

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN CHARLOTTE

REPLACEMENT OR RENEWAL?:
THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH IN REVELATION 21:1

SUBMITTED TO DR. MICHAEL J. KRUGER
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
NT 5350: HEBREWS–REVELATION

BY
JEFFREY NEIKIRK
5/15/25

Introduction

Wilhelmus á Brakel asks, “Will the structural edifice of heaven and earth be annihilated, or will they be purified by fire and be restored to their original purity, beauty, and glory?”¹ Throughout church history, various theologians have answered this question in both the affirmative and negative using Rev 21:1 to inform their answer. Some scholars find that Rev 21:1 supports the idea that God will burn up the original creation in its entirety and create a second creation *ex nihilo* in its place.² Others have proposed that Rev 21:1 supports the idea of renewal or restoration of creation from its post-fall state.³ This paper will argue in favor of the renewal side. In order to accomplish this, this paper will first consider two hermeneutical principles that aid with interpreting Revelation. Second, it will examine the literary context up to Rev 21:1. Third, it will exegete Rev 21:1, demonstrating how John places stress on the qualitative antithesis between the new world and the former without indicating that the former was destroyed.

Hermeneutical Considerations

Before examining the relevant passages of Revelation, there are two hermeneutical considerations that need to be discussed. These considerations are the principle of recapitulation and the extensive use of symbolism throughout the Apocalypse. Together, these considerations will help establish the correct literary context for Rev 21:1 and guide exegesis towards a proper interpretation of John’s visions; however, this point should not be overstated. These hermeneutical considerations

¹ Wilhelmus a Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995), 4:353.

² Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 437–441; George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, Rev. ed., NCB (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 305–307; David E. Aune, *Revelation*, 3 vols., WBC 52A–52C (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 3:1115–1117, 1132–1133; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 311–312; Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 296.

³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1039–1043; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 38A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 803; Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation 12-22*, ITC (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 344; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 708–711; Simon J. Kistemaker, ed., “Exposition of the Book of Revelation,” NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 554–555; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 376–377; Buist M. Fanning, *Revelation*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 528–531; Gale Z. Heide, “What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” *JETS* 40.1 (1997): 37–56.

do not guarantee a particular interpretation of 21:1. G. R. Beasley-Murray holds to recapitulation yet finds that 21:1 portrays cosmic dissolution.⁴ Conversely, Buist Fanning holds to a chronological approach and understands 21:1 to speak of cosmic renewal.⁵ These hermeneutical considerations do not completely solve the issue. Nonetheless, a brief discussion here will be helpful for the sections that follow.

The principle of recapitulation deals with the structure and flow of the visions within Revelation. Rather than reading Revelation as a straight chronological narration of events, the recapitulation view understands a level of parallelism in the visions where John repeats different scenes in order to add more detail. Victorinus of Petovium noticed this literary device in his commentary on Revelation in the third century: “Since those events that are future to them have been decreed by God to happen, these things are spoken twice. … For the sevenfold Holy Spirit, when he has passed in revue the events to the last time, to the very end, returns again to the same times and supplements what he had said incompletely.”⁶ This understanding of Revelation’s structure means that the literary context of a particular passage is broader than just the preceding verses. The literary context must include the other instances where John discusses similar events since these also shape the reader’s perspective as he approaches any given passage.

The other hermeneutical consideration, symbolism, is helpful for rightly interpreting the visions. The book of Revelation comprises three genres: prophecy, apocalypse, and epistle.⁷ A major literary device of apocalyptic literature is the use of symbolism in visions.⁸ John makes it clear that his writing follows this pattern in the very first verse of Revelation: “The apocalypse

⁴ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 30–31, 307.

⁵ Fanning, *Revelation*, 61–64, 528–531.

⁶ Victorinus of Petovium, “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” in *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, ed. and trans. William C. Weinrich, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 12. A full defense of the recapitulation principle is beyond the scope of this paper. This view chiefly relies on seeing similar spans of time referenced throughout the book, the similarity between the trumpets and bowls, and the repeated patterns of judgment and salvation that occur in various places. Beale’s defense of this view is the most robust and detailed: Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 108–151. See also William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 22–30; Charles E. Hill, “Revelation,” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 523–524.

⁷ Hill, “Revelation,” 520–521; G. R. Beasley-Murray, “Revelation, book of,” *DLNT* 1025–1027.

⁸ G. E. Ladd, “Apocalyptic Literature,” *ISBE* 1:152–153.

(Ἀποκάλυψις) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known through signs (ἐσήμανεν) by sending his angel to his servant John” (Rev 1:1, my translation).⁹ John uses symbolism to such an extent that P. H. Davids says, “The Revelation stands as a complete symbolic universe.”¹⁰ When interpreting this symbolic universe, it is necessary to not press the details of the visions beyond what they are meant to convey. The interpretation of the details of John’s visions should align with the overall central thought of the individual picture presented to the audience.¹¹ Nonetheless, the symbolic nature of John’s visions is important to recognize because it means that a “literal” interpretation of such pictures does injustice to them.¹² Understanding symbolism, together with the principle of recapitulation, will greatly benefit navigating the literary context of Rev 21:1 below.

Literary Context

Many of the commentators that understand Rev 21:1 as pointing to a totally new creation point to Rev 20:11 as proof of total cosmic dissolution: “From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.”¹³ As David Aune notes, “This statement [Rev 2:1b], taken together with that in 20:11b, makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author has in view the *complete destruction* of the physical universe.”¹⁴ Thus, the interpretations of 20:11 and 21:1 are connected and to show that one verse does not support a cosmic dissolution nearly requires that the other verse does not either.¹⁵

Due to the relationship between Rev 20:11 and 21:1, this section will deal with the analysis of 20:11 to show that it does not support a cosmic dissolution followed by new creation paradigm.

⁹ Hill, “Revelation,” 523; Alexander E. Stewart, *Revelation*, EGGNT (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2024), 15.

¹⁰ P. H. Davids, “Signs and Wonders,” *DLNT* 1196.

¹¹ Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 48.

¹² For a robust treatment concerning the interpretation of the symbolism in Revelation, see Fanning, *Revelation*, 33–37.

