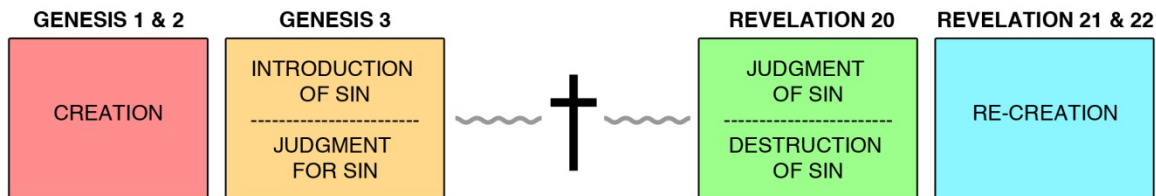


XIII. NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

WHAT WILL LIFE BE LIKE FOR THE REST OF ETERNITY?

☪ The END of the BEGINNING ☪

The bible begins with its first two chapters describing the creation of the world, and that this creation was “very good.” It is then followed by a chapter describing how sin and death entered into the world, and the judgment of God for that sin. Amazingly, the bible ends starting with **Revelation 20** which speaks of God’s judgment of sin, which leads to the destruction of sin, describing how sin and death *exit* the world. The bible then ends with its *final* two chapters, **Revelation 21 and 22**, which describe the *re-creation* of the world.



This, now, is the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end. There will be no end, for neither the believer nor unbeliever, but all will be raised bodily unto life or unto death. This, of course, is why the mandate to “go into all the world” is one of paramount importance. We are to proclaim the Kingdom of God, preaching and sharing the good news, teaching others the truth and ways of Christ, and baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Sin, evil, death, wickedness, Satan, demons, and all law-breaking sinners that don’t have the atoning blood of Jesus on their life will fall into permanent judgment.

The time is now, the end of the beginning, for us to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

☪ The KINGDOM of GOD ☪

As we have seen, upon Jesus’ ascension He now reigns at the right hand of the Father, and since the day of Pentecost up until the present day, we have been in the last days. The Holy Spirit has been freely given to all who believe in Christ, and therefore this current age has an interesting dynamic with Christ indeed having broken the power of sin and death as He currently reigns from heaven, but yet the fullness of time has not yet come. Some theologians call this the *already/not yet*♣ aspect of the Kingdom of God.

What that means is that Christ has indeed conquered, and with that, He has essentially inaugurated His Kingdom even now. We see this through the mass spread of the Gospel, the empowerment of the church through the Holy Spirit, and the distribution of spiritual gifts, as well as various gifts of God’s grace such as healings and miracles. All of these point to the fact that His Kingdom is already here.⁸⁷³

That said, His Kingdom is also not here yet.⁸⁷⁴ We still are battling sin, evil, and destruction. We still have a world full of lost people. Satan is still rampant, and death still exists. For this reason, we say that His Kingdom is also not here yet. I likened this in the chapter on sin and death to the picture of World War II, contrasting D-Day from V-Day. D-Day was the decisive day that the Allies broke the power and stronghold of Nazi Germany, but it was months later when V-Day came about, when the enemy finally was defeated in totality.

Interestingly, some believed that the Kingdom was still coming, but Jesus said, “no, I’m here, which means the Kingdom is here now.”⁸⁷⁵ Others, however, thought that the complete Kingdom was now and that Jesus would come and

⁸⁷³ Luke 17.20, 21 // Matthew 12.28

⁸⁷⁴ Luke 19.11, 12

⁸⁷⁵ Luke 17.20, 21

conquer Rome and all of Israel's enemies immediately. They so believed this that they tried to forcibly crown Jesus as King, but He declined, going into the hills to be by Himself.⁸⁷⁶

John Piper says it this way:

[The Kingdom of God] is partly present and partly future. Many of its blessings are here to be enjoyed now; but many of them are not yet here. Some of its power is available now but not all of it. Some of the curse and misery of this old age can be overcome now by the presence of the kingdom. But some of it cannot be. The decisive battle against sin and Satan and sickness and death has been fought and won by the King in his death and resurrection, but the war is not over. Sin must be fought, Satan must be resisted, sickness must be prayed over and groaned under (**Romans 8:23**), and death must be endured until the second coming of the King and the consummation of the kingdom.⁸⁷⁷

We, the church, are in the days between D-Day and V-Day, and our job, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is to fill the earth with the glory of Christ Jesus. When the Father looks upon the earth and sees that all that He set out to accomplish has been completed, He will then once and for all eternity put away all things that are in opposition to Him and bring to pass forever the promises of the Covenant of Redemption and usher in His Kingdom in totality and forever.

All this to say is that our hope of heaven is all about the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. His aim from the beginning was to not just to redeem His Kingdom from the fall, but to make His glorious grace and goodness even *more* famous in His Kingdom, in a way that could *never* have happened without the entire story of redemption taking place between **Genesis 1, 2, and 3** and **Revelation 20, 21, and 22**.

The Final Judgment of Christ

On this "V-Day," which is the very end of this age, Satan will be let out of His prison for a short time and will be given an opportunity to deceive one more time.⁸⁷⁸ Sadly, many will be deceived and turn their backs on Christ, even though they behold Him plainly in their midst.⁸⁷⁹ Then as we see, Christ will consume them once for all. Regardless of how you view the millennium, there will be a time when Christ, when He returns, will judge the living and the dead of all people, righteous and unrighteous, and will resurrect the bodies of all people for their just judgment.

Revelation 20.7-15

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

⁸⁷⁶ John 6.15

⁸⁷⁷ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/is-the-kingdom-present-or-future>

⁸⁷⁸ Remember the varying views on the millennium and now this fits into it. I personally hold to a premillennial view, where there is a 1,000 year period on this earth after Christ returns where we rule and reign with Christ while many unbelievers live under that rule, but with Satan bound.

⁸⁷⁹ Any believers alive at this time will not be able to be deceived. This only speaks of those who are not already sealed by the Holy Spirit.

And what of those who believe in Christ? Their names are found in the Book of Life, and, notably, their names were written in there from before the foundations of the world.⁸⁸⁰ Indeed, as He swore by Himself,⁸⁸¹ He would remain faithful to Himself and obligate Himself to be true to Himself; as He chose us to be His, He kept His promise, and *no one* whom He chose and gave to His Son⁸⁸² as a bride and as a people will be snatched away.

John 10.28-30

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

Romans 8.28-30

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

As we see in these verses and the many we saw in previous sections, our future glory is sure, as we have been guaranteed and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise! Upon the return of our Lord, we too will have our bodies raised from the grave and we will be resurrected, just as Christ was. This is the last and final part of our salvation, the salvation that we were freely given by the purchasing work of Christ. This is what we call our *glorification*.♣

At the end of his life, Paul spoke to Timothy and referred to his own death by saying this:

2 Timothy 4.6-8

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The word used here for "departure" is a unique word in Greek. It is the word *analsis*, and it is used as in to "loosen from a dock to set sail."

Paul is telling Timothy, "we ain't seen nothing' yet."

It was shortly after this letter that Paul would be beheaded for his faith by the brutal Roman Emperor Nero. But here, Paul is telling Timothy, "Nero isn't killing me, he's setting me free, he's offering me as a sacrifice." Paul knows what is ahead of him; he looks forward to his glorification and being with Christ. As he even says in these verses, he is looking forward to the crown of righteousness, which is the completion of our salvation; it is the victory crown at the end of the race. In Paul's day, the crown, particularly in the ancient Olympics, was a garland made of oak leaves you would receive.⁸⁸³

Philippians 3.10-21

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.13 But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

⁸⁸⁰ Revelation 13.8, 17.8

⁸⁸¹ Genesis 22.13-19 // Hebrews 6.16-20

⁸⁸² John 17.6, 18.9

⁸⁸³ Philippians 1.20-24

☪ WHERE ARE THEY NOW? ☪

In the Word we see a couple distinctions on the “location” of those who have died in Christ. We know for a fact that those who have died in Christ are not just “sleeping” in the ground, waiting to be awoken by the second coming of Christ, as Paul clearly states in **2 Corinthians 5.6-8**:

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Paul says that those who have departed, or as we have seen been “loosened from the dock to set sail,” are indeed with God. Yet, as we will see, there is a very specific future event happening where the eternal home of believers is created, which we will soon see. The current dwelling place of dead believers theologians call the *intermediate heaven*♣ because it is truly heaven, but it is heaven in its current form, which has not yet been fully prepared in its eternal form yet. Remember, Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” It is still being prepared!

Nearly all scholars admit that we don’t know much about the current heaven. Since our bodies are still in the ground, are we disembodied, with only our spirits in the intermediate heaven? Do we get a “loaner” body while we are there? We know that the current heaven is awesome, we shouldn’t picture it like a big doctor’s office waiting room, but we should also know that the saints in heaven right now are longing for their “country,” their final destination home, which we will see described in the coming sections.

In the meantime, let’s look to see exactly what the saints in the intermediate heaven, as well as we saints on earth have to look forward to as our *eternal* home and existence.

☪ RESURRECTED BODIES ☪

First of all, we see in the Word that God, who raised Christ’s body from the dead, will also do likewise to our bodies. He will raise our dead, physical bodies from the grave, not just our souls. So what exactly does it mean that we just saw in one of the verses before that “He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body”?⁸⁸⁴ Let’s look at a few verses.

1 John 3.2-3

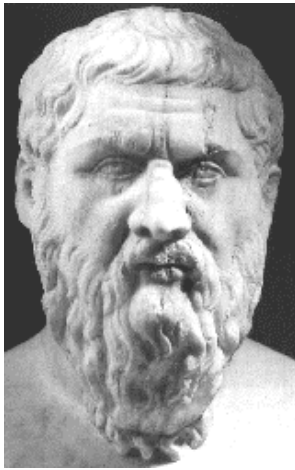
Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. *But we know that when He appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

John says that we’re going to be like Him. This is our hope, that our current, lowly bodies will become like how His glorious body is, and that we shall be like Him. So what exactly does this mean, what is His body like? If we can know what His body is like, then we can know what *our body* will be like.

The Corinthian Christians asked Paul the very same question. They wanted to know what their new, post-death, resurrected bodies in heaven were going to be like. The interesting thing about the Corinthians is that they had a little problem with their mindset, and this became a challenge for them when it came to their faith. The thing is, the Corinthians were heavily influenced by Greek philosophy (after all, Corinth is in Greece). I talked about this in the chapter on creation,⁸⁸⁵ but it would help to remind ourselves of their problem so that we can see what the Word says about heaven more clearly.

⁸⁸⁴ Philippians 3.21

⁸⁸⁵ pg. 69 and 70



Plato really jacked us up.

The Corinthians were effected largely by the teachings of Plato, who taught that the physical part of life was “bad” and the spiritual part of life was “good.” This view of Plato’s is what we now call *Platonism*.♣ The Corinthians Christians had this view because it was very much a normative in their culture. Because of this, they had a really out of balance view on the spiritual gifts, which is why Paul had to set them straight.⁸⁸⁶ They thought that the super “spiritual” gifts (like tongues and miracles) were “more spiritual” than the “physical” gifts, such as administration and organization. So, because they equated spiritual maturity with using their gifts (and in particular, specific “more spiritual” gifts,” they really just missed the mark.

Therefore, only two chapters after their spiritual gift correction, Paul addresses *another* dilemma they were facing that was also the result of their Platonist mindset: they didn’t understand what their resurrection bodies would be like! After all, as Platonists, they believed that they would be finally relieved of this sinful body and would become disembodied from it forever, living in a completely free and spiritual existence. This was a common belief among some heretical sects of Christianity called Gnosticism and Manichaeism. They taught of some kind of “escape from the prison of physical life” as

being the big goal and ultimate freedom. This is called *dualism*,♣ and though dualism has been declared a heresy, today we *still* deal with this in so many ways!

So, back to the Corinthians. They were now asking Paul what our resurrection bodies will be like. Have you ever wondered that? I sure have! If you haven’t, you need to think about heaven a little bit more! Here is what Paul tells them:

1 Corinthians 15.20-23

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the *firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; *then, when he comes, those who belong to him.....*

First of all, he says that Christ is the “firstfruit.” When spring would roll around, a farmer was always very anxious and curious on whether or not his crop would be good. The “firstfruit” of the season would give him the indication he was looking for. If the fruit that came up were good, healthy oranges, he knew that the rest of the fruit on that tree would be good healthy oranges. So here, Paul is saying that Jesus’ resurrection and His actual body is the indicator for what our body will be like. He continues in **verse 25**:

1 Corinthians 15.25, 26

For he [Jesus] must reign [in this already/not yet Kingdom age] until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.....*

Here he affirms that Jesus is indeed reigning, but that there will be a day when He puts *all* His enemies under His feet and He will finally and forever *destroy death itself!* The Kingdom is “already but not yet.”

