

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Part III— Living in Light of Heaven- Week Twelve

November 28, 2010

Chapter 45 –Reorienting Ourselves To Heaven As Our Home

When I see ocean fish in an aquarium, I enjoy watching them, but I feel as if something's _____. They don't belong there. It's not their home. The fish weren't made for that little glass box; they were made for a great ocean.

I suppose the fish don't know any better, but I wonder if their instincts tell them that their true home is elsewhere. I know *our* instincts tell us that this fallen world isn't our home- we were made for _____ better. As we've seen, the Bible repeatedly confirms this instinct.

WHAT HOME IS LIKE

When it comes to our eternal home, we often fail to think _____ in two ways. First, we imagine we won't be fully human and our ultimate home won't be physical and earthly. Second, we imagine that this world as it now is, under the Curse, is our ultimate home. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home."

Graham Scroggie was right: "Future existence is not a purely spiritual existence; it demands a life in a body, and in a _____ universe." Though many of us affirm a belief in the resurrection of the dead, we don't know what that really means. Our doctrine dresses up men and women in bodies, then gives them no place to go. Instead of the New Earth as our eternal home, we offer an intangible and utterly unfamiliar Heaven that's the *opposite* of home. No wonder there is such ambivalence and uneasiness about Heaven in our churches.

GOING TO THE PARTY

Remember, Jesus said, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (Luke 6:21). He said, "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). _____ and rejoicing- a party awaits us. Don't you want to join it? Yet even that party, in the present Heaven, is a preliminary celebration. It's like the welcome at the airport for a woman who's come home for her wedding. Sure, she's home now, and it's wonderful, but what she's really looking forward to is the wedding, and the wedding feast, which will be followed by moving into her new home with her beloved bridegroom.

To be in _____ bodies on a resurrected Earth in resurrected friendships, enjoying a resurrected culture with the resurrected Jesus- now *that* will be the ultimate party! Everybody will be who God made them to be- and none of us will ever suffer or die again.

LONGING FOR RESURRECTION

As Christians, we're _____ to Heaven in ways too deep to comprehend. Somehow, according to Ephesians 2:6, we're already seated with Christ in Heaven. So we can't be satisfied with less.

Desire is a signpost pointing to Heaven. Every longing for better health is a _____ for the New Earth. Every longing for romance is a longing for the ultimate romance with Christ. Every desire for intimacy is a desire for Christ. Every thirst for beauty is a thirst for Christ. Every taste of joy is but a foretaste of a greater and more vibrant joy than can be found on Earth as it is now. A.W. Tozer said, "In nature, everything moves in the direction of its

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hungers. In the spiritual world it is not otherwise. We gravitate toward longing, provided of course that those longings are strong enough to move us.”

That’s why we need to spend our lives _____ our love for Heaven.

HEAVEN: OUR SOURCE OF OPTIMISM

No Christian should be a _____. We should be realists- focused on the *reality* that we serve a sovereign and gracious God. Because of the *reality* of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and his promises, biblical realism is *optimism*.

Knowing that our suffering will be relieved doesn’t make it easy, but it does make it bearable. It allows joy in the midst of suffering, Jesus said, “Blessed are you when men _____ you, when they exclude you and insult you. . . Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven” (Luke 6:22-23). Paul said, “I rejoice in my sufferings” (Colossians 1:24), and James said, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2). The apostles didn’t enjoy suffering, but they rejoiced in the midst of it, because they trusted God’s sovereign plan and they looked forward to Christ’s return, their bodily resurrection, and the redemption of all creation.

THROUGH THE DOORWAY

Every person reading this book is dying. Perhaps you have reason to believe that death will come very soon. You may be troubled, feeling uncertain, or unready to leave. Make sure of your _____ with Jesus Christ. Be certain that you’re trusting him alone to save you- not anyone or anything else, and certainly not any good works you’ve done. And then allow yourself to get excited about what’s on the other side of death’s door.

Chapter 46 –Anticipating The Great Adventure

When H.S. Laird’s father, a Christ-loving man, lay dying, his son sat at his bedside and asked, “Dad, how do you feel?” His father replied: “Son, I feel like a little boy on _____ Eve.”

Christmas is coming. We live our lives _____ the first Christmas and the second. We walk on disputed turf, between Eden and the New Earth, not that far from either. The dispute will soon be settled. Christ will forever reign over the universe. And we will reign with him.

In this chapter, I want to draw us _____ Heaven-influenced living, and further prepare us for the adventure that awaits us on death’s other side.

CHAPTER ONE OF THE GREAT STORY

Read page 465 & 466 *The Last battle*

By God’s grace, I know that what awaits me in his presence, for all eternity, is something so _____ it takes my breath away even now. Job said it most succinctly; “In my flesh I will see God;. . . I, and not another (Job 19:26-27). The prospect of seeing God eclipsed all of Job’s heartaches. Surely it can eclipse yours and mine. Our ship of happiness may not come in today- but it will certainly come in. Meanwhile, laying claim to Christ’s bought-and-paid for happiness brings us joy today.

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WHAT CAN DEATH DO TO US

We shouldn't glorify or romanticize death-Jesus didn't. He _____ over it (John 11:35). For every beautiful story of people peacefully slipping into eternity, there are other stories of confused and shrunken people, wasting away mentally and physically, leaving behind exhausted, confused, and grief stricken loved ones. I've often seen death close-up. Unless Christ returns in our lifetime, it's certain that my own death- and that of everyone I love- awaits.

Death is painful, and it's an _____. But for those who know Jesus, death is the *final* pain and the *last* enemy. "For [Christ] must reign until he has put his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

Death's destruction was foretold in ancient prophecy: "[God] will _____ the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:7-8).

The apostle Paul echoes Isaiah, saying, "When the perishable has been _____ 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?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Consider Romans 8:35, 38- 39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . _____ death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Don't let a day go by without anticipating the new world that Christ is preparing for us. God loves the Heaven bound, but he is proud of the Heaven _____: "They were longing for a better country- a heavenly one. *Therefore* God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16).

QUESTIONS IN LIGHT OF HEAVEN

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I daily _____ on my own mortality
- Do I daily _____ there are only two destinations- Heaven or Hell- and that I and every person I know will go to one or the other?
- Do I daily _____ myself that this world is not my home and that everything in it will burn, leaving behind only what's eternal?
- Do I daily _____ that my choices and actions have a direct influence on the world to come?
- Do I daily realize that my life is being _____ by God, the Audience of One, and that the only appraisal of my life that will ultimately matter is his?
- Do I daily reflect on the fact that my _____ home will be the New Earth, where I will see God and serve him as a resurrected being in a resurrected human society, where I will overflow with joy and delight in drawing nearer to God by studying him and his creation, and where I will exercise, to God's glory, dominion over his creation?

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INCENTIVES FOR RIGHTEOUS LIVING

Knowing that this present world will end and be resurrected into new heavens and a New Earth should profoundly _____ our daily behavior. "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God. . . In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:11-14).

A LIFE THAT GETS US READY

"Everyone who has this hope _____ on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). If my wedding date is on the calendar, and I'm thinking of the person I'm to marry, I shouldn't be an easy target for seduction. Likewise, when I've meditated on Heaven, sin is terribly unappealing. It's when my mind drifts from Heaven that sin seems attractive. Thinking of Heaven leads inevitably to pursuing holiness. Our high tolerance of sin testifies of our failure to prepare for Heaven.

To be Heaven-oriented is to be _____ in the best sense. Paul says, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Thinking of Heaven will _____ us to live each day in profound thankfulness to God: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).

ALL THINGS MADE NEW

The most ordinary moment on the New Earth (Heaven) will be _____ than most perfect moments in this life- those experiences you wanted to bottle or hang on to but couldn't. It *can* get better, far better, than this- *and it will*. Life on the New Earth will be like sitting in front of the fire with family and friends, basking in the warmth, laughing uproariously, dreaming of the adventures to come- and then going out and *living* those adventures together. With no fear that life will ever end or that tragedy will descend like a dark cloud. With no fear that dreams will be shattered or relationships broken.

If ideas presented in this book were merely the product of my _____, they would be meaningless. But here's what the apostle John recorded near the end of the Bible:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . And I heard a loud voice from the _____ saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live 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." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:1, 3-5).

These are the words of King Jesus. _____ on them. Take them to the bank. Live every day in light of them. Make every choice in light of Christ's certain promise. We were all made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place.

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Heaven – Week 2

Section One - Realizing Our Destiny

Chapter 4 – Can You Know You’re Going To Heaven?

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

1 John 5:13 says “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that *you may _____ that you have eternal life.*”

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AND DO

Sin has _____ - “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23).

“God made him (Christ) who knew no sin to ____ sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

“ _____ is found in no one else (but Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)

JOINING THE BODY OF CHRIST: THE CHURCH

You need to join a Christ centered church to help you grow in the truth. You may feel awkward because of your past. The church is full of _____, and needy people. Most church people aren’t self- righteous. Those who are should be pitied, because they don’t understand God’s grace. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

WATER FOR THE THIRSTY

Jesus said “I am the way the truth and the life. ____ comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

He also said “He who is not with me is _____ me” (Luke 11:23).

Have you confessed your sins? Asked Christ to forgive you? Placed your trust in Christ’s death and resurrection on your behalf? Asked Jesus to be your Lord and empower you to follow him

Section Two – Understanding the Present Heaven

Chapter 5 – What Is The Nature Of The Present Heaven?

If we are alive at Christ’s return, he _____ us we 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18.)

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THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF THE PRESENT HEAVEN

By definition, an intermediate state or location is _____. Life in the Heaven we go to when we die, where we'll dwell prior to our bodily resurrection, is "better by far" than living here on Earth under the curse, away from the direct presence of God (Philippians 1:23).

WILL WE LIVE IN HEAVEN FOREVER?

The answer to the question, Will we live in Heaven forever? depends on what we mean by Heaven. Will we be with the Lord forever? _____. Will we always be with him in exactly the same place that Heaven is now? _____. In the present Heaven, we'll be in Christ's presence, and we'll be joyful, but we'll be looking forward to our bodily resurrection and permanent relocation to the New Earth.

