



GOD'S HEAVEN

BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

We know that God will work all things together for our good and His glory, so we can't be pessimistic. Yet, we also understand that our World will grow darker as the end draws near, so we can't find hope in the World around us. He has promised at the right time, He will make all things new. When that happens, the old will be swept aside and we will be new and live in a New Heaven and New Earth. Our hope is not some ephemeral thing based on the whims of men or the compulsions of fate, but our faith in the Blessed Hope, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Thomas Haney

ABOUT HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

Hope Bible Study was started when a Christian Woman asked Dr. Haney to give a study from the Bible on the Pandemic of 2020. The resulting Bible Study was Called “Hope Looks Up”. As the Bible Study grew, it helped people understand how the Bible can answer the questions of their life.

MISSION

**To Create a Bible Study Geared to Encourage, Uplift and
Point People to Jesus Christ for Life Direction.**

VISION:

Dr. Haney, a Lead Pastor for 53 years stepped away from the local ministry to teach, preach and author studies of the Bible that show how Bible prophesy is being fulfilled and how everyone can have Hope because God is directing history. The ministry offers studies on many subjects taught by Dr. Haney; downloadable books on prophetic and other Biblical areas of study written by Dr. Haney; and an active prayer ministry of over 50 people who pray for all prayer needs sent to the Ministry.

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Dr. Thomas Haney has served as a missionary; a located Lead Pastor for 53 years; an Author; an Evangelist; a Musical Evangelist; and a community leader. He holds the degrees of B.A., M. Div., and D. Min. and has written extensively in the field of Prophecy. Dr. Haney has started new congregations in Indianapolis and Phoenix, each with a starting core of less than 20 people. He experienced a call to Christian Ministry at age 14 and has made serving Christ in Christian Ministry his life’s work.

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LESSON # 1: 'HOW CAN OUR MORTALITY BE RESET TO IMMORTAL?'

Welcome to the new series for Hope Looks Up Bible Study. This Study focuses on God defining His final Heaven with just one statement: 'GOD'S HEAVEN - "BEHOLD - I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!"' We will study this defining statement by God and study questions about the greatest reset of all. God taking mortal humans and making them immortal to live on His New Earth and in His New Heaven.

Is There Life Beyond Death?

Every one of us holds inside of us the innate knowledge that there is still life beyond our death, and God confirms that He placed that in every one of us.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

"He also has set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

God has put into each one of us that knowledge that there is something about our life that goes way beyond our earthly existence. But as humans we are just too small to grasp exactly what that is.

I Corinthians 2:9 tells us,

"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived—the things God has prepared for those who love him."

The main reason we cannot grasp what will happen in this life beyond our death is because our view in this life is just like our view was in the womb. We think of life only as it is now, and not how it will be. People start out as an embryo and if blessed end up as grown adults. But there is another stage to our existence that goes beyond the adult stage, no, not retirement but immortality. But often the limiting factor to thinking a lot about that change is that between the mortal and the immortal stands our death and most people do not want to spend a lot of time pondering their death.

I would remind you that God has always taken care of us and that will continue forever.

I Corinthians 2:9 tells us,

"What no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love him."

The Scripture tells us that,

Revelation 20:13 "the sea will give up the dead which were in it,".

God has promised to bring dust, ashes, and bodies back to life. Our bodies have been reconstructed, according to scientists, with constant new cells and every 7 years every cell in our body is brand new. During 70 years your body reproduces the cells needed to form a complete human body repeatedly. But there is a conformity of identity throughout your life. We can safely trust that the God of creation knows the location of every atom of our bodies and He will resurrect and transform them at the last day.

God Will Resurrect and Transform Our Bodies at the Last Day

How will God accomplish that? He will have every person who ever lived be resurrected. But there will be a great difference between the resurrections of believers (saved) and the unbelievers (unsaved). The first resurrection of life involves all those who repent of their sin and accept the pardon of God. They participate in a resurrection to spiritual life. It started with the "first fruits" of the resurrection, 2,000 years ago and continues until Christ returns to Armageddon to eliminate the enemies of God. All who participate in this First Resurrection to life are saved and will enjoy life in Heaven forever.

The Second Resurrection involves those who reject God's pardon and die in their sin. They will rise at the last day to stand in their resurrected body before the Great White Throne Judgment of God. All those who participate in this tragic Second Resurrection will experience spiritual death for eternity.

The "First fruits" was a Jewish feast that occurred in the spring of the year to celebrate the first fruits of the harvest. It was during this feast that Christ rose from the dead. There were many others that rose when Jesus did and these that rose with Jesus are still alive. The author of Hebrews says about them.

Hebrews 12:1 "We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses,"

They are in Heaven and encourage each of us as we live our Christian life.

Writings of Christians in the First Century have been collected in the Ante-Nicene Library. They describe that more than 12,000 Old Testament saints walked through Galilee for forty days after rising from the graves when Jesus rose and appeared to many in Jerusalem and later ascended to Heaven at the same time as Jesus when He ascended to His Father.

Matthew 27:51-53

"At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had

died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people."

This was only one of many resurrection events that occurred on the 17th day of Nisan, the Feast of the First fruits.

It was on this day, 17th day of Nisan when the ark of Noah rested on Mount Ararat and the human race was resurrected following the flood. Almost 1,000 years later, Moses led the people of Israel through the Red Sea on this day to be resurrected as a nation from the bondage of Egypt. Forty years later, Israel crossed the Jordan River and the people enjoyed the first fruits of the Promised Land resurrected as free people, not slaves.

Jesus Christ was the First Fruits of Resurrection

The original first fruits of resurrection were Jesus Christ. His resurrection was the proof that we would have a resurrection. Paul writes.

1 Corinthians 15:17, 19

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied."

In fact, Paul is so emphatic that he goes ahead to state.

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Christ's Resurrection Means We have an Eternal Future

The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of redemption, both for people and for the earth. Indeed, without Christ's resurrection and what that means, an eternal future for fully restored human beings dwelling on a New Earth and living in a New Heaven, there is no Christianity.

Even though most of us grew up learning a Christian Creed that said "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Many have spiritualized that and they deny its essential meaning; a permanent return to a physical existence in a physical universe. They do not believe they will have a body after their resurrection. But this is self-contradictory. A bodiless resurrection is like a sunless sunrise. There's no such thing. Resurrection means that we will have bodies. If we didn't, we would not be resurrected. As R. A. Torrey writes, "We will not be disembodied spirits in the world to come, but redeemed spirits, in redeemed bodies, in a redeemed universe."

Genesis 2:7, is the pattern for us to see.

"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the beath of life, and the man became a living being."

LESSON #1: 'How Can Our Mortality Be Reset to Immortality'

The Hebrew word for “*living being*” is ‘*nephesh*’, often translated, “*soul*.” The point at which Adam became nephesh is when God joined his body (dust) and spirit (breath) together. Adam was not a living human being until he had both material (physical) and immaterial (spiritual) components. So, the essence of humanity is not just spirit, but spirit joined with body. Your body does not merely house the real you—it is as much a part of who you are as your spirit is.

We have allowed Greek Platonic thought and Christian thought to merge and have falsely decided that our souls merely occupy our bodies, like a hermit crab inhabits a seashell, and our souls could naturally—even ideally—live in a disembodied state.

Scripture indicates that God designed our bodies to be an integral part of our total being. Our physical bodies are an essential part of who we are, not just shells for our spirits to inhabit.

Death is an abnormal condition because it tears apart what God created and joined together. God intended for our bodies to last as long as our spirit. We are unified beings and that is why the bodily resurrection of the dead is so vital. That is why Job rejoiced that.

Job 19:26 “*In his flesh he would see God*”

This incorrect thinking about bodily resurrection stems from our failure to understand the environment in which we as resurrected people will live, the New Earth.

Anthony Hoekema wrote: “Resurrected bodies are not intended just to float in space, or to flit from cloud to cloud. They call for a New Earth on which to live and to work, glorifying God. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body, in fact, makes no sense whatever apart from the doctrine of the new earth.” He is so correct.

Death is every person’s fate because every man, woman, and child is guilty of sin against God.

Romans 3:23 “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

And sin is punishable by death.

Romans 6:23 “*The wages of sin is death.*”

It is true the thought of death can fill us with terror and dread. But, knowing our destination when we depart this life can dramatically diminish that understandable fear.

Where Do the Christian Dead Go When They Die?

It is a great hope and comfort to know that at death the spirit of every believer is immediately ushered into the presence of God, now the third Heaven. And we have Jesus’s promise to rely on for that assurance. He declared to the thief on the cross after he had professed faith in Jesus Christ:

Luke 23:43 “*Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.*”

When Stephen was being stoned, he anticipated being with Jesus at death. Stephen

Acts 7:59 "called on the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!'"

Paul's greatest desire was *"to depart and be with Christ," Philippians 1:23*; what kept Paul tethered to his earthly life was his commitment to the gospel ministry. But his ultimate desire was to "sail away" to Christ.

The most complete explanation of what happens to a believer the moment he or she dies is found in,

II Corinthians 5:6-8

"Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight, be of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

There are two insights in the Greek that I want us to note:

1. The phrases in verse 6, *"we are at home in the body"* and *"we are absent from the Lord,"* are in the present tense, representing continuous action. We might paraphrase the verse, *"Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are continuing to live at home in the body, we likewise are continuing to live absent from the Lord."* In other words, while our bodies are here on earth, we're not in the presence of Christ in Heaven.
2. The phrases *"to be absent from the body"* and *"to be at home with the Lord"* indicate actions that are completed rather than continuing. We long to be with the Lord.

There is a process to being absent from the body and present with the Lord. We do not end up with just a disembodied spirit when we go to the Lord. The spirit is delivered into the presence of Jesus Christ by His angels **Luke 16:22**. We will be given an intermediate body that will be just right for us. God has intended all along that we will live on after death and throughout eternity as a physical being. We were never meant to exist as disembodied spirits floating around on clouds playing harps all day.

Throughout this life on earth, our spirits exist inside a mortal- physical body, but after we die, we receive what theologians refer to as an intermediate spirit body. We know that intermediate spirit bodies exist because we can read in the Bible about Elijah and Moses appearing at the Transfiguration, as well as Samuel appearing to Saul when he visited the Witch of Endor. These long dead people had physical, intermediate bodies. And **Revelation 7** displays the Tribulation Martyrs as standing before the throne of God worshipping while wearing white robes. I feel if these examples were spirits, then they would have no need of clothing, The Early Christian martyrs instead had to be 'clothed' in some sort of physical body as they await the Resurrection

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of the Just at the Rapture of the Church. Later, the Old Testament and Tribulation Saints will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation.

Daniel 12:1-2

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."

Revelation 20:4

"I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

While people never remain bodiless, neither are we ever left unconscious. We remain totally conscious after death. A perfect example of this comes from the story Jesus told in **Luke 16** about the Rich Man and Lazarus. After both men had died, Lazarus was taken to Paradise while the Rich Man was cast into Torments. Both are described as dwelling in bodies that could feel, see, and talk. They existed fully conscious and never dormant due to any kind of soul sleep. Only the earthly, moral body remains "asleep" in the grave awaiting the Resurrection.

How Is a Physical Resurrection Possible?

The Bigger Question Asked Is: 'How Is a Physical Resurrection Possible?' Paul answers that question in **I Corinthians 15**: when he poses the question: 'How are the dead raised?' Paul answers his own question about resurrection by using an analogy familiar to his audience: the planting and harvesting of a crop.

I Corinthians 15: 36-38, Paul wrote

"That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own."

I owe the following analogy to **Dr. Robert Jeffress** from his book, **"A Place Called Heaven."** It will help explain the illustration of Paul about a seed and the resulting crop.

"Before a watermelon seed ever produces a watermelon, it must first be placed in the ground, where it dies. When a farmer goes into the field to gather the harvest, she does not 'gather' watermelon seeds but something much better—watermelons!"

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The harvest is always superior to what was planted. So, it is with the resurrection. When we die, our human bodies are like 'seeds' that are planted in the ground. The death of our human bodies—regardless of how it occurs—is not a hinderance to a future resurrection but a prerequisite for a greater 'harvest.' So, the body must die, and it has to die because Paul says.

1 Corinthians 15:50

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

While your body is perfectly designed for our planet, the present Earth, it is not suited for Mars, Pluto, or even Heaven. That is why we should not view death as "the end" of something but as "the beginning" of something greater.

The body we receive at "harvest time"—the resurrection—is vastly superior to the body that is planted in the ground. Think of it this way: it's a scorching summer day, 115 degrees in the shade. You have been outside working in the yard. To cool down, you come into the house and open the refrigerator for something refreshing. Which would you rather sink your teeth into—a slice of ice-cold watermelon or a handful of ice-cold watermelon seeds?

Similarly, when our bodies are resurrected from the grave, it will not be our old bodies that are raised. The resurrection is not a reconstruction but a re-creation of our bodies. Those who have been blown apart, or cremated, or donated organs to others won't be rebuilt versions of their dead selves any more than a watermelon is a rebuilt version of a watermelon seed. Rather, they are something new and vastly superior—the watermelon itself.

Although the 'harvest' is superior to "the seed," the harvest is also similar to the seed. You do not plant a watermelon seed and harvest a kumquat! Similarly, your new body that is raised at "harvest" time will not be something completely unlike your body that was buried at death. You don't die and become someone else in the resurrection. There will be similarities between our earthly bodies and our Heavenly bodies.

The perfect example of this is Jesus's resurrection body. And since Scripture promises that the bodies of resurrected believers will be like the body of Jesus. **1 John 3:2** We will look closely at Jesus's resurrection body in our next lesson to see what our glorified bodies will look like in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Jesus called people in Heaven by name, including Lazarus in the intermediate Heaven **Luke 16:25**, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the eternal Heaven **Matthew 8:11**. A name denotes a distinct identity, namely an individual. The fact that people in Heaven can be called by the same name they had on Earth demonstrates they remain the same people. In Heaven, I'll be Tom Haney, without the bad parts, forever. If you know Jesus, you'll be you, without the bad parts, forever.

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If God could make physical bodies out of the elements of the earth, dust and soil and also out of the side of one human, to create bodies just right for earthly living; why would we doubt that He can also make a glorified body for each of us that is just right for eternal Heaven? The process is clear we get rid of that which is temporary (the seed) and gain that which is eternal (the crop)

LESSON # 2: 'WHY IS OUR ETERNAL BODY CALLED A 'GLORIFIED BODY'?

This lesson continues the series of studies on how God defined His final Heaven, He said, "Behold, I Make All things New!" This will be the greatest reset in history. God taking mortal humans and making them immortal to live on His New Earth and in His New Heaven.

We first studied how God can turn the mortal person into the immortal. In that study it became obvious that God will give us heavenly bodies to live throughout eternity. That raises a lot of questions: What will we look like? How will the eternal body be different than the heavenly body? How old will we be? Will we know and be aware of people we knew on earth in heaven? and a host of personal questions about us.

We saw last lesson that humans will never remain bodiless. We are given a body in our womb development but it is earthly or mortal. So, it is incapable of living in eternity and it has also been affected by sin, both ours and the sin of the world and could not qualify for eternity. Through a study of the Bible, we see that everyone who appeared after they had died: Moses, Elijah, Samuel, the Rich man and Lazarus in a story told by Jesus, Jesus Himself, and those Godly Jewish people who rose when Jesus died; all had a body. It would appear that all who die before Jesus returns will have an intermediate body as well. It will be a body that is different from our physical body in what it can do, but will not be our eternal body. The story of Lazarus and the Rich Man show that we will not be left without a body; left unconscious; or left sleeping until Christ comes. Both men are described as dwelling in bodies that could feel, see, and talk. They existed fully conscious and never dormant due to any type of soul-sleeping. The only thing sleeping was their earthly, mortal body which remained asleep in the grave awaiting the Resurrection of mankind.

When Will Believers Receive Their 'Glorified Body'?

Our eternal body will come when Jesus returns to earth and calls the dead believers' bodies out of their graves all over the world. The Bible has always called this eternal body our "*Glorified Body*". It will be without fault, incapable of getting ill; and perfect in every way, therefore, a 'Glorified Body'.

The Bible explains the process of how this will happen in ***1 Corinthians 15:35-56***. When Christ calls believers from their graves, many of us call it the 'Rapture', something amazing happens. The earthly bodies of the dead, in whatever form they ended: dust, ashes, mummified, blown to small pieces, annihilated by nuclear warfare; or placed in graves; it will make no difference - all

LESSON #2: 'Why is Our Eternal Body Called a 'Glorified Body'?

human bodies of believers - will be raised and merged with their temporary bodies and both will be transformed into their '*Glorified Body*.'

