

13. Creation, Again (1Q 2013—Origins)

Biblical material: Rev. 21:1–5, Gen 3:19, 1 Cor. 15:52–58, Gen. 6:11–13, Isa. 11:6–9, John 14:1–3; 2 Pet. 3:13.

Quotes

- The future belongs to those who belong to God. This is hope. *W.T. Purkiser*
- The point of the resurrection...is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die...What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it...What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God’s future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether (as the hymn so mistakenly puts it...). They are part of what we may call building for God’s kingdom. *N.T. Wright*
- “Dear God, I am so afraid to open my clenched fists! Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to? Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me.” *Henri J.M. Nouwen*
- If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. *C. S. Lewis*

Questions

Why is it important to make sure the End is seen as a Beginning? How do origins impact our future? How does God re-make this world, how does he make all things new? What are the most important aspects of this new Creation? How can we avoid the doom-laden messages and share this perspective of hope? How do we represent God?

Bible summary

Here is the future for God’s friends: “‘God’s home is with human beings and he will live with them. They will be his people. God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will never happen again. There will be no mourning or crying or pain ever again for the former world no longer exists.’” Rev. 21:3–5 FBV. The problems of the Fall (Gen 3:19; Gen. 6:11-13) are resolved. We are totally transformed (1 Cor. 15:52-58). In God’s future kingdom lions lay down with lambs (Isa. 11:6-9). Jesus comes back to take his friends home (John 14:1–3), and we live in this place of new heaven and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13).

Comment: “Endings”

Driving mile upon mile at day’s end, the glory of sunset forces me to a stop. I stare out across the vast flatness to the wide over-spreading sky. In flaming fire the sun goes down, casting shadowed glows of intense gold and orange over red and

purple. The winter fields, ploughed and empty, remind me of the furrowed earthiness of similar fields in a place I called home for many years, now long gone.

I watch as with exaggerated slowness the light fades, and the sky turns deeper purple, until the final rays of golden light lose their battle and the intense darkness of night overcomes. Like an inconsolable sadness, the end comes, and I fight it.

I'm with Dylan Thomas, wanting to "rage at the dying of the light."

Why does it always have to end? Days end. Lives end. Worlds end. Everything ends.

I suddenly realize that I have stopped right beside a cemetery, almost hidden in the vastness of the fields all around. A few grave markers break the skyline, shadowed monuments of death. The last resting place of those who farmed these empty fields, now dark and barren under the ever-darkening sky.

What of their hopes and dreams now? All their toil and labor under the sun? Vanity, vanity, all is vanity... Our little lives are rounded with a sleep.

End. The finality of termination, the ceasing of life. The last breath, the inescapable close, the falling of the curtain. Like a heavy weight, the inevitability of where life leads burdens my every thought. How foolish we all are to live as if we are here forever. One day, every last one breathes their last.

Endings are all we see, the eventual close of everything and everyone, of every thought and feeling and ambition. The recognition is as hard and empty as the fields, those of a lost home or these before my eyes now.

I lift up my eyes from the headstones and empty fields to the dark sky, looking for answers. Even the stars that shine so serenely, seeming so permanent, are burning suns with eventual ends themselves. Nothing lasts, not forever. And all dissolves in the mistiness of my eyes.

In a world so full of endings and loss, of partings and death, the most valuable is the eternal. But here none exists. The day vanishes away, the light dies, life ebbs to a close. The cemetery disappears into the night, lost among the fields that stretch to the horizon, the grave markers the last to fade. Nothing is left. No sight. No light. Even the memories fade, the place once called home grows dim.

Then a flash of brilliant light. For a brief moment. A shooting star burns a bright trail in the sky over head, before it too disappears into dust. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes...

But I understand. In the skies, a message written in a blaze of light that says: "Soon!" Soon, and very soon, this world of endings, of life-wearing impermanence, will itself end. In its ending comes God re-creation, his glorious new beginning of eternity. A home, permanent, and never-ending.

But most of all, an everlasting life in the presence of the one without beginning and without end: God himself.

I turn away, to drive on, hoping for the end. For in the End, comes God's eternal Beginning.

Ellen White Comment

In the earth made new the redeemed will engage in the occupations and pleasures that brought happiness to Adam and Eve in the beginning. The Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field. {AH 549}