_____ we'll go to an intermediate Heaven. In that Heaven- Where those who died covered by Christ's blood are now- we'll await the time of Christ's return to the earth, our bodily resurrection, the final judgment, and the creation of the new Heavens and New Earth.

DOES HEAVEN REALLY CHANGE?

Only God is eternal and self-existent. All else is created. Heaven is not synonymous with God, nor is it part of His essential being. Therefore God must have created Heaven. It is not a place where he _____ dwell, but it is where he _____ to dwell. Because Heaven is a place where angels live, where finite beings come and go, it appears to be a finite environment, a specific location.

Once we abandon our assumptions that Heaven cannot change, it all makes sense. *God* does not change; he's immutable. But God clearly says that heaven _____ . It will eventually be _____ to the New Earth (Revelation 21:1). Similarly, what we now refer to as Hell will also be relocated. After the Great White Throne Judgment, Hell will be cast into the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15)

DISTINGUISHING THE PRESENT AND FUTURE HEAVENS

The questions, What is Heaven like? And, What *will* Heaven be like? Have two different answers. The present, intermediate Heaven is in the _____ realm, distinctly separate from Earth (though as we'll see, likely having more _____ qualities than we might assume).

By contrast the _____ Heaven will be in the _____ realm, on Earth. Then the dwelling place of God will also be the dwelling place of humanity, in a resurrected universe. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, _____ out of Heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God'" (Revelation 21:1-3).

DO WE REMAIN CONSCIOUS AFTER DEATH?

At death the _____ goes either to Heaven or Hell. Christ depicted Lazarus and the rich man as conscious in Heaven and Hell immediately after they died (Luke 16:22-31). Jesus told the dying thief on the cross, "_____ you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). The Apostle Paul said that to die was to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23), and to be absent from the body was to be _____ with the Lord

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(2Corinthians 5:8) After deaths, martyrs are pictured in Heaven, crying out to God to bring justice on Earth (Revelation 6:9-11)

WILL WE BE JUDGED WHEN WE DIE?

When we die, we face judgment, what is called the judgment of faith. The outcome of this judgment determines whether we go to the present Heaven or the present Hell. This initial judgment depends not on our works but on our faith. It's not about what we've done during our lives but about what Christ has done for us. Salvation is a free gift, to which we can _____ absolutely nothing (Ephesians 2:8-9) (Titus 3:5).

This first judgment is not to be confused with the final judgment, or what is called the judgment of works. Both believers and unbelievers face a final judgment.

The Bible indicates that all _____ will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of their lives (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). It's _____ to understand that this judgment is a judgment of works, not of faith (1Corinthians 3:13-14).

Our works do not affect our salvation, but they do affect our _____. Rewards are conditional, dependant on our faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26-28; 3:21).

IS THE PRESENT HEAVEN PART OF OUR UNIVERSE OR ANOTHER?

The Bible teaches that sometimes humans are allowed to see into heaven. When Stephen was being stoned because of his faith in Christ, he gazed into Heaven: "Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and _____ the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look, 'he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 7:55-56). Scripture tells us not that Stephen dreamed this, but that he actually _____ it.

The prophet Elisha asked God to give his servant, Gehazi, a glimpse of the _____. He prayed, "'O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha"(2Kings 6:17).

Next Week we will look at chapters 6 & 7

Chapter 6 Is The Present Heaven A Physical Place?

Chapter 7 What Is Life Like In The Present Heaven?

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Heaven – Week 3

Section Two – Understanding The Present Heaven

Chapter 6 – Is The Present Heaven A Physical Place?

IS THE PRESENT HEAVEN A PHYSICAL PLACE?

The physical New Earth will be our _____ dwelling place, but until then we shouldn't find it surprising if God chooses to provide a waiting place that's also physical. For us to exist as human beings, we occupy space. If the present, intermediate Heaven is a place where God, angels, and humans dwell, it makes sense that Heaven would be accommodated to mankind, because God needs no accommodation.

We know that angels can exist in a _____ world because they exist in this one, not just in Heaven. In fact, angels sometimes, perhaps often, take on human form (Hebrews 13:2).

It's no problem for the infinite God to dwell wherever mankind dwells. The question is whether finite humans can exist as God does- outside of space and time.

HEAVEN AS SUBSTANCE, EARTH AS SHADOW

Though the idea of Earth as Heaven's shadow is seldom discussed, even in books on Heaven, it's a concept that has biblical support. For example, the temple in Heaven is filled with smoke from the glory of God (Revelation 15:8). Is this a figurative temple with figurative smoke? Or is there an _____ fire creating literal smoke in a real building? We're told there are scrolls in Heaven, elders who have faces, martyrs who wear clothes, and even people with "palm branches in their hands" (Revelation 7:9). There are musical instruments in the present Heaven (Revelation 8:6), horses coming into and out of Heaven (2Kings 2:11; Revelation 19:14), and an eagle flying overhead in Heaven (Revelation 8:13).

Perhaps some of these objects are merely symbolic, with no corresponding physical reality. But is that true of *all* of them?

DOES "PARADISE" SUGGEST A PHYSICAL PLACE?

During the crucifixion, when Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "_____ you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43), he was referring to the present Heaven. But why did he call it *paradise*, and what did he mean?

The word *paradise* comes from the Persian word *pairidaeza*, meaning "a walled park" or "enclosed garden." It was used to describe the great walled gardens of Persian king Cyrus's royal palaces.

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Greek word for paradise is used to describe the Garden of Eden (e.g., Genesis 2:8; Ezekiel 28:13). Later, because of the Jewish belief that God would restore Eden, *paradise* became the word to describe the eternal state of the righteous, and to a lesser extent, the present Heaven.

God says, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

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The _____ physical tree that was in the Garden of Eden will one day be in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth (Revelation 22:2). Now it is (present tense) in the intermediate or present Heaven. Shouldn't we assume it has the same physical properties it had in the Garden of Eden and will have in the New Jerusalem? If it doesn't, could it be called the tree of life?

DO PEOPLE HAVE INTERMEDIATE BODIES IN THE PRESENT HEAVEN?

Unlike God and angels, who are in essence spirits (John 4:24; Hebrews 1:14), human beings are by nature both spiritual *and* _____ (Genesis 2:7). God did not create Adam as a spirit and place it inside a body. Rather, he first created a body, then breathed into it a spirit.

We cannot be _____ human without both a spirit *and* a body.

Given the consistent physical descriptions of the present Heaven and those who dwell there, it seems possible- though this is certainly debatable- that between our earthly life and our bodily resurrection, God may grant us some physical form that will allow us to _____ as human beings while in that unnatural state "between bodies," awaiting our resurrection.

The martyrs in Heaven are described as _____ clothes (Revelation 6:9-11).

We are told that Jesus' resurrected body on Earth was physical, and this same, physical Jesus ascended to Heaven, from which he will one day return to earth (Acts 1:11). It seems indisputable, then, to say that there is at least one physical body in the present Heaven.

Chapter 7 – What Is Life Like In The Present Heaven?

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE IN THE PRESENT HEAVEN?

We can learn a great deal about the present Heaven from three key verses in Revelation;

"When (The Lamb) opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed' (6:9-11).

Here are twenty-one observations concerning this passage.

1. When people died on Earth, they relocated to Heaven (v.9)
2. These people in Heaven were the same ones killed for Christ while on Earth (v.9)
3. People in Heaven will be remembered for their lives on Earth. These were known and identified as the ones slain "because of the testimony they had maintained' (v.9).
4. "They called out " (v.10) means they are able to express themselves audibly. This could suggest they exist in physical form, with vocal cords or other tangible means to express themselves.
5. People in the present Heaven can raise their voices (v.10). This indicates that they are rational, communicative, and emotional- even passionate- beings, like people on Earth.
6. They called out in "a loud voice," not "loud voices." Individuals speaking with one voice indicate that Heaven is a place of unity and shared perspective.
7. The martyrs are fully conscious, rational, and aware of each other, God, and the situation on Earth.

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8. They ask God to intervene on Earth and to act on their behalf: “How long.... until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (v.10)
9. Those in Heaven are free to ask God questions, which means they have an audience with God. It also means they need to learn. In Heaven, people desire understanding and pursue it.
10. People in the present Heaven know what’s happening on Earth (v.10). The martyrs know enough to realize that those who killed them have not yet been judged.
11. Heaven dwellers have a deep concern for justice and retribution (v.10).
12. The martyrs clearly remember their lives on Earth (v.10). They even remember that they *were murdered*.
13. The martyrs in Heaven pray for judgment on their persecutors who are still at work hurting others. They are acting in solidarity with, and in effect interceding for, the suffering saints on earth. This suggests that saints in Heaven are both seeing and praying for saints on Earth.
14. Those in Heaven see God’s attributes (“Sovereign . . . Holy and true”) in a way that makes his judgment of sin more understandable.
15. Those in Heaven are distinctive individuals: “Then each of them was given a white robe” (v.11). There isn’t one merged identity that obliterates uniqueness, but a distinct “each of them.”
16. The martyrs’ wearing white robes suggests the possibility of actual physical forms, because disembodied spirits presumably don’t wear robes. The robes well have symbolic meaning, but it doesn’t mean they couldn’t also be physical. The martyrs appear to have physical forms that John could actually see.
17. God answers their question (v.11), indicating communication and process.
18. God promises to fulfill the martyrs’ requests, but says they will have to “wait a little longer” (v.11). Those in the present Heaven live in anticipation of the future fulfillment of God’s promises. Unlike the eternal Heaven- where there will be no more sin, Curse, or suffering on the New Earth (Revelation 21:4)- the present Heaven coexists with and watches over an Earth under sin, the Curse and suffering.
19. There is time in present Heaven (vv.10-11). The white-robed martyrs ask God a time –dependant question: “How long, Sovereign Lord . . . Until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (v.10).
20. The people of God in Heaven have a strong familial connection with those on Earth, who are called their “fellow servants and brothers” (v.11).
21. Our sovereign God knows down to the last detail all that is happening and will happen on Earth (v.11), including every drop of bloodshed and every bit of suffering undergone by his children.

Unless there is some reason to believe that the realities of this passage apply _____ to one group of martyrs and to no one else in Heaven- and I see no such indication- then we should assume that what is true of them is also true of our loved ones already there and will be true of us when we die.

