

Revelation 06-03-24a

This is the 24th of March, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation in chapter 21. This is the final vision that John sees.

We're going to be looking at the New Heaven, the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, and then the epilogue of this book, and our study will be complete. Let's take a moment as we begin our study to clear our minds and prepare our hearts as we go to the Lord in prayer. Father, what a privilege it is to have our hope firmly fixed on the return of the Lord Jesus, the confident expectation that your word will be fulfilled and that we will live in glory beyond this life.

We thank you for the opportunities that we have now because of that hope. We thank you for the provision that you've made for us through the Lord Jesus and through the Holy Spirit for us to live a natural life by means of supernatural power. We pray that our study in the book of Revelation this evening will enable us to see clearly the path for the present as well as the path for the future and that we will as a result be thoroughly furnished for all good works and glorify our Savior.

We ask it in his name. Amen. Chapter 21 of Revelation follows after the final disposition of those who are raised in the final resurrection and those who are not found in the book of life have been cast into the lake of fire.

Then John says, Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away also there was no more sea. I mentioned last time that there is this very prevalent idea and I was surprised at how prevalent it is that this is not actually the doing away with the present heaven and earth but that it is actually a renovation and Dr. Criswell in his five-volume exposition of the book of Revelation when you get to chapter 21 that's what he thinks Gene Cunningham whose work on the book of Revelation I have referenced consistently through our study when you get there thinks that it's a renovation many, many commentators, footnotes in various study bibles and all this say well this is a renewal I wasn't surprised to find it in my reformation study bible notes but I was surprised that Dr. Criswell took that view I was very surprised that Cunningham took that view and many others so I will briefly revisit that it's important for this reason well I'm not going to give you the reason why it's important just yet but I'm going to say that I think it's important because there are parallels in other areas of bible interpretation and I think those will become evident as we visit this subject in other words if all I did was say well there's a question about whether it's a totally new heaven and new earth or this one gets a makeover you would say well do I really care how much difference does that make and I'm suggesting to you that I think it does make a difference it's worth figuring out more or less for certain because it has a direct parallel and a direct reference to other things that we very much do want to be sure we understand so as you take a look at this first verse it says now I saw a new heaven and a new earth what I would like to do is give you a little bit of the argumentation for the renewal theory and let's see if it holds water very respected gray heads of the faith have said that this is how it is and I don't depart instinctively or automatically from those views I like to

try to make them work before I leave them behind and so when it says here that the first heaven and first earth pass away and there's a new heaven and a new earth the word new is important to us because there are a couple of different words in greek for new one of them is kainos K-A-I-N-O-S another is one that you may remember from recent entertainment endeavors neos N-E-O-S it's no accident that the hero of the matrix trilogy was named Neo that was a very carefully chosen a well thought out name to give the hero just like many of the other names in that thing were what is the difference between kainos and neos well according to the revisionist people kainos means renewed or restored where neos means something that is made new something that has started all over from scratch and this I have read many different places well kainos, which is the word used here in verse 21 a new heaven is kainos and kainos means renewed or restored at the end of the bible this is the same argument that you hear in Genesis 1 where is it bara or is it asa is it made from scratch or is it manufactured bara ostensibly means to create something out of nothing asa means to manufacture out of existing materials and so here at the end we have sort of a similar debate about kainos versus neos and kainos is the word that is used here so this is time for us to consult the lexicon and see what it has to say if you go to Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Denker the great German scholars for Greek and their lexicon the number one definition for kainos is pertaining to being in existence for a relatively short time new, unused and their very first reference is the first one that came to my mind when I looked at verse 1 of chapter 21 Jesus talking about new and old garments and new and old wineskins, do you remember that? and in Matthew chapter 9 verse 17 Jesus said nor do they put new wine into old wineskins guess what word he used for new wine kainos now this is not made over wine it's not restored or renewed wine it is freshly manufactured wine it's been pressed out of grapes it's been stored or is in the process of being stored here in new wineskins and you could argue well but didn't the wineskin exist inside the animal for however many years the animal lived before they took it out because of course these skins are small animals or whatever well not as a wineskin it didn't exist it's a new wineskin it has freshly come into existence having been obtained from an animal so you have the same thing in the parallels in Mark chapter 2 and Luke chapter 5 new wine goes in new wineskins both are preserved Matthew 27 verse 60 Joseph of Arimathea had Jesus laid in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock and it had never been used before it was a brand new tomb it wasn't an old tomb they didn't go in and renovate an old tomb and spruce it up and say well let's lay the Lord in here this was a freshly hewn repository so I say all that to say I don't really think that the renewed restored argument compels it doesn't really have enough traction to decide this issue as far as I'm concerned just looking at the use of the word elsewhere now the second definition in the lexicon for kainos is pertaining to being not previously present unknown strange remarkable this is a heaven for example that could have been around for a time but in terms of human experience is new it's strange and unexplored and unoccupied uninhabited kind of like that tomb where Jesus' body was laid regardless of how long it's been around if it's the first time you've seen it you know how they say about reruns well it's new to you I forget which network says that but they try to tap dance around the fact that they're showing you old stuff they say well it's new to you if you missed it the first time it's not a rerun is it well new,