1 Corinthians 15.35-44

But someone may ask, “*How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?*” 36 *How foolish!* What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.....42*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

⁸⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 12



What is funny about their question about our resurrected bodies is Paul's answer: "Seriously? How foolish!" he says! He is thinking, "Really? This is Christianity 101!" Paul is *amazed* that they would even *wonder* what their resurrection body is like because we *know* what Jesus' body was like! He uses the example, again, of agriculture by saying that when you plant, say, an orange tree, you only plant the seed, not the whole and final tree. *But*, he maintains, that to get an orange tree it *must* be an orange seed! Therefore, our current body, which is perishable, is the seed that will be transformed and glorified into our resurrected body! Your *actual and current body* will be raised as *imperishable*!

The awesome thing is that when Paul speaks of our new body being "spiritual," he doesn't mean spiritual to mean ethereal like Casper the Friendly Ghost. Rather, it's the quality of the power or motivator. We won't any longer be people driven and powered by the flesh, but now we will be a people and have bodies that are solely empowered by the Spirit of God.

Paul continues on in **verse 49**:

1 Corinthians 15.49-57

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, *so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven*. 50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, *but we will all be changed*— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, *the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*. 53 For the perishable must *clothe itself* with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "*Death has been swallowed up in victory*."

55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Here's the awesome news: your body will *not* be destroyed, but rather it will be *resurrected* from the dead and *changed, transformed, and glorified*! Our perishable body will *put on* imperishability! It will finally and forever be *unable* to sin or die!

Let's consider, as Paul implores us to do, the resurrected Christ. First and foremost, what was in the tomb after he rose from the dead? *Nothing! The tomb was empty!* When He was raised, was He given a brand new, made from scratch body, or was His earthly body resurrected? It was resurrected! And what was it like after He was resurrected?

Look at what Jesus says in **Luke** after He sees His disciples after they see Him glorified and risen from the grave:

Luke 24.38-53

[Jesus said] "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 *Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.*" 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "*Do you have anything here to eat?*" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it.

Notice a few key things here from this story. First of all, He is being very clear by saying "it is I myself!" He is even *more* specific when He says that "a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." Jesus' body was *His body!* Not a new one, but His earthly body! Not only that, but what is the super spiritual thing He asks them after proving that He rose from the grave? He tells them that He's hungry! I love this, because it shows the very reality that our own very real bodies will be raised!

Notice a few things about Jesus' body so we can get a better picture of what our bodies, and what heaven, will be like:

- It was physical
- He ate
- He drank
- He talked
- It was recognizable (though noticeably different since He was glorified), and most of all
- It was the *same body* that He had on earth

The picture we should be getting is redemption. Not destruction. The picture is resurrection, not obliteration.

**God's plan was to destroy the curse, not His creation.
Satan's plan is to maintain the curse, and destroy creation.**

We must remember, God made us in His image, and it was "very good."⁸⁸⁷

Psalm 139.13-18

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

The present body isn't a prison to escape; what it needs is transformation.

-N.T. Wright⁸⁸⁸

But guess what else was "wonderfully made"? *All of Creation* was "very good!"⁸⁸⁹

RESURRECTED CREATION

If you remember back to the very beginning, God made the earth for man, and He made the man for earth. We're, in a way, a package deal. He gave us the earth as our home, and we were to cultivate it, take care of it, and subdue it. In a sense, we had the pink slip to it, and we sold it for a cheap thrill. Because of the sin in the Garden, we see that God said to Adam in **Genesis 3.17, 18**, "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field."

Essentially, God said that creation as well would "surely die." Indeed, God's "good" creation would now be deteriorating, dying a long, painful death, groaning and bringing up thorns and thistles. Here is how Paul speaks of it to the Roman church.

Romans 8.19-22

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 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. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Interestingly, we see a clear picture of the creation longing for the day that *creation itself as well* will be *released* from this curse.

Notably, **verse 20** here specifically says that the creation's frustration was not by its own choice, but because of the humans that sinned that creation was also subjected to the curse, so why "punish" it? Once again, we must remember

⁸⁸⁷ Galatians 3.13, 14 // Genesis 1.31, 3.16-18 // Revelation 21.1-22.5, 22.3 // Psalm 139.13-18 // Romans 8.10-25, 29, 30

⁸⁸⁸ *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, pg. 231

⁸⁸⁹ Genesis 1.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31

that man was *given* the earth to be under his authority.⁸⁹⁰ We are uniquely partnered, in a way, with the earth. The Word even says it this way, speaking of our particular relationship, that “all come from dust, and to dust all return.”⁸⁹¹ I want to be clear that this isn’t pantheism, but we should note that the original design of God for His creation was in fact that we were made for the earth, and the earth was made for us.

Therefore, Paul states that even *creation* is anxiously awaiting the final glorification of God’s chosen people. Creation can’t *wait* for this great Day, because finally the curse will be completely revoked and destroyed!

Let’s look at this section of **Romans** a little more in context.

Romans 8:10-30

But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies (not to your soul) through his Spirit, who lives in you.

...16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, *that we may also be glorified together.* 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the *glory that will be revealed in us.* 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, *the redemption of our bodies.*

...29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Indeed, God’s coming eternal Kingdom is coming, when all things will be resurrected, glorified, changed, transformed, and made new. Just as **Revelation 22.3** says, “No longer will there be any curse.” When Jesus broke the curse of sin and death, His purpose was to redeem, restore, and resurrect the earth, humanity, and all of creation, freeing it from the curse.

To destroy it and start from scratch would prove defeat and a plan-gone-wrong, proving the curse victorious.

For God to destroy His creation and start brand new from scratch would show Him as throwing up the white flag and claiming defeat; it would show that Satan was proven victorious in his quest to destroy. But God’s plan did not go wrong, He was not conquered, and He never once intended on giving up on His creation that He had completed. Indeed, God’s creation was “very good,” and it was marred by the curse, and His plan was to eradicate the curse, not creation. In John Calvin’s commentary on **Romans 8.19**, he says this:

“I understand the passage to have this meaning – that there is no element and no part of the world which is being touched, as it were, with a sense of its present misery, that does not intensely hope for a resurrection.”

Let’s look now, at the final two chapters of **Revelation**, the two chapters that book end the story of creation, rebellion, redemption, and re-creation. It is here in these two chapters that we find some of the greatest truths in the whole bible; these chapters, indeed, show us the end of the beginning, yet not at all the beginning of the end, because His Kingdom will have no end. Before we read, however, let’s remind ourselves of what this hope of eternity stems from.

1 Corinthians 15.17-26

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

⁸⁹⁰ Genesis 1.28, 2.15

⁸⁹¹ Genesis 3.19 // Psalm 90.3 // Ecclesiastes 3.20

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Romans 5.5

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (NKJV)

THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF GOD

Revelation 21

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. 18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22.1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life

with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This, indeed, is our glorious hope, our hope that will not disappoint, because we know the Jesus has indeed been risen after breaking the back of the enemy. He has come as the great Mediator between us and His Father; He has mediated the New Covenant, and He has procured the promise that God will be our God, and we will be His people.⁸⁹²

As we look back at the chapter on the covenant, we will remember that God had made various promises to His people, and that these promises, some conditional and some unconditional, if completed, would bring great blessings. Let's look at these:

ADAMIC COVENANT FULFILLED

You may remember that the Adamic Covenant was conditional, meaning that the only way we can have these promises was through pure obedience, which of course, we could not do, for Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. Thankfully, as we know, Jesus, the last Adam, did what Adam could not do, and therefore, by His works, procured the promises of this conditional covenant and passed them on to us by imputing His righteousness.

- **The curse(s) will be lifted (even Satan's, but he will be given a newer, worse, and eternal one⁸⁹³).**

Revelation 22.3

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him." The earth gets resurrected, we get resurrected, and Satan gets resurrected, but to a conscious eternal torment and death.

- **Man will once again be at Sabbath rest with God, in perfect fellowship with Him.⁸⁹⁴**

Revelation 7.17

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

- **Man will once again be living in a perfect Edenic paradise.**

Revelation 21.2, 4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

- **The earth will be restored to its original (and presumably more glorious) state.**

Revelation 21.5

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Isaiah 65.17

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth..."

Isaiah 66.22

"For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain."

⁸⁹² Genesis 17.7, 8 // Exodus 29.45 // Jeremiah 24.7, 31.33, 32.38 // Ezekiel 11.20, 34.24, 37.23 // Zechariah 8.8 // Hebrews 8.8 // 2 Corinthians 6.16 // Revelation 21.3

⁸⁹³ Ezekiel 28.19

⁸⁹⁴ Matthew 11.28-30 // Isaiah 40.28-31 // Hebrews 4.9-13 // Revelation chapters 21 and 22

- **Eternal life has returned to mankind.**⁸⁹⁵

Revelation 21.6, 7

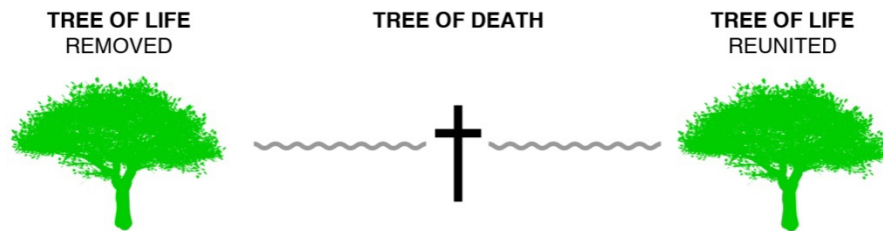
And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

- **The Tree of Life will return to be in our midst.**⁸⁹⁶

Revelation 22.2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

As God at one point had to take His dwelling place from man because of his sin, God now is able to fully and completely return His dwelling place, as the New Jerusalem, back to the dwelling place of man, the renewed earth. He is fulfilling the promise He made that "I will be their God, and they will be my people." But this isn't the only promise that is being fulfilled.



NOAHIC COVENANT FULFILLED

This covenant was unconditional, based simply and solely on God's own desires. The promises we see in this one are also fulfilled because of God's faithfulness to Himself and the procurement by Christ.

- **Man will be permanently spared from God's wrath upon the world.**⁸⁹⁷

Romans 8.1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

John 3.36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 5.24

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

- **When the earth is restored in accordance with the Adamic Covenant, not only will it never be destroyed again by water, but it will never be destroyed again period.**⁸⁹⁸

Isaiah 9.7

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

⁸⁹⁵ Revelation 2.7, 22.2, 14-21

⁸⁹⁶ Revelation 2.7, 22.2, 14-21

⁸⁹⁷ 1 Thessalonians 1.10, 5.9

⁸⁹⁸ Revelation 21 and 22

Luke 1.32, 33

[The angel Gabriel, speaking to Mary, said] “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Abrahamic Covenant Fulfilled

- **God will permanently and eternally give us the Promised Land as our inheritance.**⁸⁹⁹

In a potentially shocking twist, we find that God does not just give us a little sliver of Mediterranean real estate, but that His promise of giving us the Promised Land actually results in giving us the *entire earth* as our inheritance! Indeed, just as Adam was given the earth to subdue, Christ came to get it back; as Abraham was told his people would inherit the Promised Land, Christ shows us that the Promised Land is the whole nine yards.

Let’s keep in mind a few things. First of all, where there is a kingdom, there is land. And indeed, God says that “the whole earth is mine.”⁹⁰⁰ Additionally, look at some of these verses about the earth:

Psalms 25.13

He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth. (NKJV)

Matthew 5.5

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Psalms 37.9, 11

For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. (NKJV)

And one of my favorite ones:

Isaiah 49.8

Thus says the LORD [God the Father, speaking to God the Son]:

“In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;”(NKJV)

Now *that* is an awesome verse! God the Father giving strength to the Son so that He can accomplish the Covenant of Redemption, and giving the Son to us *as the covenant!* Not only that, but that the result of it is to *restore* the earth and cause us to inherit the desolate and broken heritages! The part about desolate heritages may be confusing right now, but we are about to soon see what this means!

All in all, we see that it was from the beginning the plan of God to give us the whole earth! It was the plan in the Garden, throughout the Old Testament, the New Testament, and we then see it happen in **Revelation!**

- **The nations will be blessed.**

Salvation, through the Lamb, will originate from Israel, but will reach every tongue, tribe, and nation.⁹⁰¹

Revelation 7.9, 10

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

⁸⁹⁹ Psalm 37.11 // Romans 8 // Revelation chapters 5, 21 and 22

⁹⁰⁰ Exodus 19.5 // Psalm 24.1, 47.2

⁹⁰¹ Galatians 3.8-14, 28, 29

Revelation 21.23-26

the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

- **God's covenant people will be one, preserved forever according to His promise.**⁹⁰²

Genesis 17.4, 5

[God making His covenant with Abraham, said,] “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.”