DO HEAVENS INHABITANTS REMEMBER LIFE ON EARTH?

As we’ve seen, the martyrs depicted in Revelation 6 clearly _____ at least some of what happened on Earth, including that they underwent great suffering. If they remember their martyrdom, there’s no reason to assume they would forget other aspects of their earthly lives. In fact, we’ll all likely remember much more in Heaven than we do on Earth, and we will probably be able to see how God and angels intervened on our behalf when we didn’t realize it.

In Heaven, those who endured bad things on Earth are comforted for them (Luke 16:25). This comfort implies _____ of what happened.

DO PEOPLE IN THE PRESENT HEAVEN SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING ON EARTH?

If the martyrs in Heaven know that God hasn’t yet brought judgment on their persecutors (Revelation 6:9-11), it seems evident that the inhabitants of the present Heaven can see what’s happening on Earth, at least to _____ extent.

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When Babylon is brought down, an angel points to events happening on Earth and says, “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you” (Revelation 18:20). That the angel specifically addresses people living in Heaven indicates they’re _____ of what’s happening on Earth.

DO PEOPLE IN HEAVEN PRAY FOR THOSE ON EARTH?

Based on scriptural evidence, I believe that departed saints currently in the present Heaven do intercede in prayer- at least sometimes- for those of us still on Earth.

Christ, the God-man, is in Heaven, at the right hand of God, _____ for people on Earth (Romans 8:34), which tells us there is at least one person who has died and gone to Heaven and is now praying for those on Earth.

The martyrs in Heaven also pray to God (Revelation 6:10), _____ him to take specific action on Earth. They are praying for God’s justice on earth, which has intercessory implications for Christians now suffering here.

CAN IT BE HEAVEN IF PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF ANYTHING BAD ON EARTH?

Many books on Heaven maintain that those in Heaven cannot be aware of people and events on Earth because they would be made unhappy by all the suffering and evil; thus, Heaven would not truly be Heaven.

I believe this argument is invalid. After all, God knows exactly what’s happening on Earth, yet it doesn’t diminish Heaven for him. Likewise, it’s Heaven for the angels, even though they also know what’s happening on Earth. In fact, angels in Heaven see the torment of Hell, but it doesn’t negate their joy in God’s presence (Revelation 14:10).

It’s also possible that even though joy would _____ in the present Heaven, there could be periodic sadness because there’s still so much evil and pain on Earth.

Christ grieved for people when he was on earth (Matthew 23:37-39); John 11:33-36). Does he no longer _____ just because he’s in Heaven? Or does he still hurt for his people when they suffer?

We must also keep in mind that Revelation 21:4, the verse most often quoted on the subject of sorrow in Heaven, refers specifically to the _____, the New Earth. “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.” Christ’s promise of no more tears or pain comes *after* the end of the old Earth, after the Great White Throne Judgment, after “the old order of things has passed away” and there’s no more suffering on Earth.

Section Three – Grasping Redemptions Far Reach

Chapter 8 - This World Is Not Our Home . . . Or Is It?

Chapter 9 - Why Is Earths Redemption Essential To Gods Plan?

Chapter 10 - What Will It Mean For The Curse To Be Lifted?

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Heaven- Week 4

Section Three – Grasping Redemptions Far Reach

Chapter 8 - This World Is Not Our Home . . . Or Is It?

Many books on Heaven say nothing about the New Earth. Sometimes a few paragraphs, vaguely worded, are tacked on at the end. Other books address the New Earth but undercut its true nature: “Is this new earth like our present earth? Probably not.” But if it isn’t, why does God call it a New *Earth*? One author says, “The eternal phase of Heaven will be so unlike what we are familiar with that our present language can’t even describe it, but it *does* in fact _____ it (e.g., Revelation 21-22).

OUR LONGING FOR EDEN

Adam was formed from the dust of the earth, forever establishing our connection to the earth (Genesis 2:7). Just as we are made *from* the earth, so to we are _____ *for* the earth. But, you may object. Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for us and would take us there to live with him forever (John 14:2-3). Yes. But *what is that place*? Revelation 21 makes it clear- it’s the New Earth. That’s where the New Jerusalem will reside when it comes down out of Heaven. Only *then* will we be truly home.

CLUES TO THE NATURE OF THE ETERNAL HEAVEN

Scripture gives us images full of hints and implications about Heaven. Put them together, and these jigsaw pieces form a beautiful picture. For example, we’re told that Heaven is a city (Hebrews 11:10; 13:14). When we hear the word *city*, we shouldn’t scratch our heads and think, “I wonder what that means?” We _____ cities. Cities have buildings, culture, art, music, athletics, goods and services, events of all kinds. And, of course, cities have *people* engaged in activities, gatherings, conversations, and work.

Heaven is also described as a country (Hebrews 11:16). We know about countries. They have territories, rulers, national interests, pride in their identity, and citizens who are both diverse and unified.

The New Earth will have _____, mountains, trees, and flowers (These familiar features are specifically mentioned in Revelation 21-22)

We’re told we’ll have resurrection bodies (1 Corinthians 15:40-44). When God speaks of us having these bodies, do we shrug our shoulders and say, “I can’t _____ what a new body would be like”? No, of course we can imagine it. We know what a body is- we’ve had one all our lives! (And we can remember when ours looked better, can’t we?”) So we can imagine a new body..

The problem is not that the Bible doesn’t tell us much about Heaven. It’s that we don’t pay attention to what it tells us.

IS THE ETERNAL HEAVEN AN ACTUAL PLACE?

One book puts *place* in quotation marks whenever it uses the word to describe Heaven or Hell. It says Paradise is “a spiritual condition more than a _____ location.” But Jesus didn’t say that Heaven was “primarily a state” or a “spiritual condition.” He spoke of a *house* with many *rooms* in which he would prepare a *place* for us (John 14:2). In Revelation 21-22, the New Earth and New Jerusalem are portrayed as actual places, with detailed Physical descriptions.

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Jesus told the disciples, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3). He uses ordinary, _____, spatial terms to describe Heaven. The word *where* refers to a place, a location. Likewise, the phrase *come back and take you* indicates movement and a physical destination. If Heaven isn’t a place, would Jesus have said it was? If we reduce Heaven to something less than or other than a place, we strip Christ’s words of their meaning.

ARE WE JUST A-PASSING THROUGH?

Earth has been _____ by our sin (Genesis 3:17). Therefore, the earth as it is now (under the curse) is not our home. The world as it was, and as it will be, *is* our home. We have never known a world without sin, suffering, and death. Yet we yearn for such a life and such a world. When we see a roaring waterfall, beautiful flowers, a wild animal in its native habitat, or the joy in the eyes of our pets when they see us, we sense that this world is- or at least was *meant to be*- our home.

THE THREE PHASES OF EARTH’S HISTORY

In order to have a biblical worldview, we must have a sense of our past, present, and future, and how they relate to each other. Without understanding God’s _____ plan for mankind and the earth, we cannot understand his future plan. Without the bookends of past and future in place, the book itself- our present lives- won’t stand up.

The attached chart shows the three _____ of Earth’s history; humanity’s past on the original Earth; our present experience on the fallen Earth; and our promised future on the New Earth.

The chart portrays human history and human destiny. It demonstrates the continuity of past, present, and future, and the continuity between life on the old Earth and life on the New Earth. By comparing each series of statements, you’ll see the distinct differences between these three periods.

In Genesis, God plants the Garden of Earth; In Revelation, he brings down the New Jerusalem, with a garden at its _____, to the New Earth. In Eden, there’s no sin, death or Curse; on the New Earth, there’s no *more* sin, death, or Curse. In Genesis, the Redeemer is promised; in Revelation, the Redeemer returns. Genesis tells the story of Paradise lost; Revelation tells the story of Paradise regained. In Genesis, humanity’s stewardship is triumphant, empowered by the human and divine King Jesus.

These parallels are too remarkable to be anything but _____. These mirror images demonstrate the perfect symmetry of God’s plan. We live in the in between time, hearing echoes of Eden and the approaching footfalls of the New Earth.

The _____ matters, our bodies matter, animals and trees matter, *matter* matters, because God created them and intends them to manifest his glory. And as we’ll see in the following chapters, the God who created them has not given up on the anymore than he has given up on us.

Chapter 9 - Why Is Earths Redemption Essential To Gods Plan?

WHY IS EARTH’S REDEMPTION ESSENTIAL TO GOD’S PLAN?

The entire physical universe was created for God’s _____. But humanity rebelled, and the universe fell under the weight of our sin, yet the serpent’s seduction of Adam and Eve did not catch God by surprise. He had in

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place a plan by which he would redeem mankind- and all of creation- from sin, corruption, and death. Just as he promises to make men and women new, he promised to renew the earth itself.

Consider this: If God's plan was merely to take mankind to the present Heaven, or to a Heaven that was the dwelling place of spirit beings, there would be no need for new heavens and a New Earth. Why _____ the stars of the heavens and the continents of the earth? God could just destroy his original creation and put it all behind him. But he won't do that. Upon creating the heavens and the earth, he called them "very good." Never once has he renounced his claim on what he made. He isn't going to abandon his creation. He's going to restore it. We won't go to Heaven and leave Earth behind. Rather, God will bring Heaven and Earth together into the same dimension, with no wall of separation, no armed angels to guard Heaven's perfection from sinful mankind (Genesis 3:24). God's perfect plan is to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:10).

GOD'S EARTHLY RENEWAL PLAN?

God has never given up on his _____ creation. Yet somehow we've managed to overlook an entire biblical vocabulary that makes this point clear. *Reconcile. Redeem. Restore. Recover. Return. Resurrect.* Each of these biblical words begin with the *re*-prefix, suggesting a return to an original condition that was ruined or lost. (Many are translations of Greek words with an *ana* prefix, which has the same meaning as the English *re*-.)

God placed mankind on Earth to fill it, rule it, and develop it to God's glory. But that plan has never been fulfilled. Should we therefore conclude that God's plan was ill-conceived, _____, or abandoned? No. These conclusions do not fit the character of an all-knowing, all wise, sovereign God.

God determined from the beginning that he will redeem mankind and restore earth. Why? So his original plan will be _____.