¹³ All scripture quotes are from ESV unless otherwise noted.

¹⁴ Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1117. Italics are original.

¹⁵ Beasley-Murray is an exception here as he finds Rev 20:11 to be symbolic, while 21:1 points to total destruction and a brand-new creation. See Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 301, 307.

To help in this endeavor, two other passages will be examined that also contain cosmic upheaval language: Rev 6:12–17 and 16:17–21. Because of the recapitulation principle and overlapping language (discussed below), these sections are closely related to 20:11. Together, all three sections make up the broader literary context behind 21:1 and build up to it.

Rev 6:12–17

Commentators such as Robert Thomas and John Walvoord understand Rev 6:12–17 to denote a real breakup of the world but not the final dissolution of the universe that they believe will come in 20:11. For example, Walvoord comments,

While this is not the final breakup of the world as described later in Revelation, when a further period of terrible judgments will be poured on the world, it does seem to indicate that beginning with the sixth seal God is undertaking a direct intervention into human affairs. ... The judgment described here, however, originates in God as a divine punishment inflicted upon a blasphemous world.¹⁶

In similar fashion, Thomas states, “This is the human perception of the magnitude of the disturbance, but is not the ultimate passage of the heavens, which does not come until Rev. 20:11; 21:1 ... The impression of all these heavenly phenomena is that the universe is coming apart.”¹⁷ For both commentators, this passage depicts literal cosmic upheaval as temporal judgment against wickedness.

In contrast to their views, there are several reasons to see Rev 6:14 as pointing to the inauguration of final judgment. First, 6:12–17 functions as the response to the saints’ plea in v. 10: “how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” In v. 11, God explains that his judgment will only come about once all the saints are gathered up. If this is the case, then vv. 12–17 predicate the end of Christian suffering and gathering of the elect so that final judgment can now commence with the breaking of the sixth seal.¹⁸ Second, whereas only a third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck in 8:12, in 6:12–13 the whole of the sun and moon, along with all the stars, are struck down (cf. 8:10; 9:1; 12:4).¹⁹ Third, John enumerates seven

¹⁶ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 136.

¹⁷ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 454.

¹⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 395–396; Blount, *Revelation*, 137.

¹⁹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 399.

groups of people in 6:15 affected by the calamities of the preceding verses: kings, great ones, generals, rich, the powerful, slaves, and the free. These groups indicate “a complete and universal judgment of the entire world.”²⁰ Fourth, 6:17 speaks of “the great day of their wrath” paralleling similar statements that refer to the final day of judgment (see 11:18; 16:14; 19:17–18), which suggest that this passage is also about judgment day.²¹ Together with the principle of recapitulation, these four reasons suggest that Rev 6:12–17 describes the inauguration of the great day of judgment at the end of human history.

John’s use of cosmic upheaval language to depict the final judgment does lend itself toward seeing a full cosmic dissolution. However, it is much more likely that John is using the cosmic upheaval language in a figurative way. Mountains and islands are symbolic features of the world representing stability. Passages such as Ps 125:1–2; Matt 17:20; and 1 Cor 13:2 especially regard mountains as immovable objects, but in contexts where God appears in judgment, the mountains shake and tremble, signaling God’s arrival (see e.g., Judg 5:5; Ps 18:7; Isa 5:25; Jer 4:24; Nah 1:5).²² Not only is the surface of the earth affected by God’s appearance, but heaven is as well. John utilizes Isa 34:4 in his description of the heavens splitting apart in Rev 6:13, and in both cases it is meant to indicate God’s judgment (for other examples of such phenomenon, see 2 Sam 22:10; Ps 18:9; Isa 64:1).²³ In addition to Isa 34:4, John also appears to draw from Isa 13:10–13; Ezek 32:6–8; Hab 3:6–11; and Joel 2:10, 30–31. Each of these passages utilizes cosmic upheaval language to depict God’s judgment against, and destruction of, a historical nation. In other words, these are portrayals of God declaring holy war on wicked nations. Now John uses these descriptions for God’s holy war against all unbelievers at the end of the age.²⁴ Therefore, the

²⁰ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 281. See also, Koester, *Revelation*, 412; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 169; Hill, “Revelation,” 533.

²¹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 401; Blount, *Revelation*, 140; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 283. Contra Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 168–169.

²² Aune, *Revelation*, 2:416; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 168.

²³ Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 167. Although, the tearing of the heavens does not always indicate judgment. Sometimes it just represents an announcement from or appearance of God (Exod 19:16–20; Ezek 1:1; Mark 1:10).

²⁴ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 397–398. For an alternative metaphorical view, see Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 168. “The cosmic happenings portrayed in verses 12–14, therefore, are metaphors of God’s judgment on the powers of evil which oppose his justice and goodness, and on the individuals who support those systems.”

cosmic upheaval language in Rev 6:12–17 does not demonstrate real cosmic dissolution, but the destruction and judgment of God’s enemies.

Rev 16:17–21

Once again, Walvoord and Thomas take the scene depicted in Rev 16:17–21 in a literal sense: “These words speak of literal topographical changes.”²⁵ Similarly, Walvoord states, “Not only does every city of the world come under terrible judgment as a result of the great earthquake which leaves all monuments of men’s ingenuity in shambles, but the Scriptures also indicate great changes in the topography of the entire world.”²⁶ These interpretations are, however, wrong. It fails to take account of the fact that John is speaking of judgment day once more and that he is using symbolic cosmic upheaval language to add depth to the picture.

The cry from the throne, “it is done!” (Rev 16:17), signifies that this is the final judgment. G. K. Beale comments that the outcry “marks the historical realization of the purpose of the seven bowls stated in 15:1: ‘in them [the bowls] God’s wrath *is consummated*’ (ἐτελέσθη). … the declaration here refers to the final consummation of judgment.”²⁷ Likewise, the picture of “the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath” (16:19) draws on OT imagery where the pouring out of wine represents the pouring out of God’s wrath (Pss 60:3; 75:8; Isa 51:17, 21–23; 63:6; Jer 25:15–18; 51:7; Rev 14:10).²⁸ Lastly, it is difficult to see how the graphic removal of islands and mountains could be anything other than a picture of the last judgment.²⁹ Thus, “John shakes the kaleidoscope and gives us another angle by which to view the end of history.”³⁰

Again, this imagery is for the purpose of adding color and depth to the vision of God’s judgment. The cosmic upheaval imagery is symbolic, not literal. Just as mountains shaking represented a divine theophany and judgment, so too do their removal (Ps 97:5; Isa 40:4; 42:15;

²⁵ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 277.