This one is so cool because it really is a curious thing that Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, could be the father of a multitude of nations. Looking at the New Testament, particularly in **Romans** and **Ephesians** (as we looked at extensively in the chapter on the church), we see that this is possible because Abraham's *true* offspring are those who believe *by faith* and are circumcised *inwardly*, not *outwardly*. Therefore, he is able to be the father of a multitude of nations because the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down by Christ, and now believers from *every tongue, tribe, people, and nation* are part of Abraham's “offspring.”⁹⁰³

Romans 4.16-18

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”

Ephesians 2.11-16

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

DAVIDIC COVENANT FULFILLED

- **The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Seed of David, will rule and reign forever on David's throne from the New Jerusalem.**⁹⁰⁴

Revelation 11:15

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

John Piper says, “When God has completed all the responsibilities in his job description [Covenant of Redemption], the house of David will be planet earth. And the subjects of the king will not just be Jews but people from every tongue and tribe and nation (**Revelation 7:9**).”⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰² Ephesians 2.14-22

⁹⁰³ John 10.16 // Galatians 3.28, 29 // Romans 2.28, 29, 9.6-8, 10.9-13, 11.1-10, 24-28 // Philippians 3.3 // Ephesians 2.11-22, 3.4-13 // Deuteronomy 10.16, 17, 30.6 // Jeremiah 4.4

⁹⁰⁴ Revelation 4.9, 10, 5.1-13, 7.10-15, 19.4, chapters 21 and 22

⁹⁰⁵ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/gods-covenant-with-david>

- **His covenant people will be a people under the great covenant King; the King of kings and Lord of lords.**⁹⁰⁶

Revelation 17.14

They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

Revelation 22.16

I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star . . . let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

- **His rule will be eternal.**⁹⁰⁷

Luke 1.32, 33

[The angel Gabriel, speaking to Mary, said] “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Revelation 4.9-11

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Revelation 5.5-10

And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 22.16

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

What an incredible “end of the beginning” we are seeing unfold! No loose ends, no plot holes, no stone left unturned! Someone needs to make a movie out of this! It is so incredible to me how the story of redemption is so delicately and creatively intertwined, weaved, and designed. Every nuance matters, every promise is fulfilled, every Word spoken from the mouth of God will come to pass! Indeed, even Jesus says:

Matthew 5.18

For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Does all of this intricate planning just blow your mind? The awesome thing is that every day that goes by, you learn something new about this plot; some new detail or insight becomes available to you through the Holy Spirit and His Word. It is absolutely true that the Word of God is living and powerful!⁹⁰⁸

Let’s look now at what our future home will be like.

⁹⁰⁶ Revelation 17.14, 19.16 // 1 Timothy 6.14-16

⁹⁰⁷ 1 Timothy 6.15

⁹⁰⁸ Hebrews 4.12

What Will Eternity Be Like?

So far, we're being shown that there is an incredible amount of *continuity*♣ in the Scriptures concerning the first creation and the second creation. Continuity means that we should look at a great proportion of what we see here and now and expect that much of it, in some fashion, will be with us on the New Earth. Indeed, a better way to put it is to speak of the first creation and then the *re-creation* of the first creation, or even more biblically, the *resurrection* and *restoration* of the first creation.



1940 Ford off the assembly line (L), a '40 Ford left to decay (C), and my '40 Ford after all things are made new (R).

I drive a 74 year old car every day (except for when it starts acting 74 and needs a nap and a foot massage). It's a 1940 Ford Deluxe, and it's been in my family for almost 30 years. When it first came off the assembly line, it was a brand new creation that had never existed before. Through the years, however, the car got older and older and eventually started wasting away, mostly due to neglect. But eventually, it came under new ownership (justification), which was my dad and my grandpa. While I was in high school, my dad, my grandpa, and I began *restoring* and *resurrecting* the car from its original form. It took some time (sanctification), but eventually it was completed (glorification), and all things were made new. This is similar to the analogy of the home renovation project in the chapter on the Holy Spirit.

Now, when we were done with the car, was it a brand new, made-from-scratch car? Did we throw out the car and start from the beginning? By no means. We used the *good* parts of the car, sanded blasted it, repainted it, rewired it, and re-chromed it. Anything that was rotten, decayed, or rusty was thrown out. This is the balance of continuity and discontinuity. Anything that God had made to be "good" and "very good" will remain, but anything that is of evil, sin, or decay will be purged.

Think about the Great Flood. It was designed to purge the earth of sin and evil and start over. Did God obliterate the earth and start with a brand new, made-from-scratch earth? Did He obliterate every animal, every seed in the ground, every mountain, every valley? No! He kept what was "very good," and purged the rest.

In addition to the story of the Great Flood, we see that God actually says He will "destroy" the earth in **Genesis 6.13** and **9.11**. But "destroy" didn't obviously mean "obliterate," but it was more of a "purge." Peter, in his epistle, even compares the "destruction" of the earth with that of the "destruction" of the earth at the flood.⁹⁰⁹ He paints the picture that this "destruction" is a destruction of evil and wickedness, much like the flood, and much like even how Paul speaks of the "destruction" of the flesh, which isn't a destruction of the actual skin and tissue of a person's body, but of the wickedness that is in them.⁹¹⁰

With that in mind, let's look at some of the elements of eternity with the idea of continuity, redemption, renewal, re-creation, restoration, and "purging" type "destruction," and see what we can quite possibly expect in the coming future.

⁹⁰⁹ 2 Peter 1-13

⁹¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 5.5

What Will Our Bodies Be Like?

Before looking at these various questions about the New Earth, I must highly encourage you to pick up a copy of Randy Alcorn's book, *Heaven*. It is filled with Scripture, he constantly points back to Scripture, and he is always clear when he is speculating, even when his speculation is based on Scripture. It's a great work that is worthy to have in your book collection, as it actually acts as a future resource you will use even after you've read it. Much of the insights I have offered here are adapted in part from many of his writings, observations, and angles.

Additionally, it must be *clearly stated* that, first of all, above all things, the New Heaven and New Earth is, primarily and without challenge, about the rule, reign, glory, beauty, worthiness, power, might, holiness, and awesomeness of the Triune God. As we look at *how* God designed our experience and life in the New Earth to give Him ultimate glory and make Him the absolute center, we need to remind ourselves that all of this *must* point to the glorious riches of God's grace.

Therefore, let's point out a few reminders that should go into our filter on discerning how we can approach the topic of heaven.

- What does the bible say?
- What does it forbid?
- Will it glorify God?
- Is it inherently sinful or evil?
- Does it jive with the idea of continuity?
- Was it a part of God's "very good" creation?
- Was it a part of God's design?

Additionally, we can keep a few Scriptures in mind as well.

1 Timothy 6.17-19

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Here Paul says that there are rich people in this present age, and that their dependence should be on God who richly provides us with *everything* to *enjoy*, not just *need*, but *enjoy*. He says if we understand that now then we will have enjoyable treasures in heaven. What are these treasures? We don't exactly know, but because we know they exist, that it includes *everything*, and it is for enjoyment, not just simplistic need, we are going to explore that within Scriptural boundaries.

Additionally, Paul also says to Timothy this astonishing statement:

1 Timothy 4.4, 5

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Everything God created is good, and *nothing* is to be rejected that He made!

1 Corinthians 10.31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Ephesians 3.20

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

No matter what we do, we can do to the glory of God, so long as it isn't sinful or inherently evil. Paul even says in **Ephesians** that God is able to do beyond what we think, and that it will bring Him glory. Most of us have put heaven in the back of our minds because we think the bible says little about it, or that it is somehow wrong to even try to imagine it because it is so holy. It will be holy indeed, but we should long for our future home, if we aren't, then something is wrong. We should look in the Word to see what it says about our permanent home. So without further adieu, let's have some fun imagining heaven from the Scriptures.

- **What will our bodies be like?**

Our bodies will be just as they are now: physical and spiritual. You will be you, and I will still be Jobey. I will have my physical features, personality, my character traits, and my passions, yet all of these without sin. My physical features, personality, character, and passions will be resurrected and glorified.

We will also have the same name as you do now. Jesus was still Jesus after His death, Lazarus was Lazarus after death, Moses was Moses after death, and Elijah was Elijah after death. Though we are *also additionally* given a *new name*, this new name is a personal and private one that only you and your Savior will share with each other.⁹¹¹ But it seems that we will all know each other according to our current name. It'll be interesting to see to what degree this plays out, since there will be many John Smiths in heaven (my guess is that there is only one Jobey McGinty), so I playfully wonder if there will be other added distinctions, like "John Smith of 20th century San Marcos." Maybe name tags would be nice.

- **Will we have all of our senses?**

Yes, we should very much assume that we will have all five of our senses, and who knows, maybe even more! When Jesus came back to visit the disciples and show Himself resurrected, again, He had the same body, and we shouldn't assume that He all of a sudden couldn't smell with His nose or that His nerve endings went numb.

Additionally, we can maybe even consider that we will have *more* senses. After all, our bodies will be glorified, and we'll have 100% brain capacity (we currently use about 10%). I don't think that one of them will be the ability to read minds, even though Jesus did, but He did so because He is omniscient, which is a trait we will never have, because that is solely for God alone. However, there may be other senses that we just can't imagine, like maybe the ability to smell colors.⁹¹²

- **Will we have any new abilities with our body?**

It seems as though we will. When Jesus' body was glorified, though it was physical, He was able to make Himself appear instantly in a room, and He also ascended into heaven. Randy Alcorn seems to err on the side that these two new "upgrades" (as iHuman 2.0) were only for Christ, though he doesn't rule it out for us. He says that Jesus' ability to appear in a place is an expression of His omnipresence, which we of course will not have (the ability to be everywhere at one time), but I don't see it at all this way. If we are able to appear in one place, we stop being located in the previous place. It seems very feasible that this will be a nice little perk. After all, I can't hardly believe that in the New Earth I'll have to take a 14 hour flight to the New Ireland to visit. Boo to that.

Additionally, Alcorn says that because there are streets in the New Earth, this indicates that there will be, to some degree, conventional transportation. Be it by vehicles, by animal, or walking. Though I agree that there will probably be all three of those, I don't think that necessitates that this is the *only* way we can get around. I think that hopping on some really sweet and fast motorcycle and cruising around the coast and seeing the New Earth in that way sounds pretty awesome. Not only that, but no speed limit, no fear of crashing and dying, and they aren't powered by gasoline, and not even by solar panels, but they'll be equipped with Glory of the Lord Panels! That's what I'm talkin' about!

As far as Jesus ascending, or flying, again, it's speculative, but I actually see this, of the two, as being maybe something that was unique to Christ, and not because only He can do it and we can't, but it seems that maybe it was the Father that was drawing Him up, but maybe not.

⁹¹¹ Revelation 2.17

⁹¹² From a Saturday Night Live fake commercial poking fun of Gary Busey.

- **What age will we be?**

Though we don't know for sure, we can probably assume that we will be at whatever optimum age we were in our original body. We can even make some assumptions based on what we *think* Adam and Eve were like. Probably (but not necessarily), between the age (as we know it) of 16 and 30. But maybe that slightly varies for each person, too. Maybe for me it's 19, and for you it's 24, 31, or 35. Thomas Aquinas says that because Jesus was crucified at 33, we would appear at our age 33, but, of course, glorified. Hank Hanegraaff says that our DNA is designed to peak in our twenties or thirties, so that would be our eternal age.⁹¹³

In some degree, I believe it will be a mix of all of them. We'll have the dependence of a 1 year old, the childlikeness of a 5 year old, the imagination of a 12 year old, the energy of a 19 year old, the balance of a 35 year old, the maturity of a 45 year old, and the wisdom of a 65 year old. This is one of the ways in which we will be "complete," as I will be 100% Jobey from every era of my life, but without sin and flaw, and driven and empowered by the Spirit alone.

Alcorn suggests a couple interesting things. One, which is related to my thought that we'll have the "completeness" of our whole life's various ages, is that somehow in our glorified body, regardless of what age we appear, somehow the whole element of our person will be made known. For instance, I get sad to think of the day that the memory of my boys being young is beyond my ability to remember. I will have to rely solely on photographs and video and foggy memories. He suggests that, if our kids are there with us in heaven and are at, say, age 30 in their appearance, somehow in their personality (and I would also add that our renewed brains and minds and memories will help this), we will be able to "see" our kids as those young kids, but also simultaneously as the mature, 30 year old men of God that they have become.



I want to remember this forever.

I really like that. I like the idea that I could walk with my earthly dad, Mick, as a peer and friend and fellow priest of God, but I also like that I can still "see" him as he was in his role in my life, older than me and as my dad. I probably won't call him "dad," because we will all be in the presence of our heavenly Dad, but I will call him by his real name, Mick, since he was simply a steward of me on the old earth, but now we are priests together. I like the idea that I will have the same potential to do the same with my boys, walk with them as peers and friends, but also still "see" them as I knew them, my little guys.