unknown, strange, remarkable this is the meaning of the word as it's used in Mark 1 27 when people hear Jesus teaching one of the first instances of Jesus teaching Mark 1 27 people hearing were amazed and they questioned among themselves saying what is this what new doctrine is this what new teaching is this for with authority he commands even unclean spirits and they obey him it's outside our experience we've never come across anything like this before now in fact the word of God that Jesus was teaching lives and abides forever and the bulk of it you can find explicitly even in the Old Testament but meek shall inherit the earth that's straight out of the Psalms there's a lot of these that were not new in the sense of never existing before but it was falling as new information on their ears Acts 17 19 is a similar usage in a similar way when Paul comes to the Areopagus and is teaching up there and they say what new doctrine is this of which you speak we haven't heard anything like this well of course it had been around in the Christian world for quite a while but it was new to them Kainos was used back in Revelation chapter 2 verse 17 he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches to him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat and I will give him a white stone and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it a new name now God may have known this name from eternity past but as far as we're concerned we're introduced to it for the first time it's new in that sense it's not a restored refurbished remanufactured reissued name it's not an old angel name that fell off of some demon and God picked it up and shined it up and said well here you use this name it's a new name and that's important because that's the word that is used here in Revelation 21 so that's part of the argument is from the wording Kainos that well God could just be refurbishing and restoring the heaven and the earth the second argument is one based on what happens to the first earth and the first heaven notice it says the first heaven and the first earth had passed away the verb there for passed away and I don't want you to pass away just because I'm giving you excess Greek in one lesson but I think it's helpful I think it's illuminating here the verb is parerkamai erkamai is the word that means to come or to go and para means various things it means alongside, parallel paradox and so on but parerkamai basically means to come or to go to a place that is not where you are a place beside some place away if you're going to draw a parallel line you draw it some distance away from the first one it's beside whatever you're currently looking at it's not in the same place so the first heaven and the first earth parerkamai they go away, they pass away this word was used for example Dr. Krizzle points this out in his argument this word was used in secular Greek for ships that would sail out into the Mediterranean and disappear over the horizon they have sailed away they're no longer visible we can't experience their presence or their reality anymore they have passed away they've passed over the line of visibility and Dr. Krizzle's argument was well see the ship still exists it's just out of sight well there are problems with that as well and once again we go to the lexicon to take a look and and see what these words mean I thought it was kind of tricky of Dr. Krizzle because he spent his whole time talking about parerkamai about when Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away and it's parerkamai there but the word here is aperkamai apa, a-p-o, apo which is a little bit different word it's also part of apolumi or apoluo luo means to lose or to destroy and apa