²⁶ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 241.

²⁷ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 842.

²⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 759, 843.

²⁹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 563.

³⁰ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 561. See also Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 415.

45:2; 54:10; Ezek 38:20).³¹ The point here is to illustrate the impressiveness of God's judgment.³² "The impact of God's presence in the force of judgment and salvation is so overwhelming that nature must flee before it," says Brian Blount, "It is as if the geographical elements, wishing not to impede God's eschatological progress, get themselves out of God's way."³³ This is not a picture of literal cosmic breakup, but a symbolic portrayal of God's fury against his enemies: "The goal is not the destruction of the earth, but the overthrowing of those who would ruin it (11:18)."³⁴

Rev 20:11–15

Having now reached the immediate context of Rev 21:1, Thomas and Walvoord now see final judgment in view. Nonetheless, they still insist on taking the language of cosmic upheaval John uses in this passage literally. Walvoord comments, "The most natural interpretation of the fact that earth and heaven flee away is that the present earth and heaven are destroyed and will be replaced by the new heaven and new earth." He continues on, stating, "What could be simpler than for God to create a new heaven and new earth by divine fiat in keeping with His purposes for eternity to come?"³⁵ While Walvoord's interpretation may be the most natural understanding of what John is communicating, there are issues with such an interpretation.

The first issue is that the literal interpretation of Rev 20:11 does not align with the rest of the vision in vv. 12–15. In vv. 12–15, John describes the final judgment scene where unbelievers, hades, and death are all thrown into the lake of fire. The main focus of the vision is final judgment, not cosmic upheaval. The literal interpretation makes creation collateral damage as though it were

³¹ Aune, *Revelation*, 2:901.

³² Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 415; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 247.

³³ Blount, *Revelation*, 308.

³⁴ Koester, *Revelation*, 668. Koester does suggest that the judgment depicted here is harsher than that in Rev 6:12–17, but this stretches the purpose of the symbolism too far. Cf. Schreiner, *Revelation*, 562.

³⁵ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 305–306. As evidence for his view, he offers up the fact that "the whole structure of the universe is operating on the principle of a clock that is running down. Though many billions of years would be required to accomplish this, the natural world would eventually come to a state of total inactivity if the physical laws of the universe as now understood should remain unchanged." Thomas similarly states, "The existence of the old creation aligns with the consistent teaching of the temporality of matter in both the OT ... and the NT ... The unavailability of any 'place' (*τόπος [topos]*) for the earth and the heaven following their departure indicates that theirs is a flight from the present existence. They will give way to the new heaven and the new earth." Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 430.

caught in the crossfire of God’s judgment. The literal interpretation simply does not align with the rest of the vision.

In fact, this issue is only worsened when one zooms out to what is happening in all of Rev 17:1–20:15. This whole section at the end of Revelation is meant to show God’s judgment and victory over the enemies previously introduced throughout the Apocalypse: Death, Hades, Babylon, the beasts, Satan, and unbelievers.³⁶ All of these enemies, except Babylon, meet the same fate; they are thrown into the lake of fire.³⁷ Creation, alternatively, is never mentioned as an enemy of God in the Book of Revelation. Nor does John depict it as being thrown into the lake of fire along with God’s other enemies.³⁸ John does not even mention any form of conflagration imagery here or elsewhere in his Apocalypse.³⁹ In other words, there is no indication that John implies the destruction of the cosmos in 20:11.

Lastly, such an understanding of Rev 20:11 would seem counterintuitive given the elders’ praise in 11:18: “The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for *destroying the destroyers of the earth*” (emphasis added). The elders praise God for slaying those whose corruption and wickedness have ruined creation. This praise would be nonsensical if God’s intentions were to ultimately destroy the earth.⁴⁰ Furthermore, in the previous two passages, 6:12–17 and 16:17–21, God utilized creation to execute his judgments against the destroyers of the earth. As Craig Koester observes, “Creation fights on the side of the Creator as God hems in his foes with lightning and thunder above and tremors on the earth below (16:18).”⁴¹ Thus, not only does the context and language of 20:11 go against a literal interpretation, but even

³⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 110–111; Hill, “Revelation,” 529.

³⁷ Although John does not describe Babylon’s destruction with the lake of fire imagery, he still describes its destruction with the images of fire and sulfur (Rev 14:10; 18:8).

³⁸ Koester, *Revelation*, 795, 803.

³⁹ Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1117. Even so, Aune thinks this passage does convey the ultimate destruction of the cosmos: “The meaning of the phrase [καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς], however, seems clear; the author anticipates the destruction of the physical universe, a view that is repeated in Rev 21:1.” Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1101.

⁴⁰ Koester, *Revelation*, 795.

⁴¹ Koester, *Revelation*, 668.

express statements earlier in the Apocalypse seem to refute the idea that John has complete cosmic dissolution in mind here.

Instead, what John is doing here seems to align and build upon what he does in Rev 6:12–17 and 16:17–21. This is especially evident in the language and verbal overlap between 6:14, 16:20, and 20:11.

Rev 6:14 (NA28)	Rev 16:20 (NA28)	Rev 20:11 (NA28)
καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπεχωρίσθη ὡς βιβλίον ἐλισσόμενον καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ νῆσος ἐκ τῶν τόπων αὐτῶν ἐκινήθησαν.	καὶ πᾶσα νῆσος ἔφυγεν καὶ ὅρη οὐχ εὑρέθησαν.	Καὶ εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ' αὐτὸν, οὗ ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς.