- **What about babies and children who die young?**

There is also another thought that Alcorn suggests as a *possibility*. He believes that the New Earth will be a place of recovering what he calls "lost opportunity." Did you lose a baby as a miscarriage, or lose a child at a young age? He believes that the possibility exists (based loosely on **Isaiah 11** and **65**) that babies and infants who die at whatever young age and go to heaven will have their bodies raised as that young age, glorified as that age, and will enter into the New Earth as that age. He thinks possibly that the babies and infants would then be raised in the New Earth by their parents, if their parents are there and were believers. If the parents aren't there, the good news is that we are *all* the family of God and these children (who would have the most incredible childhood ever imagined, growing up on the New Earth with no ability to sin!) would be raised by us, God's people.⁹¹⁴

- **Will we eat, drink, and, dare I ask, use the "el baño?"**

The best way to answer questions like these are by looking at what life was like in Eden, looking at what we know about Christ's resurrected body, and just by looking simply at the way God designed our bodies to begin with. We know for a fact that we will eat and drink on the New Earth, and we should assume, then, that we will digest that food and that our bodies will get rid of what we don't need. That said, our bodies, and the food for that matter, will be glorified, so it's very possible and likely that we won't have to all that often.

⁹¹³ *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn, pg. 297

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 298. Also, a couple other reads on "what about babies" can be found in Driscoll's *Doctrine*, at www.desiringgod.org, www.gotquestions.com, Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, and Millard Erickson's *Christian Doctrine* (which has an interesting argument) among many others. Also, take note that, from a Reformed position, salvation is by God's choosing, not by the human ability to reach up to God (Arminianism). If it were up to the baby to choose, then babies have no chance of salvation, since they are conceived in sin. But if salvation is by grace and God's choosing, God is able to work beyond our capacity or ability to choose. This is evidenced in the fact that John the Baptist was saved in his mother's womb before he was born, because he was sovereignly chosen by God before the foundations of the earth.

- **Will we sleep?**

Sleep is potentially a little different, but maybe not. At first glance, the thought is that sleep is to regenerate us when we get tired, and we only get tired because we are in a fallen world. This may be true, and if that is the reason we sleep, then we may not sleep. On the other hand, sleep could have been part of the design of how the body, perfect or fallen, efficiently works. Additionally, for many people, sleep is a welcomed and enjoyable thing to do. One of my favorite times of sleep is falling asleep on the beach while hearing the ocean, or falling asleep listening to Vin Scully call the Dodger game on a Sunday afternoon. When I do that, part of it, of course, is because I am tired, but I also do it because there is something relaxing and enjoyable about it. **Revelation 14.13** says that we will rest from our labors.

- **Will we ever be able to sin again?**

No. We will be unified and intimately connected with Christ, so we will have no ability to sin. Puritan author Thomas Boston (1676-1732) tells us that there are four states of human nature, and he puts it this way in his book, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*:

- Pre-fall Man: primitive integrity
- Post-fall Man: entire depravity
- Reborn Man: begun recovery
- Glorified Man: consummate happiness

Augustine said it this way: Man's original capacities included both the power not to sin and the power to sin. In Adam's original sin, man lost the power not to sin and retained the power to sin--which [man] continues to exercise. In the fulfillment of grace, man will have the power to sin taken away and receive the highest of all, the power not to be able to sin.⁹¹⁵

This chart may help us:⁹¹⁶

Pre-Fall Man	Post-Fall Man	Reborn Man	Glorified Man
Able to Sin	Able to Sin	Able to Sin	Able to Not Sin
Able to Not Sin	Unable to Not Sin	Able to Not Sin	Unable to Sin

Here's the big difference between Adam and our glorified bodies and why we won't be able to sin even though Adam was: Adam was not in Christ. Adam, though perfect, was corruptible, because though He was made in God's image, only Christ was divine and incorruptible. Now, incredibly, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, we are united with Him in His death and His resurrection, and we have become His body, the fullness of Him. Adam never was this when He was created.

We will not be simply *uncorrupt* like Adam was, but *incorruptible* like Jesus is.

Hebrews 9.26 says that sin is put away, and **1 Corinthians 15.52** says that we will be incorruptible. *Not uncorrupt*, but *incorruptible*. Adam was uncorrupt, but able to be corrupted. We will now be *unable* to be corrupted. This is possible *only* through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. If we have His righteousness and still believe we could possibly sin in heaven is to say that we think that Christ could sin.

An interesting side note, Augustine noted that these four stages also correspond to the four "stages" of the history of redemption for God's people. You could replace the four categories in the chart above with "Pre-Fall Man, Under the Law Man, Under Grace Man, and Glorified Man."

- **Will we have free will?**

We love this topic don't we? We love the idea of our "free will." It is such a curious thing that we are so adamant on our independence. And isn't that just interesting, that we truly want to be *independent*. That is, after all, what Lucifer wanted, and that is, after all, what he tempted Eve with. Now, I want to be clear that independence is not the same as being unique, diverse, or even to have the ability to choose; independence is a desire to make your own choices by your own strength, power, wisdom, and capacity. We love that idea. It's also called sovereignty.

⁹¹⁵ *Correction and Grace XXXIII*

⁹¹⁶ <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/four-fold.html>

But God alone is truly sovereign in the total sense. So here, we have this contrast. We saw earlier that while unrepentant sinners we are *free* to do whatever we want, but only as much as we are capable of choosing while being enslaved to sin. Now, however, in the New Earth, we will *truly* be able to choose anything we want to do, but only as much as we are capable of choosing as people who are slaves to righteousness.⁹¹⁷

In other words, as a sinner, you weren't able to choose Christ on your own, it was by God's grace that you could have faith in Him.⁹¹⁸ You were bent solely to the things of the flesh. Now, as a glorified member of the body of Christ with a renewed body, you aren't able *now* to choose *sin*. You can choose *anything else you want*, except *sin*! How cool is that? You are free to choose according to your *slavery* to righteousness and to Christ! This is a great paradox, that "slavery" would bring true freedom!

So yes, you will choose and have free will to go hang out with friends, go for a walk through the New Jerusalem, meet people, write music, take a nap, study, or have a glass of Wedding of Cana Cabernet Sauvignon from the 30 A.D. vintage (good year). But in all of this, you will *not* be so free that you are able to sin.

WHAT WILL OUR DAILY LIFE BE LIKE?

- **Will we wear clothes?**

This is a funny and interesting one. Obviously in the Garden we did not wear clothes. Clothing was brought about as result of the fall, so it seems that clothing would not be necessary. This very well could be the case, but if it is, I think that the key word is that clothing won't be *necessary*, but that doesn't mean that clothing won't be there at all (after all, it was God who made the first fashion-forward designs by replacing those old fig leaves (they were so pre-fall!) with the sleek comfort and design of authentic leather). We *do*, for instance, see that we wear white robes when we come with Christ to return to the earth. The clothing becomes an *adornment* of our body, not to cover the nakedness of our body, as clothing was originally intended, but to adorn it and decorate it with a purpose. The white robe represents our righteousness as we have been made pure by the blood of Christ.

Additionally, we see that white isn't the only color that is worn. The angels wear gold sashes in **Revelation 15.6**, and given that our nationalities will be retained at least in some way through our DNA, we could expect to see that represented as part of the adornment of our bodies. This would bring much glory to the Lord as we see, day to day, the variety, diversity, and extensive reach of God's people whom He saved. On top of that, but since we are all priests in God's Kingdom, we can look at the Old Testament priestly garments, which were *very* colorful, and should expect that we, too, as His priests, will be adorned in various colors and styles according to our own tastes and desires.

- **Will we desire only God, or will we desire each other's company as well?**

Often times, when someone asks a simple question of "will this or that be in heaven," I hear a quickly snapped back answer that goes something like "I don't think you'll even care when you're in heaven, because you'll be with God." Now, I understand the sentiment, and I do agree that God will cause everything else to pale in comparison to Him, and we do need to constantly remind ourselves that the New Earth will revolve around and glorify God, but this statement is about as Platonist and dualistic as it gets.

Did God create the earth? Yes. Did He create people? Yes. Did He say that it is "very good?" Yes. Did God say that "it is not right for man to be alone?" even though man was *not alone*, but was actually *with God* in the Garden? Yes, God said that. Is God saying "I'm not enough"? No! Absolutely not!

God *is enough* and He *is* all that we need, but this doesn't stop Him from causing us to enjoy the totality of who He is *through His own creation and design*! This is an important part of who He is, a God of community and relationship, and so it is quite natural for us to know that it is through relationship, not just us and Him, but between each other, that we will glorify God in the New Earth. So with an emphatic "yes!" we can believe that an unbelievably *important* part of enjoying God, glorifying Him, worshipping Him, and living our eternal life in the new earth is *through* the relationships we have with one another.

⁹¹⁷ Romans 6.18-22

⁹¹⁸ Romans 3.11 // Ephesians 2.1-10

Does it glorify God when we have fellowship together? When we love each other? When we encourage each other? When we sing together? When we eat together? Yes! So why would it change when *all of our sin is gone*? I'll tell you how it changes, those things become even *more* God glorifying! If you can spend time with your friend to the glory of God *here*, how much *more* glorifying will it be to spend time with your friend *on the New Earth*?

To take pleasure in another image-bearer doesn't offend God; it pleases Him.

-Randy Alcorn

God is indeed a jealous God, but He is *not* like a jealous boyfriend who doesn't let you talk to any other boys. His jealousy is aimed at anything that robs Him of His glory, and so long as our relationships don't become idols or gods or rob Him of His glory (which they can now, but they will not in the New Earth), then He will always and only be pleased, satisfied, and glorified by our relationships; it was His idea, after all.

- **Will we know each other?**

We've already inadvertently answered this question through the other questions, but it deserves more conversation. The answer is yes, we will continue our relationships, deepen them, and meet new people for the rest of eternity. Because I will have my body, my wife will have hers, and our boys will have their bodies, my wife and I will still share DNA with them, and though God will be our Father together, we will still share a special bond, physically and emotionally, as people who shared life together on the Old Earth.

Additionally, you will know your friends from the Old Earth and will continue hanging out with them. You will even know some people who were your enemies on earth, but there will be no need to apologize when first seeing them, because there will just be excitement and love for each other and you will get to know them in ways you never thought possible.

Jesus told the disciples, "it is I myself!" In **John 20.24-29** they recognized Him when He was making them breakfast on the shore (it's awesome to me that Jesus is shown both cooking and eating in two different instances post-resurrection!). He also said that He would sit down and have a glass of wine with them in the coming Kingdom. Their relationship will continue!

After His resurrection, Mary, teary eyed and upset at finding the tomb empty, mistook Jesus for the gardener until He said her name. She instantly recognized His voice and exclaimed "Teacher!"⁹¹⁹ It was only on the Emmaus road that the disciples *didn't* recognize Him as they walked, but the Word says that they were "kept from" recognizing Him, for the purpose of giving Jesus their undistracted attention, until He supernaturally "opened their eyes" and they recognized Him.⁹²⁰

- **Will there be marriage?**

Yes, there will. But there will only be one great marriage, that is, the marriage between Christ and His bride, which is us, His church.

This may come as an initial disappointment, for if you are married, this is the most tangible marriage that you know of, and naturally, you have a very intense love and devotion to your spouse. But please, don't fear. Right now, your earthly marriage is only a picture and foreshadow of a much greater union that you *and your earthly spouse* will now share *with* each other as you are *together* part of the bride of Christ.

Additionally, any shortcomings you have in your marriage now will no longer exist with your relationship with your earthly spouse in the New Earth. Here's the thing, I have a much more unique relationship with my wife, Katie, than I do with anyone else on this planet. When we enter into the New Earth, that relationship will remain special. I don't doubt that Katie and I will make it a point to hang out and be together more than I will with others, because we have lots of memories and a special bond, just as Jesus specifically told His disciples that they will for sure get together again. We don't just get thrown into a massive crowd of people never to see each other again.

Now, the difference is that we won't be married husband and wife, but our friendship will be more intense, more beautiful, more deep, more loving, more sincere, and more glorious than it *ever* was here on earth. Why? Because there will be no sin. So though marriage as we know it won't exist, the depth of love and relationship will

⁹¹⁹ John 20.16

⁹²⁰ Luke 24.31

not only exist, but will be far greater than the current life. For that reason, I am *greatly* looking forward to the beautiful relationship I will have with Katie when we are in the New Earth together.

Remember, on the issue of continuity and discontinuity, when God *does* replace something from the Old Earth, He *always* replaces it with something better and more glorious.

- **Will we be closer with some people than others?**

Just as we talked about this a little bit above concerning marriage, we can also believe that we will in fact have friends that are closer to us than others. Now, there won't be cliques or inner circles, but because we are all different and unique with varying interests, gifts, passions, and desires, we will naturally hang out with people that share in those. Even while on earth, Jesus was closer to John than the other disciples. He hung out a lot more with Martha and Lazarus, and even more so their sister Mary. He also loved His mother deeply.

