

Hopefully, reading the Bible will generate plenty of questions! I (Steve) will do my best to give 1 paragraph ideas and musings to the questions raised – but these will not be the ‘only’ answer in many cases (I am not omniscient, nor even anywhere near as knowledgeable as many others I know). I will also know some things better than others – for example, I am better acquainted with Marks gospel than the others and John’s writings more than Paul’s. Ask me about Jeremiah and Job and I’m virtually clueless, I’ll have to seek others thoughts! Some may disagree with my thoughts given as answers – that is absolutely fine, disagreeing respectfully is important (demonstrating this at college, one fellow tutor and I let students observe us debating the various ‘John’ writings in scripture – gospel, 3 letters and Revelation, the extent to which they may be the same or different authors – we disagree, but are not arrogant enough to proclaim that one of us is definitely right to the exclusion of the other). There are some things which it is definitely important to be sure and ‘right’ about – such as who Jesus is, and others where it is not really important (such as which John wrote Revelation). There are some things which it is important to be certain about. There are some other things where we do not have certainty.

So, following are my imperfect, human musings to the questions Bible School students have raised. If others have better, wiser, or even just alternative thoughts (but biblically based and thought through) - let me know, we may incorporate them.

I’ll get as far as I can with the questions in the time I have available – so do bear with me if one or two remain unanswered for a while.

‘We will reign forever’ ... Over what?

Head back to Genesis 1 and 2 and the early parts of this term – we were created to be God’s image bearers, Image & Likeness (TSLM & DMWT), his Vice-Regents ... So I guess we’ll be continuing the role of ruling over creation as in the Adam & Eve story.

‘New Jerusalem’
Is that people / buildings / what?
What is the New Jerusalem?

In Jewish theology Jerusalem was the point on Earth where heaven and Earth ‘touched’. More specifically, it was the Temple in Jerusalem. This is quite similar to what the Celtic Christian traditions call a ‘thin place’ where heaven somehow seems closer. In short – a place where God and man are together, heaven and earth are not separate.

So it’s not specifically about the people or the buildings – it’s about a point where man and God are close, unseparated, together, in harmony.

Will the new heavenly body we are given be unlimited or unrestricted?

There's a lot more that we DON'T know than we know about the details of our post-resurrection future! We see from John's Revelation that he identified the scene as having people – 'the saints' – us! So, I guess that the body will be quite similar. John saw people of every 'nation, tribe, people and language' – so I guess we'll each have the same skin colour that we have now. However, if Jesus' resurrection body is a glimpse of what our resurrection bodies will be like – there are differences – he appeared in a locked room, yet he ate fish, built a BBQ and people touched him. Philip, when meeting the Ethiopian suddenly found himself somewhere else – it is possible that we may not need Uber's with the new body. In the Spring term, one video spends a few minutes speculating on this from the biblical evidence we have ... Don't miss it.

Rev 22.2 'Heal the nations'
Why will this still be needed?
(land or people?)

All the tears of the past will be wiped away (Rev 21v4) – and there will be no more crying (v4). The pains of the past will be healed.
Good question re 'land or people?' – definitely people, but I guess the land will need healing too.

Why a 'new heaven and new earth' rather than just all being one?

My guess is in what the Jews would see as 'heaven and earth' – remember the picture of the world as the ancient and 1st century Jews saw it (earlier in our course) – earth here below and the 'dome' of stars and 'waters' above?

With the NEW Jerusalem, why is there such a fuss about the current one?

That depends on who you ask. The Jews would generally say that God has promised them that land – so they want it. There is a group of people referred to as 'Christian Zionists' who believe many things including that the restoration of a temple in Jerusalem is required before Jesus returns. The Muslims want Jerusalem as their city. Politically from the 1926 Balfour declaration to the actual physical creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was a largely Western solution forced on the Middle East (partially as a conscience salve reaction by the West regarding the Holocaust – ask my daughter Amelia about it when she's back from Uni at Christmas – her EPQ explored justice for Holocaust victims and the creation of the state of Israel was part).

So, it's a political mess.

Israel – what is the 'more' for Israel?
Are there promises yet to be fulfilled?

I think this is better as a chat to include Dual-covenant theology, Christian Zionism, Replacement theology (also known as supersessionism and fulfilment theology), Restorationalism and the nature of the new covenant.

In the Spring term sessions there are 8 learning modules – but we'll not be doing number 8 – that does have most of these elements in it. So, when we get access to the Spring programme, maybe view the 2 videos of learning block 8, make notes and we can have a discussion over a pint or a coffee?

Will there be animals in heaven?

Animals are a frequent metaphor concerning our eschatological future – the lion and the lamb, Isaiah 11 – the wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard with the young goat.

My guess is that the God who created such immense variety will create even greater variety in the next world ... So I'm guessing that there will be even more ... and they won't be poisonous, harmful or aggressive!

When will the new kingdom
come?
What sort of timeframe are we
talking about?

We don't know – see Acts 1.7 and Matthew 24.36, Mark 13.32.

From Luke 21.32 and other areas it seems that the early Christians thought it would happen in their lifetime. The message of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 is that we are to be expectant – always consider the possibility that Jesus may return today ... And simultaneously, that he may not return in our lifetime.

I have one vicar friend who says that Jesus never answered any question directly, except one – this one ... And his answer was 'I don't know'. I've had a quick scrabble around but couldn't see the reference – so maybe, maybe not. 😊

At what point will the unrest
stop on earth?

Jesus will return.

Part of what happens at the return is that he makes all things new and makes all things good – the Revelation 21 narrative.

Is the tree of life in Revelation
the same as the one in
Genesis?

I would think so – John constantly refers back to several Old Testament themes and shows Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament – both prophesies and the overall metanarrative.