For those who are alive when the Rapture occurs, their earthly bodies will be automatically transformed into their glorified body as they ascend to meet Jesus. This will be the only generation in history to avoid death. This was so hard for one Greek Church to understand that Paul wrote out the process in the Bible. They felt Jesus would come, get, and change the living, but would not resurrect the dead, so, they felt that everyone who had died before Jesus raptured the Church would be left out of heaven. The Scripture eliminates that fear when it says:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever."

God says there is an order when Jesus comes to get believers and they get their glorified bodies. Jesus will bring with Him all who have died as believers in Him. They will be in their intermediate bodies and He will summon their dead bodies to join Him and these bodies will merge to receive their glorified body; and then those believers who are still alive will all be caught up in the air and on this trip to meet Jesus they will receive their glorified bodies and all these believers, both groups, will be with Jesus forever. The Bible outlines this process as it answers the question.

1 Corinthians 15:35,

"How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"

The Bible then answers those questions about the final resurrection of the saved.

1. We will be like a seed planted when we die and God will determine the resulting body just as He determines the body of each seed and resulting plant.
2. God has determined the flesh of each living creature and the flesh of a human is different than all other creatures in creation.

LESSON #2: 'Why is Our Eternal Body Called a 'Glorified Body'?

3. In the same manner, the earthly body and the heavenly body will be different and the main difference is the heavenly body has an entirely different splendor than the earthly body.

The next few verses of Scripture explain what this new heavenly splendor is and how it will give all believers a glorified body.

1 Corinthians 15:36-41

How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

On earth we have had a very vulnerable body—injury, disease, aging—literally it is perishable. But the glorified body will be imperishable—literally—it cannot be destroyed. On Earth it has borne the effects of every sin and that has allowed the body to have dishonor and slowed down all that we had the potential to do; but the glorified body will give us a purity that can never be tarnished and we will feel the lift of no sin allowing us to complete every task we set out to do. On earth the body has been weak—it was susceptible to every illness and was affected by everything in its environment. But the glorified body is raised in power and has zero vulnerabilities. It will be able to live in every environment found in heaven without any consequences. It was a natural body on earth—conceived by humans, with all the resulting human frailties, but the believer's glorified body is a spiritual body with no physical limits on what it can do.

Having a glorified body means all believers will live forever in a Holy Spirit-powered body.

How this transformation to our glorified bodies is accomplished technically, well, only God knows. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, you will find out firsthand how it happens.

But the end result is clear: we will no longer have a body that resembles Adam, the first created human; but a body that resembles the "Heavenly Man" who we know as the resurrected Christ. His resurrection provides the pattern for our own resurrection. For when Jesus returns, He will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

LESSON #2: 'Why is Our Eternal Body Called a 'Glorified Body'?

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

Our glorified bodies cannot be destroyed. We will become immortal. We will live forever. We will be mighty and powerful. We will be Spirit-controlled rather than sin-controlled. Our sin nature will be dead. It dies with our physical bodies. In our glorified bodies we will exist as tangible beings, able to touch and be touched and we will finally have a body capable of standing in the presence of the Shekinah glory of Almighty God. We will be able to look upon the loving face of our Creator and at last enjoy perfect fellowship with Hiim. Our mortality reset allows us to have the ultimate right relationship and fulfillment as a child of God to our Heavenly Father.

When the Scripture explains how we will have a glorified body, it speaks of the patterns for our bodies. The earthly body has been a pattern created by God and actualized in the creation of Adam, a natural body. But our heavenly body will be patterned after the heavenly man, the Resurrected Jesus and it will be a spiritual body. The Scripture says:

I Corinthians 15:44b-49

"If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So, it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man."

Jesus Glorified Body Teaches Us About Our Future Glorified Bodies

Let's take a look at what the Glorified Body of Jesus teaches us about our future Glorified Bodies.

First, we will not be Angels. Angels were a distinct creation that **Psalms 8:5** and **Hebrews 2:7** says were created a little higher than humans. But after life as a Christian, believers were made higher than the angels:

Hebrews 2:6b-8

"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You make them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet." In fact, I Corinthians 6:3 spells that out when it says, "Do you not know that we will judge angels?"

LESSON #2: 'Why is Our Eternal Body Called a 'Glorified Body'?

We will have bodies like Christ's resurrected body. **Philippians 3** says this is something that Jesus will do for His people.

Philippians 3:20-21

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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."

1 John 3:2 says

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The clearest indication we have of our future body has been shown in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He appeared to His disciples and His followers on many occasions during the forty days after He rose from the grave. He specifically promised us that, in the resurrection, our body would be like His body. He knew our tendency to assume that life after death would be some eerie ghost-like existence. He taught us the reality of our future heavenly body.

On the first day of the week when Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples, His resurrected body was similar to but different from his mortal body before death. His body was tangible they could touch it. He even invited Thomas to put his finger on the scars in His hands, and touch the scar on His side, both still scarred from the Cross. Jesus showed that He still had flesh and bones.

Luke 24:39

"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."

He ate and drank showing that He still experienced sensations including taste. Yet there was an indefinable quality about His resurrected appearance which caused Mary and His disciples to initially fail to recognize Him. After being with Him a while, He was recognized. Recognition came to them when He did or said something characteristic of Him.

His body was and is incorruptible. It will never again experience pain; it will never wear out, decay, or die. Yet He declared that His body had flesh and bone. Our body will be like His. We shall have a real spiritual body which is recognizable and occupies space. But we need to realize that space and matter did not hinder Jesus. He walked through closed doors and disappeared from one place only to reappear in another. In Heaven-with our glorified bodies, we will also have this supernatural power and control over matter.

LESSON #2: 'Why is Our Eternal Body Called a 'Glorified Body'?

When the Scriptures were explaining how the body is raised from mortal to immortal; Paul says that the one most important fact he ever preached was:

1 Corinthians 15:3

"Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day—just as Scripture had said".

Then he listed the witnesses of the resurrected Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:5-8

"He appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the Apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born."

Peter, the 12, then over 500 believers, then James, then to all the apostles, and finally to me. The Scripture lists 17 different appearances of the resurrected Jesus in bodily form: 5 on the day of His resurrection; to the disciples 6 times over the next 39 days; and before the final book of the Bible was written, Jesus had appeared an additional 6 times. But Jesus did more than just show up and say, *"Shalom, you all."* He conversed with his disciples all 17 times; ate with them at least three times; He allowed His disciples to touch Him; and we see that the followers of Jesus did not interact with a disembodied spirit but with Jesus Himself in bodily form.

How Will Our New Glorified Body Be Different from Our Earthly Body?

When Jesus received His new (post resurrection) body, it was both different from and similar to His old (pre-resurrection) body. His new body was superior to His earthly body as demonstrated by His ability to materialize at will, even pass through locked doors. He could appear and disappear at will. Given time and answers to their reasons for doubting that it was Him, they all recognized it was Jesus. Why this detailed examination of Jesus's resurrected body? As we have seen.

Scripture promises that our resurrected bodies will be like His. ***Colossians 1:18*** is where Paul referred to the resurrection of Jesus as *"the firstborn from the dead."* The word translated firstborn is from the Greek word from which we get our English word prototype. When a manufacturer builds a new automobile or airplane, they first build a prototype that becomes the pattern for the new auto or plane. In the same way, the resurrected body of Jesus was an example of what our bodies are going to be like.

In what specific ways will our new Glorified Body be different from our earthly body? Just like all creation has a different flesh so Paul said in Corinthians our heavenly bodies will be one flesh and will differ from our earthly bodies of another flesh. Why should we find it difficult to believe

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that there is one kind of body created for inhabiting Earth and another kind of body for inhabiting Heaven? We cannot live now outside of earth's atmosphere with special equipment; or on the ocean floor without special equipment. We would not last 10 minutes with our earthly bodies in God's final Heaven.

First thing we notice is, our glorified heavenly body and our earthly body will both be physical, have form, substance, and are visible. But just because they are physical does not mean they will not have differences.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Earthly Bodies decay. | Our Glorified Body will endure. |
| 2. Earthly Bodies are infected with sin. | Our Glorified Body is sinless. |
| 3. Earthly Bodies are weak. | Our Glorified Bodies are powerful. |
| 4. Earthly Bodies made for the Old Earth. | Our Glorified Bodies made for the New Earth. |

Characteristics of Our Glorified Bodies

Yes, We Will Eat. - Jesus ate while in His glorified body; **Luke 22:29-30** says we will eat with Him in His kingdom—a reference to the millennial kingdom of Christ; and all will eat in the great Wedding Feast in Heaven.

Luke 22:29-30

"And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Yes, We Will Wear Clothes - It will not be an eternal 'Naked and Afraid' survival show. When Jesus appeared in all of His resurrected appearances He was wearing clothes. Christ told the Church at Sardis in **Revelation 3**--all who overcome will be clothed in white garments.

Revelation 3:4-5

"Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels."

John said that was true when he was transported to Heaven, **Revelation 7:9**. The bride of Christ—the Church—is presented to Jesus at His second coming clothed in fine linen bright and clean. **Revelation 19:8**

We Will Be Ideal, Youthful at a Mature Age - Our bodies will probably be resurrected at an ideal, youthful and yet mature age. Many theologians believe we will be in our 30's. Thirty is considered the peak of perfection, both mentally and physically. (I think I remember that age). It

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was the age OT priests began their ministry in the temple and the age when Christ began His public ministry. You might want to glance through some pictures tonight to get an idea of your eternal look, and for those who passed at a younger age—we will all have something to look forward to.

Our Bodies Will Be Perfect - Cancer, heart attacks, and strokes will be no more. Blindness, deafness, paralysis, gray hair, wrinkles, and widening girths not present. From the top of our heads to the bottom of our feet, we will be perfect in every way. We will all be healthy and appealing. As one writer states it, "We won't have to try to look beautiful—we will be beautiful."

**Your body, your memories, your gifts and talents, your passions,
and your spirit are what make you! YOU!**

You will not lose them. You will become the you God intended for you to be. We will get the ultimate upgrade on the software God gave us at birth—only with no glitches or programming errors. When we get to Heaven, we will recognize each other as the unique individuals we are. We will even recognize Saints whom we have never seen before, and the relationships we have formed on earth will continue, only without strife or enmity.

Sounds like Heaven to me!

LESSON # 3: 'WHAT DID THE OLD TESTAMENT JEWS BELIEVE ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?'

It is interesting that those who have opposed the idea of an afterlife have usually just denied that it is real. They have said the grave seals the deal! If you are dead, you are dead! Those concepts of a resurrection and a Heavenly life after we physically die are just something used to manipulate people living in fear or grief. Put in its strongest terms, Karl Marx said, religion and primarily the ideas of salvation and eternal life are an “opiate for the people.” These opponents to an afterlife say, religion teaches these concepts to people who then believe them so that governments, religion and the Church can control those same people by using these beliefs to manipulate their behavior.

It is interesting that this is not a new attack on religion, the Church or an afterlife with Jesus. It was present even in the time of Jesus. Let's see how that unfolded and what the Old Testament really teaches about the resurrection.

Paul Defends Jesus Claim That There is Life After Death

When the Apostle Paul returned to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, he was arrested when he entered the Temple. He was falsely charge with bringing a Gentile into the inner part of the Temple, a crime punishable by death and a killing permitted by the Roman rulers, **Acts 21:26-36**. The next day he was brought before the Supreme Court of their time, the Sanhedrin, and he was put on trial for desecrating the Temple **Acts 23:1-10**.

Paul knew that the Council (composed of 70 members) was ruled by the Sadducees, but he was also aware of the fact that a majority of its members were Pharisees. He used this knowledge to immediately throw the Council into a rioting mess. He caused havoc in the proceedings when he cried out, *“I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees, I stand on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead.”*

The result was *“a great uproar”* as the Pharisees began debating/arguing with the Sadducees. The arguments became so intense that the Roman soldier who had brought Paul to the council decided that Paul's life was in danger. He intervened, took Paul by force, and returned him to the Roman barracks. **Acts 23:10**

What was going on, why did Paul's comment produce such an explosion of emotion? It was and Pharisees differed strongly on certain points of theology, one of the most important being life after death and the resurrection.

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

The Sadducees, who controlled the Temple and the Sanhedrin, strongly rejected the idea of an afterlife and therefore dismissed the concept of resurrection and called it a heresy. They based their theology solely on the writings of Moses (**Genesis** through **Deuteronomy**). Based on these five books, they argued that there was no evidence in them of life after death, no such thing as a resurrection.

The Pharisees, lawyers of the Old Testament Scriptures, on the other hand, relied on all the Scriptures and also believed that the Oral Law, writings and teachings on the Written Law, later collected in the Talmud, were equal to written Scriptures. The Pharisees rejected the idea that the soul ceases to exist at death. They believed instead in the immortality of the soul and in a future resurrection of the dead.

When the Sadducees realized that Jesus believed in life after death and the resurrection of the dead, they decided to challenge Him. **Mark 12:18** states the challenge. They used the passage where Moses taught that a man who leaves his wife a widow with no children, if he has a brother, that brother is to be married to the widow. Then they asked, if this happens for all seven brothers in a single family and none of them have children with the woman, whose wife would she be in Heaven?

Jesus first told them they had not gotten their theology right. He said,

Mark 16:25

"When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in Heaven."

Jesus said two things:

1. No New Marriages in Heaven—The Church will be married to Christ and we are not sure what all that will involve.
2. Marriage was given as a means of continuing the race on Earth and the Church had been raptured, so there is not a need for additional children.

We will know all of our family relationships on Earth while in Heaven but in Heaven we shall experience far greater joy, knowledge and relationships in the presence of the Lamb than we have ever known on Earth, we will know and love them even more.

Then Jesus addressed the reality of an afterlife and He said.

Mark 12:26-27

"Now about the dead rising, have you not read in the Book of Moses- (first five books of the Bible), in the account of the burning bush, how God said to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken."

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

Knowing they relied only on the first five books of the Bible, He referred them to the passage in **Exodus 3:6** where God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush telling Moses He is the God of the first three patriarchs of Israel, all who had died before God and Moses had this talk at the burning bush. But God referred to Himself as the Father of all three in the present tense. Jesus could have referred the Sadducees to a very clear example of future life also after death from **Genesis 5:22-24**. It was the taking of Enoch (raptured) to Heaven.

Are References to Life After Death Only Found in the New Testament?

How about the rest of the Old Testament? Are there any references to life after death and resurrection, or are those strictly ideas only found in the New Testament? The Old Testament is not silent about Heaven or the resurrection. There are Old Testament Scriptures that clearly teach life after death, and there are others that could only be true if there is a resurrection. The major teachings are in the Books of Wisdom: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These two topics are also addressed in every Major Prophet: **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel**. They are mentioned in all but two of the Minor Prophets, 10 of the 12.

Before we look at them, let's take a story out of the Old Testament that clearly teaches the truth about a real Heaven and the resurrection. It is **I Samuel 28**, a story about a time King Saul, first king of Israel, was fighting a war with the Philistines.

He was very fearful, and he prayed earnestly to God for reassurance, but God would not answer his prayers because of his rebellious spirit. This war was being fought just because Saul had been disobedient. In desperation and in violation to God's Word, Saul went to a medium and asked her to call up the spirit of the prophet Samuel who had been an advisor to King Saul but had died. The medium did and Samuel appeared in his intermediate body and announced that the Philistines would be triumphant and then told Saul.

I Samuel 28:19 *"Therefore, tomorrow you and your sons will be with me."*

They were killed the next day in battle.

Another story that affirms spiritual life after death is found in **II Kings 2:1-11**, where Elisha tells us the story of his leader Elijah being taken to Heaven (raptured) without ever dying.

King David believed in Heaven and the resurrection, and clearly taught this by his life and his writings. When his son born of Bathsheba died, David proclaimed that one day he would go to be with his son, who had lived just a few days. **II Samuel 12:23**.

It is the teaching of David that has touched generations of believers with the reality of the afterlife and the joy of being with God in Heaven.

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

1. Probably none ring more familiar to us than how he ends with these words.

Psalms 23:6

"Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

That thought was echoed in ***Psalms 133:3*** where David wrote,

Psalms 133:3

"It is like the dew of Mount Hermon, coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever."