According to Thomas Schreiner, “All of these images converge and should not be differentiated from one another since they depict a world that is unrecognizable, a universe that is falling apart and coming to an end.”⁴² Furthermore, both 6:12–17 and 16:17–21 stop short of delivering the full pronouncement and execution of God’s judgment unlike in 20:11–15. As such, 20:11–15 functions as the completed picture of what is begun in the other two passages.⁴³ This would imply that, just like the other passages, 20:11 functions as a symbol of a theophanic appearance and divine judgment.

Although Aune ultimately thinks this verse points to the destruction of the universe, he demonstrates that the phrase “οὗ ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς” follows the basic pattern of a theophanic formula. The basic elements of the theophanic formula are the appearance of God and the trembling of creation before him (see e.g. Judg 5:5; Ps 18:7), which is what Rev 20:11 describes.⁴⁴ This in turn indicates that John is picking up where he left off in 6:12–17 and 16:17–21 since these passages describe the exact same thing.

Now, it has already been demonstrated that the literal reading denoting cosmic destruction does not work. Instead, John is taking the language of Dan 2:35 (Theodotion), “καὶ τόπος οὐχ

⁴² Schreiner, *Revelation*, 281.

⁴³ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 398.

⁴⁴ Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1101; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 301.

ενρέθη αὐτοῖς,” and applying it here. In Daniel, the phrase refers to “the destruction of the wicked kingdoms at the end of time … Now the same Danielic wording is applied to the complete destruction of the entire evil world system.”⁴⁵ The point is not the destruction of the universe, but the vanquishing of evil, which aligns with the point of vv. 12–15. The theophanic imagery adds to the vision by making the point that the wicked cannot hide on judgment day (cf. Rev 6:16). There will be no place for them to run or hide because God is the omniscient and omnipresent creator.⁴⁶

Exegesis of Rev 21:1

Turning now to Rev 21:1, it is important to note that none of the previous passages have implied a literal cosmic dissolution such that the universe is entirely eradicated.⁴⁷ As was shown above, all of the cosmic upheaval language is symbolic of judgment day. Hence, there is no reason to assume that the physical world has already met its demise before this verse, nor to try and coerce this verse into implying the universe's destruction without proper warrant. As will be demonstrated below, there are other possible interpretations of this verse that do not suggest cosmic dissolution.

Kai εἰδον

John transitions to this verse with the formula *Kai εἰδον*. He uses this formula frequently throughout the Apocalypse for three different purposes: (1) to begin a new vision (e.g. Rev 8:2, 10:1; 13:1; 14:1), (2) to start a new scene within a vision (e.g. 5:1; 6:1; 8:13), and (3) to focus on a character or action within a vision (e.g. 5:2, 6, 11; 6:2, 5, 8, 12). In this case, John uses it to begin a new vision;⁴⁸ however, *καί* does not indicate chronological narrative progression here. John may receive his visions in sequence, but that does not mean they portray events in that chronological

⁴⁵ G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1150.

⁴⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 375–376; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 301; Heide, “What Is New about the New Creation?,” 42.

⁴⁷ This is not to say that there will be no literal cosmic upheaval when Christ comes again. Other passages do seem to imply that there will be some level of destruction upon Christ's return (cf. 2 Pet 3:7–10), but this does not mean there will be a total collapse of the universe.

⁴⁸ Aune, *Revelation*, 1:338.

order.⁴⁹ Instead, καὶ simply “introduces something new with a loose connection.”⁵⁰ As a result, one does not have to understand the new heavens and new earth as appearing chronologically after final judgment in 20:11–15 such that the cosmos is destroyed, judgment happens, and then there is a new creation.⁵¹ Instead, it may be preferable to understand 21:1–5 as the redemptive counterpart to what happens in 20:11–15. In other words, 20:11 and 21:1 may be two different views of the same event where God comes, judges, and restores.

οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν κατένην and ὁ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ

John describes what he sees in this vision as a “new heaven and a new earth.” The first reason he offers as evidence (γάρ)⁵² for this observation is that “the first heaven and the first earth have come to an end” (translation is my own). On the surface, the language John uses very easily lends itself to an understanding which implies the end of the present universe and its replacement with a new universe, but John is instead making a statement about the superiority of the new heavens and new earth over the former.

Unlike in Rev 20:11 where οὐρανός and γῆ work together to mean the entire creation, here, earth and heaven stand side by side.⁵³ They represent component parts of creation rather than creation as a whole. The fact that John mentions the sea independently and that in 21:2 John describes the new Jerusalem as descending to earth from heaven supports this observation. As a result, John does not describe the replacement of one creation with a totally new one, but the renewal of component parts of creation because all the wickedness that characterized the former world order have ceased.

⁴⁹ Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 501, 535; David Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 272.

⁵⁰ BDAG, s.v. “καὶ,” 1e. This would imply that the translation “and I saw” is preferable to “then I saw” (cf. ESV, CSB, KJV, ASV, NET).

⁵¹ Cf. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 438; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 311; Bratcher and Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, 296.

⁵² G. K. Beale, Daniel J. Brends, and William A. Ross, *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek: Analysis of Prepositions, Adverbs, Particles, Relative pronouns, and Conjunctions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 33; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 658, 673.

⁵³ BDAG, s.v. “οὐρανός,” 1aβ.

Furthermore, the language and syntax John uses suggest that he is making a point about the quality of the new heavens and earth compared to the first heaven and earth. Syntactically, of the 82 times John uses *γῆ* in Revelation, this is the only occurrence where it lacks the article. Similarly, of the 52 times John uses *οὐρανός*, this is one of two times that it lacks the article (the other time is 18:20).⁵⁴ In addition, both Isa 65:17 and 66:22 of the LXX, which John draws on for Rev 21:1, include the article for both nouns: *ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καὶνή*.⁵⁵ This suggests a deliberate change and drop of the article in 21:1. Anarthrous nouns can either be indefinite, qualitative, or definite.⁵⁶ The best option for the present context is qualitative since John chose not to include the article and is comparing the new heavens to the first heavens. As a result, John is placing stress on the quality or nature of what he is seeing: “I see new heaven and new earth” (translation is my own).