I'm personally very excited to spend time with friends and family that I didn't have as much time for here. Whether it was schedules, distance, life changes, or whatever, time flies by here. Not so in the New Earth, we'll have all the time in the world. Just thinking about all the catching up and pursuing of so many friendships gets me so excited to see people and spend lots of time with them!

In addition to that, we'll get to know *new* people that we never met, even people from another era. I can't wait to meet a brother from another mother that my personality and desires relate to so deeply. It might even be someone from another culture and another era that I would have *never* guessed I would relate to!

- **Will we know everything?**

No. Only God knows everything. When we get to Heaven, we won't have, as some call, the "big ah-ha!" Now, I do believe that we will have a big "ah-ha!" moment when we see things so much more clearly, but I don't think that "ah-ha!" is going to be as extensive as some make it out to be, as if we will know everything we've ever wondered. If that happened, we would become omniscient like God. There are some things that only God will know, and some of those things we may possibly be given to seek and search them out throughout eternity.

Jonathan Edwards believed that "the saints will be progressive in knowledge to all eternity," and that "the number of ideas of the saints shall increase to eternity."⁹²¹ Presumably, I will still be able to play guitar in the New Earth, and I will probably continue to learn and get better and write more songs. If you ever wanted to learn to play an instrument, you can certainly give it a shot then! I look forward to playing music with people I've always wanted to play music with, such as friends who have passed away or song writers of the past. I would love to find out if any of my ancestors who were believers (hopefully) were also musicians. How cool would it be to write songs about our lives and how God was glorified through our family throughout the ages!

- **Will there be books in heaven?**

On the topic of learning, it is also very conceivable that we will still write and read books. Maybe it would be history books of the Old Earth that we can learn from and see how God worked in humanity as we give ourselves to learning more and more about God and how His love and grace works. That may seem odd, but think about it, God's very Word is a treatise on human history, and even the negative events in His Word bring glory to Him when we see through His eyes and mind. Not only that, but think of all the genealogies that we find in the Word.

God cares very much about not just *what* He did, but *how* He caused it to be!

Maybe it would be theological topics that we write for each other to read to encourage us in an area of who God is that we want to know more about. And maybe, just maybe, some of the great books that were written here on this Old Earth will be available in the New Earth. Of course, the authors will probably be a little embarrassed on some views they were wrong in and will want to re-edit it as a second "eternal" edition after making some theological changes, but even with their theological misconceptions, could we read those books, knowing of the points that are wrong, and simply either chuckle at them and then praise God that He is bigger and wiser than we thought? Quite possibly!

⁹²¹ Ibid., pg. 319

answers in His left, I would choose God's left hand.

-Martin Luther

Though it's true that Jesus will be there in heaven, and it is conceivable we could just *ask* Him for answers in the questions we seek, but as Luther points out, part of the fun and glory of God's wisdom is the pursuit of it. I wouldn't actually even be surprised if we ask Jesus to answer something and He just smirks and says, "well, why don't you find out, come back to me, and I'll tell you if you're on the right track."

- **Will we remember our old life, even the bad things?**

For sure we will know that there was sin, because Jesus will bear His scars forever. For that reason, and based on other Scriptures, I believe that we will have a very good, even perfect, memory of specific, or even all, of the events of our life on earth. Why is that, and how can that be, given that “the old have passed away” and “He will wipe away every tear”? Let’s explore this a little bit.

First of all, know for sure, there will be no sadness. There will be no shame, there will be no embarrassment or remorse or despair, so let's try to move forward on this thought *knowing full well these things will not be there*. When you think of the biggest regrets and embarrassments of your life, surely you think "I *never* want to remember that ever again!"

But something we must consider is this, that we will *always* for sure know that there was sin. After all, the scars on Jesus' hands and feet and in His side will be there forever. When the Word says that God has "remembered their sin no more,"⁹²² it doesn't mean that they don't exist in His memory, that would be impossible. If that were true, then the verses that say He will "remember their sins"⁹²³ would say that He actually forgot that they were there in the first place!

If Jesus actually “forgot” our sins, He would be pretty confused wondering why He’s the only who has scars.

But what He has “remembered no more” or “remembered” is their place in His mind of judgment. As the Judge, He will either call our sins into account as evidence, or He will remember them no more. Now, this shouldn’t cause us alarm, because even though these sins will be somewhere in His mind (and on His hands and feet), the fact of the matter is that, from a judgment standpoint, He has promised to “remember their sin no more!” There is *no* condemnation for those of us in Christ Jesus!⁹²⁴

That said, it *may* (but not certainly) be the case that we will indeed remember our past life, even the bad things, but that we will see them as Christ sees them: completely covered in His blood and atoned for! What this would do, once again, is bring utmost glory to God's glorious grace. For if we *weren't* aware of our sin, we would have the mindset of Adam, unknowing of God's true grace. The whole *plan* was to make God's grace known, so it seems as though that obliterating our knowledge of our past would go against the whole purpose.

Furthermore, we know that God's Word is eternal, and the bible is His written Word. Therefore, we should expect that the bible will be present in the New Earth. Well, the bible is full of lots of people's sins, but us knowing it won't be to their shame, nor will they feel shame by having it in the New Earth. We won't go up to Adam and want to punch him, we'll embrace Him as our great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandpa times 200 and rejoice with him that we finally got to meet and that we'll be spending the rest of eternity with each other! Sure, we'll know it was he and his wife that set everything in motion, but *we will understand God's eternal plan* so much more vividly, our past and the past of others will *not whatsoever* bring any shame to us, but rather our knowledge of it will be bring glory to God!

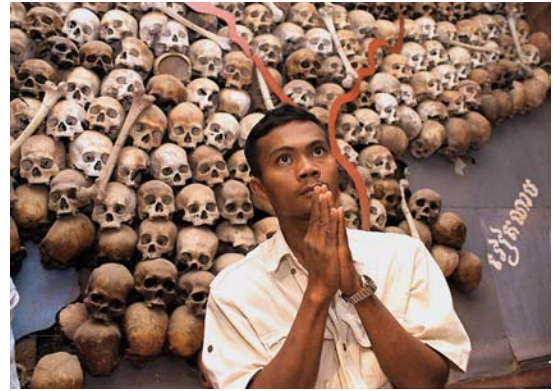
⁹²² Jeremiah 31.34 // Hebrews 8.12

⁹²³ Jeremiah 14.10 // Hosea 8.13

924 Romans 8.1

Again, we can't be sure of this, but let me offer a few more biblical passages that give a little bit more explicit reference to this topic. **Revelation 6.9-11** depicts martyrs who are in heaven. They are very aware of the situation that is currently taking place on earth. They also are aware of *their* previous life on earth, even the bad things, as they ask God, "How long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" They knew they were killed for their faith, and they knew that the Christ had not poured out His wrath on the earth yet.

In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus goes to heaven and the rich man to hell. Jesus said that Lazarus receives comfort in heaven, because he had nothing on the earth. Lazarus' comfort seems to come from his knowledge of how his life on earth was.



This Cambodian missionary prays in front of the skulls of Christian martyrs. These martyrs are aware and awaiting the Day when Jesus judges all wickedness.

Furthermore, we will give an account to God for what we did on the earth.⁹²⁵ For us believers, we are saved by grace through faith, so at this, called the Judgment Seat of Christ,⁹²⁶ we will have to give an account of *everything* in our life. This will determine our eternal reward. Once again, however, though we will recount the sinful things, we can be assured that He will not bring them into account concerning our eternal salvation.

Lastly, we should know that knowledge of sin or bad events does not equate to causing sin or an absence of goodness. The angels are all witnesses to everything on earth, indeed the worst atrocities, yet they have not sinned or been brought under sinful feelings. Likewise, the martyrs in heaven are also aware of the events on earth, and the events of their life, and yet we should remain confident that all of their tears have been wiped away.

- **Will we be aware of loved ones who are in hell?**

Similar to the previous question, this is another tough one, but we can speculate (and disagree) based on Scripture. Personally, I tentatively believe, along with the above question, that yes, we will be aware of people who are not there. Now, I know what you are thinking, and I agree, yes, it would be devastating to know and it would make us sad, and the bible says there will be no tears and sadness. But as I said before, we can be *absolutely assured* that there will be no sadness.

This is, however, unequivocally, the toughest pill to swallow, which again, should impassion us to go out and share the good news (which begins with bad news!). But unless we believe that heaven's joy is based on ignorance, we must reconcile that it is highly possible, if not even sure, that we will know that some rejected Jesus. Now, I know the immediate thought is "but that would bring tears and sadness!" I know, I know, trust me, on this side of eternity, it is hard to wrap my brain around. But if we are to be fair to the Word, we need to consider it, firstly, that it is possible, and secondly, how it is possible.

Like the previous question, we should understand that we will see in a completely different perspective. Don't read that I mean "cold hearted" or "impersonal," but that we will truly see Christ for what He is, we will behold His glory, and we will see His graciousness in offering Himself to us for our sins. In that light, we will see the folks that rejected Him as law-breakers who rejected our Best Friend, our Savior, our Messiah, the King of kings. Somehow, we will have eyes of justice, and we will also know that we deserved to belong there with them.

We will also see and understand that God was incredibly patient with them, and gave them multiple, even countless, chances to humble themselves before Him. But in the end, they will selfishly and with great pride reject Him, spit on His face, and mock the crucifixion of the Lamb of God. Seeing all of this, for what it really is, will confound us.

Again, this will bring more glory to God's glorious grace.

⁹²⁵ 2 Corinthians 5.10 // Matthew 12.36 // 1 Corinthians 3.14, 9.4-27 // Romans 14.10-12 // Revelation 19.7, 8 // 2 Timothy 2.5

⁹²⁶ The resurrection of unbelievers is found in Revelation 20.11-15, called the Great White Throne Judgment. This also does not determine eternal destination, as that was already decided by them while they were on the earth. It is here that they will receive the severity of their punishment according to their sin, whereas believers will receive the extent of their blessing according to their righteous deeds done in the Name of Jesus.

Jonathan Edwards said that those in heaven will “see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned.”⁹²⁷

We all deserve hell.

Once again, it must be our *constant* and *perpetual* reminder that we *all deserve hell!* If we don’t get that through our brain, we will stop repenting on a daily basis, we will constantly be charging God with injustice, we will *never* be able to fully grasp and appreciate the great riches of God’s glorious grace, and we will fall so short in living out the life that He desires for us, because we will never humble ourselves enough; we will always have a sense of entitlement. It is this same attitude of self-righteousness that causes us to think that it will, ultimately, be unfair for God to allow law-breakers to be judged.

One final thought, though a somewhat graphic one, is one that Alcorn offers in his book. He says that the very things we love about the people in our lives that are not believers are the things that they possess because they are image bearers, albeit fallen image bearers. If you remember, we looked at this way back in the beginning, when we delineated between total depravity and utter depravity. Total depravity means that we are sinful through and through, but that we can still do some moral good physically and emotionally. Utter depravity says that we are always and only sinful in every way and cannot do any good; not just spiritual good, but emotional and physical.

Scripture teaches that we are totally depraved, not utterly. In other words, we are still image bearers, though we are marred. That said, our loved ones who are not saved still reflect some of God’s image. This is what many call *common grace*, which is God’s grace bestowed to everyone, be it the gift of life, love, happiness, child bearing, etc. It is the grace that is common to everyone, believers and unbelievers.

What Alcorn believes about this is that when one of our loved ones dies, when and if we are able to know that they are in hell, we will no longer see them as a “loved one,” because anything and everything that was a bearing of God’s image will be stripped from them, and we will see them for what they really are *without* any residual image of God. They will be solely sin bearers, looking not like God, but like, as the Word calls them, children of Satan, sons of disobedience, and children of wrath. By no means must you agree with me on this, since there is a thread of speculation woven through it. As a matter of fact, *I don’t* even want to agree with it! It is such a sobering thought, but in my desire to be fair and objective to all the Word of God, this must be a consideration.

- **Will we ever disagree with each other?**

You might be surprised that I am going to answer ‘yes’ to this question! Now, with that, I don’t think that our disagreements will ever be sinful, mean, demeaning, arrogant, or prideful. But could we all sit down for a tasty meal and one person likes a particular dish more than another? Could two brothers sit down and listen to two songs and disagree on which one is better? I think so! I think that Scripture shows how unique and diverse we are, and that we aren’t going to be androids doing everything the same.

This is hard for us to imagine (as no doubt some of you disagree with me on this!), because disagreement most often lives alongside some kind of offense. But this is not always the case. Would it not be fun to have a chili cook off with Augustine, Luther, Adam, Moses, and your uncle Rufus who made the most killer chili this side of Texas? Would it be unanimous? No! Would it be fun? Yes!

On the same note, we can expect to see sports in the New Earth. Will we win and lose? Of course! Will our pride be hurt? No! Is it possible to play a game with someone and just have fun, even if there is winning and losing? Absolutely! When pride and ego are gone, competition becomes *really* fun! These are all man-made activities, but God *made* man *in His image*, and part of man’s image bearing is the ability to *create*. Sports are not evil, and we should expect that they will be here on the renewed earth, just minus sin.