means utterly in that context and so *aperkamai* means to utterly go away and it's *aperkamai* that's used here you look at this in the lexicon and the first definition is to go away or depart to move away from a particular reference point it's used in Matthew 8.21 another of his disciples said to him Lord let me first go away and bury my father let me leave the circle of disciples and not be a part of the group I've got to go and spend time with my family as my father is in his dying stage when he says let me go bury my father he's basically saying I need to go be there because my father is not well and I need to stay there until he dies and is buried and then I will come back i.e. I have family responsibilities so let me go and Jesus replies let the dead bury their dead you're wanting to trade spiritual progress and spiritual accomplishment and spiritual growth to go back and accomplish there's no such thing as purely earthly tasks that any unbeliever can accomplish there are other people in your family who can care for the land and care for the household and watch over things while your father passes away you are uniquely positioned I mean can you even imagine you have the opportunity to travel with the Lord Jesus Christ and listen to him teach in Aramaic as much as you want watch him do the miracles all the time can you imagine somebody getting dissatisfied and thinking well I really need to go back home I need to go back and be with my people I have concerns back there this is subjectivity eyes on circumstances now granted many times we have family responsibilities and they compel and they are important and that's what we should do but that was not the case here with this man so he wanted to pass away and the word that he uses is significant I want to sort of permanently distance myself from this group while I go take care of this family business and Jesus said let the dead bury their dead it's used again in Matthew 13 25 the parable of the wheat and the tares while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away went away never to be seen again there's no point in trying to track down the enemy and try to get reparations or get him to undo the damage or pick up the tares that he sowed he's gone he's out of the picture that's *aperekamai* one other reference I'll give you here quick Matthew 16 4 a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and no sign shall be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah and he left them and departed and he never spoke with them again he never visited them again that was the last thing they heard from the Lord Jesus if all you're doing is looking for a sign you're a wicked and adulterous generation you're not going to get anything but that final sign which is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ being in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights and then returning so to say that the *parerekamai* idea the first earth had passed away it isn't annihilated it isn't totally burned up this is the difference between renovation and annihilation so it would be the difference if you've got an old tired run down house you go in there and gut the thing and rebuild it but it's basically still there same foundation, same walls, same floors you just do a massive refurb or do you bulldoze the thing away and start completely fresh well there are those who argue that because the first heaven and the first earth *aperekamai* or *parerekamai* that they're not really gone they just received this severe facelift Cunningham here says that the suggestion to me is that while the present creation is cleansed by fire and he references 2 Peter 3 God brings out of it new conditions and then he references Romans chapter 8 verse 13 and following and you remember in Romans 8 where it talks about the whole creation groans waiting

for the revelation of the sons of God I consider the suffering of this present time this is Romans 8 18 not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us for the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God for the creation was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope because, and this is the key verse, verse 21 the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now so the idea here is that when the children of God are liberated and glorified that the creation is going to be released from the curse it's delivered out from under this and it's groaning and waiting for that to what do you think this refers? this is the millennial kingdom Satan is bound death is virtually eliminated this is the restoration of creation to its pre-flood condition if you will near Edenic conditions where people lived for hundreds of years and why is that? evidently all of the things that kill us now like cancer and various organ failures and everything else is eliminated the only death that we know for sure takes place is capital punishment and obviously there may be a few other kinds maybe a little bit of crime that's quickly dealt with with the iron rod but essentially this revealing of the glorious liberty of the children of God is going to take place in the millennial kingdom and this is a very common mistake in Bible interpretation is to confuse the millennial kingdom with what we're looking at in Revelation 21 heaven is not the millennial kingdom the millennial kingdom is not heaven and in fact the kingdom of the Father is not really heaven per se we've gotten this traditional idea of heaven when I die I will go to heaven and accept the Lord Jesus as your savior and you'll go to heaven when you die is really more a tradition than a biblical teaching and because of that it's easy to take passages that refer to the distant future with any kind of improved condition and say oh that's heaven and that's what's happened with this I think and one of the reasons is and this is how we're going to resolve this problem with interpreting Revelation 21 is to go to 2 Peter take a look at 2 Peter chapter 3 he begins this chapter by saying I'm writing this second epistle to you to stir up your pure minds by way of reminder that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior now notice those two things are given equal weight by Peter knowing this first that scoffers will come in the last days walking according to their own lusts saying where is the promise of his coming you don't have to look too far to hear and see people saying that today oh science has pretty well disproven the idea of God you know you're really stuck in the past and religion is just an excuse for violence and oppression now it doesn't really explain anything or do anybody any good we've evolved past that point etc. etc.

