

New Heaven and New Earth

Last week we talked about prophets, mainly because there was some interest in prophets last time I talked about the Bible. This week I started out intending to talk about the book of Revelations, because there was some interest in that. I say started out because the passage I chose from Revelations is also in Isaiah, who was a prophet. So apparently Spirit didn't think I was done talking about prophets.

Who wrote the book of Revelations? John the Revelator. Well the author declares his name is John. Most believe it was the same author who wrote the gospel of John. What is the most prominent number in Revelations? 7. 7 churches, 7 seals, 7 angels, 7 bowls of plague. 7 is a number of completion—the story of creation unfolds over 7 days—although God got tuckered out and had to rest on the seventh day. The Greek word meaning revealed is apocalypse—the unveiling of things previously not known. Apocalyptic literature tends to be metaphoric descriptions of the end times. It is helpful to know that in early Christianity, they thought Jesus would be right back. So they really didn't intend to be studying this 2,000 years later.

Now the book of Revelations is filled with scary images, just as most of the prophet language. But the heart of the matter, for me, comes in chapter 21 of Revelations: *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”*

John the Revelator was probably well versed in Hebrew scripture and this new manifestation sounds a lot like Isaiah 65. *“I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, “Here I am, here I am,” to a nation that did not call on my name. I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.”* I just have to say I was not aware they had GPS back in Isaiah's time. Then there is quite a bit of “course correction” advice about stuff they are doing wrong in their rebelliousness. Finally God gets to the promise in Isaiah:

“For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

First of all, every interpretation is just the meaning one person brings to the passages at hand. We all have different experiences; we might all utilize different resources; and we might all be open to a different message. So this is just how I interpret some of this today.

First I want to note that both passages are prophetic in being intended as “course corrections”. Taking prophecy as a literal prediction of events we can historically document is what produces the periodic groups carrying signs that say, “The end is near! Repent!” When someone fixes on a date for either the end or the rapture when the “good people will be taken up to heaven”, I am always curious how many people sell their houses and give away stuff. The metaphysics of a prophecy would indicate **right now** is the perfect time to make the course correction and begin to manifest the promised positive outcome. There is no waiting required.

One thing I note about both passages is the intimacy with God. Revelations: *See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them.* Isaiah: *I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.* While some might read those passages as separation and possession, I tend to read it as an intimate belonging and oneness. A couple years ago we did a series based on Brené Brown’s book, *Braving the Wilderness*—the quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone. At its heart it is a spiritual book. Brown makes a distinction between true belonging and fitting in. She says, “True belonging doesn't require us to **change** who we are. It requires us to **be** who we are.” For me, to be God’s people is to acknowledge our divinity and to live fully and fearlessly from our true nature of love, wholeness, compassion and wisdom. To be God’s people means we hear the still small voice because we both anticipate it and we are receptive to it. God is not a him—not even on this Father’s day—but the energy of love Itself, both embracing us and breathing through us.

If we have a sense of separation then unification is part of the course correction we need to make. Perhaps we need to put down our devices, trying to not answer when Spirit calls and turning away when Spirit reaches out. My grandma called it being “hard headed”; I think the Bible refers to it as “hard hearted”. Ezekiel, one of the prophets we talked about last week, got a promised outcome when we become willing to unify: *“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you. . . Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”*

Another similarity in between Isaiah and Revelation is the death and passing away of the old heaven and earth. Isaiah: *the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind* Revelation: *for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more*

For most of us or maybe just for me, one of the most challenging aspects of change is really and truly letting go of the old way, the old thoughts, the old habits. Remember that metaphysically everything happens in consciousness. When we commit to a spiritual path and set the intention to create in this new consciousness, we are called to let go of the old mindset of earning, accumulating, clinging to materiality, measuring success is doing and having, and so much more. If new heaven is our new conscious relationship with the Divine and new earth is our new way of living in the material world, then we are called to some pretty big shifts and letting go. How do we do that?

Unlike the portrayal of a rapture in which everything changes in a single moment or even an apocalyptic ending that signals a new beginning, I think it happens more like the seven seals, one by one until we are complete. The seven seals unfold this way: the first seal reveals false prophets; the second, war; the third, famine; the fourth, pestilence; the fifth, tribulation; the sixth, heavenly signs; and the seventh, seven trumpets. That’s a lot of letting go. Even a quick metaphysics might indicate learning to listen to our inner guidance and stop looking for the guru, book or philosophy that will fix us. Letting go of our believe in needing to win and having power over others; a belief in lack and a belief the world is out to get us. We have to learn how to stay centered and not revert to the old ways when things go wrong. We tend to demand and look for signs of how to proceed and then ignore them. I suppose the seven trumpets also might indicate we expect a warning so we can prepare for the woe about to befall us.

Actually the woe comes from our own actions and isn't sent by God or triggered by a trumpet. Ultimately, I think preparing for the new heaven and the new earth is a process we have to commit to every day.

I was curious about the phrase in Revelations—the sea was no more. I like the water, what was that about. Here's what I came up with. Water metaphysically can represent cleansing but it can also represent uncertainty, confusion and emotional chaos. The New Heaven and the New Earth is certain. That foundation of faith in Hebrews: the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen. We prepare ourselves for this newness with conviction and assurance and no more wavering every time something happens we don't like.

The last similarity is the absence of death, or at least the description in Isaiah says no more early death before a hundred years and an absence of tears and weeping. For me this feels like a point I might not get to in my consciousness while I am still experiencing my humanity. Centered in my spiritual awareness I understand that life is eternal. I understand that death of the body is simply the ending of our temporary time here. I feel the presence of those who are no longer on this plane. And sometimes I weep. My humanity longs to hear the voice and feel the physical embrace of those no longer on this physical plane. As a person who lost a parent as a child and lost a child as a parent, I am not one to sugar-coat the human experience of death. As someone who tends toward the mystic, I feel the intimacy of the divine relationship, at least sometimes. Yet I will not pretend that divine intimacy is every day or to the exclusion of moments of having my humanity wallowing in the mud and the muck. Even when I acknowledge the edges of my growth I am not discouraged from pursuing a new heaven and a new earth. I continue my work of letting go the old beliefs and habits as I uncover them. I continue imagining what this new earth might look like.

And that is where I'd like us to go in our meditation. What new earth could we co-create? What could an awakened world of peace, harmony and abundance look like? We would celebrate parent's day without regard to gender or gender identity. We would celebrate without regard to how families form or how individuals express and experience love. We would love one another and there would be no significance to the color of our skin or the language we use or our abilities. There would be no wars because we'd share one planet without boundaries or territories. We would know true belonging as all humanity knows its kinship in the divine.