

The Whole Counsel of God: Creation-Fall-REDEMPTION
The Christian Faith and Contemporary Challenges
February 7, 2021

“My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” – Ezek 37:27

I. Review

A. The “Five Calls” of God

1. **THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS – Phil 3:14** – *“I press on toward the goal for the prize ...”*
2. **THE CALL TO REPENTANCE & FAITH – Mark 1:15** – *“... the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ...”*
3. **THE GREAT COMMANDMENT – Matt 22:37–39** – *“You shall love the Lord your God ...”*
4. **THE GREAT COMMISSION – Matt 28:19–20** – *“Go therefore and make disciples ...”*
5. **THE CULTURAL MANDATE – Gen 1:27–28** – *“Be fruitful and multiply ... and have dominion ...”*

B. Creation Ordinances

1. **MARRIAGE – Gen 2:24** – *“Therefore a man shall leave ... and hold fast to his wife ...”*
2. **PROCREATION – Gen 1:28** – *“Be fruitful and multiply ...”*
3. **DOMINION – Gen 1:28** – *“... and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion ...”*
4. **LABOR – Gen 2:15** – *“The Lord God ... put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”*
5. **WEEKLY SABBATH – Gen 2:3** – *“So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy...”*

II. United to Christ by faith, we possess what we were made for!

- A. The “ultimate goal” from the beginning = God’s glory revealed in an *unbreakable* bond of fellowship with a holy people in a holy place under an obedient covenant representative!

“There is an absolute end posited for the universe before and apart from sin. The universe, as created, was only a beginning . . . [The goal was] an absolute, perfect, ethical relation to God and a supernaturalizing [i.e., glorification] of man and the world.” – Geerhardus Vos

- B. In the fall, by his disobedience, Adam forfeited the “ultimate goal” (see above) and plunged the human race into sin, spiritual alienation from God, and cultural chaos in the world.

1. **Gen 3:24** – *“He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”*

- C. Christ, the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45), has not only saved us from sin and its penalty, but ushered us into the beginnings of the “ultimate goal” through faith-union with himself.

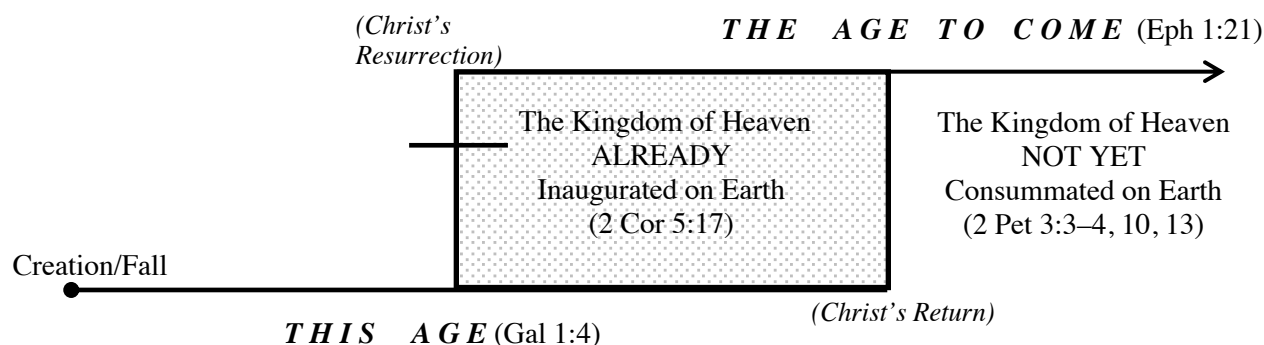
1. **Rev 2:7** – *“To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*
2. **Luke 23:43** – *“And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”*

*“The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased, **not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven**, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.” (WCF 8.5)*

3. **2 Cor 5:17** – *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*

III. United to Christ by faith, we possess what we were made for ... with more to come!

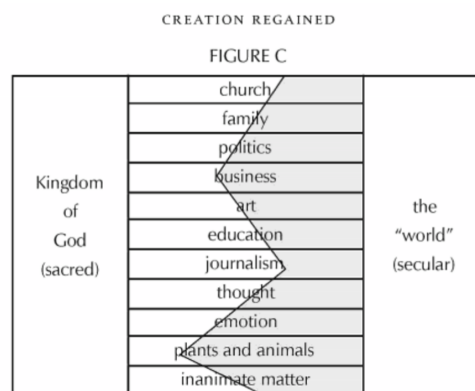
- A. **1 John 3:2** – “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
- B. **Phil 3:20–21** – “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”



IV. How does redemption through Christ affect a Christian’s approach to culture and contemporary challenges?

- A. View #1: A Christ-centered approach to the original “creation ordinances” *transform* this world into Christ’s Kingdom on earth.
1. E.g., Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (2nd ed., 2005).

*“Both God and Satan lay claim to the whole of creation, leaving nothing neutral or undisputed . . . The divine line between them cuts across every creational reality . . . Moreover the line moves: whenever family life, for example, grows in obedience and conformity to God’s creational law, there **the kingdom advances** and the world is pushed back. Wherever the spirit of humanism secularizes human thought, there **the kingdom of God loses terrain** and is taken captive ‘through hollow and deceptive philosophy...’ Redemption, then, is the recovery of creational goodness through the annulment of sin and the effort toward the progressive removal of its effects everywhere.”*



2. E.g., Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling* (2008), p. 189 – “Transformed culture is at the heart of God’s mission in the world, and it is the call of God’s redeemed people... [T]he cultivation and creation of culture is our basic human task and will carry over into the new Jerusalem.”
- A. But does Christ’s Kingdom ever “lose terrain”? See 1 Pet 1:3–5, John 10:28!
- B. How does Christ build his redemptive kingdom on earth? Does it expand as Christians “take dominion” of the culture? See Matt 28:18–19!

- B. View #2: Christian's *testify or bear witness* to the redemptive kingdom of Christ (to which they belong today!) as they take a Christ-centered approach to the original "creation ordinances," trusting that, one day, Christ will transform this world into a new heaven and new earth for his church.
1. Christians are a "pilgrim people," whose works are to *reflect* the goodness, righteousness and beauty of the invisible kingdom of Christ, who will one day visibly transform this fallen world into a perfected paradise at his return.
 - A. **Heb 11:13, 16** – "... *having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth ... But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*"
 2. To embrace your pilgrim identity does NOT mean abdicating this world.
 - A. **Matt 5:13-14** – "*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? . . . ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden . . . let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*"

V. Conclusion

- A. Christians are redeemed in Christ, and God will continue to apply the redemptive work of Christ to the hearts of sinners until his plan is fulfilled. **So rejoice and do not fear!**
 1. **Matt 16:18** – "*I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"
- B. Christians should remember that we are "strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb 11:13) and so moderate their expectations for the renovation of the broader culture. **So trust God and keep your eyes fixed on heaven!**
- C. Christians redeemed in Christ should be eager for God to "spread the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere" (2 Cor 2:14). **So pray, work, and testify to the beauty of Christ's kingdom in all things!**

*Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer.
Heaven's eternal days before thee,
God's own hand shall guide us there.*

*Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.*

– "Jesus I My Cross Have Taken" (Henry Francis Lyte)