THE NEW EARTH IS THE OLD EARTH RESTORED

Peter preached that Christ "must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to _____ everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:21). We're told that a time is coming when God will restore *everything*. This is an inclusive promise. It encompasses far more than God merely restoring disembodied people to fellowship in a spirit realm. (Because living in a spirit realm is not what humans were made for and once enjoyed, it would not qualify as "restoring.") It is God restoring mankind to what we once were, what he designed us to be- fully embodied, righteous beings. And restoring the entire universe to what it once was.

Christ did not say "after the *destruction* of all things" or "after the *abandonment* of all things" but "at the *renewal* of all things."

REDEMPTION = RETURN

Redemption buys back God's original _____. In the words of one writer, "Adam and Eve (and their children) were to extend the blessings of Paradise throughout the entire world. . . . Salvation, therefore, restores man to his original calling and purpose, and guarantee's that man's original mandate- to exercise dominion under God over the whole earth- will be fulfilled.

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GOD'S GLORY ON GOD'S EARTH

The physical heavens are constantly declaring God's glory (Psalm 19:1-2). Even now, in reference to an earth under the Curse, God says, "The glory of the Lord fills the whole earth" (Numbers 14:21). But the universe will behold an even _____ display of God's glory, one that will involve redeemed men and women and redeemed nations on a redeemed earth. It is on Earth, God promises, that "the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it" (Isaiah 40:5). That God will be glorified on Earth is central to innumerable passages, including these two:

God's Kingdom and dominion are not about what happens in some remote, unearthly place; instead, they are about what happens on the earth, which God created for his glory. God has tied his glory to the earth and everything connected with it: mankind, animals, trees, rivers, _____. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." His glory is manifested in his creation. The earth is not disposable. It is essential to God's plan. God promises that ultimately the whole earth will be filled with his glory (Psalm 72:19; Habakkuk 2:14)

A VISION OF THE NEW EARTH

Another significant passage that describes the New Earth is _____. Although it doesn't contain the term *New Earth* (as do Isaiah 65 and 66), we can be certain that's what Isaiah intended because his precise language is used in John's depiction of the New Earth in Revelation 21-22. Thus, Isaiah 60 serves as the best biblical commentary on Revelation 21-22.

At the beginning of Isaiah's remarkable prophetic message, God says to his people in Jerusalem, "The Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (vv 2-3). God's people will have a glorious future in which the earth's nations and kings will participate in and benefit from renewed and glorious Jerusalem.

God promises something that has never been true of the earthly Jerusalem: "I will make _____ your governor and righteousness your ruler. (V.17).

REDEMPTION OF NATIONS AND CULTURE

Both Isaiah and John, using _____ language, state that on the New Earth "the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into" the New Jerusalem and "the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it" (Revelation 21:24,26; cf. Isaiah 60:3-5).

Significantly, the vivid description of the New Earth in Isaiah 60 is immediately followed by the explicitly messianic passage that Jesus used as his inaugural text for his ministry (Luke 4:16-19): "The spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1).

Next week- Chapters 10 & 11

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Heaven- Week 5

Section Three – Grasping Redemptions Far Reach

Chapter 10 -What Will It Mean For The Curse To Be Lifted?

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, Satan appeared to have _____ God's plan for a righteous, undying humanity to rule the earth to God's glory. Yet immediately after the Fall, God promised a redeemer, the seed of the woman, who would one day come and crush the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15).

While the wound of sin was still fresh, before the first scar had formed, God _____ his plan to send a fully human redeemer who would be far more powerful than Satan. In a courageous act of intervention to deliver mankind, this redeemer would deliver a mortal wound to the usurping devil, and in the process would be wounded himself.

Later, it's revealed that this redeemer would be the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and the house of David (2Samuel 7:12-13). Genesis 3:15 is the first of many passages anticipating a _____ servant who would battle Satan and redeem God's people (e.g., Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:5-7; 52:13; 53). That suffering servant would be Christ, the Messiah who came to make all things new.

God did not sit idly by or shrug his shoulders at sin, death, and the Curse. He did not relinquish his claim on mankind and the earth. No sooner did ruin descend on humanity and Earth than God revealed his plan to defeat Satan and _____ them for his glory.

TAKING OUR INHERITANCE

Our interest in the end times usually extends to the period immediately preceding and following the return of Christ. But God's plan culminates after the _____ judgment, when King Jesus says, "come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Where is this kingdom? Exactly where it has been from the beginning- on Earth.

UNITING HEAVEN AND EARTH

God's plan of the ages is "to bring all things in heaven and on earth _____ under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10). "All things" is broad and inclusive- nothing will be left out. This verse corresponds precisely to the culmination of history we see enacted in Revelation 21, the merging together of the once separate realms of Heaven and Earth, fully under Christ's lordship.

WHO WILL REIGN OVER THE EARTH?

The Bible's central storyline revolves around a question: Who will reign over the earth? Earth's destiny hangs in the balance. Because it is the realm where God's glory has been most _____ and resisted, it is therefore also the stage on which his glory will be most graphically demonstrated. By reclaiming, restoring, renewing, and resurrecting Earth- and empowering a regenerated mankind to reign over it. God will accomplish his purpose of bringing glory to himself.

Christ will become the unchallenged, absolute ruler of the universe and then will turn over to his Father the Kingdom he has won (1 Corinthians 15:28). Redeemed humans will be God's unchallenged, delegated

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_____ of the New Earth (Rev 22:5). God and humanity will live together in eternal happiness, forever deepening their relationships, as the glory of God permeates every aspect of the new creation.

THE LAST ADAM DEFEATS SATAN

Satan successfully _____ the first Adam in Eden. The theological consequences of Adam's sin (and the redeeming work of the last Adam, Jesus Christ, the new head of the human race) are laid out in Romans 5:12-19. When Satan tempted the last Adam in the wilderness (which is what Eden's garden had become), Christ resisted him. But the evil one was desperate to defeat Christ, to kill him as he had first Adam (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

Christ has already _____ Satan, but the Full scope of his victory has not yet been manifested on Earth. At Christ's ascension, God "seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything" (Ephesians 1:20-22).

The outcome of the great war is not in question. It is _____. Christ will reign victoriously forever. The only question we must answer is this: Will we fight on his side or against him? We must answer this question not just once, with our words, but daily, with our choices.

REMOVING THE CURSE

"No longer will there be any _____" (Revelation 22:3). If the Bible said nothing else about life in the eternal Heaven, The New Earth, these words would tell us a vast amount.

What would our lives be like if the Curse were lifted? One day we will know firsthand- but even now there's much to anticipate.

The removal of the Curse will be as thorough and _____ as the redemptive work of Christ. In bringing us salvation, Christ has already undone some of the damage in our hearts, but in the end he will finally and completely restore his entire creation to what God originally intended (Romans 8:19-21). Christ will turn back the Curse and restore humanity all that we lost in Eden, and he will give us much more besides.

FAR AS THE CURSE IS FOUND

Jesus came not only to save spirits from damnation. That would have been, at most, a _____ victory. No, he came to save his whole creation from death. That means our bodies too, not just our spirits. It means the earth, not just humanity. And it means the universe, not just the earth.

Christ's victory over the Curse will not be partial. Death will not just limp away wounded. It will be _____, utterly destroyed: "{God} will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth" (Isaiah 25:7-8).

Earth cannot be delivered from the Curse by being _____. It can only be delivered by being *resurrected*. As we'll see in the next section, Christ's resurrection is the forerunner of our own, and our resurrection is the forerunner of the earth's.

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Section Four – Anticipating Resurrection

Chapter 11 – Why Is Resurrection So Important?

In the late 1990's, a group of scholars assembled to evaluate whether Jesus actually said the things attributed to him by the gospel writers. Although they employed remarkably subjective criteria in their evaluation of Scripture, members of the self-appointed "Jesus Seminar" were widely quoted by the media as authorities on the Christian faith.

Marcus Borg, a Jesus Seminar leader, said this of Christ's resurrection: "As a child, I took it for granted that Easter meant that Jesus literally rose from the dead. I now see Easter very differently. For me, it is irrelevant whether or not the tomb was empty. Whether Easter involved something remarkable happening to the physical body of Jesus is irrelevant."

Paul wrote "If Christ has not been _____, your faith is futile; you are still in your sin... {and} we are to be pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:17,19).

RESURRECTION IS PHYSICAL

The major Christian creeds state, "I _____ in the resurrection of the body." But I have found in many conversations that Christians tend to spiritualize the resurrection of the dead, effectively denying it. They don't reject it as a doctrine, but they deny its essential *meaning*: a permanent return to a physical existence in a physical universe.

_____ views of the afterlife that settle for less than a bodily resurrection- including Christoplatonism, reincarnation, and transmigration of the soul- are explicitly unchristian.

CONTINUITY IS CRITICAL

Paul says that if Christ _____ rise from the dead, we're still in our sins (1Corinthians 15:17) – meaning we'd be bound for Hell, not Heaven.

There will be continuity from this life to the next. I will be able to say with Job, "In my flesh I will _____ God; I myself will see him with my own eyes- I, and not another" (Job 19:26-27).

Continuity is evident in passages that discuss resurrection, including 1 Corinthians 15:53: "For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with _____." It is *this* (the perishable and mortal) which puts on *that* (the imperishable and immortal). Likewise, it is *we*, the very same people who will walk the New Earth. "And so *we* will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:17, emphasis added).

THE NATURE OF OUR NEW BODIES

The empty tomb is the ultimate _____ that Christ's resurrection body was the same body that died on the cross. If *resurrection* meant the creation of a new body, Christ's original body would have remained in the tomb. When Jesus said to his disciples after his resurrection, "It is I myself," he was emphasizing to them that he was the same person- in spirit *and* body- who had gone to the cross (Luke 24:39). His disciples saw the marks of his crucifixion, unmistakable evidence that this was the same body.

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CHRIST'S RESURRECTED LIFE IS THE MODEL FOR OURS

Not only do we know what our present bodies are like, we also have an _____ in Scripture of what a resurrection body is like. We're told a great deal about Christ's resurrected body, and we're told that our bodies will be like his.

Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be _____ him, for we shall see him as he is (1John 3:2, RSV).

THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ. . . Will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21).