Lexically, John uses the adjectives *κανός* and *πρῶτος* to stress the qualitative supremacy of the new heavens and earth over the first heavens and earth. Other commentators have sought to support the fact that John is making a qualitative distinction rather than a temporal one based solely on his choice in *κανός* over *νέος*.⁵⁷ While these scholars reach the right conclusion, they place too much weight on a single word as “individual words normally cannot be expected to carry such a point by themselves.”⁵⁸ Indeed, *κανός* and *νέος* can even function as synonyms in certain contexts since they have an overlapping semantic range.⁵⁹ For example, it is exceedingly difficult to think

⁵⁴ Statistics retrieved from Accordance.

⁵⁵ The MT of Isa 65:17 lacks the articles, but the MT of Isa 66:22 has them.

⁵⁶ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 244–245; Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020), 160–161.

⁵⁷ Kistemaker, “Exposition of the Book of Revelation,” 555; Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 217; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1040.

⁵⁸ Fanning, *Revelation*, 529.

⁵⁹ BDAG, s.vv. “κανός,” “νέος;” L&N, 58.71, 67.115. Although, in Danker’s *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, there is no definition under *νέος* denoting superior quality like there is under *κανός*. Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 183–184, 240. For a discussion concerning the relationship between *κανός* and *νέος*, see Moises Silva, “κανός,” *NIDNTTE*, 2:585–586. On the difficulty of synonymous relationships in the NT, see Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 74–75; D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 47–53.

that Paul has in mind two different senses with the phrases νέος ἄνθρωπος and καίνος ἄνθρωπος in Col 3:10 and Eph 2:15 respectively.⁶⁰ In both cases, the stress is clearly the characteristic superiority of the new self over the old self. Alternatively, both can clearly function to stress the temporal newness of an object as well. In Luke 5:39, νέος describes new wine while παλαιός describes old wine, and the old wine is the better of two. The stress is on the fact that the new wine is freshly made, not better. Likewise, Jesus compares the καίνος wineskin to the παλαιός wineskin in Matt 9:17. His point is not that the new wineskin is of superior craftsmanship to the old wineskin, but that the new wineskin is freshly made or unused (see also Matt 13:52; Mark 2:21–22; Luke 5:36). As such, John’s use of καίνος by itself is not enough to support the idea that he is speaking of a qualitatively superior world rather than a world recently made.

What does seem significant is the coordination between καίνος and πρῶτος that John employs. As seen above, καίνος is often used in coordination with παλαιός where the stress is on the temporal aspect of the object rather than on the quality of the object. In such instances, additional comments must be made to indicate if the new is better than the old. Clearly the new wineskins in Matt 9:17 are better than the old wineskins, whereas in Matt 13:52 where Jesus discusses old and new treasure, both the old and new treasure are valuable and good. Yet, in Rev 21:1, John compares the new (καίνος) heavens and earth to the first (πρῶτος) heavens and earth, not the (παλαιός) heavens and earth. The only other places καίνος and πρῶτος are coordinated in the NT is in Heb 8:13; 9:15 talking about the new covenant.⁶¹ In both contexts, the author of Hebrews clearly emphasizes the superiority of the new covenant over the first covenant with the choice of καίνος and πρῶτος. Moreover, a broader understanding of covenant theology knows that the first covenant and new covenant are not completely disjoined. The new covenant finds its roots in the first covenant and shares the same substructure of grace with it. In other words, the new comes out of the old. There is continuity between the two.⁶² As such, when these two adjectives work together, they seem to function in such a way as to emphasize the qualitative distinction

⁶⁰ Silva, *NIDNTTE*, 2:585–586. Hebrews 8:8–9 and 12:24 offer another example where both νέος and καίνος stress quality. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC 47B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 442.

⁶¹ According to Accordance, νέος and πρῶτος never occur in the same verse.

⁶² Richard P. Belcher, *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2020), 43–44.

between the objects without necessarily indicating complete discontinuity between them.⁶³ Thus, John is stressing the superiority of the new heavens and earth over the first heaven and earth without suggesting that the new shares zero continuity with the old.⁶⁴

The conclusion that John describes the superiority of the new heavens and earth over the former finds support in the rest of the pericope and the verse's OT background. John depicts both continuity and discontinuity in using the phrase "the first heaven and the first earth have come to an end" (my translation). The new creation for God's people includes both earth, heaven, and a city (Rev 21:2). The city shares the same name and designation as its former counterpart: Jerusalem, the holy city (Neh 11:1, 18; Isa 52:1).⁶⁵ That John can identify the city indicates that he could recognize it as something familiar to him; however, it is also new. It is better than its former counterpart because in it, God will dwell with his people, the people who are his even now, without a temple (Rev 21:2, 22). Furthermore, there will be no sea (discussed below), tears, mourning, wailing, pain, or death (Rev 21:1, 4). All of these descriptions are meant to emphasize the superiority of the new creation over the former.

The texts from Isaiah that John employs in Rev 21:1 also stress the qualitative supremacy of the new heavens and new earth over the former. Beale and Sean McDonough observe that

Isaiah 65:16–18 makes a qualitative contrast between the 'former' earth, where the 'first affliction' of captivity occurred, and 'a new heaven and a new earth,' where there will be only enduring 'joy and exultation.' Isaiah 66:22 affirms that one of the qualitative differences is that 'the new heaven and new earth' will 'remain' forever, in contrast to the old, which passed away. Revelation 21:1 portrays the future fulfillment of the two Isaianic new creation prophecies.⁶⁶

Thus, John takes Isaiah's words and applies them to the second coming of Christ and the future glory that awaits his people in a distinctly better heaven and earth.

⁶³ Granted, the sample size of evidence for this conclusion is small. More research is needed to back up this observation.

⁶⁴ Many other commentators make a similar point by drawing attention to the conceptual link with the redemption and future resurrection of believers in passages such as 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Eph 1:20; 2:6–15; Col 1:15–18, but Heb 8:13; 9:15 better parallel the language that John uses here. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1040; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 49; Koester, *Revelation*, 794, 803; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 711.

⁶⁵ Koester, *Revelation*, 804; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 711.

⁶⁶ Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1150.