⁹²⁷ Heaven, pg. 361

- **Will there be various races and cultures in the New Earth?**

Yes, there will! We will not be conformed into the image of Christ as saying that we will all be His clones. We will not be androids all made from one mold. We will retain *this present body* but *restored and resurrected*. And this is not just our appearance, of course, but our DNA, but a purified DNA. If you are Mexican, you will still be Mexican; if you are Puerto Rican, you will still be Puerto Rican; if you are Zambian, you will still be Zambian; if you are Chinese, you will still be Chinese; if you are Irish, you will still be a Leprechaun; if you are Icelandic, you will still be a gnome.⁹²⁸



Get used to seeing this sight. Beautiful, isn't it?

Jesus was born Jewish. He was killed Jewish. He rose Jewish. He reappeared Jewish. He ascended Jewish. And He is still Jewish. The same will be for us. **Revelation 5.9, 10** says that those who His blood has ransomed and that will reign on the earth as God's Kingdom and His priests will be people from every tribe, language, people and nation. Additionally, **Revelation 7.9, 10** says this:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Randy Alcorn notes that "tribe" refers to a person's clan and family heritage, "people" refers to race, and "nation" refers to those who share a national identity and culture. He quotes Herman Bavinck who speaks of the New Earth this way by saying "All those nations-each in accordance with its own distinct national character, bring into the New Jerusalem all they have received from God in the way of glory and honor."⁹²⁹

As one of God's redeemed, I will be a representative of the McGinty clan and heritage (tribe),⁹³⁰ from the Irish people,⁹³¹ and my 21st century American national identity and culture. God's redemptive plan will not simply *cover* all of these in a sense of commandeering them and then abolishing them, but He will be glorified *through them*! It is racial diversity and cultural diversity and how the blood of Christ and the Gospel of His grace transcends all of this that gives us an awesome picture of the greatness and glory of God! It is part of who He is; as image bearers, *no one of us individually* can properly encapsulate all of who God is. It's in our unified but diverse design that truly paints a picture of the intricacy of God and His body.

**Racism is not just an attack on fellow mankind,
but it is *firstly and primarily* an attack on God's character.**

The New Earth won't "do away" with race and the many nuances that come with it, but rather the New Earth will be a place to *celebrate it*, because it is one of the great testimonies of who God is and what He is like! This is quite possibly one of my favorite features of the New Earth. The color, the diversity, the beauty, the glory revealed through the all-encompassing redemption of God's creation! Think of all the cultures, traditions, and various nuances of all the tribes and nations, redeemed unto God and purified from any sinfulness, being put on display to show the awesome work of redemption! Talk about an incredible showcase of God's glory! A multitude of tribes, nations, people, heritages, and cultures all distinctly unique but united by the blood of the Lamb and into *one*

⁹²⁸ Icelandic people actually believe in gnomes. They don't build their roads and highways through certain protected areas for fear of disturbing the gnomes' natural habitat. Gnomes in Iceland are like the spotted owl of our Pacific Northwest. Seriously, check it out: <http://news.softpedia.com/news/Icelandic-Roads-Rerouted-Due-To-Elves-Tradition-5001.shtml>

⁹²⁹ *Heaven*, pg. 376

⁹³⁰ Along with the other surnames throughout my family history, e.g. Dalton, Kuhl, Love, McClintock, Naughton, McMullen, etc.

⁹³¹ As well as a splash of German and a hint of American Indian

Kingdom! Indeed, this was his command to His church, to go and make disciples of all nations. This is what He has sent us to do, and when we are in that great multitude looking around and seeing every tongue, tribe, and nation represented and declaring Christ as the risen King, we will rejoice with so much joy and excitement because His plan was accomplished!

- **Will there be actual “nations,” or just “nationalities”?**

We may think, “well if it’s “one Kingdom” then how can there be various nations?” I think this is easy for us to see, tangibly, but hard for us to see because of human sin. Think of the “United” States of America? “One nation, under God.” Regardless of whether we think this is even true anymore, the point is that we are “one nation” under God, but yet also still 50 united but distinct states. The United Kingdom is made up of four vassal countries (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales), but is one united yet segmented kingdom. Furthermore, we see this similar concept in the Trinity: three Persons, one God. The idea of multiple and diverse people groups and nations with distinction, yet unified in their equality and under the Kingdom of God would be a very consistent biblical view of the future in the New Earth.

As a matter of fact, **Daniel 7.27** says that the kingdoms of this earth will be “handed over” to God’s people. Check it out:

And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High...

The righteous saints who were chosen from among these kingdoms will be given these earthly kingdoms to rule and reign in! Beyond this even, we should expect to see peoples and tribes and nationalities resurrected from long ago, some that may even be extinct or long forgotten now, but will be resurrected to reign in the New Earth along with Christ as His body!

Also, we know for sure that the Twelve Tribes of Israel will be represented;⁹³² these are twelve distinct people groups that are autonomous within themselves, but united with each other, and united under God. We also see in this picture of not just nations, but the actual *kings* of nations bringing their own nation’s *wealth* as worship into the New Jerusalem:

Revelation 21.22-27

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Can there really be kings on the New Earth when we have Christ as our King? Why not? He’s called the King of kings, isn’t He? Was that a title for Him only for the first earth, or is that an eternal title that He bears?

- **What language will we speak?**

This is a fun one to think about. First of all, we know that there was one common language in the Garden, and that changed at the Tower of Babel.⁹³³ God cursed the Babylonians because they were trying to build the earth upward toward heaven for their own glory, but God, in **Revelation 21**, brings heaven down to the earth for *His* glory. This leads many to say that there will only be one language, some saying that it is the language of speaking in tongues that we will all be able to speak and understand. Though I think that this is probably very probable, that we have a “common language” so that we can all speak to each other, it *also* seems that there will be a *multitude* of languages brought into the New Earth.

What this means is that though I will be able to speak to a Zambian who only spoke Nyanja on the Old Earth by speaking to him in our common language of tongues, he will also be able to speak his native language, if he so chooses, to other resurrected Nyanja. On the New Earth, it would be quite possible, if this is the case, for me to learn Nyanja if I wanted to, but of course it wouldn’t be necessary since we will all speak in one tongue as well.

⁹³² Revelation 21.12

⁹³³ Genesis 11.1-6

So why have both? For one, our language is part of our unique and diverse self, and it shows the encompassing glory of God in redemption. Secondly, learning someone's language is a very helpful and personal way of getting to know them deeply. Presumably, with glorified minds, you could quite possibly learn a language you always wanted to learn in a very short amount of time.

- **Will we have any personal possessions?**

Yes. Sometimes I think we picture just a herd of people cruising around like a big commune where there is no real distinction or uniqueness. But the Word tells us of a few things that we will each have of our own. Though we may not be able to identify *exactly* what they are, we can no less look at the Word and speculate within the boundaries of Scripture.

First of all, we should recognize that *all* things are truly God's, and that we are simply stewards. So whereas some Christians would shy away from talking about "private ownership," we could say that "private stewardship" or "specific stewardship" is maybe a better term, but for this purpose, we are speaking of the same thing. Additionally, ownership (stewardship) isn't necessarily wrong, unbiblical, materialistic, unspiritual, or selfish. God affirmed private ownership *all throughout* the Old Testament, as well in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, two of the Ten Commandments are based on, and affirm, ownership: do not steal and do not covet.⁹³⁴ So we shouldn't automatically assume that we won't own, or steward, anything on the New Earth.

Additionally, we see that selflessness and generosity should go hand in hand with our ownership. The early church shared their *possessions*. So if there are varying possessions in the New Earth, we will gladly and selflessly share them and bless each other with them.

Here's what the Word says will be "yours" (denoting personal ownership) in the New Earth:

- A white stone with our name written on it. The Word says that Christ will give us each a new name, written on a white stone, that only you and He will know.⁹³⁵
- A home/living place, and houses that we will build and inhabit.⁹³⁶
- We will each get an inheritance, as well as treasures that we have sent ahead of us.⁹³⁷

Additionally, we know this from the Word:

James 1.17, 18

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

What good gifts do you have in your life that have come from God? Just spiritual ones? Or even physical ones? James says *every good gift and every perfect gift* is from God, and that He *doesn't change!* If God gave gifts to us, both spiritual and physical, in *this* life, do we really believe that He will only give us *spiritual* gifts in the New Earth?

- **Will we work?**

Yes. Now, before you proclaim, "What?! I thought it was going to be heaven!," you can believe that this won't be the kind of work you are used to. Well, in some way, it will be, but in another way, it will not. Adam was given the task to take care of the Garden, and this was before the fall. His *curse* was that his work would not be enjoyable, would be painful, and would be *hard, laborious* work. The curse wasn't the actual work.⁹³⁸

In the **Gospel of Luke** it says that we will help God run all of creation. How exactly this looks, it's difficult to say, but we should again expect a lot of continuity between this earth and the New Earth. As we saw, there will be nations and tribes, and so there will be specific duties within those nations and tribes. Of course, many of our current national duties won't be there, like the military, police, unemployment services, etc. We won't have diplomats to try to keep peace, but maybe there will be diplomats for other purposes, like organizing celebrations,

⁹³⁴ Exodus 20.15, 17

⁹³⁵ Revelation 2.17

⁹³⁶ Luke 16.9 // John 14.2, 3 // Isaiah 6.21, 22

⁹³⁷ Colossians 3.24 // Daniel 12.13 // Revelation 21.7

⁹³⁸ Genesis 2.15

trade (“we’ll send you over 100,000 of our 20th century Midwestern American apple pies to say thanks for sending us 10,000 pounds of your fresh ahi tuna so we can make some killer sushi rolls!”).

Is it possible that even smaller communities within the New Earth will organize local get-togethers, like a dance, a corporate night of worship, a play, a sporting event, or a festival? Absolutely! All of this will take organizers, planners, and overseers. Imagine all of this, but minus stress, anxiety, money, pride, sin, ego, or hard labor! The thing is, though, is that we can hardly picture work that is non-laborious or work that is enjoyable. After all, the word “work” is just, well, blah. But you can agree that there is rewarding, fulfilling, and fun work as well. Maybe you don’t even call it “work,” but you call it your “passion,” “calling,” “hobby,” “talent,” or whatever.

For instance, I like to build things around the house. Paint, nails, screws, hammers, you name it. My friends call me Martin Stewart. I don’t exactly know how I think about that, but it’s true. I absolutely love making stuff, no matter what it is, everything I make is by design (because it’s me) a project: home projects, family memories, photography, art, home décor, writing sermons, travel itinerary, music, having company over, writing a Doctrine and Theology Class with goofy pictures and movie quotes, you name it! This is all work, you may even say that it’s at times “hard” work, but it is so enjoyable to me!

In heaven we will be permitted to finish many of those worthy tasks which we had dreamed to do while on earth but which neither time, nor strength, nor ability allowed us to achieve.

-Wilbur Smith⁹³⁹

You may have a job you hate. Don’t worry, it won’t haunt you in the New Earth, but is there something you did on the side that you love, or some work that you always wanted to do but never had the ability, time, or resource? Maybe you will do that. I have a feeling that much of the work that I enjoy now I will continue in the New Earth. I think I will still love to have people over, socialize, create things or gifts for people, make music, study, and teach.

- **What else from our current life will be resurrected?**

The Word talks about the resurrection, and continuity, of our good deeds done on earth. How this exactly plays out, we can’t be positive, but it seems that it in some way relates to the previous question. **1 Corinthians 3.12-15** says this:

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

These verses tell us that anything we do here on earth will last, so long as it was “built well,” in other words, used to glorify Jesus. Will a song that I wrote here on earth have the potential, so long as it brings glory to God, to be carried over into the New Earth for us to sing? Could God even reassemble, or re-create some of things we made for His glory?

Imagine if your grandmother wrote you a letter when you were 16 going through a sinful time of rebellion. In the letter, she told you about Jesus, and though at the time you thought it was stupid, years later, you opened up that letter again, and wept in repentance and gratefulness. Could God reassemble that note, that has maybe since decomposed or would be eventually burned in the fire upon the purging of the earth? Could He do this as a gift to you in the New Earth, something to frame up in your dwelling place to give glory to God and remember *how* He saved you? Wouldn’t it be great to have your grandma over for tea every now and again, and you can always look at that note? Look at what this verse says:

Revelation 14.13

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

Again, this of course is speculative, but I don’t think we can ever underestimate the New Earth, as a matter of fact, I don’t think we can even overestimate it!

⁹³⁹ Quoted from Alcorn’s *Heaven*, pg. 413



What Will the New Earth Be Like?



