

SURPRISED BY HOPE

WEEK 5

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 13: BUILDING FOR THE KINGDOM P. 207

God builds the kingdom, and **He has enlisted us to act as his stewards in the project of creation.** P.207

God alone will make the “new heavens and the new earth”. But “what we can and must do in the present, if we are obedient to the gospel, if we are following Jesus, and if we are indwelt, energized, and directed by the Spirit, is to **build for the kingdom**” p. 208.

“Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every works of art of music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation...every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support...every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honored in the world – **ALL OF THIS WILL FIND ITS WAY, THROUGH THE RESURRECTING POWER OF GOD, INTO THE NEW CREATION THAT GOD WILL ONE DAY MAKE.**” P.208

Therefore, **what we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted. It will last all the way into God’s new world.** In fact, it will be enhanced there. 1 Corinthians 15:58 – What you do for the Lord is not in vain. You are accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God’s new world. P.208

We are called to bring real and effective signs of God’s renewed creation.

Applied to the mission of the church, this means **we must work in the present for the advance signs of the eventual state of affairs when God is “all in all”**, when His kingdom has come, and His will is done “on earth as it is in heaven”. P.211

The church is called to a mission of implementing Jesus’ resurrection and thereby anticipating the final new creation. What might that look like?

Justice

Justice is the intention of God to set the whole world right – a plan gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and now to be implemented in the world. P.213

We must **live consciously** between the resurrection of Jesus in the past and the making of God’s new world in the future. P.213

Precisely because Jesus rose from the dead, **God’s new world has already broken in to the present**, and Christian work for justice is to bring real, bodily, **concrete signs of hope to the present world.**

The world has already been turned upside down; that’s what Easter is all about. It isn’t a matter of waiting until God eventually does something different at the end of time. God has brought his future, his putting-the-world-to-rights future, into the present in Jesus of Nazareth, and **he wants the future to be implicated more and more in the present.** P.215

Beauty

Beauty matters almost as much as spirituality and justice. Romans 8, with its rich theology of new creation, offers us a way of appreciating natural beauty. p.222

We find ourselves poised between creation and new creation. Genuine art is thus itself a response to the beauty of creation, which itself is a pointer to the beauty of God. P.223

We are committed to describing the world not just as it should be, not just as it is, but as one day it will be! p.224

When people cease to be surrounded by beauty, they cease to hope. They internalize the message of their eyes and ears, the message that whispers that they are not worth very much, that they are in effect less than fully human. P.231

Evangelism

If we are **engaging in the work of new creation**, then at the center of the picture stands the **personal call** of the gospel of Jesus to every child, woman, and man. P.225

The gospel is the **good news** that God (the world's creator) is at last becoming king and that Jesus, whom this God raised from the dead, is the world's true Lord. P.227

Once the gospel announcement has been made, it means instantly **that all people everywhere are gladly invited to come in, to join the party, to discover forgiveness for the past, an astonishing destiny in God's future, and a vocation in the present.** P.227

Being in Christ – such a person is a **living, breathing little bit of “new creation”** – that new creation that has already begun to happen in Jesus' resurrection that will be complete when God finally makes his new heavens and new earth and raises us to share in that new world. P.228

The mission of the church

Therefore, **the mission of the church must reflect, and be shaped by, the future hope as the New Testament presents it.** If we take – justice, beauty, and evangelism – in terms of the anticipation of God's eventual setting to rights of the whole world, we will find that they dovetail together.

Part of the task of the church must be to take up that sense of injustice, to bring it to speech, to help people articulate it, and turn it into prayer. And the task then continues with the church's work with the whole local community to foster hope (the work of hope for life before death).

Therefore, **the church**, because it is the family that believes in hope for new creation, **should be the place in every city where new creativity bursts forth for the whole community, pointing to the hope** that, like all beauty, always comes a surprise. There is a new world, and it has already begun, and it works by healing and forgiveness and new starts and fresh energy. P.232

This is the good news – of justice, beauty, and above all Jesus – that the church is called upon to live and to speak, to bring into reality, in each place and each generation. P.232

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 13

- 1. How can we build for the kingdom in our communities? What does that look like?*
- 2. What are we called to do as believers?*
- 3. How does N.T. Wright reframe evangelism?*
- 4. What is the mission of the church?*
- 5. Has God placed anything on your heart/mind as to how we can bring hope, beauty, justice, and the good news to the community outside the doors of Coastline Church?*