

Introduction: There Was A Time

There was a time when the universe was a singular reality. There was a time when heavenly beings freely traversed the different levels of a consolidated universe. There was a time of dynamic interplay, and seamless interactivity, between heaven and earth. There was a time when the Christian hymn, made popular by Cat Stevens, “Morning Has Broken” was a daily reality for the first humans. Genesis 3:8 gives us a snapshot of this sublime setting

*When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife
heard the LORD God walking about in the garden.*

The man here is Adam. His wife is Eve. The time God “walked” with them was before Eve was deceived by the serpent to partake of the forbidden fruit and Adam chose disobedience over obedience (not the apple on the tree but the “pair” on the ground). We often think of this “original sin” in personal terms, and we should. After all, it has separated us from God, the “Source of life” which inexorably leads to moral, intellectual, spiritual, and physical death, precisely as God had warned. But what did sin do to the universe? For starters, it compartmentalized it into three distinct dimensions.

Dimension I: Earth

The first dimension is the realm of our habitation. Yes, the earth, the very place Jesus, the “Word of God,” (John 1:3) created as the public expression of the infinite joy, he, the Father, and Spirit shared in from eternity past. Did you know that this physical/material world with all the creatures contained therein, is the result of an infinitely happy God? Well, it is, and we are! However, since the “Fall,” earth has become cordoned off from the other dimensions of the universe.

Dimension II: Mid-Heavens

The 2nd dimension of our universe is called “mid-heavens” or “mid-air.” Paul refers to this realm in the well-known “rapture” text of I Thessalonians 4:17:

**Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth
will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.**

The Old Testament prophet Daniel referred to this level as well. In an eye-opening text, Michael, the archangel, explains to Daniel why it took so long for his prayer to get answered. Michael explains in Daniel 10:12-14

12 Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your prayers were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.

From here, and other texts, we see that mid-heaven is the current place of angelic/demonic warfare, the first stop on Jesus’ return tour, and in my view, the very location of hell itself.

Dimension III: 3rd Heaven

The 3rd dimension of this fractured universe is called the “Heaven of Heavens” or “Highest Heaven,” (the highest rung of Jacob’s Ladder, Genesis 28:12, Deuteronomy 10:14, 1 Kings 8:27, Revelation 4, 5). This is where the “Throne of God” is located, along with a variety of heavenly beings and past saints. In the Book of Job, Satan had a fascinating dialogue with God regarding Job’s faith there (Job 1:6). Listen to what Paul called it after his spiritual/visionary visit there. Referring to himself, he states in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. 3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

New Heavens & New Earth: Reintegrated Universe

We need to know about the dimensions of the universe because one day, it will be restored to what it was before sin fractured it. John sees this future reality in Revelation 21:1-2

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

The Integrated Universe

This new universe is called the “New Heavens and New Earth.” It will not be compartmentalized but consolidated! Integrated, not bifurcated! When God recreates the universe, he will not be putting lipstick on a pig but will perform a top-to-bottom, soup-to-nuts, dollars-to-doughnuts systemic transformation! Listen to some of the amenities of our brand-new digs. The old decaying, sin laden world is gone for good! No more “sea.” That’s big because “sea” in Revelation is symbolic of the conflict and chaos created by evil. The New Jerusalem, i.e., the Church, beautifully adorned for her husband, Prince Jesus (Ephesians 5:25, the original “Prince’s Bride”). Perhaps the greatest joy, however, is found in v3-4

3 I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

God With Us-Permanently

The thread that ties all of Scripture together, is that God will once again live permanently WITH us. I know what you’re thinking.

Since God is omni-present he is already with us. Plus, he’s with us in Spirit. He’s with us in the Body of Christ and he lives in our hearts by faith. Isn’t that what the 1st Advent was all about? Isn’t that why Jesus is called Immanuel, the “with us God” (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)?

“Yes and No” to my brilliantly perceptive church. In all the ways that God has been with us, and is with us now, there is one massive way he isn’t. He is not personally or directly with us. Why? He must protect us from the sheer awesomeness of his being. God is so amazingly glorious that if he just happened in, we, along with the universe itself, would be toast! Burnt toast! Toast that’s never been more toasted! When Moses asked God to see his face, God responded, “Can’t, you will be toast” (Exodus 33:20). Moses was almost turned to toast when he saw the “finger of God” write the Ten Commandments (Exodus 31:18). When the holiest guy of his day, Isaiah, encounters the tip of God’s “robe” in the Temple, he cried out, “Woe is me I am becoming undone” (Isaiah 6:5). In other words, toast. Ezekiel falls as dead at the River Chebar after seeing God in the “Vision of the Wheel.” When Jesus was “Puttin’ on the Ritz” at his transfiguration, his disciples could not bear the sight of him. I could go on but since the original sin, God has had to protect us from his direct presence or we would instantaneously become singed sinners, or toast. However, in the “New Heavens and New Earth” separation will no longer be necessary. At the end of history, we get glorified bodies, like that of Jesus’ resurrected body, so that we might have eternal life WITH God WITHOUT ever worrying about becoming toast (lol)!

Conclusion: Jesus Came In First Advent to Start the Process

Perhaps, living with God, in glorified bodies, in an integrated universe, is simply too incredible to even imagine, let alone, believe. Maybe our faith needs a little bit of a boost to truly grasp that such a future is ours. If so, listen to v5

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”