We've established that Christ's resurrected body, before his ascension, was quite _____ in appearance. But what is Christ's "glorious body" like? We are given a picture on the Mount of Transfiguration: "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). The Transfiguration appears to have given us a preview of Christ's glorified body.

Certainly, the glorified Christ will be by far the _____ glorious being in Heaven. Yet, as we will see, Scripture indicates that we too, in a secondary and derivative way, will reflect God's glory in physical brightness.

THE PROMISE OF IMPERISHABLE BODIES

When Paul speaks of our resurrection bodies, he says, "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in _____; 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" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

When Paul uses the term "spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44), he is not talking about a body made of spirit, or an incorporeal body- there is no such thing. *Body* _____ corporeal: flesh and bones. A spiritual body is first and foremost a real body or it would not qualify to be called a body. Paul could have simply said, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spirit," if that were the case.

Scripture portrays resurrection as involving both fundamental continuity and significant dissimilarity. We dare not minimize the dissimilarities- for our glorification will certainly involve a dramatic and marvelous transformation. But, in my experience, the great majority of Christians have underemphasized continuity. They end up thinking of our transformed selves as no longer being ourselves, and the transformed Earth as no longer being the earth. In some cases, they view the glorified Christ as no longer being the same Jesus who walked the earth- a belief that early Christians recognized as heresy.

Inside your body, even if it is failing, is the _____ for your resurrection body. You may not be satisfied with your current body or mind- but you'll be thrilled with your resurrection upgrades. With them you'll be better able to serve and glorify God and enjoy an eternity of wonders he has prepared for you.

Next week- Chapter 12 &13

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Heaven – Week Six

October 10, 2010

Section Four – Anticipating Resurrection

Chapter 12 –Why Does All Creation Await Our Resurrection?

The gospel is far greater than most of us imagine. It isn't just good news for us- it's good news for animals, plants, stars, and planets. It's good news for the sky above and earth below. Albert Wolters says, "The redemption in Jesus Christ means the restoration of an original good creation."

BROADENING OUR VIEW OF REDEMPTION

The breadth and depth of Christ's _____ work will escape us as long as we think it is limited to humanity. In Colossians 1:16-20, notice that God highlights his plan for the church, but then he goes beyond it, emphasizing "all things," "everything," and "things in Heaven":

For by him {Jesus} *all things, on Earth and in Heaven*. Visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things* were created by him and for him. He is 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 the 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 (Colossians 1:18-20).

ALL CREATION WAITS IN EAGER EXPECTATION

The creation hopes for, even anticipates, *resurrection*. That's _____ what Scripture tells us.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 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 glorious freedom 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. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-23).

We _____ 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.

AS MANKIND GOES, SO GOES CREATION

John Calvin writes in his commentary on Romans 8:19, "I understand the passage to have this meaning- that there is no element and no part of the world which is being touched, as it were, with a sense of its present misery, that does not intensely hope for a resurrection.

What is "the _____ creation" that groans for our resurrection? The phrase appears to be completely inclusive of "the heavens and the earth" that God created in the beginning (Genesis 1:1). So it is the heavens and the earth that eagerly await our resurrection. This includes Earth and everything on it, as well as the planets of our solar system and the far reaches of our galaxy and beyond. If it was created, Paul includes it in "the whole creation."

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Why does the creation wait eagerly for our resurrection? For one simple reason: *As mankind goes, so goes all of creation*. Thus, just as all creation was spoiled through our rebellion, the deliverance of all creation hinges on our deliverance. The glorification of the universe hinges on the glorification of a redeemed human race. The destiny of all creation rides on our coat tails.

WAS THERE REALLY NO DEATH?

God made seasons, and I wouldn't be surprised if in Eden the colors of autumn leaves were more brilliant than we see on the present earth. This "death" of leaves in the fall could be part of a living tree's beauty, not its curse. Did leaves ever fall in Eden? Once they fell, did they rot? Eventually wouldn't the earth have been covered with leaves? God made us to consume vegetation, which doesn't involve harm or suffering. Why shouldn't he allow it to decompose through natural processes? Did Adam and Eve step ankle deep in human and animal waste because it did not decay? Was there no compost to enrich the garden? Wine requires fermentation, a form of decay. Did bread not rise?

All of these natural processes could easily have been part of God's _____ design. What I believe was *not* part of his ideal world was the suffering and death of all creatures.

FROM THE FALL TO OUR RESURRECTION

How will the effects of our bodily resurrection be felt by the entire universe? In exactly the same way that all creation suffered from our fall into sin. There is a metaphysical and moral link between mankind and the physical universe.

We should expect that anything affected by the Fall will be _____ to its original condition. Things will no longer get worse. When they change, they will only get better. That will be true of our bodies and our minds and our human culture in the universe. And there are no grounds to imagine that the link between mankind and the universe will cease. Why shouldn't it continue for all eternity?

"We know," Paul says, "that the _____ creation has been groaning" (Romans 8:22). Consider the shocking cruelty in the animal world, where mother sometimes devour their offspring, and most of those that survive are mercilessly killed by predators. If "the whole creation" is as comprehensive as it appears, then there is not an amoeba or chromosome of DNA strand or galaxy unaffected by mankind's fall. That is the bad news.

Paul follows with the good news- that what went down with mankind in the Fall will come back up with us when Christ's redemptive work is _____. The God who raised Jesus will in turn raise his people and the universe.

THE PAINS AND PROMISE OF CHILDBIRTH

It's fair to say that _____ Christians believe there will be no carryover into Heaven of our present culture, art, technology, or the products of human creativity. Indeed, it's common to doubt if we will even remember our lives on Earth or the people whom God used to influence and shape us, including our families and closest friends.

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If our _____ about the end of the world were correct, what analogy would we expect Paul to use for what will happen to creation? An old man dying? A mortally wounded soldier grasping his final breaths? Those images would fit well with a belief that the universe will come to a violent, final end. But Paul doesn't use analogies of death and destruction. He uses the analogy of Childbirth: "The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up until the present time" (Romans 8:22).

It is no coincidence that the first two chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-2) begin with the creation of the heavens and the earth and the last two chapters (Revelation 21-22) begin with the re-creation of the heavens and the earth. All that was lost at the beginning will be restored at the end. And far more will be added besides.

Chapter 13 - How Far Reaching Is The Resurrection

Jesus became a man and lived as a man on Earth, in order to redeem mankind. His victory had to take place on Earth- the dwelling place of mankind- and it has to culminate on Earth, where Christ will return to set up his Kingdom with his redeemed and resurrected people.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR DEEDS

Anticipating eternal life as resurrected beings in a resurrected universe has present, practical implications. "Therefore [in light of our eventual resurrection], my dear brothers, stand firm. Let _____ 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" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

How do we _____ that our labor in the Lord is not in vain? Because of our bodily resurrection. Just as we will be carried over from the old world to the new, so will our labor. In a sense, not only our bodies but our service for Christ will be resurrected.

If the creation itself will be resurrected, could this also include some of the _____ of our hands? "If any man builds on this foundation [Christ] using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" (1Corinthians 3:12-15)

We have the _____ of Scripture that all believers will survive the fire of testing and be raised. But it is not only ourselves that will outlast this world and be carried over to the new one. It is what we do with our lives. Our righteous works will follow us to Heaven (Revelation 14:13).

Not only will some things that God has made survive his judgment, but so will some things we have done. Products of faithful lives will endure. They will be purified and "laid bare," so their beauty will be forever seen.

God's fire will _____ destroy the whole Earth; it will destroy all that displeases him. But there is much that pleases him, and these things will endure the fire, to be reconstituted after the final resurrection of the dead. Not only will acts of obedience and spiritual sacrifices be carried over from one world to the next, but everything else good will also last forever.

Resurrection is not a figurative expression. It indicates _____. If our physical bodies will survive, doesn't it suggest that other physical things might also survive?

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

USING OUR IMAGINATION ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

_____, the resurrection of the dead extends much further than most of us have been taught. How much further might the power of resurrection go? Could a child's story written out of love for Jesus survive this world, either in Heaven's handwriting or the child's own? Might certain works of art, literature, and music survive either literally (on the canvas and paper they were written on) or at least be re-created in Heaven? Obviously, we can't be certain, but isn't the idea consistent with what we've seen of the nature of resurrection?

If our bodies and the works of our hands that _____ God will be resurrected, why not a chair, cabinet, or wardrobe made by Jesus in his carpenter's shop in Nazareth? What about things we made to God's glory? Could these be resurrected or reassembled?

RESURRECTION DAY

What will it be like on _____ resurrection day, when we return with Christ to this old Earth, when we are given new bodies in the knowledge that we will together colonize a New Earth (whether that is immediate, or after a thousand years)? At the end of my novel *Safely Home*, I tried to catch a flavor of what it may be like:

Read Page 137-138

NEXT WEEK

Section Five - Seeing The Earth Restored

Chapter 14 - Where And When Will Our Deliverance Come?

Chapter 15 - Will The Old Earth Be destroyed. . . Or Renewed?

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Heaven – Week Seven

October 17,2010

Section Five – Seeing The Earth Restored

Chapter 14 – Where And When Will Our Deliverance Come?

If God were to end history and reign forever in a distant Heaven, Earth would be remembered as a graveyard of sin and failure. Instead, Earth will be redeemed and resurrected. In the end it will be a far greater world, even for having gone through the birth pains of suffering and sin – yes, *even sin*. The New Earth will justify the old Earth's disaster, make good out of it, putting it in perspective. It will preserve and perpetuate Earth's _____ design and heritage.

Isaiah and the prophets make _____ the destiny of God's people. They will live in peace and prosperity, as free people in their promised land. But what about the recipients of these promises who have died- including people who lived in times of enslavement and captivity, war, poverty, and sickness? Did these poor people ever live to see peace and prosperity, a reign of righteousness, or the end of Wickedness? NO

THE OLD TESTAMENT HOPE FOR A NEW EARTH

The "country of their own" spoken of in Hebrews 11 is a _____ country, with a real capital city, the New Jerusalem. It is an actual place where these "aliens and strangers on earth" will ultimately live in actual bodies. If the promises God made to them were promises regarding Earth (and they were), then the heavenly "country of their own" must ultimately include Earth.