The verb that John uses to describe what happens to the first heaven and earth, ἀπέρχομαι, means “to discontinue as a condition or state.”⁶⁷ John uses it in Rev 9:12 and 11:14 in a similar way to refer to the end of the woes. It means that something has come to an end, but not necessarily that it is destroyed. John does not use the fiery language that is typical of other writings which discuss the destruction of the cosmos.⁶⁸ Instead, he makes a simple comment that all that the first heaven and earth represented have ceased. There is no description of how this happened, only the result of what happened.⁶⁹ God set the world free from the clutches of Satan, the wicked beasts, Babylon, and unbelievers. He has removed all death and sadness from it. The world is a new creation; it is characteristically different and qualitatively superior to that which came before it.

καὶ οὐθάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.

The end of the sea is the second piece of explanatory evidence John offers for his vision. Rather than functioning as the copula verb, οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι expresses the sea’s lack of existence in the new heavens and new earth.⁷⁰ Some have taken these words as a cosmological statement about the makeup of the world to come and concluded from them that John implies a totally new creation which will replace the old.⁷¹ Yet, it is much more likely that John is using the sea symbolically.

In general, the OT viewed the sea as a force opposed to God. It represented disaster, the power to destroy nations, the source of the beasts in Daniel’s visions (Dan 7:3–4; cf. Rev 13:1). Nonetheless, YHWH both overcomes the waters of the sea (Pss 74:13–14; 77:16) and wields them for his own purposes of judgment (Gen 6–8; Exod 14:23, 28; 15:1, 4–5, 10, 21).⁷² From this

⁶⁷ BDAG, s.v. “ἀπέρχομαι.” Many English translations translate this verb with the English pluperfect trying to connect it to Rev 20:11. It is probably translated better as a dramatic aorist, “have passed away,” instead due to the present tense verb that follows it (ἔστιν). “ἔστιν is unlikely to be a historical present. See Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 523; Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 515, 564–565.

⁶⁸ Koester, *Revelation*, 794; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 708; Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1117.

⁶⁹ “The point of his statement is not to tell his audience where the first heaven and earth have gone, or to give them details of the event. John is not saying that God has simply wiped everything away to begin again with nothing.” Heide, “What Is New about the New Creation?,” 43.

⁷⁰ BDAG, s.vv. “εἰμί,” “ἔτι;” A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd. rev. and enl. (Cambridge, MA: The University Press, 1919), 394.

⁷¹ Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 307; Thomas, *Revelation* 8–22, 440.

⁷² Moises Silva, “θάλασσα,” *NIDNTTE*, 2:401–402.

background, Jonathan Moo suggests that John’s aim in declaring that “there is no more sea” is to demonstrate that creation “has been brought beyond any threat of future evil, chaos or judgement.”⁷³ John’s purpose with such a statement then is not to make a cosmological claim, but to comfort and encourage the people of God that one day there will be no more threat of judgment or evil.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, John does not teach an eschatological recreation *ex nihilo*. A brief consideration of a few hermeneutical principles helped provide a framework for the working through the passages. The broader literary context of Rev 6:12–17; 16:17–21; 20:11–15 all depicted theophanic appearances and divine judgment. In no case was there evidence that John intended to teach a literal cosmic breakup and dissolution. In Rev 21:1, certain features such as John’s use of καὶνός and πρῶτος, drawing on select passages from Isaiah, show that he has in mind a new creation that is in every way superior to the former. He makes no reference to the process by which the new creation appears, but there is every indication that the new creation has continuity and discontinuity with what came before it. Lastly, the removal of the sea from the new heavens and new earth marks the end of God’s enemies and puts creation beyond any threat from future chaos or judgment. It is not a cosmological statement about the makeup of the new creation. Therefore, John does not propose cosmic dissolution followed by an entirely new creation. Instead, he proposes that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

⁷³ Jonathan Moo, “The Sea That Is No More: Rev 21:1 and the Function of Sea Imagery in the Apocalypse of John,” *NovT* 51.2 (2009): 167. See also David Mathewson, “New Exodus as a Background for ‘The Sea Was No More’ in Revelation 21:1c,” *TRINJ* 24.2 (2003): 258.

Appendix A: Translation of Rev 21:1–4

NA28	My Translation
¹ Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινήν. ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.	And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth have come to an end, and the sea no longer exists. ^a
² καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἀγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.	And it was the holy city, the new Jerusalem, that I saw ^b coming down out of heaven from God prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.
³ καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης· ἴδού ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός],	And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look, the dwelling place of God is with man, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them as their God, ^c
⁴ καὶ ἔξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυνον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν.	and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will no longer exist, neither will mourning, nor wailing, nor pain exist anymore; ^d the first things have come to an end. ^e

Textual Notes

- a) ἔστιν used predicatively to assert existence rather than as the copula.⁷⁴
- b) This is the only place that John splits the phrase καὶ εἶδον with the direct object. Using a cleft construction helps retain this emphasis.
- c) αὐτῶν is a genitive of subordination (“over”).⁷⁵ Θεός could either stand in apposition to ὁ θεὸς or there is an implied ὡς.⁷⁶ The translation above reflects the implied ὡς. On the text critical issue, Bruce Metzger says, “Once again it is singularly difficult to determine the original reading. Was the expression αὐτῶν θεός (or θεὸς αὐτῶν) omitted (¶ 046 most minuscules) because it seemed to be totally superfluous, or was it added as a marginal

⁷⁴ BDAG, s.v. “εἰμί,” 1; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 394.

⁷⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 103.

