

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth.... I also saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”

Revelation 21: 1-2

Last week in this space I wrote of some of my reflections on heaven and some questions that flow from a consideration of God’s own Kingdom of Heaven. Heaven is something that Jesus of Nazareth was at pains to reveal to the Jews and Gentiles of the first century world in which he lived. Jesus believed that this was not something widely believed but that it really is essential to our faith in Him. Why? First, Jesus wanted us to know that there was kingdom. Created by God. For what purpose? For us to dwell in. For how long? All eternity. God not only created us. Not only created us for our limited time here on earth but created us in such a way that our bodies can be transformed and our lives never-ending. All by God’s design. If we recognize this truth it begins to make a difference in the way that we live here.

What happened to this original plan of God? Sin happened. Sin distorted things. Sin twisted everything. Sin turned harmony into disharmony. Sin brought disobedience and mistrust into our world. But our world is not the only world there is. There is the Kingdom of God. And the Father still wants us to live in it with him forever. He sent his Son, whom we believe is Jesus of Nazareth, to reveal this to us, to bring us a message of forgiveness for the sins we have committed, a message of hope so that we do not despair and a vision of what is our destiny from the perspective of God.

In the Book of Revelation, one of the very last books of the Bible we see those words printed at the top of this reflection. There is a new heaven and a new earth. Why a new heaven? Because the original sin was not human in origin but rather with the fall of some of the most spiritual of God’s creatures, the angels. The devil was defeated by Saint Michael the Archangel in a battle that raged in heaven. The enemy lost and was cast out of heaven. To? Earth. Earth? Yes, earth. Why cast down to earth? Perhaps it had to do with what part of the full plan of God’s creation that did not sit well with some of the angels in the heavenly court. What things? The Incarnation. That God’s beloved would give up his thoroughly and totally spiritual being and take on material reality, human flesh. Some of the angels would not worship, would not accept God in human form. They rebelled against the divine decision. There was a battle in heaven. They were cast out. But heaven is to be created anew. What will this new heaven be? Actually the proper question is this: Who will this new heaven be? The new heaven is Jesus Christ, him crucified out of love, forgiving as he died and raised from death, transformed into the Mystical Christ. We will begin to live in heaven when we enter into a relationship with Christ. Did you realize that? The question of the week.