scoffers will come where is the promise of his coming since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation and this is the essential argument of the secular materialist secular humanist the evolutionist look we've got a continuum in the geological record and we're just continuing on there's no God there's no God coming back for you there's no afterlife etc. this they willfully forget that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of water and in the water by which the world that then existed perished being flooded with water but the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word so

Peter says there was a heaven and earth before the flood that was wiped out by the flood and there is now a heaven and earth which are now preserved by God's same promise I will never again destroy the earth with a flood they are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men so can you see the argument here? they're saying look Peter's talking about the heaven and earth and he says there was a heaven and earth that were destroyed by the flood and we have another heaven and earth now that's reserved for fire it's the same heaven and earth we look up into essentially the same sky we have essentially the same ball of dirt under our feet it wasn't totally annihilated it was renovated by the flood it was scrubbed clean of the evil that God was unhappy with and I think that's a great argument if you don't pay any attention to the context of this argument because Peter is actually using this as a contrast he says look there was earth standing out of the water and God used water to cleanse it the earth was standing out of water and in the water by which the world then existed perished being flooded with water that earth was judged with existing water same stuff the world the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word are reserved for fire unto the day of judgment it's not going to get flooded again it's reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men and that perdition is apoluo you know Judas was the son of perdition the son of utter loss and ungodly men godless men are going to be apoluo obliterated so to speak beloved do not forget this one thing with the Lord a day a thousand years a thousand years is a day concerning his promise verse 10 the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise the heavens will pass away with a great noise now you say well now wait a minute is there noise in outer space is it a vacuum what does this imply it is a vast cataclysmic destruction and the elements will melt with fervent heat a lot of people think well God is just going to roast the outside of the planet just like people are going to get a chemical peel you know I don't like the way my face looks so I'll just get it peeled and the new skin will come out and I'll have a new face well no it's the old face that's been scorched both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up now if it was just the works I could see the renovation theory the works that are in it are burned up that would be every pavement every building every fence every man made construction effort on the entire planet that would be the works that are in it but when it says the earth itself will be burned up will be consumed by fire that just does not sound like renovation to me you don't say well we're going to renovate our house and then you burn it to the ground and there's no two sticks one upon another it just doesn't make any sense let me give you the Greek here in verse 10 the elements are being burned the elements are and then the word is luo and luo is the word to to loose or to destroy they are destroyed they're not cleansed they're not purged they're destroyed the elements being burned will be loosed the earth and the works that are in it the day of the Lord will come in which the heavens with a cracking sound literally and then you have the word that Dr. Crystal was talking about pass away go over the horizon never to be seen again and of course this is human experience now why here's my whole point why does this make a difference does God refurbish the existing universe and the existing planet earth or is this entire dimension of reality go away is there essentially another big bang and an entirely new creation results the reason for this is and the argument is made Dr. Crystal makes the same