⁷⁶ Stewart, *Revelation*, 236.

gloss, derived from Is 7.14 and 8.8? If it be argued that the preceding clause (*καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται*) requires some such parallelism as provided by *αὐτῶν θεός* or *θεὸς αὐτῶν*, the question arises whether these words are the author's or were supplied by a perceptive copyist. Moreover, in choosing between *αὐτῶν θεός* and *θεὸς αὐτῶν*, one is faced with conflicting considerations. The former order, involving the unemphatic position of *αὐτῶν*, seems to be contrary to the author's usage elsewhere (only in 18.5a does such an order appear). The latter order, however, may have arisen as an attempt to avoid the sequence *αὐτῶν ἔσται αὐτῶν*. After considerable discussion the Committee concluded that the least unsatisfactory procedure was to print the text of A, but to enclose the words *αὐτῶν θεός* within square brackets.”⁷⁷

- d) οὐκ … οὐτε … οὐτε are negative correlatives meaning “not … neither … nor.”⁷⁸
- e) Many manuscripts omit ὅτι: A, P, 051^s, 1006, 1611, 1841, 2030, 2053, 2062, 2329, 2377, \mathfrak{M}^A . This could be due to haplography (ETIOTI); however, it is also possible that ὅτι was inserted to smooth over asyndeton.⁷⁹ The external evidence supports the exclusion of ὅτι, which the above translation reflects. The THGNT excludes it as well. The meaning does not change with its inclusion or exclusion.

⁷⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 1994), 688–689.

⁷⁸ BDF §445.

⁷⁹ Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 689.

Appendix B: Word Study on καινός/νέος

Lexicon Definitions		
	καινός	νέος
BDAG ⁸⁰	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. pert. to being in existence for a relatively short time, new, unused 2. pert. to being not previously present, unknown, strange, remarkable, 3. pert. to that which is recent in contrast to someth. old, new <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. w. no criticism of the old implied b. in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by what is new. In such a case the new is, as a rule, superior in kind to the old 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. pert. to being in existence but a relatively short time, new, fresh 2. pert. to being superior in quality or state to what went before, new 3. pert. to being in the early stages of life, young 4. a person beginning to experience someth., novice, 5. The well-known city name
Concise BDAG ⁸¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Of recent origin 2. Different and superior in quality relative to someth. Old 3. Different in reaction generated 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In existence for a relatively short time <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Of someth. Recently made <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. in ext. sense of someth. not the same as before b. Of pers. In a relatively early stage of life 2. As component of a city name
LN ⁸²	<p>28.33 καινός, ἡ, ὁ: pertaining to not being well known previously but being significant — ‘previously unknown, previously unheard of, new.’</p> <p>58.71 καινός, ἡ, ὁ; νέος, α, ον: pertaining to that which is new or</p>	<p>6.198 οἶνος νέος: a set phrase referring to newly pressed grape juice, unfermented or in the initial stages of fermentation — ‘new wine, grape juice.’</p> <p>58.71 καινός, ἡ, ὁ; νέος, α, ον: pertaining to that which is new or recent</p>

⁸⁰ BDAG, s.vv. “καινός,” “νέος.”

⁸¹ Danker and Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 183–184, 240.

⁸² L&N, 6.198, 28.33, 58.71, 67.115, 67.116, 93.541.

Lexicon Definitions

	<p>recent and hence superior to that which is old — ‘new.’</p> <p>67.115 νέος, α, ον; καινός, ή, όν: pertaining to having been in existence for only a short time — ‘new, recent.’</p>	<p>and hence superior to that which is old — ‘new.’</p> <p>67.115 νέος, α, ον; καινός, ή, όν: pertaining to having been in existence for only a short time — ‘new, recent.’</p> <p>67.116 νέος, α, ον; μικρός, ά, όν; ελάσσων, ον: pertaining to a living being who is relatively young, often the younger of two objects — ‘young, younger.’</p> <p>93.541 Νέα Πόλις f: the harbor of Philippi in Macedonia — ‘Neapolis’</p>
--	--	--

Passages under Consideration		
NA28	ESV	Notes
καινός and παλαιός		
Matt. 9:17 οὐδὲ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς : εἰ δὲ μή γε, ῥήγνυνται οἱ ἀσκοὶ καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἐκχεῖται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπόλλυνται· ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινούς , καὶ ἀμφότεροι συντηροῦνται.	Matt. 9:17 Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”	Here the comparison primarily concerns the age/use of the wineskins. The distinction is not one of quality or characteristic such that the new wineskin is characteristically better than the old wineskin. The new wineskin is better only because it better accomplishes the task for which it was made. It is not characteristically better than the old wineskins. Wineskins are wineskins.
Matt. 13:52 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· διὰ τοῦτο πᾶς γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὅμοιός ἐστιν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότῃ, ὅστις ἐκβάλλει ἐκ τοῦ θησαυροῦ αὐτοῦ καινὰ καὶ παλαιά .	Matt. 13:52 And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”	The comparison between the treasure concerns age, not quality. Furthermore, both the old and the new treasure are considered good here.
Mark 2:21–22 Οὐδεὶς ἐπίβλημα ράκους ἀγνάφου ἐπιράπτει ἐπὶ ιμάτιον παλαιόν : εἰ δὲ μή, αἴρει τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὸ καινὸν τοῦ παλαιοῦ καὶ χεῖρον σχίσμα γίνεται. καὶ οὐδεὶς βάλλει οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς : εἰ δὲ μή, ῥήξει ὁ οἶνος τοὺς ἀσκοὺς καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοί· ἀλλ’ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινούς .	Mark 2:21–22 “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”	Similar to Matt. 9:17 above.
Luke 5:36 Ἐλεγεν δὲ καὶ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς	Luke 5:36 He also told them a parable: “No one	The comparison deals with the age/use of the garment not the

Passages under Consideration

<p>ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐπίβλημα ἀπὸ ιματίου καινοῦ σχίσας ἐπιβάλλει ἐπὶ ιμάτιον παλαιόν εἰ δὲ μή γε, καὶ τὸ καινὸν σχίσει καὶ τῷ παλαιῷ οὐ συμφωνήσει τὸ ἐπίβλημα τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ καινοῦ.</p>	<p>tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old.</p>	<p>quality of the garment. No comment is made on the quality of the new garment vs the old garment.</p>
<p>Eph. 4:22–24 ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης, ἀνανεῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὀσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.</p>	<p>Eph. 4:22–24 You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.</p>	<p>The comparison here is qualitative. The old self is clearly portrayed negatively not because it is old, but because it is corrupt. Similarly, the new is portrayed positively not because it is recent, but because it is renewed in righteousness. There is still a chronological element in play here.</p>
<p>1 John 2:7 Αγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν ἀλλ’ ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἶχετε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς· ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε.</p>	<p>1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard.</p>	<p>Here the distinction is between a familiar old command and an innovative new command. In this case, the old command is viewed positively whereas the thought of a new command is viewed negatively.</p>
<p>καινός and πρῶτος</p>		
<p>Heb. 8:13 ἐν τῷ λέγειν καινὴν πεπαλαίωκεν τὴν πρώτην τὸ δὲ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ.</p>	<p>Heb. 8:13 In speaking of “a new covenant,” he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.</p>	<p>The new covenant is perceived as being characteristically better than the first one. The new covenant has replaced or overtaken the first covenant. The distinction here is not one of time, although the chronological aspect is not totally gone.</p>
<p>Heb. 9:15 Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης</p>	<p>Heb. 9:15 For this reason he is the mediator of a new</p>	<p>The new covenant is associated with eternal inheritance whereas</p>