2. He even used this belief to refute non-biblical teaching. He said in Psalms.

Psalms 16:10 *"You will not abandon my soul to Sheol."*

A reference to the belief that after death, the soul goes to a holding place for the spirits of the dead, called Sheol in the Old Testament and later Hades in the New Testament.

3. David said the thought of the resurrection and life after death was what kept him hopeful. He wrote in Psalms.

Psalms 27:13

"I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

4. Other Psalm writers also affirmed their belief in an afterlife and the resurrection. Asaph, David's worship leader wrote:

Psalms 73:24 *"With your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory."*

The Sons of Korah proclaimed.

Psalms 49:15 *"God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol."*

Other Wisdom writings that show the Jews believed in the afterlife and a resurrection.

Other Wisdom Writings That Show Jews Believed in After Life & Resurrection

1. King David's son Solomon, like his father, affirmed his belief in life after death when he concluded the book of Ecclesiastes with the observation that:

Ecclesiastes 12:14

"God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

There would be no need for such judgment if people's souls were annihilated at death. Solomon also spoke of life after death in Proverbs where he wrote,

Proverbs 12:28 *"The path of the godly leads to life. So why fear death?"*

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

2. The book of Job is considered by many Biblical scholars to be the oldest book of the Bible, written before the Pentateuch. In the book, Job proclaims his belief in life after death when he is recorded as saying,

Job 13:15 *"Though He (God) slay me, I will hope in Him."*

This is an amazing statement since Job lived before any written revelation of God to Mankind. His faith was grounded solely in his personal relationship with his Creator.

3. The prophet Isaiah spoke of his belief in life after death when he declared that a day would come when God would *"swallow up death for all time,"* and He would then *"wipe away tears"* from the faces of those who were redeemed,

Isaiah 25:8

"He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken."

He spoke of it again when he taunted the King of Babylon and wrote:

Isaiah 14:9

"In the place of the dead (Sheol), there is excitement over your arrival. The spirits of world leaders and mighty kings long dead stand up to see you."

Another passage about souls in Sheol welcoming the dead is found in the writings of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 32:20

"The Egyptians will fall with the many who have died by the sword, for the sword is drawn against them. Egypt and its hordes will be dragged away to their judgment. Down in the grave (Sheol) mighty leaders will mockingly welcome Egypt and its allies saying, 'They have come down; they lie among the outcasts, hordes slaughtered by the sword.'"

4. Paul quotes **Hosea** to justify to the Corinthian Church that there is life after death, he wrote.

Hosea 13:14 *"O Death, where is your victory? O Death where is your sting."*

The Evidence for Resurrection in the Old Testament is Even Stronger

1. Job wrote:

Job 14:14 *"If a man dies, will he live again?"*

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

He answers his own question by writing:

Job 14:15

"You God will call and I will answer you. You will long for the work of Your hands."

He is absolutely clear when he later wrote:

John 19:25-27

"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the Earth. Even after my skin is destroyed. Yet from my flesh I shall see God whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!"

2. David wrote in Psalms.

Psalms 17:15

"But as for me, my contentment is not in wealth but in seeing You and knowing all is well between us. And when I awake in Heaven, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see You face to face."

Another unnamed Psalmist wrote:

Psalms 71:20

"God will one day revive him and "bring me up again from the depths of the Earth."

3. Isaiah stated that he believed in the resurrection when he wrote:

Isaiah 26:19

"Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn and the Earth will give birth to the departed spirits."

4. None are more elaborate about the resurrection than Daniel who specifically tells us the Old Testament Saints will be resurrected at the end of the Great Tribulation. He wrote:

Daniel 12:1-3

"At that time Michael, the archangel who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued. Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace. Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever."

This passage makes it clear the Old Testament Saints will not be included in the Rapture. That is because the Rapture is a promise to the Bride of Christ, the Church. All Church Saints will be taken in the Rapture, both the living and the dead ***1 Thessalonians 4:13-18***; but the Old Testament Saints and Tribulation Martyrs will be resurrected when Jesus returns to Earth at the end of the Tribulation. This leads to a question that some seem to wrestle with:

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

How can we be certain that Adam, Eve, Noah, Sarah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Rahab, or any of the other Old Testament people called 'Saints' in the New Testament are really in Heaven?

Two things:

1. The Scripture in **Acts** says.

Acts 4:12

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under Heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

So, how can Christ in whom they had never trusted save those who lived before His time? First, they were not saved by works but were saved by faith, the same way everyone in Heaven will be saved. Paul states it well in **Romans**.

Romans 4:2-3

"If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God', and it was credited to him as righteousness."

A story between God and Abram in **Genesis 15** shares how it happened. God had come to assure Abram that he would build a nation from him, and Abram objects because he has not fathered any children yet. God assures him a son of his own flesh and blood would be his heir and took Abram outside the tent and made him look up at the stars. He promised Abram he would have more descendants than all the stars he was looking at. Then in **Genesis** we find the key,

Genesis 15:6

"Abram believed the Lord, and He (meaning God) credited it to him (meaning Abram) as righteousness."

The Hebrew word translated "credited" is an accounting term. We use the same idea today. Imagine you go into a store to purchase a new sofa for your living room. The sofa costs \$2,000.00 and you pay with your credit card. Amazingly, by simply allowing the salesperson to swipe that piece of plastic you are allowed to walk out of the store and own a valuable piece of furniture. Why? The plastic card has no intrinsic value. It represents a promissory note—a promise to pay. When the bill arrives in the mail, it must be paid. When Old Testament saints exercised faith in God, their faith represented a future promise to pay. They were immediately 'credited' with salvation. When the bill came due, the only Person capable of satisfying their sin debt paid it. When Jesus cried out on the cross, *"It is finished"* **John 19:30** the word He used was

LESSON #3: 'What Did the Old Testament Jews Believe About Resurrection?'

'tetelestai', a Greek accounting term meaning "Paid in full." Regardless of when a person lives in history, all are saved from eternal death through the payment of Jesus Christ on the cross as He pays the 'sin debt.' Those who lived before Christ were saved by being "credited", gaining a right standing with God, we call it being saved, and having their sin debt paid by Christ on the cross. Literally saved by the cross of Christ.

2. The second reason is because the New Testament says the Old Testament saints are resurrected, saved, and will be in Heaven with all other believers. The author of **Hebrews** in **Chapter 11** lists many people starting with Abel and the last listed person is Samuel and then lists many incidents where people were saved for Heaven. He ends the chapter by telling us:

Hebrews 11:39-40

"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

LESSON # 4: 'WHAT DOES THE OLD TESTAMENT SAY ABOUT BEING NEW IN ETERNITY?'

God has never minimized the amount of time a believer should spend in thinking about their final destination, a New Heaven sitting on a New Earth! So, we find the Old Testament believer and the New Testament believer both saw this final destination as one of their highest goals. The idea that; *"We can be too Heavenly minded to be any earthly good"* did not come from God. God knew that the more Heavenly minded we were, the more we would do for His Kingdom here on earth. C. S. Lewis observed, the problem with most believers is not that they think about Heaven too much but that they think about Heaven too little.

He wrote in MERE CHRISTIANITY:

"If you read history, you will find that Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set out on foot to convert the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth "thrown in": aim at Earth and you will get neither." No reason to be fixated on what people do to us or think about us—our calling to our new location is assured. Instead, grasping the reality of that "place called Heaven" that awaits us should liberate us to invest our remaining years on earth as wisely as possible."

C.S. Lewis

Old Testament Believers were Captivated by the Hope of the Next World

The Old Testament believers are an ideal place to start and see this lived out in lives of the faithful. As you review the lives of the men and women in the Old Testament who made the most profound impact on this world; such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah, you discover one common denominator: they were captivated by the hope of the next world.

Hebrews 11 tells of their great longing to be with God in His prepared city of reward:

Hebrews 11:13-16

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are

LESSON #4: 'What Does the Old Testament Say About Being New in Eternity?'

looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country, a Heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

The Bible goes ahead to say that Abraham and Sarah, who had lived in a sumptuous suburb of Babylon in a beautiful home were content to follow God and live in tents the rest of their life, simply because they anticipated that following God would give them eternal entrance into His Heavenly city.

David also yearned for that *"better country"* when he wrote:

Psalm 42:1-2

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I GO AND MEET WITH HIM?"

There is no doubt that Old Testament believers longed to be with God in His New Heaven. You might ask, "then why has God not spelled out more about Heaven?" The Bible does not always tell us everything we want to know about our future home. What the Bible reveals is true but it is not exhaustive. God has given us a pencil sketch or line drawing of our future home and often we have wanted the entire blueprint. Some very important things to consider are:

First, God says some things are just not possible for us to comprehend in this life. Paul received a personal tour of Heaven ***II Corinthians 12:2,4*** and did not describe that tour to us because he said, "I was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

II Corinthians 12:2,4

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. ... 4 was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

Even the apostle John who was given the most extensive vision of the future that any believer has ever received, and recorded his experience in the Book of Revelation wrote:

Revelation 10:4

"And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

These experiences were even more elaborate than the insights the Old Testament believers received in their personal discussions with God.

LESSON #4: 'What Does the Old Testament Say About Being New in Eternity?'

Why Didn't They Detail Heaven Like We Would Want?

Second, if God told us everything about Heaven, we would find it difficult to focus on the very important assignments God has given to us during our brief stay on earth.

Let me illustrate: suppose a child sits down at the dinner table and his mother places a plate of lima beans in front of him, which he normally would eat without complaining. But then his mother places a bowl of vanilla ice cream smothered in chocolate syrup and whipped cream on the table. What do you think the child will want to eat? The same thing you and I would want to eat, the sundae! However, if the boy sits there with his plate of lima beans and his mother promises him an ice cream sundae after he eats his vegetables, then he will dive into his lima beans with gusto, knowing something better is yet to come! That is why God has given just enough information to each generation of followers to whet their appetite for the "sundae" that is yet to come. A New Heaven!!!

The Old Testament believers embraced the new and found comfort in the familiar, a wonderful way to anticipate eternal life in Heaven. There is an oft used phrase in the Old Testament that speaks about the newness of Heaven and the comfort of being with people you know. It is the way God described the death of each of the Patriarchs—God said they were *"gathered to their people in the bosom of Abraham."* **Genesis 25:8; 35:29; and 49:33**

Some have said that this oft repeated phrase does not prove that the patriarchs believed in a personal resurrection from the dead but merely refers to their expectation of being buried with their ancestors.

But a study of these passages shows that they did believe in a personal resurrection in which they would be reunited in Heaven with those who had died earlier as believers. Let's look at the death of Jacob or Israel in **Genesis 49** where he is speaking with his 12 sons and giving blessings to them and instructions about his death and burial. He says:

Genesis 49:29-33

"I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. . . There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. . . When Jacob had finished giving the instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people."

Jacob said he would be gathered with his people and the bible says at his death he was gathered to his people. But Jacob was not buried immediately. There was a period of seventy days required for embalming and mourning in Egypt. Then a large entourage assembled of Joseph, his elders, all the

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servants of Pharaoh, the elders of all the land of Egypt, the house of Jacob, the house of Joseph, his brothers and they all made their way on the long journey north to Canaan to reach the burial cave. Notice, that the passage says he *“breathed his last, and was gathered to his people,”* with no indication of waiting until he reached the grave site. When he died his spirit was in the presence of his people who had gone to Heaven before him.

Without a doubt no one longed with more hope for a new earth and a new Heaven than the Old Testament saints. The *“country of their own”* spoken of in **Hebrews 11** is a real country, with a real capital city, the New Jerusalem. It is a place where these *“foreigners and strangers here on earth”* will actually live in bodies. If the promises God made to them were promises regarding Earth, then the Heavenly “country of their own” will ultimately include Earth. The fulfillment of these prophecies requires exactly what Scripture elsewhere promises, a resurrection of God's people and God's Earth.

What thrilled the Old Testament saints of **Hebrews 11**, was not that God would rule in Heaven, He already did; but the hope was that one day He would rule on Earth and remove sin, death, suffering, poverty, and heartache. They believed the Messiah would come and bring Heaven on Earth. He would make God's will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

They did not just hope this for their distant offspring—one day in the future—but also for themselves. They longed for God's rule on Earth, not just for a hundred years or a thousand years but forever.

It is commonly taught that the Old Testament concept of Heaven is stunted. Truthfully little is said about the intermediate Heaven, where believers go when they die before the appearance of the eternal Heaven but the Old Testament actually says a great deal about the eternal Heaven.

Unfortunately, we often don't realize it. Why? Because when we read passages about a future earthly kingdom, we assume they do not refer to Heaven. But because God will dwell with His people on the New Earth, those Scripture passages do refer to Heaven. Isaiah 26 says it very plainly:

Isaiah 26:19

“But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—your dew is like the dew of the morning: the earth will give birth to her dead.”

Just as Adam was made from the dust of the earth, we will be remade from the dust to which we returned at death. God's Old Testament people were not looking for deliverance from Earth, but deliverance on earth. That's exactly what we will find when God completes the New Heaven and New Earth.

LESSON #4: 'What Does the Old Testament Say About Being New in Eternity?'

Let's take a look at the New Heaven that the Old Testament saints so longed to live in that they sacrificed physical comforts just to be a resident in that city. We might ask.

"Where is Heaven now?"

Both God's holy angels and Lucifer indicate that the location of Heaven is upward. Also, Paul described Jesus as the *"One" who descended* in His humanity and then *"ascended far above all the Heavens," Ephesians 4:10*. Above us is more than sky. Above us is God's dwelling place.

But when people wonder about the location of Heaven, they are usually thinking about more than the direction it is in. They are really inquiring about the realm in which Heaven exists. They want to know if Heaven is part of our universe—far, far away, perhaps, but still somewhere that can be located. Or does Heaven exist in a completely different dimension, outside of time and space, like the fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man, remember The Twilight Zone?

The answer to that question requires us to distinguish between the present Heaven where God resides and the future Heaven Jesus is constructing for us. The present Heaven or the Third Heaven as Paul calls it in ***II Corinthians 12***, is where God is and it is where Christians go as soon as they die.

II Corinthians 12:2

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows."

II Corinthians 5:8

"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

The future Heaven is where all believers will one day spend eternity, and this future Heaven is still under construction. The future Heaven is the *"place"* Jesus is preparing for us now, and will be lowered from the sky by Christ to rest on the New Earth. (More about the New Earth next week.)

Present Heaven vs Future Heaven?

The idea of a present Heaven and a future Heaven can be somewhat confusing. But think of it like this illustration: A couple planning to retire someday often buy a piece of land along the seashore, the lake, or in the mountains to build their retirement house. They may continue to live in their existing home or move to an apartment while their future retirement home is under construction. Their current residence may be wonderful, plush and comfortable, but it's only temporary. The couple could truly be said to be in an *"intermediate home"* as they await the completion of their future home. In the same way, those who are in Heaven today (the present Heaven) are enjoying a wonderful existence in the presence of God while waiting for the completion of their final, forever

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home (the future Heaven.) Since this truth about both a present Heaven and future Heaven is a surprise to many Christians, let's look more closely at what makes them different.

Most Bible students know and point out that the Bible refers to the fact that we live with three Heavens right now.

1. **First Heaven** is the earth's atmosphere. It contains the air we breathe and the space in which birds and jetliners fly.
2. **Second Heaven** is what we often refer to as "outer space," where we find the planets, stars, and billions of galaxies that populate this vast universe.
3. **Third Heaven** is where God is living now. This is where all Christians immediately go when they die. It is sometimes called Paradise, the place where Jesus assured the thief on the cross, he would go the moment he died. At one point in his life, Paul was caught up into this third Heaven, where he heard *"inexpressible words"*. **II Cor. 12:4** When most Christians speak of Heaven this is the Heaven they mean, the one that is "up". This is what the Bible refers to as the present Heaven.

But there is also a Fourth Heaven.

4. **Fourth Heaven**—A future "Heaven" God is preparing for us right now. This is the place of our future and forever home, and it is a geographical location. This fourth Heaven includes the "New Heaven", the "New Earth" and the "New Jerusalem." John the revelator described its arrival in **Revelation 21-22** as coming down from the third Heaven to the newly created Earth. The fourth Heaven will literally be "Heaven on Earth." This future Heaven will be the place where all believers, Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, and all Christians from the time of Jesus's death and resurrection until that date, will live for eternity.

Why Did God Call This Heaven a New Heaven?

Why did God call this Heaven a New Heaven and what does it mean that it will sit on a New Earth?