THE QUESTION OF THE MILLENNIUM

Many have _____ the coming reign of Christ on Earth to a thousand-year millennial kingdom on the old earth. Consequently, they have failed to understand the biblical promise of an eternal reign on the New Earth. Because of this, it's necessary for us to take a closer look at the Millennium, which has been the subject of considerable debate throughout church history.

- Revelation 20 refers six times to the Millennium, describing it like this:
 - The devil is bound for a thousand years (v.2)
 - For a thousand years, the nations are no longer deceived (v.3)
 - The saints come to life, and reign with Christ for a thousand years (v.4)
 - The rest of the dead don't come to life until after the thousand years are ended (v.5).
 - The saints will be priests and kings for a thousand years (v.6)
 - Satan will be loosed at the end of the thousand years, and he will prompt a final human rebellion against God (vv.7-8).
- ☐ *Postmillennial*
- ☐ *Premillennial*
- ☐ *Amillennial*

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Although the Millennium is a subject of interest to many, it's not the subject of this book. I mention it only to point out that our beliefs about the Millennium need not affect our view of the New Earth.

_____ of when the old Earth ends, the central fact is that *the New Earth will begin*.

No matter how _____ we may view the Millennium, we can still embrace a common theology of the New Earth.

THE PROMISED NEW WORLD

A dominant theme in Old Testament prophecies involves God's plan for an _____ kingdom of righteousness. This pertains to the earth in general and Jerusalem in particular. Isaiah, for example, repeatedly anticipates this coming new world.

The Messiah "will _____ on David's throne and over his kingdom. . . Forever" (Isaiah 9:7). David's throne was an earthly one, with an earthly past and an earthly future.

In Isaiah 11:1-10, we're told of the Messiah's mission to Earth: "He will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked and destroy them" (v.4,NLT). With the lifting of the Curse, the Messiah will bring _____ to the animal kingdom: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat" (v.6). (This fulfills the deliverance spoken of in Romans 8.)

Isaiah says there will be no harm or destruction in Jerusalem (v.9). The Messiah "will stand as a banner for the peoples," and "the nations will rally to him" (v.10). His "place of rest will be glorious" (v.10). (This anticipates Revelation 21-22.)

Where will this happen? Not "up there" in a distant Heaven, but " _____ " on Earth, in Jerusalem. As we saw in chapter 9, Isaiah 60 speaks of the city gates always being open, because there are no longer any enemies. In words nearly identical to those of John concerning the New Earth. (Revelation 21:24-26), it speaks of nations and kings bringing in their wealth. It tells of God's light replacing the sun's and promises that "your days of sorrow will end" (Isaiah 60:19-20)- two prophecies clearly fulfilled in Revelation.)

The preoccupation with God's establishment of an earthly kingdom couldn't be more clear than it is in Isaiah 65: "Behold, I will _____ new heavens and a new earth. . . But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. . . They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit... (Vv. 17-19,21,25).

THE MESSIAH'S EARTHLY KINGDOM

God's people were right to _____ the Messiah to bring an earthly kingdom. That's exactly what God promised: "All kings shall fall down before him; All nations shall serve him" (Psalm 72:11,NKJV). An explicitly messianic passage tells us, "His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:10).

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

God promises that he has a great future in store for Jerusalem, in which, he says, “I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream” (Isaiah 66:12). Nations at peace will _____ their cultural treasures into a healed Jerusalem, precisely as Revelation 21:24 portrays.

The ultimate fulfillment of a host of Old Testament prophecies will be on the New Earth, where the people of God will “_____ the land *forever*” (Isaiah 60:21).

Chapter 15 - Will The Old Earth Be Destroyed. . . Or Renewed?

Will the present Earth and the entire universe be utterly _____, and the New Earth and new universe made from scratch? Or will the original universe be renewed and transformed into the new one? At first glance, some Scriptures seem to answer “utterly destroyed”:

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. (Psalm 102:25-26)

[Jesus said,] “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Luke 21:33)

The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by _____, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3:10)

In contrast, there are passages that speak of the earth _____ forever (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Psalm 78:69). However, the same Hebrew word translated “forever” in these passages is used elsewhere in ways that don’t mean forever (e.g., Deuteronomy 15:17). It is clear that the earth *as it is now* will not remain forever- but what does that really mean?

BURNED UP OR REFINED?

Scripture says that the fire of God’s judgment will destroy “wood, hay or straw,” yet it will purify “gold, silver, [and] costly stones,” which will all _____ the fire and be carried over into the new universe (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Similarly, the apostle John notes that when believers die, what they have done on Earth to Christ’s glory “will follow them” into Heaven (Revelation 14:13).

These are earthly things that will _____ the present Earth. “Those purified works on the earth, “writes Albert Wolters, “must surely include the products of human culture. There is no reason to doubt that they will be transfigured and transformed by their liberation from the curse, but they will be in essential continuity with our experience now- just as our resurrected bodies, though glorified, will still be bodies.

John Piper argues that God did not create matter to _____ it away. He writes, “When Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10 say that the present earth and heavens ‘pass away,’ it does not mean that they go out of existence, but may mean that there will be such a change in them that their present condition passes away. We might say, ‘the caterpillar passes away, and the butterfly emerges.’ There is a real passing away, and there is a real continuity, a real connection.”

As we saw in chapter 12, Romans 8:19-23 inseparably links the _____ of mankind and Earth. As such, the earth will be raised to new life in the same way our bodies will be raised to new life.

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

REDEMPTION MEANS RESTORATION

Even if the term *New Earth* appeared nowhere in Scripture, even if we didn't have dozens of other passages such as Isaiah 60 that refer to it so clearly, Acts 3:21 would be sufficient. It tells us that Christ will "remain in heaven until the time comes for God to _____, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." When Christ returns, God's agenda is not to destroy everything and start over, but to "restore everything."

The perfection of creation once lost will be fully _____, and then some. The same Peter who spoke these words in Acts 3 wrote the words about the earth's destruction in 2 Peter 3- apparently he saw no conflict between them.

Many cannot reconcile the idea of redemption through restoration with the statements of 2 Peter 3:10 that "heavens will disappear with a roar," and "the elements will be destroyed by fire," and "the _____ and everything in it will be laid bare."

I think the _____ to understanding the qualified meaning of these images of destruction in 2 Peter lies within the passage itself. The passage draws a parallel between the earth in the time of Noah, which was "destroyed in judgment again, this time not by water but by fire (2 Peter 3:6-7). The stated reference point for understanding the future destruction of the world is the Flood.

THE MEANING OF NEW

As we've seen, the expression "Heaven and Earth" is a biblical designation for the _____. So when Revelation 21:1 speaks of "a new heaven and a new earth," it indicates a transformation of the entire universe. The Greek word, *kainos*, translated "new" indicates that the earth God creates won't merely be new as opposed to old, but new in quality and superior in character.

Paul uses the same word, *kainos*, when he speaks of a believer becoming "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new earth will be the _____ as the old earth, just as a new Christian is still the same person he was before. Different? Yes. But also the same.

As God may gather the scattered DNA and Atoms and molecules of our bodies, he will _____ all he needs of the scorched and disfigured Earth. As our old bodies will be raised to new bodies, so the old Earth will be raised to become the New Earth.

So, will the earth be destroyed or renewed? The answer is _____ - but the "destruction" will be temporal and partial, whereas the renewal will be eternal and complete.

The earth's death will be no more _____ than our own. The destruction of the old Earth in God's purifying judgment will immediately be followed by its resurrection to new life. Earth's fiery "end" will open straight into a glorious new beginning. And as we'll see later, it will just keep getting better and better.

NEXT WEEK:

Chapter 16 – Will The New Earth Be Familiar. . . Like Home?

Chapter 17 - What Will It Mean To See God?

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Heaven – Week Eight

October 24, 2010

Section Five – Seeing The Earth Restored

Chapter 16 – Will The New Earth Be Familiar. . . Like Home?

Sometimes when we look at this world's breathtaking _____ - standing in a gorgeous place where the trees and flowers and rivers and mountains are wondrous- we feel a twinge of disappointment. Why? Because we know we're going to leave this behind. In consolation or self rebuke, we might say, "This world is not my home." If we were honest, however, 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 _____ - a world without sin, death, and Curse, and all the personal and relational problems and disappointments they create.

WILL THE NEW EARTH BE FAMILIAR LIKE HOME?

Those who emphasize our citizenship in Heaven- and I'm one of them- sometimes have an unfortunate habit of minimizing our _____ to the earth and our destiny to live on it and rule it. We end up thinking of eternity as a non-earthly spiritual state in which Earth is but a distant memory, if we remember it at all.

This faulty _____ accuses God of failure. Why? Because it assumes he will never accomplish a lasting state or righteousness on Earth. (Even the Millennium ends in rebellion.) Instead, he finally has to resort to making mankind less human (disembodies) and destroying the earth he made. God's magnificent sovereign plan of the ages is reduced, in our minds, to a failed experiment.

WHAT OUR HOME WILL REALLY BE LIKE

The correction to the heresy of believing God's plan has failed is the biblical doctrine of the new heavens and New Earth.

Theologian Rene Pache writes, *"The emphasis on the present heaven is clearly rest, cessation from earth's battles and comforts from earth's sufferings. The future heaven is centered more on 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, nations to rule. In other words, the emphasis 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 many times through the power and glory of resurrected bodies on a resurrected Earth, free at last from sin and shame and all that would hinder both joy and achievement."*

As human beings, we long for _____, even as we step out to explore undiscovered new frontiers. We long for 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; staying in a nice new hotel room; welcoming a new child or grandchild; 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.

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

THE FAMILIARITY OF HOME

When the Bible tells us that Heaven is our home, what meanings should we attach to the word *home*? _____ is one. Everything here speaks of time spent with significant people: playing together, eating together, reading together, crying together, praying together, charting the course of our lives together. Home is where we're with the ones we love.

Heaven will be just like that. We'll be with people we love, and we'll love no one more than Jesus, who purchased with his own blood the _____ of the New Earth. It won't be long before we settle in there. Because we've already lived on Earth, I think it will seem from the first that we're coming home. Because we once lived on Earth, the New Earth will strike us as very familiar.