- **What will the new earth be like?**

It's hard to get super specific, but we should know that it is going to be *this earth*, but made new, resurrected, and released from its curse. There will be oxygen, a sky, land, grass, trees, mountains, and large bodies of water. Our eternal home is *this planet*, but glorified. Remember, the Garden was intended to be our eternal home, but our sin got us evicted. God is restoring all things, and God's complete presence will return to the earth to dwell among His redeemed people.

Will the continents be shaped the way they are now, or close to it? Possible, but not probable. Will there be the landscape variety, such as forests, jungles, deserts, mountain ranges, etc.? I think we should expect some or most of the varieties we see, though some, like deserts, seem to be negative aspects of a fallen world. But that said, the desert can be a thing of beauty, and in it are animals and plant life that God created, so it may have a place in the New Earth, but it just won't be a thing of death or lifelessness.

Additionally, and this is all based on some Scriptural speculation, but it might be possible, let's say, for me, Katie, and my boys to picnic in the location that was San Marcos, California, on the Old Earth. Who knows what will be there, but if it's possible, and I think that it is, it would be a cool thing for us to do that. For that matter, how cool would it be for all of us who called Life Mission Church their home to have a bar-b-q at the spot that we used to worship at in our old life? A big family reunion to catch up, tell stories, and reminisce, and we can end the night with some worship and celebration!

- **Will there be time in the New Earth?**

This is one I hear mentioned a lot, and the answer is always "no," for the reason that God is eternal and outside of time. Usually, however, this answer comes from a misunderstanding of what heaven even is. Most of these folks (and I was one of them), always saw heaven as some other dimension spiritual sauna in the sky. They never made the (embarrassingly obvious) connection in the Scriptures that heaven will be physical, natural, real, material, *and* spiritual all at once. Not only that, but that it will be *this earth* but *resurrected and made new*.

So, on the premise, first of all, of continuity, is there time here? Of course. Can God be eternal but we still live in time? Yes. Of course, that doesn't answer the question Scripturally, so let's see what Scripture says.

To take a few instances noted in Alcorn's book, *Heaven*, he references these:

- Heaven's inhabitants rejoice the *moment* a sinner repents. **Luke 15.7**
- Martyrs in heaven are told to "wait a little longer" when they ask "how long" before Christ will judge the earth. **Revelation 6.10, 11**
- Paul spoke of heaven by saying there will be coming *ages*, plural. **Ephesians 2.7**
- The tree of life will yield fruit *every month*. This seems to be the most obvious reference. **Revelation 22.2**
- **Genesis 8.22** has God stating that "summer and winter, day and night will never cease." Apparently, seasons, day, and night were intended to be forever.
- **Revelation 8.1** says that there was "silence in heaven for a half hour."⁹⁴⁰
- There is music in heaven, and music requires time. **Revelation 5.9-12**

- **Will there be snow, rain, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc.?**

This is interesting because most theologians believe that the first rainfall was at the time of the flood, showing that rain was also a result of the curse. The drastic change in the earth's topography also is thought to be what causes severe season changes, such as snow in winter. That said, the Word speaks of seasons being in the New Earth. One thing we need to recognize is that there are some things that are a result of the curse, such as varying languages, clothing, etc., that are also sovereignly put in play by God as not themselves being evil, but actually bringing glory to God.

⁹⁴⁰ Many say that this is proof that men get to heaven a half hour before the women.

For instance, though clothing is meant to cover up what originally was not shameful, clothing also adorns us and represents the diversity of who we are, which brings God glory. Snow, for instance, may have come about because of a disrupted creation, but who is to say that snowfall doesn't glorify God? Could He keep it? Sure He could. As a matter of fact, **Job 37.3-6** actually says that lightning, thunder, and snow declare the majesty of God! And that would mean we can probably snowboard on the New Earth as well!



That's beautiful...right?

Concerning other natural events, those seem to be a little more tricky, mostly because we equate them with destruction (even though rain and snow can also be destructive; as a matter of fact, the sun can be destructive, so this should help us think through this). Would the earth have had volcanoes and earthquakes if the fall never happened? Possibly not, but it is also possible that there could have been, we just would have seen it as a display of God's glory in creation and we would have seen it as a natural event. Additionally, we would know that somehow harm wouldn't be done by these.

Imagine being in an earthquake but having no fear, knowing that it's "just the earth moving again." Imagine enjoying a crazy lightning storm with no fear of being negatively affected. Imagine watching a volcano erupt from a distance knowing that you are protected. That, I argue, would be awesome!

- **Will we have homes?**

Yes, we will. Some people automatically over-spiritualize the verse where Jesus says "in my Father's house there are many rooms" by saying that the rooms are our bodies since we are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. But the picture here is that there is one house that is the Father's, which is heaven, and that in heaven there are multiple individual dwelling places *for us*. The verse isn't talking about multiple dwelling places for the Holy Spirit, for indeed, we are one body that the Spirit dwells in, not multiples; the dwelling places Jesus is speaking about is where *we* will dwell, not the Holy Spirit. We will live in individual dwelling places, each will have their own home.

Isaiah 65.21, 22

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

The New Earth will be incredibly community based, and there will be countless things we will do with each other, but we will also have our own privacy and individuality. We will still have a private relationship with God (shown by the name He gives us that only you and He will know), and you no doubt will have private time to talk with Him, study, write music, explore, or whatever you desire that would bring glory to God and increase your enjoyment of Him.

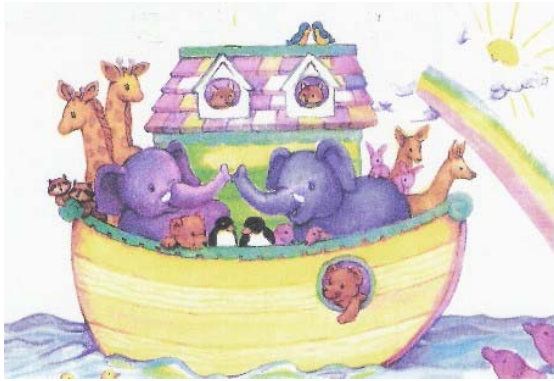
- **Will there be animals?**

This is such a common question, and I think it's a good one. First of all, we should start where we normally do, asking "was it there in Eden?" That's always a good place to start. The answer, of course, is yes! And a quite obvious 'yes' at that!

Not only were the animals there, but we are shown that we humans were given a very specific task and role with them. Adam named every single one of them, and they were to be ruled and subjected by us. Of course, they also came under the curse because of our sin; just like the earth, they didn't sin, but because creation is so intricately connected to us the stewards of creation (being God's image bearers), they also became subject to the curse. Therefore, we should expect that they are also awaiting release from the curse.

Isaiah 11.6-9 speaks of an era on earth when the "leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together." It speaks of cows, bears, and cobras all living peaceably among each other. Similarly, **Isaiah 65.17** and **66.22** specifically speaks of the New Earth, and in **65.25** Isaiah speaks also of the wolf and lamb feeding together, and the lion eating straw, rather than other animals.

We can learn a couple things from this. First of all, seeing that the animals live peaceably among each other on the New Earth should show us that it is quite possible that the animal kingdom, pre-fall, was also at peace among themselves. Potentially, this too gets restored.



I think it's funny that we use the destruction of the world by God's wrath as cute baby décor.

Another interesting thing to note is that God specifically saved them from the flood, and that they were included in the Noahic Covenant. God even says in **Genesis 9.9-17**, "this [rainbow] is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you *and every living creature* with you, a covenant for *all generations* [of both man and animal] *to come*." He then adds, "this is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and *all life on the earth*."

God loves all of His creation, and He really loves His animals. He has even linked us together as fellow creatures of God. Yes, of course we are the only image bearers and the only ones capable of sin, regeneration, and having a relationship with God, but that doesn't change the connection we have with the creation that we are a part of, not only the earth itself, but also the animals and all the elements.

God spared the animals in the earth's first destruction; He will probably do the same in the next.

- **Will our pets be there?**

This is really what most people are getting at when they ask "will animals be there?" They don't really want to know if animals are going to be there, they want to know if Fido is going to be there. This, also, I think is a good, not silly, question.

First of all, I don't think I have to say this but I should make it clear, Christ did not die for the sins of animals, because they don't sin, and they are not image bearers of God. That said, His death *does* cover and eradicate the curse on all creation, and so in a sense, part of the purpose of His death was to release creation from the curse which was imposed because of man's sin. **Romans 8.21** says that "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." This specifically says that creation will be *liberated* from its decay; God won't start from scratch but He will *liberate* all of His *already* created creation and raise it up along with us.

Here's a crazy verse I'll let you ponder. **Psalms 104.24-30** says this:

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you've made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things, small and great. 26 There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. 27 These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30 When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

Notice in **verse 29** says that God takes their breath away and they die and return to dust. But then in **verse 30** it says that He will later send forth His Spirit, they are then created, so that He can renew the face of the ground. It seems as if God is planning on, at some point, sending His Spirit out to re-create dead animals so that He can renew the face of the ground when He renews the earth. This would be consistent with much of what we have seen so far. God isn't going to obliterate the earth and make a new one; God isn't going to obliterate our body, including our personality, mind, and passions, and then start from scratch; it also seems as though God isn't going to obliterate all the bodies of dead animals and then start from scratch.

If God is going to release and re-create the already existent earth from the curse and unto life, and if He is going to release and re-create our already existent bodies (and the already existent bodies of people from the past) from

the curse and unto life, wouldn't He not also release and re-create the bodies of already existed animals (including those from the past) who lived under the curse and raise them unto life? It seems consistently so.

So, back to Fido. Will he be there?



Let's hope so!

God very well could simply just make a whole new slew of animals. Or, it actually seems more consistent that He could, or even would, bring back to life animals that lived under the cursed creation. Randy Alcorn aims to be very clear when writing on this topic, making sure that we don't mistake re-creation or "bringing back to life" with "resurrection" or "redemption." Though "resurrection" and "bringing back to life" can be essentially the same it's best to avoid using "resurrection" because we don't want to think that somehow animals are "saved" or "purchased" by the blood of Christ. Releasing the earth from a decrepit state and restoring it is not the same as resurrecting an enemy of God who is dead in sins and trespasses from the grave and unto adoption as a son of God.

But getting back to the topic, it seems *very* possible that our pets could very well be given to us in the New Earth. Now, probably somewhat similar to marriage, this doesn't necessarily mean you will have sole possession of your pet. Some pets had multiple owners who loved them. Our pets, if they are there, belong to the Lord. Maybe they will run free and make a visit every once in a while, like Yellow Dog from the Chevy Chase movie *Funny Farm*. Or maybe we will take them into our home for a couple months at a time and then let another owner take care for another time. Who knows. This, obviously is all speculation, but it's fun to speculate, so far as we stay within biblical boundaries. After all, He did say that He is able to do "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think!"⁹⁴¹

To give you a little relief if you are even the slightest bit embarrassed by hoping your pet should be there (and let me tell you, you shouldn't be embarrassed. God gave us animals to take care of back in Eden, and we were made to bond with animals), here is a poem by Dr. John Piper:

And as I knelt beside the brook
To drink eternal life, I took
A glance across the golden grass,
And saw my dog, old Blackie, fast
As she could come. She leaped the stream-
Almost-and what a happy gleam
Was in her eye. I knelt to drink,
And knew that I was on the brink
Of endless joy. And everywhere
I turned I saw a wonder there.⁹⁴²

Additionally, C.S. Lewis (have I mentioned that he is one of the greatest Irishmen of all time?) also believed that our beloved animals that we care for here will be re-created in heaven.⁹⁴³ The great John Wesley also believed that animals will be restored, but not only that, but that they will be made more cognizant of their Creator. This is based in part by the many Scriptures that say that "everything that has breath will praise the Lord" ("breath" is the word used for both man and animal in the bible; in the Hebrew it is the word *naphesh*, which means "soul." We should *not* assume that an animal has a soul like ours, but we do see that they have some type of soul-ish features, meaning that they (at least many) do in fact have personalities and emotions.).

⁹⁴¹ Ephesians 3.20

⁹⁴² Quoted in Alcorn's *Heaven*, pg. 401

⁹⁴³ From a story he told in his book, *The Great Divorce*

- **Will there be an ocean?**

Many people, mostly beach goers, point to the verse in **Revelation 21.1** that says there will be “no more sea.” This is alarming to many folks. Many scientists who are Christians believe that before the flood there was no ocean, but that the waters from below broke forth and now we have separation of people groups, countries and cultures. The thing is, however, **Genesis 1.9, 10** actually says that God created the seas at the time of creation, and that they were also very good. So a further look is necessary.

One thing about the sea is that it had a much different meaning to people in John’s day. The sea was treacherous, a thing of death. With no modern equipment, either tactical like a compass and radar or recreational like a surfboard, the sea was seen as a thing of death.

Specifically, we see just a few verses earlier in **20.13** that John is using the sea as some type of picture of death (which would make lots of sense to first century readers) when he says that “the sea will give up the dead.” This sea, gathered from **13.1**, is actually (probably symbolically) where the beast rose out of. So it is quite possible that this “sea” which is no more is not the physical seas, but a picture, of some sort, of death.