Revelation 21:1 says:

"Then I saw 'a New Heaven and a New Earth,' for the first earth had passed away."

Does that mean God will replace the first and second Heavens (earth's atmosphere and outer space) and the earth as we know with a re-created (new) Heaven and earth? Peter seems very clear when he writes in:

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II Peter 3:7, 10-13

"By the same word the present Heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. . . But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The Heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the Heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells."

Scripture is silent on exactly how God will burn up the universe, but theologians and scientists have speculated about the intensity of heat required to destroy the earth. We can only guess if it is nuclear explosions, an asteroid, or God merely reversing creation and just speaking it done. You might ask:

Why Would God Need to Destroy the Old Heavens and the Old Earth?

God created the existing Heavens and Earth as recorded in **Genesis 1** and pronounced them "good." But sin spoiled everything. Like leaving a classic car out to rot in the elements until it is no more than a rusty bucket of bolts—sin has so corrupted our physical environment that it is no longer fit as a place to hold perfect righteousness for eternity. In fact, the present Heavens and earth would not be able to exist for all of eternity.

After the Great White Throne of Judgment in which all unbelievers will be found guilty and before the New Jerusalem is open for occupancy, God will complete His promise in:

Isaiah 65:17

"See, I will create new Heavens and a New Earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

The Old Testament believers anticipated being new in eternity with "their people—other believers" and living in a New City in the New Heaven. The **Book of Hebrews** tells us some of what they had endured:

Hebrews 11:35b-38

"There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning, they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goat skins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the

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world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground."

And as deserving of the final Heaven as that sounds—God said wait—"we will share this together with all believers. . ." These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Perfect people in a perfect "New Heaven" the backbone of belief for Old Testament Believers and a hope we share with them.

LESSON # 5: 'WHY DID CHRIST INTERACT WITH PEOPLE IN ALL OF HISTORY?'

God defined His final Heaven and Earth when He said: ***"Behold, I Make All things New!"***

Revelation 21:5. It was God's ultimate gift for His saved believers and the wedding present of Jesus to His bride—the 'saved from all generations'. God wants us all to receive this great gift.

Role of Jesus in Creation

It is essential for us to stop and recognize the role of Jesus in the first Creation, in the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth, and in His constant interaction that tied the two together. It was outlined in the Old Testament and often defined and elaborated in the New Testament. It starts with creation. The Book of Genesis tells the story of creation with God as the one who takes the chaos and emptiness of the universe and shapes it into all that we have in our universe, where we live. It is hard to see the role of Jesus in **Genesis 1-2**, the only cues are the references to "Elohim", a plural Hebrew word for Gods used 30 times in the passage, showing the involvement of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and the reference to plural pronouns in

Genesis 1:26,

"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

But in the next verse the author and compiler of **Genesis**, Moses reverts to the plural word for God and says:

Genesis 1:27

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

The true involvement of Jesus is defined by John when he writes his Gospel, where he clearly spells out the role of Jesus Christ in Creation. He begins by showing us the eternity of Jesus and His role in creation when he writes:

John 1:1-5

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was

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made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

He then defines who "The Word" is in John and says,

John 1:14

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

It is clear that Jesus was involved in every step of the creation of the original Heavens, Earth, and humans.

Jesus Encourages People to be Part of the New Heaven & New Earth

In the 21st Chapter of Revelation, it is clear that Jesus Christ will be the center of focus when the New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem appears.

Revelation 21:2 tells us:

"I saw the Holy City the new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."

Obviously referring to the saved as the Bride and Christ as the groom/husband. The thought is continued when an angel takes John up close to observe the New Jerusalem and says to John:

Revelation 21:9b-10

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God."

Jesus had completed the task of a Hebrew husband. He had prepared a place for His bride to live with Him and specific room/rooms for each person. Jesus had promised that He would do that for His disciples when He comforted them about His dying and leaving them here on the Earth. He had told them,

John 14:1-3

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

LESSON #5: 'Why Did Christ Interact with People Throughout History?'

We can trace this pattern of Christ leading and guiding throughout history to encourage people to be a part of the New Heaven and New Earth. On at least five different occasions, Jesus claimed to be the theme of the entire Old Testament:

1. The Occasions were about Him.

Matthew 5:17

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

2. Jesus eliminated the confusion about His death by explaining the OT had explained all that was to happen to Him.

Luke 24:27,

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

3. The Theme of the OT is Christ and what happens to Him.

Luke 24:44,

"He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.'"

4. Salvation is found in the OT and it is through Christ.

John 5:39

"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

5. Jesus allowed God and mankind to have a restored relationship by His sacrifice. The role and purpose of Creation, and the theme of the OT.

Hebrews 10:5-7

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, my God.'"

LESSON #5: 'Why Did Christ Interact with People Throughout History?'

Old Testament Personalities were Aware of Christ & the New Heaven & New Earth

It should not surprise us that key Old Testament personalities were aware of Christ, and in some cases, even encountered the preincarnate Christ, long before He was born as a human, always with a desire for them to be with Him in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Christ Sustains the Israelites During Their Wilderness Sojourn

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians reveals that Christ sustained the Israelites during their wilderness sojourn after leaving Egypt. The Israelites in the wilderness,

1 Corinthians 10:4

"They all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink.' For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

Note—the Israelites 'drank' from the spiritual Rock.' The imperfect tense in the original Greek indicates continuous action—this 'Rock' sustained God's people throughout the entire journey. The Bible tells us that Jesus also personally was "the pillar of fire" and "the pillar of cloud" that led the Israelites.

Jesus was With Daniel's Friends in the Firey Furnace

Daniel's friends refused to worship the image of gold set up by King Nebuchadnezzar, and were threatened by death in a fire. They responded:

Daniel 3:17

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from your Majesty's hand."

The king responded to their statement with anger and ordered the burning furnace to be stoked to be as hot as possible. But when they were thrown in, instead of instant incineration, the king said:

Daniel 3:25

"Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

It does not say it was Jesus but infers it was because:

1. Daniel's friends said God would save them—a visible person appeared.
2. Even the king felt this person looked like a God. Jesus affirmed the eternal faith of those in exile.

LESSON #5: 'Why Did Christ Interact with People Throughout History?'

The last three I will list in this lesson are all affirmed by New Testament Scriptures showing Jesus made contact with Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah. These are recorded but we do not know how many times Christ interacted with people to direct them to the New Heaven and New Earth that is not recorded. Many people, including myself still feel He is contacting and interacting.

Moses Knew Christ and It Changed His Life

Moses lived 1,500 years before Christ and yet in the Book of Hebrews we are told he considered his commitment to honoring Christ the most important direction for his life. The passage says:

Hebrews 11:24-27

"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible."

God—Jesus the Son of God—had spoken to him, showing him things invisible to the natural eye, revealing another king, another kingdom, and a better reward. It was as though Moses identified with what Paul wrote in **II Corinthians**. Yes, Paul, another man who Christ sought out, got his attention, and trained him to seek the new Heaven and the New Earth wrote:

II Corinthians 4:17-18

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Isaiah Interacted with Jesus

Isaiah tells the story about his interaction with Jesus in:

Isaiah 6:1

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; the train of his robe filled the temple."

The angels were saying this about the Lord,

Isaiah 6:3

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole Earth is full of his glory."

LESSON #5: 'Why Did Christ Interact with People Throughout History?'

John's Gospel, tells us that Isaiah actually, beheld the glory of Jesus Christ, when he wrote,

John 12:41 "Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him."

So, he tells us that the phrase of the angels, *"the whole Earth is full of His glory,"* speaks of Jesus Christ. Some 700 years before the Messiah was physically born in Bethlehem, Isaiah witnessed the incredible glory of Christ in a vision. This same Isaiah often prophesied the birth of the Messiah/Son of God—Jesus.

Abraham Encounters Jesus

Jesus Himself told us about the encounter(s) with Abraham in an argument with some traditional Jews about being the offspring of Abraham. They said genealogy was the determinate and Jesus said if they were true descendants of Abraham, they would do what Abraham did—believe and obey God. They should have trusted in the one sent from God—Jesus—and not just trust in their Abrahamic lineage. Then Jesus made the most astonishing statement to this group of Jews. He said:

John 8:56

"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

Jesus was the one Abraham anticipated. When Abraham thought of seeing His day—the day of Jesus with the 'New Heaven' and the 'New Earth,' he was filled with joy and gladness.

Jesus Will Redeem and Make the Earth New

One thing that Jesus will redeem and make new is the Earth. Many of us have been led to think of redemption far too narrowly. So, we are fooled into thinking that Heaven must be fundamentally different from Earth. Earth—we have been taught is bad, irredeemable, and beyond hope. However, we are limiting ourselves when we limit the new creation to just people and Heaven. "A radical new beginning"—everything new, writes Cornelius' Venema, "would suggest that sin and evil have become so much a part of the substance of the present created order that it is unrelievedly and radically evil. . . It would imply that the sinful rebellion of the creation had so ruined God's handiwork as to make it irretrievably wicked." He points out this does not echo what the Bible teaches about the supremacy of Jesus. Listen as Paul outlines just how supreme Jesus is over all creation,

Colossians 1:16-20

"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is

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before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on Earth or things in Heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

The recreative power of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is powerful enough to not only remake us, but to remake every inch of the universe—mountains, rivers, plants, animals, stars, nebulae, quasars, and galaxies. Christ's redemptive work extends resurrection to the far reaches of the universe. This is a stunning affirmation of God's greatness. It is the reason Paul wrote in:

Romans 8:19-22

"For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. (Made clear by their being raptured from the Earth) For the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

The New Heaven will Be Occupied by His Believers on the New Earth

So, Paul says we groan for what creation groans for—redemption. God subjected the whole creation to frustration by putting the curse not only on mankind but also on the Earth **Genesis 3:17**. Why? Because human beings and the Earth are inseparably linked. And as together we fell, together we shall rise. God will transform the fallen human race into a renewed human race, bring a New Heaven for occupancy—where God and His believers can live together forever; and transform the present two physical Heavens and the Earth to complete the New Heavens and New Earth inhabited by the Glorified—Eternal Bodies of believers. How will that happen?

Ultimately, we will not go up to Heaven and leave this Earth behind forever. Instead, God will bring the new Heaven down to a newly created Earth. In many ways this new Earth will resemble our present Earth—only vastly improved. It will be physical in nature with actual buildings, grass, trees, a total universe, streets, rivers and all things needed for a body to live. God will give to us a physical place for our physically transformed bodies. This new Earth will be familiar. The things mentioned that will be in it: river, trees, buildings, streets, gates, doors, foundations are all things that we are familiar with. The curse leveled against this present world, **Genesis 3**, will be lifted and all redeemed humankind will enjoy the world as God originally created it. Those who live on the New Earth will experience unbroken fellowship with God and one another in joyous loving

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relationships untainted by sin. Several things that we have on our present Earth will not be a part of the New Earth. It will not have oceans—only rivers and fresh water. It will not have a sun and moon—which both had shelf lives—because it will have the Light of the World, Jesus to illuminate it. It will exist in perpetual daytime, with no night at all. (**Isaiah 60:19** is the prophecy and **Revelation 21:25**; and **Revelation 22:5** the fulfillment). There will be no Temple and no preachers for all the Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, **Habakkuk 2:14** A universal love for and devotion to God will permeate the new Earth, meaning we will no longer feel the sting of sin experienced every day in this world. Rather, our lives will be filled with uninterrupted and unending joy.

It will have no evil or misdirected people so no need for police, courts, or jails. It will have no sickness or disease so no need for hospitals, doctors, nurses, or clinics. Nothing will deteriorate, get weak or die. All will be “in their prime” for all eternity and this includes the trees, flowers, shrubs, birds, and animals of Heaven. It will be a place of great inheritance: Jesus said in:

Matthew 25:34

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”

What is the Inheritance Jesus Speaks Of?

Just as the children of kings inherit kingdoms, and kingdoms consist of land and property so Earth is humanity's God-given property. Satan seeks to destroy the Earth. God seeks to restore and renew the Earth, rule it, and hand it back over to His children. God will win the battle for us and for the Earth.

God's plan of the ages is.

Ephesians 1:10b *“to bring unity to all things in Heaven and on Earth under Christ.”*

That means to leave nothing out. It is a foretelling of what happens in **Revelation 21**, when Jesus blends together the once separate realms of Heaven and Earth, fully under His Lordship. There will be one universe, with all things in Heaven and on Earth together under one head, Jesus Christ. God will live with us on the New Earth. That will *“bring all things in Heaven and on Earth together—including God and His people.”*

God's plan is that there will be no more gulf between the spiritual and physical worlds. There will be no divided loyalties or divided realms. There will be one cosmos, one universe united under one Lord—forever. When God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden, Earth was Heaven's backyard. The New Earth will be even more than that—it will be included in Heaven itself. All those who know Jesus as Savior will live there.

LESSON # 6: 'THE FIRST CHURCH'S VIEW OF HEAVEN & OUR NEWNESS!'

Our series continues of studies on how God defined His final Heaven and Earth when He said: "Behold, I Make All things New!" **Revelation 21:5** It was God's ultimate gift for His saved believers and the wedding present of Jesus to His bride, the 'saved from all generations.' A gift God wants each one of us to receive.

As we have seen, the sense that we will live forever somewhere has shaped every civilization in human history. Australian aborigines picture Heaven as a distant island beyond the western horizon. The early Finns thought it was an island in the faraway east. Mexicans, Peruvians, and Polynesians believed that they went to the sun or the moon after death. Native Americans believed that in the afterlife their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo. The Gilgamesh epic, an ancient Babylonian book of legends, refers to a resting place of heroes and hints of a tree of life. In the pyramids of Egypt, the embalmed bodies had maps placed beside them as guides to the future world. The Romans believed that the righteous would picnic in the Elysian fields while their horses grazed nearby. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, said, "The day thou fears as the last, is the birthday of eternity." Although these depictions of the afterlife differ, the unifying testimony of the human heart throughout history is 'belief in life after death.' Anthropological evidence suggests that every culture has a God-given innate sense of the eternal—that this world is not all there is.

The First Christians Believed in the 'After Life'

No one lived that out with a stronger belief in the afterlife than the First Christians did with their preoccupation with Heaven. They set the standard for focusing on the next life as much more important than their present life. The Roman catacombs, where the bodies of many martyred Christians were buried, contained tombs with inscriptions like these:

1. In Christ, Alexander is not dead, but lives.
2. One who lives with God.
3. He was taken up into his eternal home.

One historian writes, "*Pictures on the catacomb walls portray Heaven with beautiful landscapes, children playing, and people feasting at banquets.*"

In AD 125, a Greek named Aristides wrote to a friend about Christianity, explaining why this 'New Religion' was so successful: "*If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.*"

LESSON #6: 'The First Church's View of Heaven & Our Newness!'

In the third century, the church father Cyprian said, *"Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, which snatches us from this place and sets us free from the snares of the world, and restores us to paradise and the kingdom. Anyone who has been in foreign lands longs to return to his own native land. We regard paradise as our native land."*

Belief in an 'After Life' is Rooted in Scriptures

These early Church perspectives sound almost foreign today, don't they. But their beliefs were rooted in the Scriptures, where the apostle Paul writes:

Philippians 1:21,23

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. . .I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far."

He also wrote:

II Corinthians 5:6, 8

"As long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. . .We. . .would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

When Jesus told his disciples:

John 14:2

"In my Father's house are many rooms. . .I am going there to prepare a place for you"

He deliberately chooses common, physical terms (house, rooms, place) to describe where he was going and what he was preparing for us. He wanted to give His disciples, including us, something tangible to look forward to, an actual place where all of us would go to be with Him.

This place is not an ethereal realm of disembodied spirits, because human beings are not suited for such a realm. It is a place by nature that is physical, just as human beings are by nature physical. We are also spiritual, but God built a place for us where we are specifically designed to live, Earth, and He has designed a place where we can live eternally that will be built just for us, the New Heaven. We see from Scripture an exciting yet strangely neglected truth, God never gave up on his original plan for human beings to dwell on Earth. That is so true, that the Bible says the climax of history will be the creation of new Heaven(s) and a new Earth, a resurrected universe inhabited by resurrected people living with the resurrected Jesus. ***Revelation 21:1-4***

Jesus Came to Deliver Us from the Fear of Death

As human beings, we have a terminal disease called mortality. The current death rate is 100 percent. Unless Christ returns in our lifetime, we are all going to die. We don't like to think about death; yet, worldwide, 3 people die every second, 180 every minute, and nearly 11,000 every hour.