Passages under Consideration

<p>ἐστίν, ὅπως θανάτου γενομένου εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παραβάσεων τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν λάβωσιν οἱ κεκλημένοι τῆς αἰώνιου κληρονομίας.</p>	<p>covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.</p>	<p>the first covenant is associated with transgressions. The distinction is based on character or quality, not time. Although the chronological aspect is still not totally gone.</p>
<p>νέος and παλαιός</p>		
<p>Luke 5:39 [καὶ] οὐδεὶς πιὼν παλαιὸν θέλει νέον λέγει γάρ· ὁ παλαιὸς χρηστός ἐστιν.</p>	<p>Luke 5:39 And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, ‘The old is good.’”</p>	<p>The comparison is primarily wine that has been freshly made vs wine that has aged; however, there is also a qualitative distinction rooted in the age of the wine. The old wine is better.</p>
<p>1 Cor. 5:7–8 ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην, ἵνα ἡτε νέον φύραμα, καθώς ἐστε ἀζυμοι· καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός. ὥστε ἑορτάζωμεν μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιῷ μηδὲ ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀζύμοις εἰλικρινείας καὶ ἀληθείας.</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:7–8 Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.</p>	<p>Νέος describes a new/fresh lump of dough. This lump of dough is compared against the old yeast, which is malice and evil. Thus, the fresh lump of dough is better because it lacks the old yeast, but it is better because it is fresh. The qualitative difference is rooted in the freshness/newness of the dough.</p>
<p>Col. 3:9–10 μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἄλλήλους, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν,</p>	<p>Col. 3:9–10 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.</p>	<p>The distinction here is primarily concerned with characteristics/quality rather than time. Although the time component is still present.</p>
<p>νέος and καινός as implicite comparison</p>		

Passages under Consideration

<p>Heb. 12:24 καὶ διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη Ἰησοῦ καὶ αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ κρείττον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἀβελ.</p>	<p>Heb. 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.</p>	<p>In the context of Hebrews, this is clearly a reference primarily to a better covenant, not a fresh or newly established covenant; although that is also true.</p>
<p>Heb. 8:8–9 μεμφόμενος γὰρ αὐτοὺς λέγει· ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει κύριος, καὶ συντελέσω ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰουδαία διαθήκην καίνην, οὐ κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην, ἣν ἐποίησα τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπιλαβομένου μου τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν ἔξαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου, ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου, κάγὼ ἡμέλησα αὐτῶν, λέγει κύριος·</p>	<p>Heb. 8:8–9 For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.</p>	<p>The new covenant is not like the covenant established before it. The emphasis is on the character or quality of the new covenant against the one which came before it.</p>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aune, David E. *Revelation*. 3 vols. WBC 52A–52C. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.

Bauckham, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999.

Beale, G. K., Daniel J. Brendsel, and William A. Ross. *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek: Analysis of Prepositions, Adverbs, Particles, Relative pronouns, and Conjunctions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.

Beale, G. K., and Sean M. McDonough. “Revelation.” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.

Beasley-Murray, George Raymond. *The Book of Revelation: Based on the Revised Standard Version*. Rev. ed. NCB. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981.

Belcher, Richard P. *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology*. Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2020.

Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Blount, Brian K. *Revelation: A Commentary*. NTL. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

a Brakel, Wilhelmus. *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*. Edited by Joel R. Beeke. Translated by Bartel Elshout. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995.

Bratcher, Robert G., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993.

Campbell, Constantine R. *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996.

Danker, Frederick William, and Kathryn Krug. *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Fanning, Buist M. *Revelation*. ZECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Heide, Gale Z. “What Is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3.” *JETS* 40.1 (1997): 37–56.

Hendriksen, William. *More than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015.

Hill, Charles E. “Revelation.” Pages 517–54 in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Edited by Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Kistemaker, Simon J., ed. “Exposition of the Book of Revelation.” NTC. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001.

Koester, Craig R. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AYB 38A. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

Kostenberger, Andreas J., Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer. *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020.

Ladd, G. E. “Apocalyptic Literature.” *ISBE* 1:151–161.

Lane, William L. *Hebrews 9-13*. WBC 47B. Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991.

Leithart, Peter J. *Revelation 12-22*. ITC. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018.

Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989.

Martin, R. P. and P. H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Mathewson, David. “New Exodus as a Background for ‘The Sea Was No More’ in Revelation 21:1c.” *TRINJ* 24.2 (2003): 243–58.

———. *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016.

Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*. New York, NY: American Bible Society, 1994.

Moo, Jonathan. "The Sea That Is No More: Rev 21:1 and the Function of Sea Imagery in the Apocalypse of John." *NovT* 51.2 (2009): 148–67.

Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Rev. ed. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998.

Robertson, A. T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. 3rd. rev. and enl. Cambridge, MA: The University Press, 1919.

Schreiner, Thomas R. *Revelation*. BECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023.

Silva, Moisés, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 2nd ed. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Smalley, Stephen S. *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Stewart, Alexander E. *Revelation*. EGGNT. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2024.

Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992.

———. *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995.

Victorinus of Petovium. "Commentary on the Apocalypse." *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*. Edited and translated by William C. Weinrich. Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.

Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966.