On top of that, we see in the Word that **Isaiah 60** also speaks of the New Jerusalem as having “wealth upon the seas,” which are brought by ships into the New Jerusalem. These ships are bringing glory and praiseworthy gifts to the New Jerusalem to honor Jesus. We also see in **Revelation 22.1, 2** that there is a great river that originates from God’s throne and flows through the New Jerusalem, but where does it end? It must end in some type of large body of water, either a huge lake or an ocean.

- **Will we travel?**

This also seems to be a big ‘yes.’ The New Jerusalem has streets and gates, and since Christ will reign from the New Jerusalem, we will travel there to see Him (though, as we saw before, it very well may be possible to go directly to Him if we can “transport” ourselves as Christ did when He came back to the earth). We also can’t rule out technology and mechanical machinery, such as cars, boats, and airplanes. As a matter of fact, we do see boats in the New Earth, and that is no more “technology” and “mechanical machinery” than a computer or a space shuttle, they are just different components and a different era. This will be the New Earth, where all the minds of all time will not only be together but also glorified, with all the materials we’ll ever need to create, as we naturally would, being made in the image of a Creator!

So could we develop modes of transportation, even if just for fun? Could we have drag races or bike rides or boat rides? Why not? Jesus rode in a boat and He didn’t seem to have a problem with that.

- **Will we travel to other galaxies?**

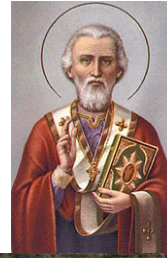
Again, this rides on the possibilities of the previous question. If we can indeed create modes of transportation, then there is no reason to think that we will not explore other galaxies. As a matter of fact, that would do nothing *but* bring more glory to God if we were able to behold the vast expanse of His creation!

- **Will we be able to travel in time?**

This one is more interesting, isn’t it? First question is “could God make it possible for us to do so?” The answer is yes, of course. He is not limited by time, and though we will be living in time in the New Earth, this doesn’t mean that He couldn’t allow us to go outside of time. Maybe instead of just reading about past history, maybe He’ll let us see it. Maybe we can watch, either in “person” (but maybe as an onlooker in the spiritual realm, like an angel) in real time, or maybe on some supernatural cosmic DVR or image, like a dream or a vision. Why would He do this? To bring Himself more glory, of course! Talk about an increase of worship and praise and thanks if you got to see some of the events of human history!

Imagine watching some of these events unfold:

- Creation
- God making the first bloodshed, the leather clothing, for sin
- The Great Flood
- Joseph being reunited with his family
- The plagues
- The look on Pharaoh's face when Moses called his bluff
- The exodus
- The parting of the Red Sea
- David slaying Goliath
- Jonah getting swallowed by the whale
- The birth of Jesus
- The feeding of the 5,000
- The Last Supper
- Jesus' trial and crucifixion
- His opening of the tomb
- The Holy Spirit being poured out on the church
- Paul's conversion
- Paul's travels
- Augustine's ministry
- St. Patrick converting Ireland
- Santa Claus' radical gift giving in Turkey (the real St. Nicholas)
- Martin Luther nailing his 95 Thesis on the Wittenberg door
- Your parents' first date
- Your birth
- A life changing moment, maybe a near death experience
- Kirk Gibson's home run in the 1988 World Series⁹⁴⁴
- The day you the Holy Spirit caused you to be born again
- Your first date with your spouse
- Your kids' birth
- The day your kids were saved
- The list goes on



Then, imagine if you could see events that happened *after* you were gone, such as these:

- The day your great grandchildren got saved
- A family tradition that you passed down and was still being done 300 years later
- Your great-great-great-great-grandchild becomes a Pastor or missionary because of your spiritual heritage that you passed down
- Someone at your work you led to Christ then leads their grandchild to Christ, and then their grandchild, and then their grandchild, and then all because of you, 286 years after you die some great great-great-great-grandchild of someone you prayed for starts a revival in the Middle East that sees millions come to Christ.

Now doesn't that sound fun? And God glorifying? Will He do it? We don't know. Can He do it? Yes. Could it bring Him great glory? Yes. So would He do it? He might.

When we consider this, again we have to recognize that it could very well be possible to even remember, read about, or even see events that are even sinful, without them bringing us sadness, temptation, shame, or dishonor to God. After all, God said His Word is eternal, which means the holy Scriptures, which is His written Word, will still be in heaven, and it has a lot of rated R content, including some embarrassing stories of some folks that we'll be meeting. But in the New Earth, under the blood of the Lamb, we won't be embarrassed of our stories, because the fact that we are redeemed will cause those stories to bring glory to God.

Beyond this, even, maybe God will take you on a little tour of our life to show us how He "worked all things for good." Maybe He'll show us how He answered a prayer that we never recognized; maybe He'll show us what *could*

⁹⁴⁴ Shameless, I know.

have happened if we had made other choices. Maybe, even, we'll get to chat with the angels that were given charge to fight for us in spiritual battle as we were tempted. Now *that* would be cool! Maybe even a combination is going to happen, maybe we'll be able to watch the event unfold, *and* see the spiritual warfare between angels and demons going on as well, talk about intensity in ten cities!⁹⁴⁵ Forget 3D, this will be like 7D!

**If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy,
the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.**

— C.S. Lewis

☪ I WILL BE THEIR GOD, THEY WILL BE MY PEOPLE ☪

And so the Greatest Story Ever Told comes to a close. God has accomplished all things that were necessary to give praise to His great and glorious grace. In our eternal home on the New Earth, He will find His ultimate glory, because it is there that we will have ultimate satisfaction in Him. We will be satisfied in Him in every way, as we will be in awe of His justice, mercy, grace, holiness, righteousness, beauty, longsuffering, patience, glory, depth, eternality, power, might, strength, wisdom, love, kindness, peace, joy, and the list goes on and on. God's entire purpose will be completed, it is only a matter of time and His divine sovereignty.

This is our story, our heritage, our history, our present, and our future. Sinners that were in the hands of an angry God, and yet were saved by grace. Gentiles cut off from the commonwealth of Israel, but chosen to be grafted in, adopted as sons and daughters.

This *is* your family history. This *is* your ancestry. This *is* your testimony!

⁹⁴⁵ Wayne Campbell, from the blockbuster hit movie, *Wayne's World*

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Why a Biblical View of Eternity is Necessary

Result #1: It changes how we see life *now*!

It is unfortunate when I hear Christians say things like “well the bible doesn’t say much about heaven,” or “it doesn’t really matter, as long as we get there!” It *does* matter! We were *made* for this place, and God *has* put clues to our future and eternal home in His Word, and we should *want* to know! Seeing the great and glorious hope we have in our future home gives us excitement for our promises and excitement for our future! This alone causes us to worship more, which causes us to want to *share* this great truth with others!

When we get a picture of what the New Earth is going to be like, we will definitely want to let more people know about it. All of a sudden, heaven becomes such a *relevant* future, rather than an odd, boring sounding, ethereal and non-descript “state” of being.

Result #2: It changes how you engage with the current earth.

Understanding about the continuity of this earth and the renewed earth gives us a great deal of appreciation for what we have here. Do you want to know what your eternal home will be like? Look around. Granted, it will be better than what we see now, but it is exciting to know that much of what we have grown to love will be with us forever (and everything we have grown to hate will be gone, e.g. traffic).

Not only that, but it changes the way you see the time that you spend. Knowing that your deeds will “follow you” into eternity is challenging and convicting! It makes you take a long and intense look at the time you invest. Is it worth it? Will it make it through the fire? Is it laying up treasures in heaven?

Result #3: It simply deepens awe and wonder.

This could be the only result of why the doctrine of heaven is important and it would be enough. Seeing the beauty, love, creativity, and selflessness of God in His creation of such a great eternal home is just breathtaking. This is one particular doctrine that has expanded my view of God’s character and love in ways I can’t even explain. Studying heaven has taken God, for me, from a big ol’ smart God, to a very deeply caring, loving, and Fatherly God. I’m not saying that I didn’t see Him as loving and caring and Fatherly before, but there is just something about the *home* that a Father prepares for His kids that *incredibly deepens* our understanding of this side of God.

I just think of my boys, as I have mentioned a lot during this study, and I think of how much I aim to make them happy, joyful, satisfied, and fulfilled. My wife and I have truly prepared a place for them. We aim to give them the most enjoyable and loving home and family life, because it *pleases me* to see them filled with joy. I don’t get jealous when they play with their toys and not me; I don’t get jealous when Micah chooses to play baseball with Liam and not me. I only get “jealous” when they sin and disobey.

God is the same *exact* way, but even better! We oftentimes picture God as this big ol’ Deity that demands a constant religious service of worship. I say “religious” because to me, I understand worship to being *anything* that we do that gives God glory, but there is some worship that is specifically for acts of religious service, such as prayer, singing, etc.

But God does *not* get jealous when we are doing the things we were *designed* to do, like love other humans, have fun, joy, laugh, etc. This is how the home that He has prepared for us is going to be. And that causes me to deeply worship in a way that I never have before.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

♣ Definition of Terms ♣

Already/not yet: This is an element of the present age that many theologians describe as saying that the Kingdom of God is already here, in the sense that the enemy has been defeated, the Holy Spirit has been poured out, and we are able to see much of, maybe a foretaste, of the final and eternal victory. That said, we are still living in a fallen world and the consummation of the age has not yet come. We are living in the days between D-Day and V-Day, so to speak.

Glorification: This is the final stage of our salvation process. We will be raised, body and spirit, our current body purged of sin and any deformity, whether physical or spiritual. We will live forever on this earth (but renewed) in these glorified bodies.

Intermediate heaven: This is what we call the current state of heaven. In the future, after the second coming of Christ, the New Heavens and New Earth will emerge, which will be our eternal home. For now, saints who have passed away reside in the intermediate heaven, which is very real, good, and holy, as it is in God's presence, but it is not the actual final place for the saints.

Platonism: Platonism is a philosophy built on the teachings of Plato. Plato believed that the material world was evil and that the spiritual world was good. Plato was a Greek philosopher, and his beliefs among the Greeks was substantial, and so therefore this particular influence was very normal in the early Christian churches, such as the church at Corinth. Through the years, others, such as Origen, passed along and kept alive some Platonic teachings.

Dualism: Dualism is in some ways the broad category that Platonism falls into. It is the general belief that there are two "natures" or "sides" that are in opposition with each other. In terms of creation, it would be the spiritual and physical. Real biblical theology, however, teaches that both the natural and physical, in its original form, was declared "good" by God. Therefore in our lives we can rest assured that enjoying physicality is not evil or sin, unless it is idolized or is already known as an actual sin. However if it is "neutral" or "secular," we are free to enjoy it to the glory of God.

Continuity: This is a term we use to describe the many features of this current life that we will see in the next. It helps us get a biblical understanding and picture of what resurrection really is.

Recommended Resources

Theology Books

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem. Chapters 56 and 57 deal with the final judgment and the New Heavens and New Earth.

Doctrine by Mark Driscoll. Chapter 13 deals with the eternity.

Salvation Belongs to the Lord by John Frame. Chapters 22 and 23 covers the eternity and the last days.

Books

Heaven by Randy Alcorn

The Message of Salvation by Philip Ryken

Sermons

www.marshallchurch.org Type in “heaven.” Choose from a few sermons:

- “Kingdom: God Reigns” from their Doctrine series
- “Heaven and Hell” from their **Luke** series.
- “The Revelation of Jesus’ Heaven” from their **Revelation** series.
- “Perseverance Until Jesus Returns” from their Trial series.
- “Jesus the Narrow Door” from their **Luke** series
- “What You Don’t Want to Hear About Heaven and Hell.” A 5 minute clip from their **Luke** series.

www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages This is Wayne Grudem’s sermons going through his book, *Systematic Theology*. Go to the sermons on Chapters 56 and 57

www.desiringgod.org This is John Piper’s ministry. Along with audio or video sermons, he has the transcripts as well. Type into the search field on desiringgod.org to find these audio sermons that have attached articles. Simply type in “heaven,” “hell,” etc.

- “Why do you believe that infants who die go to heaven.” An encouraging short audio clip and article on Dr. Piper’s view on what happens to babies who die before they are able to receive Jesus.

Web Articles

www.theresurgence.com This is a ministry of resources, training, and media connected with Mars Hill Church in Seattle. Check out their article called “To Hell with Hell?” on the doctrine of hell.

fm.thevillagechurch.net This is the church where Matt Chandler, a gifted teacher, is the Teaching Pastor at. Go here, click on “Resource Library,” select “Articles and Position Papers,” and scroll down at articles on eternity.

www.monergism.com is a great site in general, but this particular link has a lot of information on eternity.

www.gotquestions.org If you tend to have lots of questions in general, this is a great website to get to know. Go here and search “heaven,” “hell,” “judgment,” you name it.