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If the bible is right about what happens to us after death, it means that more than 250,000 people every day go either to Heaven or Hell.

Jesus came to deliver us from the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

"So that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death, "

No one every captured that truth more than those who were a part of the first Church, the ones Jesus taught personally. So, we see Paul writing about the coming resurrection of the dead, *"Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?"* This prophecy from the book of Habakkuk gained reality when Jesus conquered death through the sacrifice of His perfect life and erased all sins, no longer did death have any sting for the believer. The first Christians fully embraced this fact and it freed them from the fear of death, because they had a relationship with Christ, who died on our behalf, the one who had gone ahead to make a place for all to live with Him. The only ones who should be left with any fear are those who do not know Jesus, and they should be very afraid.

Old & New Testament Believers Had a Clear View of Heaven

As we saw in our study already, the Old Testament believers had a clear view of Heaven and they accepted the knowledge that Heaven was their final destination. They suffered, sacrificed, and lived in less than the best circumstances because they saw God taking them to live in Heaven in the great city with Him. When we get to the New Testament and listen to and watch the first Christians, we find increased clarity on issues related to death and the afterlife. In fact, the apostle Paul reveals that death is a mere transition into the afterlife. Paul could hardly wait to get to Heaven and writes:

Philippians 1:21-24

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account."

This is the enthusiasm we see embracing Heaven and an eternal life with Jesus among the First Christians. Paul's desire was to die so that his spirit could depart from his Earthly body and go to be with Jesus in Heaven. Warren Wiersbe wrote "and you have the assurance of being with Christ when life ends."

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Paul was speaking from experience. Earlier in his ministry he had actually been caught up to Heaven, and he witnessed it firsthand **II Corinthians 12:2-4**. He liked what he saw and he wanted to go back. So, he also wrote:

II Corinthians 5:8

"We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

Death is not the end, it is a mere transition into the afterlife, into the very presence of Jesus. No one understood that better than the First Christians. It permeated all that Paul wrote and thought so much that he said to his young disciple, Timothy.

II Timothy 4:6

"I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."

Theologian Paul Enns writes about this time in the life of Paul and says, 'When the apostle Paul wrote Second Timothy, he was only a month or two away from being executed by beheading, and he knew it. It was in that circumstance and mental framework that Paul wrote the confident, upbeat words,

II Timothy 4:18

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His Heavenly kingdom: to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Paul and thousands like him that were a part of those early Christians had no doubt that the Lord would bring them to Heaven at the moment of their death. They have set the tone for freeing saving faith that embraces Heaven and eternal life with God.

In Heaven, Believers Will have a Great Reunion with Loved Ones and Friends

Another aspect of Heaven and life in the new Heaven and the new Earth that the first Christians embraced was the reality that Heaven will be the greatest reunion ever of all who have lived in the Lord here on Earth. The New Testament is brimming with insights on our future reunion in Heaven with Christian loved ones and friends.

In fact, we may rest assured that when Christian loved ones die, our communion with them is broken for only a short while. Our fellowship will be eternally resumed soon enough. We will again see their faces, hear their voices, and be able to hug their resurrected bodies. We part with them in grief, but will be reunited in never-ending joy.

Consider what the Thessalonian Christians were worried about. They were concerned about their Christian loved ones and friends who had died. They expressed their concern to the apostle Paul,

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so in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17** Paul speaks directly about the *"Dead in Christ."* He assures the Thessalonian Christians that there will indeed be a reunion in Heaven. He says that both the dead in Christ and those Christians who are alive at the time of the *rapture* *"will always be with the Lord"* in Heaven. Therefore, Paul says, they ought to comfort each other using this truth. Certainly, the apostle Paul himself expected to be reunited with his beloved Thessalonian friends in Heaven.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

"What is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus or his coming? If not for you?"

Paul rejoiced at the thought that he would be with his Thessalonian friends face to face in Heaven.

I believe that the clear evidence of the New Testament Scripture says that you and I will recognize each other in the afterlife. We just saw that Paul taught the Thessalonian Christians that they would be reunited with their Christian loved ones and that they ought to comfort one another with this truth. One must wonder what good a reunion would be if nobody recognized anybody else. I can't imagine Paul intending to say, *"Rejoice, for we will be reunited with all our Christian loved ones in Heaven, parents, spouses and children, even though none of us will recognize each other."* Paul's emphasis on comfort and joy is rooted in the reality that we will be together again and recognize each other.

Perhaps no Scripture outlines the completeness of this family reunion more than what Jesus taught in **Matthew** that many will eat with the Old Testament patriarchs in Heaven. He said:

Matthew 8:11

"Many will come from the east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

This implies that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will still be recognized as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Heaven. Theologian Paul Enns notes that this verse pictures, 'Abraham reclining in the kingdom with Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson. Family reunion! For believers, death brings a joyful reunion with believing family members. What a pleasant prospect.

Jesus Promises that When a Believer Dies His Spirit Will Be in the Presence of God

The First Christians had a very firm grasp on what happens to Christians and where they go when they die. They accepted and knew that at the death of each believer the spirit of the believer was ushered into the presence of God, in the third or present Heaven. We have Jesus's promise to rely on for that assurance. He declared to the thief on the cross who, moments earlier, professed his faith in Christ:

LESSON #6: 'The First Church's View of Heaven & Our Newness!'

Luke 23:43 *"Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

When Stephen was being stoned, he anticipated being with Jesus at death. Stephen "Called on the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!'" **Acts 7:59**.

Paul's great desire was *"to depart and be with Christ"* **Philippians 1:23**. The Greek word for 'depart' (analuō) was used in reference to a ship being loosed from its moorings so it might sail away. The 'mooring' that kept Paul tethered to his Earthly life was his commitment to the gospel ministry. But his ultimate desire was to 'sail away' to Christ.

One great key for the First Christians was they accepted and believed the teaching of **II Corinthians**.

II Corinthians 5:6-8.

"Therefore, being of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

There are two important things that are contained in the original Greek language that add to the surety of what Paul writes and made it all that more compelling.

First, the phrases in verse 6, *"we are at home in the body"* and *"we are absent from the Lord,"* are in the present tense, representing continuous action. We might paraphrase verse 6 like this:

"Therefore, being always of good courage and knowing that while we are continuing to live at home in the body, we likewise are continuing to live absent from the Lord." Our bodies are here on Earth, and we are not in the presence of Christ in Heaven, not any way we can be at home with the Lord indicate actions that are completed rather than continuing. We might paraphrase verse 8 like this: *"we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to have completely departed from the body and to be finally at home with the Lord."*

They grasped this truth of Paul, to be present here on Earth is to be absent from there in Heaven and to be absent here is to be present there. Once we leave our Earthly bodies behind—which are nothing more than the cocoon from which a butterfly emerges—our spirits are instantly transported to our Heavenly home where Christ is. They knew that would be exactly what happens.

Why so much confusion today in our Christian World and so little confusion in the World of the first Christians? If you will look closely, we will see that the only Churches that had confusion in the New Testament were the Greek Churches of Thessalonica and Corinth. Greek philosophy was the mind-set of the day and it taught that our personhood is dualistic. The physical (body) and the spiritual (spirit) were incompatible and the person spent a lifetime getting rid of the body and all

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the negative things it did to the person and free the spiritual side. But the early Christians saw that Jesus had physically resurrected and restored both a body and a spirit in physical form that would be a part of the eternity of Jesus. Remember our resurrected bodies will resemble his (made the same). Through the teaching of Jesus and the writing of Paul, the early Christians adopted the idea that the spirit would go immediately to Jesus and would be reunited with an eternal or glorified body at the time set aside by Jesus. But, the thinking of the Greeks from Plato on was that the promise of a rewarding life means you do not have a body and that stood in contrast to the teaching of Jesus, *"the new body is essential to our redemption and not just having a new spirit."* As we saw in Genesis, 'If the body is not redeemed,' mankind is not redeemed, because we are by nature body as well as spirit. We need to accept just as they did and as Jesus taught and Paul wrote, *"A spirit without a body, like a body without a spirit, is not the highest human destiny. Rather, it's a state of unfinished, a mirage differing from the full meaning of being human."*

These Greco ideas began to be more popular as the Church became more secular. Tied to the government of Rome and often co-led by clergy and political figures. The Church tragically accepted the allegorical method of interpretation, all rooted in explicitly unchristian assumptions and it came to rule the church's theology. Even today, many commentaries and books on Heaven often automatically regard all Scripture about Heaven as figurative. Typical of this type of thinking is what Leon Morris says in his commentary on Revelation: "When John speaks of streets paved with gold, of a city whose gates are made of single pearls and the like, we must not understand that the Heavenly City will be material as present Earthly cities." But with what we have studied of the resurrection of mankind and the Earth, why not? An allegorical interpretive approach undercuts Scripture's magnificent revelation that there will be one world, both spiritual and material. The two aspects will coexist in perfect harmony, made by a God who forever linked the spiritual and material worlds by his incarnation, his resurrection, and his ascension. They accepted this as truth and it allowed the First Christians to anticipate real rewards, not something to figure out when we get there.

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LESSON # 7: 'IS CHRIST THE POWERFUL LION OF JUDAH & RULER OF NEW JERUSALEM?'

Welcome to our series of studies on how God defined His final Heaven and Earth when He said: "Behold, I make all things new!" **Revelation 21:5** It was the ultimate gift God gave to His saved believers and the wedding present of Jesus to His bride-the 'saved from all generations.' A gift created by Jesus for His bride and one in which Jesus will rule.

How does the Bible reconcile these two facts about Jesus, Ruler of Heaven and One who's power allowed Heaven to be a reality?

Alexander the Great supposedly said:

*"I Am Not Afraid of an Army of Lions Led by a Sheep.
I Am Afraid of an Army of Sheep Led by a Lion."*

Christian believers realize that God's Word refers to Jesus in a variety of poetic ways. He is called the:

- 'Rose of Sharon' and the 'Lily of the Valley' **Song of Solomon 2:1**
- 'Bright and Morning Star' **Revelation 22:16**
- 'Righteous Branch of David' **Jeremiah 22:16**
- 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah' **Revelation 5:5**

Jesus is Called the '*Lion of Judah*'

Let's look more closely at why Jesus is called the Lion of Judah. It is a reference to a prophetic blessing bestowed on Judah by his father Jacob/Israel.

Genesis 49:8-10

"Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness, who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his."

The interesting word in this prophecy is "Shiloh", here translated, "to whom it belongs". The word has a dual meaning, 1) it can be translated as here "he whose it is", or 2) "whose kingdom it belongs." It is also understood to be a formal name pointing to the Messiah and the peace or

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tranquility He will provide. So, the prophecy of Jesus being the Lion of Judah is a statement of reality that Jesus is powerful enough to defeat all enemies including death itself. The Bible makes it clear that no witch, devil, ravenous wolf or prowling beast can stand against the Lord's Anointed. Greater is He than he that is in the world!

Christ will be the benevolent, loving, and grace-filled leader we will picture in Heaven because He has defeated all the enemies that stand in the way of a perfect, eternal Heaven. His times where He needed to be the Lion of Judah will all be over and He can be the groom for all of His believers. What all has changed through the power and might of Jesus that will eliminate many things from Heaven that are on this present Earth?

How Things in Heaven will be Different from Things on Earth

First, God will be the Temple in Heaven and we will not need another building for worship when God is with us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We will not have a sun or a moon, the light of Heaven will be Jesus Christ Himself, **Revelation 22:5** and night will be eliminated for the light of Jesus will be present all the time. A quick study of **Genesis 1-3** tells us that God created night because the present bodies of humans are comparatively weak and need sleep every night in order to recuperate. Our resurrection bodies will apparently not require recuperation through sleep. Our upgraded bodies will never become fatigued. We will never become run-down (even power-naps will be eliminated), so night becomes entirely unnecessary.

The sea will be eliminated in Heaven and what covers almost three fourths of our present Earth will be just increased areas for dry land and all the beauties that will fill the new Earth. There will not be any separation on the new Earth, fellowship and connection with one another will never be broken.

No more curse upon anything. **Genesis 3:17** following tells us that the Earth was cursed because of the sin of mankind but Jesus defeated sin, death and the grave. The Earth will be restored to a pre-flood paradise; and it will be beautified for an eternal place for God and His children to live. The curse will be lifted off of women and men and they will live eternally with the same freedom they had before sin. The curse will be fulfilled for Satan and he will spend eternity in the lake of fire with those who followed him. **Revelation 20:10**

There will be no pain, death or mourning. That means that there will be no more suffering—physical, emotional, spiritual, or any other. The 'last enemy' (death) will be forever gone, never again to surface among the living **1 Corinthians 15:26; 54-55** Mourning will not even be in Heaven's vocabulary.

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1. God will be the Temple in Heaven
2. Jesus will be the Light of Heaven, no more Sun or Moon
3. Night will be eliminated because, the Light of Jesus present all the time
4. Our upgraded bodies will never become fatigued and will require no sleep
5. No Oceans or Seas in Heaven
6. Earth will no longer be cursed
7. Earth will be restored to pre-flood paradise
8. No Pain Death or Morning

I would like to share with you a list of things that will not be in Heaven compiled by Ron Rhodes in his book "What Happens After Life?", that are a direct result of the actions of our Lord Jesus Christ:

1. We will never have to confess a wrongdoing. With no sin in Heaven, confession will be unnecessary.
2. We will never experience guilt or shame over any action.
3. We will never have to repair our homes or any other items. Nothing will run down.
4. We will never have to defend ourselves before others. Relationships will be perfect in every way.
5. We will never have to apologize. Our actions will be focused on others instead of ourselves.
6. We will never feel isolated or lonely. There will be a perfect expression of love between all the redeemed.
7. We will never have to go through rehabilitation. We will remain whole and healthy for all eternity. There will never be any addictions of any kind.
8. We will never be depressed or discouraged. We will perpetually enjoy the abundant life.
9. We will never become tired or worn-out in Heaven. Our resurrection bodies will be strong and never need recuperation.
10. There will never be offense (given or received) in Heaven. All our words will be void of sin and full of grace.

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11. We will never experience envy or jealousy in Heaven. Our love for others will be utterly complete and perfect, with no unwholesome emotions.
12. We will never experience infidelity in Heaven. The Golden Rule will unwaveringly predominate. Faithfulness will be a hallmark in Heaven.
13. We will never again lust after another person. Our hearts will be pure, with no sin whatsoever
14. We will never experience a misunderstanding with other people. No relationships will ever be broken.
15. We will never have any sense of deprivation. We will never have to earn money or worry about having enough money to survive. We'll have an overabundance of all we need.
16. There will be no wars or bloodshed in Heaven. The sinful attitudes that give rise to wars will be nonexistent.

He goes on to say, "Of course, there are many other things I could mention here. The main point I want to stress is that the absence of all these (and many other) negative things will contribute immensely to our sense of joy and well-being in Heaven. We can't begin to imagine how wonderful it will be."

Contrast Between the New Jerusalem and Earthly Cities

Jesus has made it, so that in view of what will and will not be in Heaven, there is a noted contrast between the New Jerusalem and Earthly cities. Here are a few comparisons:

1. Earthly cities constantly have to be rebuilt or repaired, but no such repair is ever necessary in the New Jerusalem.
2. Believers and unbelievers live in Earthly cities, but only believers will be in the eternal city.
3. Many people go hungry and thirsty in Earthly cities, but no one will hunger or thirst in the New Jerusalem.
4. Earthly cities have crime, but there is perfect righteousness in the eternal city.
5. Earthly cities often have outbreaks of rebellion, but there is no such rebellion, in the Heavenly city. All are in submission to the divine King.
6. People in Earthly cities have many broken relationships, but all relationships in the New Jerusalem are perfect and loving.

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7. Widespread disease is common in Earthly cities, but perfect health is always present in the New Jerusalem.
8. Earthly cities have graveyards, but such are absent in the eternal city. Death will be entirely foreign to our experience in Heaven.
9. Earthly cities get dark at night, but the eternal city is always lighted.

Heaven will be an Eternal Paradise

Jesus has prepared our New Heaven and New Earth with His defeat of all our enemies and His granting to us a new resurrected and eternal body in an eternal city, the New Jerusalem, which is going to be absolutely wonderful, far more so than any human mind could possibly fathom or even begin to imagine.

