

## Foreword

Janet Willis's book will make you love Jesus more. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says when Christ returns, we will meet the Lord in the air and "so we will always be with the Lord." This fact is sufficient, and many are content to stop there. But *how and where* will we "always be with the Lord?" Paul goes on to say, "encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess 4:18). God intends for his children to understand his whole counsel, including where we will always live with the Lord, how we will live with him, what we will be doing, which relations we have with the nations, and so on. God describes our future heavenly home on earth in order to motivate us to holy living in the here and now. He does not leave us in the dark on this matter. It's exciting and humbling to learn more about our eternal home. How many hours do home-buyers spend on Zillow looking at potential homes and running around with their real estate agent for a house they may live in for 5, 10, or maybe 30 years at most? How much more should we delight in reading about our future eternal home with Jesus on earth?

I could tell you that *What on Earth Is Heaven Like: The New Creation and the New Jerusalem* has new insights, but that would be an understatement. These "insights" are significant in how the Bible describes the New Jerusalem and its relationship to the millennium, the new creation (the new heavens and earth), the nations, and the temple. Much of biblical eschatology has focused on the initial events of the Parousia (a.k.a. the second coming of Christ): the rapture, resurrection, the arrival of the Antichrist's great tribulation, and the day of the Lord. But what happens when the dust settles after these initial events? Janet Willis, of course, is not the first to discuss the nature of the millennium and the goings-on during Jesus's Davidic rule over the nations. Countless interpreters have discussed the topics that Willis explicates in this book. The problem, however, is that many of them repeat themselves, functioning on unchallenged presuppositions. Willis does three things in this book that make me claim this is the best book on this topic. First, and this is long overdue, she challenges the nature, timing, layout, size, and shape of the New Jerusalem, including insights into the new creation, the nations, and the temple. She does this not with a few scattered proof texts here and there but adduces an abundance of clear biblical evidence, much more than I had originally understood the Bible to describe. Taking just one example, she clears up traditionally confusing understandings by showing that the New Jerusalem descends at the beginning of the millennium. It never made much sense to locate the New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium, but many interpreters accepted it without much thought. Okay, I will take one more example! She puts forward a persuasive argument demonstrating that Ezekiel's millennial city is the same city that John describes in the book of Revelation as the New Jerusalem—and this has huge ramifications for the timing of the descent of the city to earth. Second, she does not atomize these various events and topics, making the reader wonder how they all fit together. The chapters in the book possess biblical logic as she weaves these events into a coherent, vigorous millennial narrative, carefully allowing Scripture to define the new creation. Her explications are both scholarly *and* devotional! One would think that Willis would begin the narrative at the beginning of the millennium. But as she would argue, the reader would be left with an incoherent story—she begins in the garden and makes a brilliant case for identifying the relationship of the New Jerusalem with the Garden of Eden. Third, as an artist, Willis observes the small details in the biblical picture, details that support the main title of her book: *What on Earth Is Heaven Like*. However, she does not use "artistic freedom" or her imagination to describe what it will be like. She uses Scripture to support these descriptions, Scripture that interpreters have wrongly spiritualized rather than taking as actual events. Many believe it is more pious to

interpret these passages as “heavenly,” framing them solely on “spiritual truths.” They assume biblical prophecy could not be that precise or detailed. Many books usually have one or two chapters worth reading. But, *every* chapter in Janet Willis’s *What on Earth Is Heaven Like* contributes meaningful insights into the theology of the millennium. Each chapter leaves you anticipating the next chapter in this invigorating kingdom story.

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