



Blu-ray, Decay, and the Hope to Be Revealed: The Christian's Inheritance in a World of Obsolescence

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Like many others, my wife and I are considering whether to make the transition from DVD to Blu-ray. *When* might be a better word than *whether*, because the changeover increasingly seems inevitable. New media replaces old, and our former technologies gradually disappear from the shelves.

The trick is to hit that elusive sweet spot where the price of new technology has significantly dropped, but obsolescence is still beyond the horizon. I usually miss this target: Last year I bought a new VCR, and I have the hardest time finding replacement needles for my vinyl turntable.

Part of our resistance to new technology is our desire to preserve what we already have. Avid movie lovers, my wife and I have accumulated quite a collection of DVDs (not to mention those lingering VHS tapes). More than these purchases, though, we want to preserve our own family mementoes. While my wife recently copied her parents' home videos onto DVD, I converted audiocassette interviews of the same family members into digital formats. Many of these loved ones have gone to be with the Lord, some before our own births, and we want our own children to one day enjoy their stories.

The difficult truth, however, is that this quest for permanency is futile.

Technological innovation is already phasing out our newly minted family DVDs, and the digital interview recordings will fare no better. Audiophiles once hailed mp3 recording as the solution to cassette-ribbon frays and CD scratches, but time has proven that these files subtly degenerate with every play. Even the "Apple Lossless" format introduced as a proprietary component of iTunes software turns out to be no more than a marketing gimmick; the best that Apple can truly claim is that its files decay slower than most.

This trend toward decay in the media realm should come as no surprise. Physics has long

taught that the natural tendency of all material is toward greater disorder. The second law of thermodynamics, reduced to a nutshell, teaches that things fall apart. Entropy replaces order, and our CDs, DVDs, automobiles, bodies, and ecosystems all gradually succumb to chaos. The same science that developed this bleak forecast has also offered much to forestall it, but the underlying principle remains the same.

Physics explains the “how” of our fragile condition, but it can never answer the “why.” The Bible, however, can.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome to explain to them that not only their community of faith but also the entire cosmos live with a perpetual problem. Romans 8:20-22 says, “For the creation was subjected to futility . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Under the present circumstances introduced by human sin, even the created order groans like a woman in labor, desperate for deliverance.

Paul’s teaching echoes Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount. He taught His disciples, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matt. 6:19). Long before the principles of thermodynamics, Jesus understood that sin has rendered this world and its possessions impermanent. Rather than investing here, He counseled, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (v. 20).

The transience of our present possessions ought to both lead us to practice temperance in acquiring them, and point us to the greater reality yet to come. Decades after the Sermon on the Mount, the eyewitness Peter wrote that Christ “has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you*, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:3-5). Even now, the Lord is at work preparing this inheritance. God Himself declares in Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I am making all things new.” The first creation, flawed and condemned to decay through human rebellion, will not last, but God will replace it with a pristine one of His own fashioning.

In the meantime, I am all for archives. I want my grandchildren and their grandchildren to hear the stories of Aunt Dodie and Aunt Nell, and I’m investing in some recording software to make that happen. Copies of the new DVDs of old family videos are going straight from the recorder into the safe deposit box. I suppose I’ll even concede and purchase a Blu-ray player before too much longer (there are some *Star Wars* bonus features unavailable any other way!). Once I do, my next iteration of upgrading the home movies will begin.

I do all this preservation, however, knowing that it is not of ultimate concern. My memories are here, but my hope is in the new heavens and new earth ready to be revealed. I pray that my descendants will share both the memories and the new life with me, but if they can only have one, I pray that it will be the latter.

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