1 Corinthians 2:9

"However, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him---! "

Let me share in a story how this has changed lives. One of the greatest evangelists to ever live on this planet was Dwight Moody, a man who had an eternal perspective and did not fear what lay beyond death's door. He was excited about his Heavenly destiny—living in the very presence of God. The day Moody entered into glory is a day to remember:

"Someday you will read in the papers that Dwight Moody is dead," the great evangelist exclaimed one hot Sunday in August 1899 to a New York City crowd. 'Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. . .I was born of the flesh in 1837; I was born of the Spirit in 1855. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit shall live forever."

Four months later, exhausted from years of preaching and labor, Dwight Moody was dying. Early in the morning of December 22, Moody's son Will was startled by his father's voice from the bed across the room: 'Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me!' Will hurried to his father's side, 'This is no dream Will. It is beautiful. . .If this is death, it is sweet. God is calling me and I must go. Don't call me back!'

A few hours later Moody revived to find his wife and family gathered around him. He said to his wife, 'I went to the gate of Heaven. Why, it is so wonderful, and I saw the children (Irene and Dwight, who had died in childhood)' Within hours the man who had stirred two nations for Christ took a few final breaths and then entered the gate of Heaven."

Taken from the book, *"What the Bible Really Says: After Life"* by Douglas Connelly.

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Moody was caught up to Heavenly paradise. The word "*paradise*" literally means "*garden of pleasure*" or "*garden of delight*," **Revelation 2:7** makes reference to Heaven as the "*Paradise of God*." The apostle Paul said he "*was caught up to paradise*" and "*heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell*,"

II Corinthians 12:4

Apparently, this paradise of God is so resplendently glorious, so ineffable, so wondrous, that Paul was forbidden to say anything about it to those still in this Earthly realm. But what Paul saw instilled in him an eternal perspective that enabled him to face the trials that lay ahead of him. He could hardly wait to get back there, **Philippians 1:21-23** This is where Moody went and where all saints go the moment their spirits depart the body in death.

Moody's entry into glory is a perfect illustration of the fact that Christ has taken the sting out of death for the believer, **I Corinthians 15:55; Isaiah 25:8; II Timothy 1:10; and Revelation 21:4** The anticipation of entering Heaven is altogether sweet for those who hold Christ dear to their hearts. So, dear saint, fear not that you will die. Your Savior has you in His hands in both death and life.

The Power of Jesus to Create the New Heaven & New Earth

There might be those who would doubt the ability and capacity of Jesus to create the New Heaven and lower it to set on the New Earth for eternity. But let's put the power of Jesus in perspective. If we were to look at the night sky and observe the universe tonight, we would be able to see only about 4,000 stars and then we better be in the high country of Arizona or the light pollution would only allow us to see around 1,000 in Phoenix. But a giant telescope would reveal that there are 10 to the power of 25 stars that is, 10 million-billion-billion stars in the known universe. And who but God knows how many stars exist beyond the reach of our finite telescopes? As one Christian scholar put it, 'Since God is infinite, and He is the creator of the universe, there is no reason to assume that either our telescopes or our relativistic mathematics have penetrated to its boundaries.' (Henry Morris in his book, "*The Biblical Basis for Modern Science*."

Not only is the grandeur of the created universe evident in the number of stars, but in their incredible distances from each other. Consider the following astounding facts about the vastness of the universe:

- The moon is only 211,453 miles away, and you could walk to it in 27 years. A ray of light travels at 18,000 miles per second, so a beam of light would reach the moon in only one-and-a-half seconds.
- If we could travel at that speed, we would reach Venus in two minutes and eighteen seconds because it's only 26 million miles away.

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- After four-and-one-half minutes we would have passed Mercury, which is 50 million miles away.
- We could travel to Mars in four minutes and twenty-one seconds because it is only 34 million miles away.
- The next stop would be Jupiter, 367 million miles away—and it would take us 35 minutes.
- Saturn is twice as far as Jupiter—790 million miles—and it would take one hour and eleven seconds.
- Eventually we would pass Uranus, Neptune, and finally Pluto, 2.7 billion miles away. Having gotten that far, we still haven't left our solar system.
- The North Star is 400 hundred billion miles away, but that still isn't very far compared with known space.
- The star called Betelgeuse is 880 quadrillion miles from us and has a diameter of 250 million miles, which is greater than the Earth's orbit around the sun.
- Where did it all come from? Who made it? It can't be an accident. Someone made it, and the Bible tells us it was Jesus Christ.

Is not the stellar universe indescribably amazing? And is it not astounding to realize that Christ—the One who constructed this Earth and the entire Universe **John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2**, is the Builder of the Heavenly city in which we will dwell for all eternity? **John 14:1-3**

The Most Elaborate Description of the New Jerusalem

Perhaps the most elaborate description of the Heavenly city contained in the Bible is **Revelation 21**, where we read all about the New Jerusalem. Randy Alcorn in his classic book, "Heaven" makes this interesting observation regarding what this real city might be like.

"Everyone knows what a city is, a place with buildings, streets, and residences occupied by people and subject to a common government. Cities have inhabitants, visitors, bustling activity, cultural events, and gatherings involving music, the arts, education, religion, entertainment, and athletics. If the capital city of the New Earth doesn't have these defining characteristics of a city, it would seem misleading for Scripture to repeatedly call it a city."

Randy Alcorn

That makes a lot of sense to me. You and I will have physically resurrected bodies, that is, real bodies. As real persons with real bodies, it is logical that we would forever live in a real city, the New Jerusalem **Revelation 21:2**

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Since Jesus is the Lion of Judah, all enemies of God and His children will be defeated, sin will be eliminated, grace will abound and Heaven will be perfect. Since Jesus is also the ruler and husband of New Jerusalem the love, care, and life of each one of us will also be perfect. It would not have been Heaven if Jesus had not been both--Lion and Groom.

LESSON # 8: 'WILL OUR SINS KEEP US FROM BEING BRAND-NEW?'

"Behold, I make all things new!" **Revelation 21:5**. It was the final gift God gave to all of His saved believers and the wedding present of Jesus to His bride, the 'saved from all generations.' One of the great concerns of some believers has been:

1. Am I really fit for Heaven; I have done some very sinful things?
2. Will I be capable of sinning in Heaven and ruin my eternal life?

Am I Really Fit for Heaven; I Have Done Some Very Sinful Things?

"Am I really fit for Heaven or have I done some very sinful things that eliminate me from being a part of Heaven?"

Let's take the "I" out of the question and ask if God is capable of eliminating all the effects of sin and the fall of humankind in our resurrected eternal bodies? The answer is of course yes—absolutely, without a doubt—YES! I want us to look again at that wonderful scripture in **I Corinthians 15:35-58** in light of this question: I have capitalized the parts of this Scripture that speak directly to this question:

I Corinthians 15:35-58

*But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another. **THERE ARE ALSO HEAVENLY BODIES AND THERE ARE EARTHLY BODIES; BUT THE SPLendor OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES IS ONE KIND, AND THE SPLendor OF THE EARTHLY BODIES IS ANOTHER.** The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. **SO, IT WILL BE WITH THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. THE BODY THAT IS SOWN IS PERISHABLE, IT IS RAISED IMPERISHABLE; IT IS SOWN IN DISHONOR, IT IS RAISED IN GLORY; IT IS SOWN IN WEAKNESS, IT IS RAISED IN POWER; IT IS SOWN A NATURAL BODY, IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY. IF THERE IS A NATURAL BODY, THERE IS ALSO A SPIRITUAL BODY.** So, it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being", the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. **THE SPIRITUAL DID NOT COME FIRST, BUT THE NATURAL, AND AFTER THAT THE SPIRITUAL. THE FIRST MAN WAS OF THE DUST THE EARTHLY MAN, SO ARE THOSE WHO ARE OF THE***

EARTH; AND AS IS THE HEAVENLY MAN, SO ALSO ARE THOSE WHO ARE OF HEAVEN. AND JUST AS WE HAVE BORNE THE IMAGE OF THE EATHLY MAN, SO SHALL WE BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY MAN. I DECLARE TO YOU, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THAT FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, NOR DOES THE PERISHABLE INHERIT THE IMPERISHABLE. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 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. **FOR THE PERISHABLE MUST CLOTHE ITSELF WITH THE IMPERISHABLE, AND THE MORTAL WITH IMMORTALITY. 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."** "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" **THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND THE POWER OF SIN IS THE LAW. BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, HE GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST.** Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, 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."

As Christian scholars Thomas Ice and Timothy Crimny said, "In our resurrection bodies, the effects of the Fall and of sin will be removed. The bodies will be real but without the physical limitations that we now experience and without the effects of disease, disability, tragedy, or sin. There will be no more gray hairs, no more cholesterol buildup, no more cancer or heart disease, no more wrinkles on the face, and no more memories of the sins that we committed on Earth. Our bodies will no longer be susceptible to injury or disease, and there will be no allergies in Heaven. Our bodies will involve absolute perfection mentally, physically, and spiritually from the top of our heads to the bottom of our feet. Sin and death will be a thing of the past and our sin will be no more real to us anymore than our death will be. They will all be a thing of our past. Essentially, when we have the mind of Christ, which will be a part of our eternal body. We will also have the mind of Christ about sin. We will realize that God has forgiven our sin, why else would we be in Heaven with Him and He has remembered our sins no more."

Hebrews 8:12;

"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Hebrews 10:16-18

"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." "And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary."

Jeremiah 31:33

"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

What Changes in Heaven? We Do

God has always forgiven and forgotten our sins. We are the ones who will finally have God's perspective and will realize that our sins have been removed by God from His mind and can be and will be removed from our mind. We will have an eternal perspective that will allow us to accept that we are forgiven, innocent people because of what Jesus has done for us; that we have been born again both in spirit and in our life; and that God has forgiven and removed every confessed sin and fault that we have given to Him.

Paul compares our present body to a tent and our Heavenly body to a building.

II Corinthians 5:1-4

"For we know that if the Earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our Heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our Heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."

One commentator paraphrased Paul's words this way: "Don't take your physical situation too seriously. Your body is fine to camp out in for a while, but before long, the tent will begin to sag: a stake or two will be lost along the way; seams will begin to tear." He then gets to the heart of the issue when he says: "Our Father is so good to gently remind us every time we look in the mirror that we are rushing toward eternity. Paul was one who truly understood that his body was only a temporary dwelling."

Like Paul we groan in this present body and present life. Why? Because our bodies are burdened by sin and our remembrances of sin, sickness, sorrow and death. Commentator Albert Barnes explains it this way: "The sense is. . . that the body is subjected to so many pains—physical and mental—and so much suffering, as to make us earnestly desire to be invested with that body which shall be free from all susceptibility to suffering." Literally, we groan because our 'tents' are showing signs of use, our bodies are wearing out, and we have a tendency to remember the negatives of our life. So, how does God keep our spirits up and looking for this eternal body which will not be filled with memories of our failures and our frailty?

II Corinthians 5:5, right after the discussion about our Earthly bodies being no more permanent than a tent, **the Bible says**,

II Corinthians 5:5

"Now the one who has fashioned us for His very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come."

It is this very specific promise from God that He has given His Holy Spirit as a 'deposit' of what is yet to come. The word 'deposit' was used among the Greeks to refer to a pledge that guaranteed final possession of an item. It was sometimes used of an engagement ring which acted as a guarantee that the marriage would take place. The Holy Spirit is a 'deposit' in the sense that His presence in our lives guarantees our eventual total transformation and glorification into the likeness of Christ's glorified resurrection body.

Philippians 3:21

"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."

The Holy Spirit in us is virtually a guarantee of what is to come.

This helps us to maintain an eternal perspective. I would ask you to ask yourself, why has this series resonated so well with you about your future. It is not what you had thought about yourself in Heaven, where Heaven is, or even if the Earth could be present. I would suggest that the Holy Spirit in you is assuring you that the Scripture is making it clear that you will have a physical eternal body; you will live in a giant city called Heaven that Jesus has made for all of His believers; and it will rest upon a newly created Earth that will be able to last for eternity.

Will Our New Eternal Physical Bodies Ever Wear Out?

It is true that our present bodies are wearing down. They have been infected by a fatal disease known as sin. One day, they will simply cease functioning (they will fall down like a flimsy tent). By contrast our resurrection bodies in Heaven will never again wear down, never again get sick, never again die, and never again dwell on all the mistakes we have made on Earth. They will instead be as solid and sturdy as a building. Pastor Paul Powell tells us that "there will be no blind eyes in Heaven, no withered arms or legs in Heaven, no pain or agony there, tears will be gone, death will be gone, separation will be gone, and this will be the ultimate healing. This will be true not only for us physically but also mentally and spiritually. Then and only then, will we be free at last." Keeping this truth before our minds can really put "wind in our sails" when we seem to be stagnating on our sea of suffering.

How Can We Not Have Mourning in Heaven?

I want to deal with one more subject before we leave this area of Earthly sin having a hold on our anticipation of Heaven. That is a question that I have been asked many times, "How can we not have mourning in Heaven when we know that some of our family members and friends are not there with us. How could we not mourn, knowing that some are suffering in hell?"

1. First, I think part of the answer may be found in the fact that God can selectively purge some of our memories so that we do not think of anyone who might be in hell.

Isaiah 65:17 says

"See, I will create new Heavens and a new Earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

Just as the old Heaven and the old Earth will not be remembered when we live in the new Heaven and the new Earth, other things not remembered may include loved ones who rejected Christ and are not in Heaven with us. Such purging would be an act of grace and mercy on behalf of the saints in Heaven.

I want to be careful to emphasize that I do not think this verse means that God will purge every memory we have of our past. After all, many of our memories of the past are good memories-including the memory of how we became Christians and how we came to understand that Christ died for our sins. The fact that Christ's resurrected body retains the crucifixion scars will apparently serve as an eternal reminder of the sacrifice He had to pay for our salvation.

John 20:27

"Then He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'"

We will continue many of our present relationships in Heaven, so it makes good sense that we would retain precious memories about those relationships.

2. Second, we must remember that God has promised that He will take away all pain and remove all our tears.

Revelation 21:4

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

It is in His hands. It is His responsibility. We may not be fully aware of how God will do it, but we can rest assured that He has the power and ability to do as He has promised. It is a

concrete fact that we will be serenely happy in Heaven. God has promised it, and He will bring it about.

3. Finally, in the Heavenly city, we will each be aware of the full justice of all of God's decisions. We will clearly see that those who are in hell are there precisely because they rejected God and chose to live a life that took them right to hell. We will see things clearly from the divine perspective. We will see that God's divine love does not coerce people against their wills into the kingdom of God. God invites all but many reject the invitation. Those who reject the invitation are eternally kept from Heaven, and all in Heaven will fully understand God's perfect justice. It is good to be reminded that God has a series of punishments for those consigned to hell, **Matthew 10:15**, **Luke 12:47-48**; and:

Matthew 16:27

"For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what they have done."

This will be for good and bad people and include good and bad rewards. This assures us that the Hitlers of human history will suffer more than, an atheistic moralist. God is perfectly wise and just. He knows what He is doing! You and I can rest with quiet assurance in God's wisdom and justice when it comes to judging unbelievers. If Jesus could save a murdering terrorist while dying on the cross—He has the ability and knowledge to know who has sought Him out for salvation and who has not. Ultimately, we have to take God at His Word. He has promised there will be no more mourning, pain, or tears in Heaven. He will bring it about.

Now let's look at the second question:

Will I Be Capable of Sinning in Heaven & Ruin My Eternal Life?

The questioning reasoning has been—Heaven will be perfect, but a sinless environment doesn't mean we can't sin; Adam and Eve proved that. They lived in a sinless place, yet they sinned. Even pointing out they were tempted by Satan is not enough. The reasoning continues, Satan originally was a perfect being living in a perfect environment and beholding only to God Himself. Not only was there no sin in Heaven; there was no sin in the universe. Yet Satan sinned. Heaven's perfection, it seems, doesn't guarantee there will be no future sin. Some people also argue that being human demands free choice, and therefore we must have the capacity to choose evil in Heaven. If that's true, then we could experience another Fall. Let's take a Biblical look.

Can We Know We Won't Sin?

Christ promises on the New Earth:

Revelation 21:4

"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"

Romans 6:23 says, *"The wages of sin is death"*

So, the promise of no more death is a promise of no more sin. Those who will never die can never sin, since sinners always die. Sin causes mourning, crying, and pain. If those will never occur again, then sin can never occur again.

