



Why do We Struggle?

We've looked at how Christians join Christ in His death and resurrection. We mentioned that Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of a new creation, but that the new creation is invisible now. However, when Jesus returns it will become visible to everyone, both believers and non-believers. The old creation will be destroyed, and only those who are part of the new creation will remain.

In Jesus' resurrection we see how God's power transformed a dead human being into a living person. After His resurrection Jesus had a new kind of body, a resurrection body. Those who believe in Jesus are made part of the new creation by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Since believers are part of the new creation then why do believers still struggle with concerns about the old creation? We struggle against illness. We struggle against poverty and oppression. We even struggle against temptation to sin.

We are continuing to study the resurrection as we consider:

- What Isaiah Saw
- What Paul Saw
- Seeing What God Wants Me to See

What Isaiah Saw

In Isaiah 43:18-19 and Isaiah 65:17 prophesy of the coming new creation. In these verses we get a strong sense that old problems of this world will be gone when the new creation begins. We will be looking at two verses in Isaiah that Paul points to as being fulfilled in Christ, and in those who believe in Christ.

Isaiah 43:18-19

¹⁸ "Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things
of old.

¹⁹ Behold, I am doing a
new thing;
now it springs forth, do
you not perceive it?

I will make a way in
the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 65:17

¹⁷ "For behold, I create
new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things
shall not be
remembered
or come into mind.



Isaiah tells us that God said, "**I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**" (Isaiah 43:19). In chapter 65 Isaiah returns to this theme, by telling us that God has said, "**I create new heavens and a new earth**" (Isaiah 65:17). To summarize, God will create a new heavens and earth. The old heavens and earth are to be forgotten. In the new creation God will cause springs of water, even rivers, to spring up in the desert. Perhaps it will be like the Garden of Eden.

In Isaiah 43 we are told that God's people will have to put all thoughts of the old creation aside. They must focus on things that belong to the new creation. Deserts will become places with abundant water. To people who lived in a desert land this was a refreshing thought. Their greatest need, water, would be provided abundantly in the new creation.

Isaiah says that God will "create" a "new heavens" and a "new earth" (Isaiah 65:17). The word that Isaiah uses, translated as "create", is the very same Hebrew word used when God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1. This is not just a "tune up," or a "home makeover" of the current heavens and earth. This is something entirely new. In this verse Isaiah again says that the old creation will no longer be remembered.

Isaiah saw that a "new heavens" and a "new earth" was coming. Israel's struggle with its enemies would be over. Israel's struggle to put food on the table, and to find safe water to drink, would be over. At first, we might say, "Since we are living here in the old creation, this prophecy must be fulfilled in the future, because it has not been fulfilled yet." But that's not what Paul Jesus showed Paul.

What Paul

Paul claims that the verses we looked at in Isaiah are fulfilled in Christ and those who believe in him.

Paul saw this prophecy as fulfilled by Jesus Christ. You might ask, "How could Paul see this prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, when the old creation was still in existence?" You would be right in pointing out that

Paul saw something different than what Isaiah saw. Paul sees everything Isaiah saw plus more. We will compare what Paul saw to what Isaiah saw. We will see that Paul says that both he and Isaiah are talking about the same thing, but Paul claims his understanding is more complete than Isaiah's understanding.

Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 5:14-17:

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that **one has died for all, therefore all have died;** ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him **who for their sake died and was raised.**

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, **we regard no one according to the flesh.** Even though **we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.** ¹⁷ Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

Jesus didn't die on the cross because of anything He needed for Himself. He died on the cross because all human beings had sinned, and their sin needed to be paid. Paul claims that Christ "**has died for all, therefore all have died**" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has died with Him. Jesus "**died**" for "**their sake**" and "**was raised**" for "**their sake**" (2 Corinthhains 5:15). His death on the cross paid for their sin (.. Jesus didn't stay in the tomb. He rose again. Those who believe in Him, share in both His death, which paid the debt of sin, and in His resurrection, which gives them new life.



Jesus is now seated on the throne in heaven, waiting for the time of His return to earth.

What may not be so clear is what Paul says about the "**new creation**" (2 Corinthhains 5:17). He says that believers should "**regard no one according to the flesh**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Paul calls the kind of thinking that belongs to the old creation, "regarding" things "**according to the flesh**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Our physical body, or our "**flesh**" is part of the old creation. But our hearts and minds have been made new in Jesus Christ, so our thoughts do not need to belong to the old creation.

