abilities, and desires He gave you to use to glorify Him. You will fully fulfill that call on the new earth.