NEW SONG, NEW CAR, NEW EARTH

By calling the New Earth *Earth*, God _____ tells us it will be earthy, and thus familiar. Otherwise, why call it Earth?

When _____ speaks of a "new song" do we imagine it's wordless, silent, or without rhythm? Of course not. Why? Because then it wouldn't be a song. If I promised you a new car, would you say, "If it's new, it probably won't have an engine, transmission, doors, wheels, stereo, or upholstery"? If a new car didn't have these things, it wouldn't be a car. If we buy a new car, we know it will be a better version of what we already have, our old car. Likewise, the New Earth will be a far better version of the old Earth..

DOES EARTHLINESS DEMEAN HEAVEN?

In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus is an earthly Heaven, where gods indulge in scandalous behavior, making Heaven seem cheap and man-made. Islam portrays Heaven as a place where man is given countless concubines- promiscuity as an eternal reward. We rightly recoil at this. It may partly account for why some people resist the notion of a New Earth, assuming that earthliness somehow demeans God and Heaven.

Scripture _____ God as holy and transcendent. Because Heaven is his dwelling place, it seems inappropriate to think of Heaven in earthly terms. But even before Christ's incarnation, God came to the Garden to walk with Adam and Eve. And Christ's incarnation and resurrection took it much further- one member of the transcendent triune God became *Permanently* immanent. Jesus is in a physical form, in a human resurrection body, for all eternity.

HOMESICK AT HOME

Do you recall a time when you were away from your earthly home and desperately _____ 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 should feel about Heaven. We are a displaced people, longing for our home. CS Lewis said "*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.*"

Augustine wrote, *I am groaning with inexpressible groaning on my wanderer's path, and remembering Jerusalem with my heart lifted up towards it- Jerusalem my homeland, Jerusalem my mother.*"

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

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 _____ of water on 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. And we reduce “spirituality” into a denial of 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 for a barbeque with friends, watch a ball game, play golf, ride bikes, work in the garden, 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*.

Section Six – Celebrating Our Relationship With God

Chapter 17 –What Will It Mean To See God?

“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1).

We may imagine we want a thousand different things, but God is the one we really long for. His presence brings _____; his absence brings thirst and longing. *Our longing for Heaven is a longing for God-* a longing that involves not only our inner beings, but our bodies as well. Being with God is the heart and soul of Heaven. Every other heavenly pleasure will derive from and be secondary to his presence. God’s greatest gift to us is, and always will be, himself.

THE BEATIFIC VISION

Ancient theologians often spoke of the “beatific vision.” The term comes from three Latin words that together mean “a _____ - _____ sight.” The sight they spoke of was God. Revelation 22:4 says of God’s servants on the New Earth, “They will see his face.” To see God’s face is the loftiest of all aspirations- though sadly, for most of us, it’s not at the top of our wish list. (If we understand what it means, it will be.)

To be told we’ll see God’s face is _____ to anyone who understands God’s transcendence and inapproachability. In ancient Israel, only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and he but once a year. Even then, according to tradition, a rope was tied around the priest’s ankle in case he died while inside the Holy of Holies. Why? Well, God struck down Uzzah for *touching* the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:7). Who would volunteer to go into the Holy of Holies to pull out the high priest if God slew him?

Moses saw God but not God’s face (Exodus 33:18-23). The New Testament says that “God lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:16). To see God’s face was utterly unthinkable.

That’s why, when we’re told in Revelation 22:4 that we’ll see _____, it should astound us. For this to happen, it would require that we undergo something radical between now and then. The obstacles to seeing God are daunting: “Without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). It’s only because we’ll be fully righteous in Christ, completely sinless, that we’ll be able to see God and live.

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

FACES OF FATHER AND SON

David says, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple" (Psalm 27:4). David was preoccupied with God's _____, and also with God's _____. He longed to be where God was and to gaze on his beauty. To see God's face is to behold his beauty, which is the source of all lesser beauties.

God, who is transcendent, became _____ in Jesus Christ, who is Immanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). God the Son pitched his tent among us, on our Earth, as one of us (John 1:14). So whenever we see Jesus in Heaven, *we will see God*. Because Jesus Christ is God, and a permanent manifestation of God, he could say to Phillip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Certainly, then, a primary way we will see the Father on the New Earth is through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will _____ God" (Matthew 5:8). And in Revelation 22:4, when it says "they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads," it appears to be referring to seeing the face of God the Father.

"God is spirit" (John 4:24). Biblical references to God's body parts (e.g., "the eyes of the Lord" or "God's arms") are figures of speech. Yet in _____, it seems that Moses saw a bright essence of God himself, even without seeing God's face. Is brightness really part of God the Father's essence, or is it a form in which he chooses to reveal himself to physical eyes? I don't pretend to understand how we will see the Father's face, but it seems that in some sense we will.

SEEING GOD WITH OUR NEW BODIES

A book on Heaven says, "The redeemed will see God- not, to be sure, with _____ eyes." But why not? The scene depicted in Revelation 22:3-4 comes *after* our bodily resurrection: "The throne of God . . . Will be in the city, and his face." As physical beings we will certainly have physical eyes- how else should we expect to see God? Our resurrection bodies will have physical spiritual eyes, untainted by sin, disease, or death. They will see far better than Moses' eyes, which allowed him to see an indirect manifestation of God's glory.

Will the Christ we worship in Heaven as God also be a man? _____. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday {when he lived on Earth} and today {when he lives in the present Heaven} and forever {when he will live on the New Earth, in the eternal Heaven}" (Hebrews 13:8). Christ didn't put on a body as if it were a coat. He didn't contain two separable components, man and God, to be switched on and off at will. Rather, he was and is and will be always a man *and* God.

Job, in his anguish, cried out in a vision of striking clarity: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my _____ I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27).

SEEING GOD: OUR PRIMARY JOY

In Heaven, _____ between redeemed human beings and God will forever be gone. To Look into God's eyes will be to see what we've always longed to see: the person who made us for his own good pleasure. Seeing God will be like seeing everything else for the first time. Why? Because not only will we see God, he will be the lens through which we see everything else- people, ourselves, and the events of this life.

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

What is the essence of eternal life? “That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Our _____ joy in Heaven will be knowing and seeing God. Every other joy will be derivative, flowing from the fountain of our relationship with God.

Scripture says we are to put our hope _____ in material things but, “in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17). If he provides everything for our enjoyment, we shouldn’t feel guilty for enjoying it, should we?

God is a lavish giver. “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). The God who gave us his Son delights to graciously give us “all things.” These “all things” are in addition to Christ, but they are never _____ of him- they come, Scripture tells us, “along with him.” If we didn’t have Christ, we would have nothing. But because we have Christ, we have everything. Hence, we can enjoy the people and things God has made, and in the process enjoy the God who designed and provided them for his pleasure and ours.

SEEING GOD IN EVERYTHING GOOD

They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life. (Psalm 36:8-9).

This passage portrays the joy that God’s creatures find in feasting on Heaven’s abundance, and drinking deeply of his delights. Notice that this abundance and the river of delights flow from and are completely _____ on their source: God. He alone is the fountain of life, and without him there could be neither life nor joy, neither abundance nor delights.

God doesn’t want to be _____ or depreciated. He wants to be recognized as the source of all our joys, and he wants us to draw closer to him through partaking of his creation.

Theologian Sam Storms writes, “We will constantly be more _____ with God, more in love with God, and thus ever more relishing his presence and our relationship with him. Our experience of God will never reach its consummation. We will never finally arrive, as if upon reaching a peak we discover there is nothing beyond. Our experience of God will never become stale. It will deepen and develop, intensify and amplify, unfold and increase, broaden and balloon.

Will we never tire of praising him? Augustine writes, “God himself, who is the Author of virtue, shall be our _____. As there is nothing greater or better than God himself, God has promised us himself. God shall be the end of all our desires, who will be seen without end, loved without cloy, and praised without weariness.”

Section Six – Celebrating Our Relationship With God

Chapter 18 -What Will It Mean For God to Dwell Among Us?

Chapter 19 – How Will We Worship God?

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Heaven – Week Nine

November 7, 2010

Section Six- Celebrating Our Relationship With God

Chapter 18 –What Will It Mean For God to Dwell Among Us?

In Eden, God came down to Earth, the home of _____, whenever he wished (Genesis 3:8). On the New Earth, God and mankind 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 forever in the same home- the New Earth.

God declares this truth in Scripture:

I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will _____ among you and be your God, and you will be my people. (Leviticus 26:11-12)

I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. (2 Corinthians 6:16).

THE MARRIAGE OF GOD AND MAN, HEAVEN AND EARTH

Earth will become Heaven- and it will truly be Heaven on Earth. The New Earth will be God's locus, his dwelling place. This is why I do not hesitate to call the New Earth "Heaven," for where God _____ his home is Heaven. The purpose of God will at last be achieved: "To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10).

THE JOY OF A GOD-CENTERED HEAVEN

Consider this statement: "God himself will be with them" (Revelation 21:3). Why does it emphatically say God *himself*? Because God won't merely send us a delegate. He will _____ come to live among us on the New Earth. As Steven J. 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.*"

HEAVEN RELOCATED TO EARTH

Not only will God come to dwell with us on Earth, he will also _____ with him the New Jerusalem, an entire city of people, structures, streets, walls, rivers, and trees that is now in the present, intermediate Heaven. If you've ever seen a house being relocated, you appreciate what a massive undertaking it is. God will relocate an entire city- Heaven's capital city- the New Jerusalem- from Heaven to Earth. It's vast complex containing, perhaps, hundreds of millions of residences. He will bring with it Heaven's human inhabitants and angels as well. It appears that God has already fashioned the New Jerusalem: "He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16). It doesn't say that God *will* prepare a city or even that he *is preparing it*, but that he *has* prepared it. This suggests that the New Jerusalem, complete or nearly complete, is already there in the present Heaven.

BEING WITH GOD

A Heaven without God would be like a palace without a king. If there's no king, there's no palace. If there's no God, there's no Heaven. Heaven will simply be a _____ extension of God's goodness. To be with God- to know him, to see him- is the central, irreducible draw of Heaven.

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

The _____ of God is the essence of Heaven (just as the absence of God is the presence of Hell). Because God is beautiful beyond measure, if we knew 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).