argument that the same language is used of our human bodies in 1st Corinthians chapter 15 where Paul says we don't want to be unclothed but we want to be clothed upon I tell you we shall not all sleep but we shall all be transformed and he says see it's the same with the human body as it is with the universe and the earth the heavens and then he goes on to argue that this body is the basis upon which our glorified body is built that God takes this one and transforms it and changes it into the resurrection body and he supports this by pointing to the Lord Jesus who still had his scars and that this was the means of identifying Thomas put your hands in the holes put your hand in my side my Lord and my God it's the same body but transformed is the argument well I have two thoughts to offer you about that position first of all it is going to be exceedingly difficult for God to reconstruct the components of most people's human body because that dust has long since blown away and become a part of crops that have been eaten by other people and if you want to talk about the individual molecules and where they went your body is what ninety four percent water and where is that water so he's not going to use the water molecules I mean our cells completely change out what every six years something like that you have a whole new chemical components I mean at what point in our life is it at the point that you die whatever composed you God is going to carefully mark down each molecule I mean it is to laugh it's ridiculous people have perished in fires people have drowned and been eaten by fish who were then caught and eaten by other people there is cannibalism of missionaries I mean on and on and on you know what if a cannibal got saved and he ate a missionary now who is going to get the body it's this is a this so often I think we are afflicted with this over literal kind of thinking why did Jesus have marks on his body it was specifically to serve as identification these were badges of honor and it wouldn't surprise me if many martyrs who have suffered physically unto death for their fate may be Jim Carrey around in the glorified state with those spear marks and the other two fellows that were with him Paul the apostle maybe he will have a little circle right around his neck where his head was chopped off John the Baptist and many others and you know Paul said I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus and in some way these are badges of honor the marks on the Lord Jesus body are badges of honor he was faithful unto death to the plan and purpose of the father it doesn't it's needlessly literalistic to say well that means that God used the same body and just really gave it an upgrade no this it's a crude example but I remember in the Star Trek movie series where after so many years you know the old old Enterprise NCC 1701 Jim Kirk had to self-destruct the thing and he looks up from the planet and here's the thing streaking through the sky and you think oh boy there's the end of an era I mean that ostensibly is the ship that was in all of the TV series and the first couple of movies and so on and there the thing is going like a meteor I mean there's no way they're going to bring that thing back and then at the end of the movie why here's NCC 1701A and it's a whole new ship but look it's got the number on it it's called the USS Enterprise it's 1701A and you're meant to think of it as this is the resurrection body of the Enterprise so to speak and this I think is what God is getting at with especially the remarks on the Lord Jesus and it would not surprise me one bit if people are going to have badges of honor of that nature on their glorified body and people can say there's someone who was faithful unto death and it wouldn't surprise me if on our glorified body many of our invisible

scars may turn out to be the equivalent of ribbons and badges and medals of honor there are people who have never had a mark on their body but their soul has been stabbed and wounded and chopped up into little pieces at various times and yet they have remained faithful and God has ways of honoring those martyrs you don't have to be a physical martyr you can be a spiritual martyr and you can bear in your soul the marks of the Lord Jesus and that will reflect as part of being an overcomer so the idea here I think is that we have a really tough time thinking beyond our human experience and people say well you can't just do away with the entire universe it's too big it's too massive and I think in some ways this is a symptom of having too small a God in our conception honestly one of the things that has helped me as much as anything to conceptualize just how big God is is to think in terms of computers and think in terms of what you now have in terms of sort of a virtual reality in a computer with adventure games where there are whole environments and characters who run through them people play Doom and Half-Life and various other things and it just seems endless and anybody that had been on a desert island since 1980 that came in and suddenly saw what computers can do in terms of virtualizing reality and just having endless environments in which characters can move around and do things well imagine that one of these characters inside the virtual reality inside this bit mapped programmed rule based scenario suddenly came to sentience and you send a little text message in there and leave it in this little virtual world and say you know there's something more than your universe that exists in RAM and in pixels on the screen there's a reality beyond that and for that character running in this program that normally always runs according to its rules you run into a wall you always stop you stand on the floor you always cast a shadow and so on if you're the programmer you can occasionally give a character the ability to pass through a wall you can instantly transfer that character from one place to another and at the point that you're finished with that game you can reboot the computer and create a completely different reality and people can transfer all kinds of things between environments and it's a lot easier for me to conceptualize a miniature world that is its own reality and that people existing within it would think well this is all there is and would have no ability to conceive of flesh and blood carbon based life forms who have created them in little electric domains on silicon chips inside a computer it's just totally beyond their ability to comprehend well that's sort of what we're doing we are existing in a reality that God has created and it is fundamentally simple for a God as great as our God to end this particular program and create a fresh one and yet transfer us into that new reality that's what the new heaven and the new earth is why is there some language associated with that seems to suggest renewal or transformation because it's our view we are still there and we're seeing a change in environment we are seeing a wonderful upgrade and the only way we can even understand it is by analogy with the old it's called heaven and it's called earth because that's what we understand in this world it may be something that when we get there we're going to look back and say oh earth I see that was the language for two year olds back when I was living in the earth but this is this is hyper earth I think one of the clues is coming up in this chapter when you find the dimensions of the new Jerusalem how do we give the dimensions the physical dimensions of a town right now we give it square miles only well the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex occupies so