Paul "**once regarded Christ according to the flesh**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Paul is referring to the way he thought about Jesus before Jesus appeared to him on the Road to Damascus when Paul was convertedIt's interesting that Paul says, "we regarded" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Remember all the people Paul is writing to are new Christians. Every one of them had come to Christ as a non-Christian. They all remembered the way they thought of Jesus before they were believed in Jesus.

Both Paul and Isaiah talk about the new heavens and the new earth. Paul draws our attention to Isaiah 43:18-19 and Isaiah 65:17. To make this very clear, I put the key verses into a chart where you can see the similarity of the words and ideas. He is making an "**allusion**" to these verses in Isaiah. That means that he is quoting not Isaiah word for word. He is using enough of the same words, so that those who know these verses by heart, will recognize that he is drawing attention to these verses.

Isaiah	2 Corinthians 5:17
<p>Isaiah 43:18-19</p> <p>¹⁸ <u>Remember not the former things,</u> nor consider the things of old.</p> <p>¹⁹ Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.</p> <p>Isaiah 65:17</p> <p>¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and <u>the former things shall not be remembered</u> or come into mind.</p>	<p>¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.</p>

Both Paul and Isaiah say that believers should think according to the ways of the new creation. Isaiah did not know that the new creation would begin with Jesus' resurrection, and the power of the resurrection would make those who believe in Jesus "new creations" in their hearts and minds.

Paul knew something that Isaiah didn't know because the risen Jesus had appeared to him. Paul knew that Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of the new creation, and that the new creation was coming in two stages. Stage 1: Believer's thoughts and hearts were transformed by the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Stage 2: The second part of the new creation will come when Christ returns. At that time the old creation will be destroyed, and the new creation will come in its full physical presence. All the prophecies are completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ, both those fulfilled by His first coming and those fulfilled by His second coming.

Both Paul and Isaiah knew about the new heavens and the new earth. And both recognized that believers needed to put aside old, sinful thinking, and think in new, holy and righteous way.

Seeing What God Wants Me to See

We struggle because we are living in the old creation but we belong to the new creation.

Isaiah was a prophet. God revealed parts of His eternal plan to Him. Jesus personally appeared to Paul. Paul also was told directly by God, about God's plans for the future.

God hasn't revealed Himself as directly to you or me. That doesn't mean that we don't experience the presence of God's peace, and that He doesn't tell us about His plans for the future.

We can read the words God gave to Isaiah and Paul in the Bible. They didn't have those words written down like we do. After all, they were the ones who wrote them down. We have a priceless gift that they didn't have. We have a Bible that we can pick up and read. We can study it to know what God has revealed.

God wants us to know that if we will come to Jesus Christ, and accept His gift of salvation, we can become "new creatures." We do not have to think the way this evil world thinks. We don't have to be motivated by selfishness. We don't have to be concerned with the respect or approval of other people. Jesus Christ, by the power of His resurrection, has made us new. Our sins are forgiven.

We still have our old, physical bodies, but our hearts have been made new by the power of Jesus' resurrection. We need to strive to use every bit of willpower that we have to put that resurrection power to work in our thoughts, words, and actions. We will never run out of possible ways to do this.

We need to think in a new way. Paul says we should take every one of our thoughts "captive.

⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Watch the way you think! When you recognize a sinful pattern of thinking, confess your sinful thoughts to God in prayer. Ask Him to show you a new way of thinking. I suggest that Philippians 4:4-8 provides a guide so that we may “think on these things” which belong to the new creation of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

2 Corinthians 5:14–17

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

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Philippians 4:4–8

A K W T S U J E S U S N F S **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.** Let your **reasonableness** be **known** to **everyone**. The **Lord** is at **hand**; do not be **anxious** about **anything**, but in **everything** by **prayer** and **supplication** with **thanksgiving** let your **requests** be **made known** to God. And the **peace** of God, which **surpasses** all **understanding**, will guard your **hearts** and your **minds** in **Christ Jesus**. Finally, brothers, whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **just**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **commendable**, if **there** is any excellence, if **there** is **anything** worthy of praise, think about these things.
(ESV)

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