A new heaven and a new earth: The case for a holistic reading of the biblical story of redemption

Abstract

Many Christian voices have proposed that the eternal destiny of the redeemed consists not in a disembodied heaven hereafter, but in the resurrection of the body in the context of a new earth. This paper explores the theological—and especially the exegetical—case for a consistent understanding of redemption as the restoration of God’s creational intent, such that the appropriate hope for the redeemed is life in a renewed earthly creation. The inner theological logic of this position is explored through an integrated reading of the plot structure of the entire biblical metanarrative and by attending to representative New Testament texts that articulate a holistic eschatological vision of God’s redemptive purposes. The paper concludes by considering biblical texts that might seem to provide an alternative vision.

Recommended Citation