many thousand square miles how what are the dimensions of the New Jerusalem given in you've got it's the city that is built four square there are four linear dimensions given for that city and it doesn't make any sense people have imagined a cube or a pyramid well the reason those linear dimensions are four in number is it exists in a reality that we can't even conceptualize we conceptualize we can't visualize it in our little two dimensional three dimensional brains so I say all of that to say this when God says the old has passed away and the new has come that's exactly what he means and And it's important for us to understand it because it pertains to our personal existence. We experience a kind of resurrection every time we wake up in the morning, don't we? You think about it.

When you wake up in the morning, and you haven't been conscious, and you haven't been aware, I mean, you've been gone. And when you wake up in the new morning, and then you, you know, for me, it can take a finite amount of time before I remember who I am, and where I am, and what I'm doing, and what day of the week it is, and what faces me in the day. I have to sort of reload all of that from the memory banks.

I wake up in the, have you ever woke up, you know, if you went to bed at an odd time, or you're in an odd place, wherever you wake up. And initially, it takes you several seconds before you can figure out where you are. But we load all of that up from our memory.

We reconstruct our reality every morning when we wake up. We say, oh, yes, here I am, and this is what I do, and that's what reality is. Well, that's exactly what we're going to do when we wake up in our resurrected state after death or after the rapture.

And God is powerful enough to transfer our conscious self with our memories. And, you know, I've occasionally, when I was younger, I used to worry that, well, how's everybody else going to know that it's really me in the resurrection? Will I be there, or will somebody named Sam with all of my memories be there, and it won't really be me? You know, what if I go to sleep tonight, and tomorrow somebody else wakes up named Sam, and the me that's talking right now is not there? You know, maybe that's, maybe I'm just too simple-minded, but I don't know if you get very metaphysical in your thinking or not, but has it ever occurred to you that you could go to sleep tonight, and tomorrow somebody else could wake up that looked just like you and remembered everything you remembered, and yet it wouldn't be the essential you that is self-aware right this minute, when you think, well, the same thing could happen in the resurrection. Who would know it but me if I wasn't there? It could be a pseudo-Sam running around.

It could be a pseudo-you running around. How would I know it's really you? And not just somebody loaded up and configured to look and act and remember like you. Well, God is in the business of reality, and he is going to take away this heaven and this earth.

It is going to melt. How else could an ancient person communicate the cosmic physics involved in doing away with the universe? The elements are going to melt with a fervent heat. The earth and

the works in it will be burned up.

There's going to be a big cracking sound through the whole universe. How else could you say it? It doesn't get any more out with the old and in with brand new than this. And the same is true.

And I'm glad that we will put off this mortality in its entirety, but the ineffable, essential, spiritual self that makes us up is going to go into glory, intact, minus the debilities of this universe, minus the debilities of this body, minus the sinful nature. And it is way beyond a makeover. This isn't, what's that TV show where they do the surgery on everybody? Extreme makeover.

It's more than an extreme makeover. It is a complete new reality. And all of that is in this first verse of Revelation chapter 21.

So this explains, for example, why there is no more sea. You ought to see the people who believe it's a renovation and that it's really the same earth that's just really shined up and fresh. There's no more sea.

Well, now, I mean, if you think the ozone going away is bad, try working the earth with no ocean. Well, we'll talk more about that when we come back, but let's pause here and take our break. We'll be right back.