Revelation 21:4 ends, *"For the old order of things has passed away."*

What follows the word 'for' explains Heaven's lack of death, mourning, crying, and pain. These are part of an old order of things that will forever be behind us. The sin that caused them will be no longer. We need not fear a second Fall.

More basic, Scripture emphasizes that Christ died once to deal with sin and will never again need to die **Hebrews 9:26-28; 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18**. We will have the righteousness of God **II Corinthians 5:21**. We won't sin in Heaven for the same reason God doesn't. He cannot sin. Our eternal inability to sin has been purchased by Christ's blood.

Hebrews 10:14

"For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

On the cross, validated by His resurrection, our Savior purchased our perfection for all time.

Revelation 21:27 says,

"Nothing impure will ever enter it (the New Jerusalem), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Heaven will be completely devoid of evil, with no threat of becoming tainted. Three times in the final two chapters of Revelation, we are told that those still in their sins have no access to Heaven and never will. **Revelation 21:8, 27**; and **Revelation 22:15**. Evil will have no footing in Heaven and no leverage to affect us.

Will We Ever Be Tempted in Heaven?

One final thought on this subject of our sin and Heaven: will we ever be tempted? Will we be tempted to turn our backs on Christ? No. What would tempt us? Innocence is the absence of something (sin), while righteousness is the presence of something (God's holiness.) God will never

withdraw from us His holiness; therefore, we cannot sin. We'll never forget the ugliness of sin. People who have experienced severe burns are not tempted to walk into a bonfire. Having known death and life, we who are experiencing life in Heaven will never want to go back to death. We will never be deceived into thinking God is withholding something good from us or that sin is in our best interests. Satan won't have access to us, but even if he did, we would not be tempted. We will know not only what is but also what sin is, or was. We will always know sin's costs. Every time we see the scarred hands of King Jesus, we will remember. We will see sin as God does. It will be stripped of its illusions and will be utterly unappealing.

Because our hearts will be pure and we will see people as they truly are, every relationship in Heaven will be pure. We will all be faithful to the love of our life King Jesus. We could not do anything behind his back even if we wanted to. But we will never want to.

We will love everyone, men and women, but we will be 'IN LOVE ONLY WITH JESUS'. We will never be tempted to degrade, use, or idolize each other. We will never believe the outrageous lie that our deepest needs can be met in any person but Jesus. We will have been made perfect by Christ, and we will be unable to be anything less than perfect.

LESSON # 9: 'HOW THE NEW COVENANT SPELLS OUT OUR RESIDENCY IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH?'

The New Heaven and New Earth is the final destination of all who have followed God as His believers and it is the wedding present of Jesus to all the saved from all generations. We have seen that believers will inhabit this eternal Heaven with eternal spiritual bodies. Heaven itself will be a tremendous City, a cube of 1,400 miles and it will rest upon the rebuilt eternal New Earth.

Is Heaven Just a Gift for Christians or Is It Also a Gift for Believing Israelites?

Did Jesus abolish the Old Testament covenant and introduce a new covenant of grace? Is the covenant based on the law gone forever? The Bible gives many clues and answers but the statements of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31 outlining the New Covenant and quoted by the author of Hebrews gives us a very definitive answer to the question: 'Who will be in Heaven?' It has nothing to do with being in the right denomination and everything to do with being in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. The Scripture says:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, "know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

When our Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, communion, or the Eucharist, He said.

Luke 22:20b

"This cup is the new covenant of my blood, which is poured out for you."

This seems to be a reference to the New Covenant that Jeremiah wrote about that would be extended to both the Judahites, (Jews) and the Israelites, (the 10 nations that spilt off of Judah and kept the name Israel.) This would mean that Jesus saw the future restoration of Israel as a nation and also the future time when Israelites would be believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

LESSON #9: 'How the New Covenant Spells Out Our Residency in the New Heaven?'

This is not just a renewal of the agreement between Yahweh and Israel like the covenant with King Josiah had been in **II Kings 22-23**; but a brand-new covenant initiated by the God of Israel. It is prophetic and points to a time *"the days are surely coming"* in the future when the Lord will put His law within the Israelites, write in on their hearts, and be their God forever in the restored city of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 31:35-40

"This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar--the LORD Almighty is his name: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will Israel ever cease being a nation before me." This is what the LORD says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD. "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. 39 The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished."

This change of heart for the Nation of Israel will come because they will remember God as the compassionate and forgiving God who directed and saved the Patriarchs of Israel. This does not mean that God will eliminate the Sinai covenant at that time, Law of Moses, for God will indeed write the law within their heart. In the next chapter of Jeremiah God says that this new covenant would be everlasting. We see through the death and sacrifice of the life of Jesus this new covenant was also sealed by blood, the blood of Christ.

The first five books of the Old Testament are called the Torah by the Jews but are often just translated "The Law" in the books and minds of Christians. That is a shame because Torah is taken from the root *"yara"* which means to "throw, cast, or shoot an arrow at the target." So, Torah should be properly understood as "the teaching or instruction which lets you shoot your arrow right in the target." So, the Torah is an integral part of the Bible that allows it to be harmonious with the rest of the Scriptures and relevant to all ages and cultures. Actually, God's Torah recorded in the Pentateuch in particular has been the building block of all covenants found throughout biblical history and it is consummated in the New Testament.

This was also the message of Moses in the last sermon he gave to the children of Israel before he climbed Mt. Nebo to see the Promised Land and to be taken home by God, **Deuteronomy 30**. It was also the message of Isaiah (**Isaiah 55** and **61**) where Isaiah says because of the love of David, God would make an everlasting covenant with Israel and that Israel would be a nation that drew

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other nations to that same covenant, **Jeremiah 3:17, Zechariah 8:20-23**. This truth was spoken by Jesus in **John** when Jesus told the Samaritan woman:

John 4:22

"You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."

Paul shares how this happened in:

Ephesians 2:11-13

"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Paul goes ahead to tell them how this happened:

Ephesians 2:18

"For through him (Jesus) we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

And then gives the result of the work of Christ in expanding the covenant to include the Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:19-21

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."

It is coming to a time of completion when the unity will be obvious and Paul explained in his great passage about the fate of Jews in the end times, **Romans 9-11** And so, all Israel will be saved: as it is written,

Romans 11:25-27

"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

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This new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ has become the very hope for every one of us. Fellowship with God is the cry of the human heart and the yearning of the soul. So, we see the call for this rewarding fellowship in the words of the Psalmist who says,

Psalms 42:1-2

"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God."

God Fellowshiped with His People Throughout History

Throughout human history, God has fellowshiped with His people in various ways. How exciting it must have been for the patriarchs, men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to see God appear to them in the form of *"the angel of the Lord"*, **Genesis 22:11-15**. He appeared to Moses in a burning bush and conversed with him, **Exodus 3:2** When God delivered His people from enslavement in Egypt. He led them through the wilderness and the desert in the form of a pillar of cloud during the daytime hours and a pillar of fire during the night, **Exodus 13:21-22**. In New Testament times, God directly lived among His people through Jesus, **John 1:1, 1:14**. Jesus, although God, was able to become human flesh so that in His incarnation, He was 100 % God and 100 % man. So, Jesus could tell His followers.

John 14:9 *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."*

In the times since the ascension of Jesus back to Heaven, God makes Himself present to us through the Holy Spirit. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, **1 Corinthians 3:16**. God dwells in every believer just as much as God dwelt in the temple in the Old Testament times. It only gets better as the day will come when we enter Heaven, either on an individual journey or with the raptured believers. Then we will have unhindered, full access to God and will behold Him face to face. It is a promise of the Bible: John says in:

Revelation 22:4 *"God's people will see his face."*

Paul said in:

1 Corinthians 13:12,

"Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

The Psalmist had already written,

Psalms 17:15 *"As for me, I shall behold your face."*

Often when we think of Heaven, we anticipate the reality that we will live forever and that death will be finally defeated. These are wonderful promises, but nothing will be greater and more

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satisfying than the reality that we will fellowship with God face to face with the saved from all nations and all generations under the new covenant of God.

What Does Fellowship with God Mean for Each of Us?

In the Garden of Eden, God came down to Earth, the home of mankind, whenever he wished, **Genesis 3:8**. On the New Earth, God and saved humanity will be able to come to each other whenever they wish. We will not have to leave home to visit God, nor will God leave home to visit us. God and mankind will live together and forever in the same home, in the New Heaven located on the New Earth. God frequently declares this truth in Scripture:

Leviticus 26:11-12

"I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people."

Ezekiel 37:27

"My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people."

II Corinthians 6:16

"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Let's shift to the terminology of the Bible when it speaks of this eternal blend of God and God's people in Heaven. The Bible says it will be the marriage of God and Man, Heaven and Earth.

The marriage of the God of Heaven with the people of Earth will also bring the marriage of Heaven and Earth. There will not be two universes, one the primary home of God and angels, the other the primary home of humanity. Nothing will separate us from God, and nothing will separate Earth and Heaven. Once God and mankind dwell together, there will be no difference between Heaven and Earth. Earth will become Heaven and it will truly be Heaven on Earth. The New Earth will be God's dwelling place. This is why we can call the New Earth "Heaven", for where God makes His home is Heaven. The purpose of God will at last be achieved:

Ephesians 1:10

"To bring all things in Heaven and on Earth together under one head, even Christ."

In fact, there may not be two universes now. The intermediate Heaven where God is now does not have to be in another universe but simply as a part of our universe that we are currently unable to see. Just as blind people cannot see the world, even though it exists all around them, we may not be able to see Heaven in our fallen world and condition. Is it possible that before sin and the curse, Adam and Eve saw clearly what is now invisible to us? Is it possible that Heaven itself is but inches

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away from us? Does death restore a visual insight we once had? Theology professor, Dallas Willard says:

“When we pass through what we call death, we do not lose the world. Indeed, we may see it for the first time as it really is.”

**Dr. Dallas Willard, 'The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God.' Pg 392*

Consider the Biblical statement: “God Himself will be with them.: **Revelation 21:3**. Why does it emphatically say God himself? Because God will not merely send us a delegate. He will actually come to live among us on the New Earth. As Steve Lawson explains:

“God’s glory will fill and permeate the entire new Heaven, not just one centralized place. Thus, wherever we go in Heaven, we will be in the immediate presence of the full glory of God. Wherever we go, we will enjoy the complete manifestation of God’s presence. Throughout all eternity we will never be separated from direct, unhindered fellowship with God.”

**F. Steven Lawson, 'Heaven Help Us', Pg 142*

God’s glory will be the air we breathe, and we will always breathe deeper to gain more of it. In the new universe, we will never be able to travel far enough to leave God’s presence. If we could, we would never want to. However great the wonder of Heaven, God Himself is Heaven’s greatest prize. Father Boudreau writes:

“The beatitude of Heaven consists essentially in the vision, love, and enjoyment of God Himself.”

**J. Boudreau, 'The Happiness of Heaven', Pg 95-96*

Many contemporary approaches to Heaven either leave God out or put him in a secondary role. “*The Five People You Meet in Heaven*” a best-selling novel, portrays a man who feels lonely and unimportant. He dies, goes to Heaven, and meets five people who tell him his life really mattered. He discovers forgiveness and acceptance. It sounds good, but the book fails to present Jesus Christ as the object of saving faith. Instead, it portrays a Heaven that isn’t about God, but about us. A Heaven that’s not about God’s glory, but our healing. And a Heaven that’s not about God’s unfathomable grace to undeserving sinners, but our goodness and self-importance. Man is the cosmic center; God plays a supporting role. This sort of Heaven, of which the Bible knows nothing, is a place of therapeutic self-preoccupation rather than preoccupation with the person of Christ.

God Brings the City of ‘New Jerusalem’ with Him to the New Heaven & New Earth

Let’s look at this more since it is a new covenant that God has instituted. Not only will God come to dwell with us on Earth, he will also bring with him the New Jerusalem, an entire city for people with structures, streets, walls, rivers, and trees that is now in some stage in the intermediate Heaven. If you have ever seen a house being relocated, you appreciate what a massive undertaking

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it is. God will relocate an entire city, the largest there has ever been, Heaven's capital city, the New Jerusalem, from Heaven to Earth. It's a vast complex containing hundreds of millions of residences. He will bring with it Heaven's human inhabitants and angels as well. Jesus told His disciples in **John 14** that He was going to go build a place for all of them and 50 years later, the author of **Hebrews** says, He has prepared a city for them, speaking about all the Old Testament saints that line the Hall of Faith

Hebrews 11:16

"Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

This suggests that complete or nearly complete the New Heaven is there in the intermediate Heaven. I personally believe that God will let everyone occupy Heaven at the same time, so I feel it is empty now, but there is no Scripture that says that. Imagine the thrill of beholding and exploring God's City together!

God's Center of Government will be the New Earth

God's new center of government will be the New Earth. This will be the ultimate answer to the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 6:10 *"Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven"*

God's will shall be done on the New Earth as it now is in Heaven. Indeed, the New Earth shall be a part of Heaven, for the veil between the worlds, first torn apart by the cross and Christ's resurrection, will be permanently removed. There will be no barrier between Earth and Heaven or between believers and God.

The Presence of God is the Essence of Heaven

Many books and programs these days talk about messages from the spirit realm, supposedly from people who have died and now speak through channelers or mediums. They claim to have come from Heaven to interact with loved ones, yet almost never do they talk about God or express wonder at seeing Jesus. But no one who had actually been in Heaven would neglect to mention what Scripture shows is the main focus of Heaven. If you had spent an evening dining with a king, you wouldn't come back and talk about the place settings. When the apostle John was shown Heaven and wrote about it to the church, he recorded the details, but first and foremost, from beginning to end, he kept talking about Jesus.

The 1998 movie 'What Dreams May Come' portrays Heaven as a beautiful place, yet shows it is lonely because a man's wife isn't there. Remarkably, something else is entirely absent from the movie's depiction of Heaven, God. Going to Heaven without God would be like a bride going on her

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honeymoon without her groom. A Heaven without God would be like a palace without a king. If there's no king, there's no palace. If there is no God, there is no Heaven. It is clear wherever God is that's Heaven and wherever God is not, that's Hell. The presence of God is the essence of Heaven. Because God is beautiful beyond measure, if we know nothing more than that Heaven was God's dwelling place, it would be more than enough. The best part of life on the New Earth will be enjoying God's presence, having him actually dwell among us.

Revelation 21:3-4

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.' He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

In the New Jerusalem, there will be no temple; everyone will be allowed unimpeded access into God's presence. Heaven's greatest miracle will be our access to God. In the New Jerusalem, we will be able to come physically, through wide open gates, that never close, to God's throne.

The New Covenant of God Clarifies Concerns About Judgement

With the New Covenant God has also clarified many of the concerns we have about judgment and has answered them. Our sins will be forgiven and forgotten by God at the time we are forgiven by Him, when we ask for His forgiveness and give Him our sins. But as we saw last week for us to forget our sins and remember them no more, which God has already done, we may need our eternal glorified body. We will need to see our sins and our forgiveness more through the mind of Christ. But for the one who never repents and asks God to forgive their sins, they shall forever remain in their sins and unforgiven they will share in an eternity of punishment and not an eternity of blessing. They will receive the reward they have worked to get. If they served the world and not Christ, then they will spend eternity with the unforgiven world; but if they have received Christ and let Him direct their life; they will spend eternity with God in Heaven. Clearly, Heaven will not be for everyone.

Let's examine judgement at the end of our life and how the Bible describes it. Every person from the time of Adam to the present will have to appear before the divine-Judge who *"will judge the living and the dead," II Tim 4:1*. No one escapes God's judgement. As the writer of Hebrews declared:

Hebrews 9:27 *"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgement."*

Notice the writer doesn't limit the generic term "men" (meaning human beings) to only certain individuals or groups. Everyone will face God's scrutiny of his or her life.

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However, there is not one single judgment for all humankind. Instead, unbelievers will stand before Christ at what is called the great white throne judgment. This judgment is for all unbelievers since the time of Adam and will occur at the end of the 1,000-year reign of Christ over the Earth. It will result in condemnation-being cast into the lake of fire **Revelation 20:11-15**. Believers will appear before a very different judgment, *"the judgment seat of Christ, II Corinthians 5:10*. It will be a judgment geared towards honoring and commending those the Lord deems to have served Him faithfully in their brief existence on Earth.

Everyone who has ever lived will experience one of these two judgments and the Bible is very clear who will be involved in the great white throne judgement, it will be everyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We would say everyone who has not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior and been saved. But for those whose name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, there will not ever be a judgment of 'condemnation' but only a judgement of 'commendation'. Everyone who is judged at the judgement seat of Christ will be a saved person who will live eternally in Heaven. No one will appear at this judgment who hasn't already been declared *"not guilty"* by God. The term used in theology is justification. So, Paul wrote:

Romans 5:1

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ."

We need to remember that same teacher that gave a failing grade to a student with inferior work, also gave an 'A' or even a '100 percent' to the student who had done correct work. Judgment produces both good and bad results.

But when we trust in Christ for our salvation God credits our *"righteousness"* account with the perfection of His Son, erasing our debt and eliminating any future penalty. That means Christians never have to worry about a future judgment for the sins already paid for by Christ. Paul assures us that:

Romans 8:1 *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

However, being justified does not exempt us from God's evaluation of our lives after we are forgiven for our sins. Paul states:

II Corinthians 5:10

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what each has done, whether good or bad."

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Notice, Paul said, "*We must all appear.*" I've checked the Greek text and "*all*" means "*all!*" Every believer will appear before Christ's judgment bench, there are no exceptions, exclusions, or exemptions. Each of us will appear before the Lord for an evaluation to receive whatever reward is appropriate.

REMEMBER:

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST IS FOR THE COMMENDATION OF BELIEVERS.

WHILE THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT IS FOR THE CONDEMNATION OF UNBELIEVERS.

No one will experience both judgements, but will be divided by being a believer or an unbeliever. This is why Paul told us:

II Corinthians 5:9

"Make it your ambition, whether at home, living here on Earth, or absent, gone from the Earthly body, to be pleasing to Him."

LESSON # 10: 'HOW CAN WE ADAPT TO A PLACE THAT IS ALL NEW AND DIFFERENT?'

Welcome to the final lesson on our series of how God defined His final Heaven and Earth when He said: *"Behold, I make all things new!"* **Revelation 21:5** It is the final destination that God has planned for His believers of all centuries. It is literally our final home. But some wonder if it will be difficult to adjust to a new and different environment and will life be so different that it is upsetting or confusing? Well, the Bible is not silent on those great questions, so let's find the answers.

Sometimes when we look at this world's breathtaking beauty, standing in a gorgeous place where the trees, flowers, rivers and mountains are wondrous, we feel a twinge of disappointment. Why? Because we know we are going to leave this behind. We might say, "Well, this world is not my home," but if we were honest, we might add, "But part of me sure wishes it was."

What we really want is to live forever in a world with all the beauty and none of the ugliness, a world without sin, death, the curse of sin, and all the personal and relational problems and disappointments they create. Sadly, those who primarily emphasize our citizenship in Heaven often tend to minimize our connection to the Earth and our destiny to live on it and rule it. They often tend to make us think of eternity as a non-Earthly spiritual state in which Earth is but a distant memory, if we remember it at all.

Citizenship in Heaven is Connected to Living on a New Earth

This faulty theology and way of looking at the work of God accuses God of failure. Because it assumes He will never accomplish a lasting state of righteousness on Earth, even the Millennium Rule of Jesus ends in rebellion. Instead, he finally has to resort to making mankind less human, just a spirit in Heaven and destroying the Earth He made. God's magnificent sovereign plan of the ages is reduced, in people's mind, to a gigantic failed experiment.

To correct the heresy of believing God's plan has failed we need to study the biblical teaching of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Bible teacher, Rene` Pache writes:

"The emphasis today on the present Heaven is clearly rest, cessation from Earth's battles and comforts from Earth's sufferings. But in the Bible the future Heaven is centered around activity and expansion, serving Christ and reigning with Him. The scope is much larger: the great city with its twelve gates, people coming and going, and nations to rule. In other words, the emphasis today in the present Heaven is on the absence of Earth's negatives, while in the future Heaven it is the presence of Earth's positives magnified

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many times through the power and glory of the resurrected bodies on a resurrected Earth, free at last from sin and shame and all that would hinder both joy and achievement.”

Rene` Pache, The Future Life, pg. 68.

Recognizing God's plans for the New Heaven to sit upon and incorporate the New Earth into our eternal dwelling place corrects a multitude of errors. It frees us to love the World that God has made without guilt, while saying no to the world corrupted by sin. It reminds us that God Himself gave us the Earth, gave us a love for the Earth, and will delight to give us the New Earth.

Will the New Earth Be Unfamiliar When We First See It?

When we open our eyes for the first time on the New Earth, will it be Unfamiliar, or will we recognize it as home? As human beings, we long for home, even as we step out to explore undiscovered new frontiers. We long for the familiarity of the old, even as we crave the innovation of the new. Think of all the things we love that are new: moving into a new house; the smell of a new car, the feel of a new book; a new movie; a new song; the pleasure of a new friend; the enjoyment of a new pet; new presents on our birthday; staying in a nice new hotel; arriving at a new school or a new workplace; welcoming a new grandchild, or even a new great-great grandchild; eating new foods that suit our tastes. We love newness, yet in each case, what is new is attached to something familiar. We don't really like things that are utterly foreign to us. Instead, we appreciate fresh and innovative variations on things that we already know and love. So, when we hear that in Heaven, we will have new bodies and live on a New Earth, that's how we should understand the word 'New', which is a restored and perfected version of our familiar bodies; our familiar Earth renewed and perfected; and our familiar relationships.

A common misunderstanding about the New Heaven and the New Earth is that they will be unfamiliar. But that couldn't be further from the truth. The following list compares widespread assumptions about Heaven with biblically based characteristics of Heaven.

ASSUMPTIONS OF HEAVEN

Non-Earthly
Unfamiliar, Otherworldly
Disembodied
Foreign
Leaving Favorite Things
No Time and Space
Static, Boring

BIBLE DESCRIBES HEAVEN

New Earth
Familiar, Earthly
Resurrected Bodies
Home with All Comforts
Retaining the Good
Time and Space
Dynamic

LESSON #10: 'How Can We Adapt to a Place That is All New & Different?'

ASSUMPTIONS OF HEAVEN**BIBLE DESCRIBES HEAVEN**

Strange & Unknown

Both Familiar and New

Nothing to Do-But Float on Clouds

Worship, Work, Friends

No Learning - Instant Knowledge

An Eternity for Learning

Boring

Fascinating

Loss of Desire

Constant Fulfilled Desire

Absence of Terrible - Not Much Else

Presence of Wonderful

The last one means, an assumed Heaven is not the presence of things we desire, but Biblical Heaven says, it is everything we desire and nothing we do not want or desire.

What we have assumed about Heaven has reduced it to a place we look forward to only as an alternative to an intolerable existence here on the present Earth: body worn out and constantly sick, people not righteous or just, life unfair and frustrating. Only the elderly, disabled, suffering, and persecuted might desire the Heaven that many imagine. But the Bible portrays life in God's presence, in our resurrected bodies, in a resurrected universe, as so exciting and compelling that even the youngest and healthiest of us should daydream about being there.

No wonder Satan doesn't want us to learn the truth about Heaven. If we fall in love with the place and look forward to the future that God has for us, we'll fall more in love with God, and we'll be emboldened to follow him with greater resolve and perspective. The moment we set foot on the New Earth, and enter the New Heaven, we will know it is exactly where we belong. But we don't have to wait until we die to learn about Heaven.

As a bride lives daily in anticipation of the bridegroom's arrival, coming to take her to the house He has built for her, we should think daily about Jesus and about Heaven. Instead of feeling abandoned, the bride feels honored because she knows that she will live in the home the bridegroom has lovingly constructed with her in mind. She may experience some loneliness and difficulty, but she knows He hasn't forgotten her and what He's doing for her will assure her eternal happiness. Her present happiness depends on trusting Him, belief that He will come to take her home, so there they will joyfully live together forever.

Heaven is Our Familiar Home

Let's focus on that word 'Home' for a while. When the Bible tells us that Heaven is our home, what meanings should we attach to the word home?

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First - One clear one is familiarity. I, like you, have countless memories from childhood. Even those who endured childhood traumas usually have some good memories too. When I am in my basement and see the arial view of the home and farm where I grew up, a fond familiarity comes over me like a wave of emotional warmth. The hills, the creek, the fences, the barns, the farm house, the small graveyard out in the field, all reverberate with memories of father, mother, family, friends, dogs, cattle, and many other animals. When I go into that remembrance mode, I step back into a place inseparable from who I was and who I now am, totally inseparable from family, friends, and my roots.

Second - Home in the Bible stands for a place with loved ones. The hominess of the house I live in now is inseparable from thinking about my wife Sharon, my daughters, our sons-in-law, our grandchildren, and our Church friends. Memories of extended family and other friends who have stayed with us also contribute to the hominess of this house. Everything in it speaks of time spent with significant people: playing together, talking together, eating together; reading together; crying together; praying together; charting the courses of our lives together. Home is where we are with the ones we love.

Heaven will be just like that. We will be with people we love, and we will love no one more than Jesus, who purchased with His own blood our real estate in the New Heaven. It won't be long before we settle in there, because we have already lived on Earth. I think it will seem like the first that we are truly coming home. Because we once lived on Earth, the New Earth will strike us as very familiar.

Third - Home is a place where we fit right in. It is the place we were made for. Most houses we live in on Earth weren't really made just for us. But the New Heaven and New Earth will be. Just like most of us carefully put together just the right room for the babies we were expecting, so, we will live in a home that was made just for each one of us by Jesus.

Because he isn't limited and He loves us even more than we love our children, I think we can expect to find the best place ever made by anyone, for anyone, in the history of the universe. The God who commends hospitality will not be outdone in His hospitality to us.

Do you recall a time when you were away from your Earthly home and desperately missed it? Maybe it was when you were off at college or in the military or traveling extensively overseas or needed to move because of a job. Do you remember how your heart ached for home? That's how we can feel about Heaven. We are a displaced people, longing for our home. C.S. Lewis said:

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"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, pg. 120.

Nothing is more often misdiagnosed than our homesickness for Heaven. We think we want all these Earthly things that are supposed to make us happy, but what we really want is the person we were made for, Jesus, and the place we were made for, Heaven. Nothing less can satisfy us. C. S. Lewis said:

"The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but joy, pleasure, and merriment He has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun and some ecstasy. It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose any obstacle to our return to God."

C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, pg. 115.

Man Longs for an Earth Where God is Fully Glorified

My first ministry I met a farmer who told me it troubled him that he didn't really long for Heaven. Instead, he longed for an Earth that was like God meant it to be. He didn't desire a Heaven, out there somewhere, but an Earth under his feet, where God was glorified. He felt guilty and unspiritual for this desire. At the time, I had not realized that we would live on a remade New Earth. If I could find him again and talk, I would point out that his longing was biblical and right. In fact, the very place he's always longed for, an Earth where God was fully glorified, is the place where we will live forever.

To say, "This World is not your home" to a person who's fully alive and alert to the wonders of the world is like throwing a bucket of water on the kindling's blaze. We should fan the flames of that blaze to help it spread, not seek to put it out. Otherwise, we malign our God-given instinct to love the Earthly home God made for us. As we reduce 'spirituality'- the only good is in Heaven - we really deny art, culture, science, sports, education, and all else human. When we do this, we set ourselves up for hypocrisy, for we may pretend to disdain the World while sitting in church, but when we get in the car, we turn on our favorite music and head home to eat with our friends, watch a ball game, walk around the campus, or curl up savoring a cup of coffee and a good book. We do these things not because we are sinners but because we are 'people'. We will still be people when we die and go to Heaven. This isn't a disappointing reality, it's God's plan. He made us as we are, except the sin part, which has nothing to do with friends, eating, sports, gardening, or reading.

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The Good Things in Life are a Preview of a Greater Life to Come

We get tired of ourselves, of others, of sin and suffering and crime and death. Yet we love many things here on Earth, don't we? The night sky and sunsets of the desert; watching a good movie on TV with our blanket around us and our dog snuggled beside us; that first cup of coffee in the morning and that cookie to dunk in our hot coffee; and that greeting we get as we enter our neighborhood, go to the store, or see our friends in a variety of settings that day. These experiences are not Heaven, but they are a foretaste of Heaven. What we love about this life are the things that resonate with the life we were made for. The things we love are not merely the best this life has; they are previews of the greater life that is coming.

Some scholars prefer to say that our present universe will be resurrected, just as our physical bodies will one day be resurrected. The idea here is that at the resurrection, we do not receive different bodies in place of our present bodies. We just get the right body for the right environment and it is suggested that the same will be true with the universe and it will be resurrected and have some continuity with the old Heavens and Earth. Just as our human bodies experience redemption, so the universe as a whole will experience redemption. ***Isaiah 65:18-25; Ezekiel 28:25-26; 34:25-30; Matthew 19:28; and Acts 3:21.***

Randy Alcorn in his book, 'Heaven' makes this great point. He suggests that we pay special attention to the words we find throughout the Bible, "Reconcile, Redeem, Recover, Return, Renew, Regenerate, and Resurrect. Each of these biblical words begin with the re-prefix, suggesting a return to an original condition that was ruined or lost." The Bible teaches that just as many of Jesus's miracles involved restoration: health, limbs, eyesight, life, etc., so God's renewal of the universe will involve restoration not just replacement.

Heaven is the Last Frontier

Like other frontiers in human history, it will challenge us with new opportunities, possibilities and experiences. Unlike the previous frontiers on Earth, Heaven will be unlimited in time and space. It will inspire us to join as participants in the dynamic, creative plans of Jesus Christ as we embark on a greater adventure than any, we have ever dreamed we could have. The eternal quest of our human spirit yearns for a Heaven in which we can explore the infinite possibilities of an unlimited universe. Our future blessings in Heaven will begin with the ending of all evil, suffering, and adversity. But it will also provide the fulfillment and enhancement of all the real joys and happiness of human life.

The language in the bible describes our rest and satisfying labor and the elimination of toil and grief. These passages do not suggest a life of inactivity or boredom. The promises are of an active, purposeful, and joyful life in a creation filled with beauty fairness and justice.

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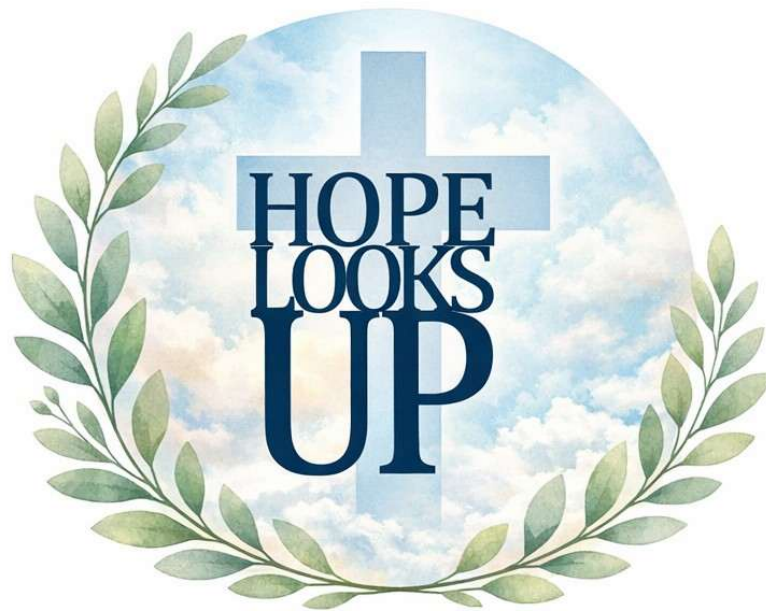
In our present Earthly life, it is difficult to reconcile the goodness and power of God with the apparent triumph of evil and death. However, in the New Heaven and New Earth we will see the final reconciliation of the accounts of life in which evil will be judged and good will triumph forever. The spiritual warfare which exists in the heart of men between our good and evil natures will finally end. Believers will enjoy their newly resurrected bodies with their heart, mind, and spirit cleansed from the taint of sin. We will be purified and made ready as “the bride of Christ” to become citizens of the City of God.

God's unfolding purpose throughout human history is that His will and nature will be reflected in a perfected humanity in which evil will be annihilated and good will triumph. The age-old prophecy of God is fulfilled and we shall also join the Heavenly chorus and perhaps even sing the Earthly version of the music to that same great passage written by George Handel and sing as we shout:

Revelation 11:15a

“The kingdom of this World is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ and of His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever.”

BLESSINGS FROM HOPE LOOKS UP MINISTRIES



HOPE LOOKS UP
— MINISTRIES —