Jesus promised his disciples, "I will come back and _____ to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). For Christians, to die is to "be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8, NKJV). The apostle Paul says, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians 1:23). He could have said, "I desire to depart and be in Heaven," but he didn't- his mind was on being with his Lord Jesus, which is the most significant aspect of Heaven.

WILL GOD SERVE US?

Jesus said, "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them _____ when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them" (Luke 12:37).

If it was our idea that God would serve us, it would be _____. But it's *his* idea. As husbands serve their wives and parents serve their children, God desires to serve us. "On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples" (Isaiah 25:6). God will be the chef- he'll prepare us a meal. In Heaven, God will overwhelm us with his humility and his grace.

WHOM WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

If you had the opportunity to spend the evening with any person who's ever lived, whom would you _____? Probably someone fascinating, knowledgeable, and accomplished. High on my list would be C.S. Lewis, A.W. Tozer, Jonathan Edwards, Hudson Taylor, and Charles Spurgeon.

Is Jesus the first person you would choose?

The good news is, *he chose you*. If you're a Christian, you'll be with him for eternity and enjoy endless fascinating conversations and experiences. Incredibly, he'll also _____ your company and mine. After all, he paid the ultimate price just so he could have us over to his place for eternity.

HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD

In a sense, we're _____ in Heaven with Christ: "Since, then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and *your life is now hidden with Christ in God*. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4, emphasis added).

Our intimate link with Christ in his redemptive work makes us _____ from him, even now. As we walk with him and commune with him in this world, we experience a faint foretaste of Heaven's delights and wonders.

"God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Chapter 19 –How Will We Worship God?

HOW WILL WE WORSHIP GOD?

Have you ever- in prayer or corporate worship or during a walk on the beach- for a few moments experienced the very presence of God? It's a tantalizing encounter, yet for most of us it tends to _____ quickly in the distractions of life. What will it be like to behold God's face never being distracted by lesser things? What will it be like when every lesser thing unfailingly points us back to God?

ALL ENCOMPASSING WORSHIP

Most people know that we'll worship God in Heaven. But they don't grasp how _____ that will be. Multitudes of God's people- of every nation, tribe, people, and language- will gather to sing praise to God for his greatness, wisdom, power, grace, and mighty work of redemption (Revelation 5:13-14). Overwhelmed by his magnificence, we will fall on our faces in unrestrained happiness and say, "Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and strength, be to our God forever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:9-12).

People of the world are always striving to celebrate- they just lack ultimate _____ to celebrate (and therefore find lesser reasons). As Christians, we have those reasons- our relationship with Jesus and the promise of Heaven. "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).

Will we always be on our _____ at Christ's feet, worshipping him? No, because Scripture says we'll be doing many other things- living in dwelling places, eating, and drinking, reigning with Christ, and working for him. Scripture depicts people standing, walking, traveling, in and out of the city, and gathering at feasts.

When doing these things, we won't be on our faces before Christ. Nevertheless, all that we do will be an _____ of worship. We'll enjoy full unbroken fellowship with Christ. At times this will crescendo into greater heights of praise as we assemble with the multitudes who are also worshipping him.

Even now, we're told, "Be _____ always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). That God expects us to do many other things, such as work, rest, and be with our families, shows that we must be able to be joyful, pray, and give thanks *while doing other things*.

WHY WORSHIP CAN'T BE BORING

Some subjects become less interesting over time. Others become more fascinating. Nothing is more _____ than God. The deeper we probe into his being, the more we want to know. One song puts it this way: "As eternity unfolds, the thrill of knowing Him will grow."

We'll never lose our fascination for God as we get to know him better. The _____ of knowing him will never subside. The desire to know him better will motivate everything we do. To imagine that worshipping God could be boring is to impose on Heaven our bad experiences of so- called worship.

Satan is determined to make church _____, and when it is, we assume Heaven will be also. But church can be exciting, and worship exhilarating. That's what it will be in Heaven.

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE

"Blessed are those who are _____ to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:9). It's amazing enough that we'll be _____ to the king's wedding. What's beyond amazing is that we'll be his bride. (Think about *that* for a few million years!) There is an intimacy between husband and wife that includes close friendship yet also transcends it.

The return of Christ will signal not only the Father _____ his children but also the Bridegroom _____ his bride. As the church, we're part of the ultimate Cinderella story- rescued from a home where we labor, often without appreciation or reward. One day we'll be taken into the arms of the Prince and whisked away to live in his palace. When "the wedding of the Lamb has come" (Revelation 19:17), the New Jerusalem, consisting not only of buildings but of God's people, will come down out of Heaven, "prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Revelation 21:2); "And his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear" (Revelation 19:7-8). The eyes of the universe will be on the Bridegroom, but also on the bride for whom he died.

If I were to ask you, "What does the fine linen the bride is _____ stand for?" you might be inclined to say, "The righteousness of Christ that covers us." Significantly, however, the text says something different: "Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:8). It's only because of the Bridegroom's work that the chosen princess, the church, can enter the presence of the Lord. Yet her wedding dress is woven through her many acts of faithfulness while away from her Bridegroom on the fallen Earth.

The picture is compelling. Each prayer, each gift, each hour of fasting, each kindness to the needy, all of these are _____ that have been empowered by the Spirit, and she has spent her life on Earth sewing her wedding dress for the day when she will be joined to her beloved Bridegroom.

NO RIVALRY BETWEEN CHRIST AND HEAVEN

A man said to a few of us at a gathering, "I find myself longing for Heaven." After he left, someone said to me, "Shouldn't he be longing for *God*, not Heaven? This may sound spiritual, but is it? Scripture speaks positively of "longing for a better country" (Hebrews 11:16). I don't know the man's heart, but his statement was _____ warranted. The right kind of longing for Heaven is a longing for God, and a longing for God is a longing for Heaven. If we understand what Heaven is (God's dwelling place) and who God is, we will see no conflict between the two. A woman who longs to be reunited with her husband could well say, "I just want to go home."

If we think _____ thoughts of Heaven, we think unworthy thoughts of God. That's why the conventional caricatures of Heaven do a terrible disservice to God and adversely affect our relationship with him. If we come to love Heaven more- the Heaven God portrays in Scripture- we will inevitably love God more. If Heaven fills our hearts and minds, God will fill our hearts and minds.

Those who love God should _____ more often of Heaven, not less.

NEXT WEEK:

Chapter 20 – What Does God's Eternal Kingdom Involve?

Chapter 21 – Will We Actually Rule With Christ?

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Section Seven— Week ten

November 14, 2010

Chapter 20 –What Does God’s Eternal Kingdom Involve?

If you were to describe a kingdom, what _____ would you include? A king, certainly, and subjects to be ruled, but what else? In order to be rightly described as a kingdom, wouldn’t it also have to include territory, a government, and a culture? Why is it then, that when we think of God’s kingdom, we often think only of the King and his subjects, but we leave out the territory and the culture? We spiritualize God’s kingdom, perceiving it as otherworldly and intangible. But Scripture tells us otherwise.

DIDN’T JESUS SAY HIS KINGDOM WASN’T EARTHLY?

When Jesus said to the Pharisees, “I am not of this world” (John 8:23), he did _____ “I am not *in* or *on* this world.” rather, he was speaking of his place of origin. His Kingdom is not *of* the world because it is not *from* the world. It did not originate here. Furthermore, it’s uncontaminated by the fallen Earth and operates by different principles.

When Jesus was on trial, he said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from _____ place. . . You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world” (John 18:36-37). When Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” he did not mean that his Kingdom wouldn’t be on this earth after it is transformed. He meant that his Kingdom isn’t of this earth as it is now, under the Curse.

Flesh isn’t a universally _____ word. Jesus is said repeatedly to have had *sarx*, or “flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; 2 John 1:7), but he didn’t have sin; therefore *flesh* and *sin* cannot be synonymous.

JESUS, WORTHY KING OF THE NEW EARTH

John writes, “I wept and wept because no one was found who was _____ to open the scroll or look inside” (Revelation 5:4).

“Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has _____. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. . . And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:5-9).

The passage culminates with a statement about Christ’s followers: “You have made them to be a kingdom and _____ to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10).

THE IMPORTANCE OF LAND

An essential component of any kingdom is *land*. I don’t always agree with David Chilton, but I believe he’s correct when he says in *Paradise Restored*, “When God created Adam, He placed him into a land, and gave him _____ over it. Land is basic to dominion; therefore, salvation involves a restoration to land and property.

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. . This is why Biblical law is filled with references to _____, law, and economics; and this is why the Reformation laid such stress on this world, as well as the next.

The Biblical ideal is for every man to own property- a _____ where he can have dominion and rule under God.”

Consider how the theme that Earth belongs to God and his people (not to the unrighteous who sometimes rule it now) is carried throughout Psalms and Isaiah.

You made [mankind] ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet. (Psalm 8:6)

He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth. (Psalm 25:13, NKJV)

I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the People, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages. (Isaiah 49:8, NKJV)

The man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land and _____ my holy mountain. (Isaiah 57:13)

THE GOAL OF HISTORY

God is the sovereign ruler of the universe, yet he _____ not to rule the universe alone. He delegates responsibilities to angels, who exist in a hierarchy of command under Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9; revelation 12:7). God made human beings in his image, as creators and rulers, to carry out his divine will. He does not grudgingly pass on to us management responsibilities. On the contrary, he delights to entrust Earth’s rule to us. He has uniquely created and gifted us to handle such responsibilities and to find joy in them.

Remember God’s _____ stated plan: “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Ephesians 1:10). His design is through Christ “to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross’ (Colossians 1:20).

Chapter 21 –Will We Actually Rule With Christ?

God created Adam and Eve to be king and queen _____ the earth. Their job was to rule the earth, to the glory of God. They failed.

Jesus Christ is the _____ Adam, and the church is his bride, the second Eve. Christ is king, the church is his queen. Christ will exercise dominion over all nations of the earth: “He will rule from sea to sea and from River to the ends of the earth. . . All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him” (Psalm 72:8,11).

As the new head of the human race, Christ-with his beloved people as his bride and co-rulers- will at last _____ what was entrusted to Adam and Eve. God’s saints will fulfill on the New Earth the role God first assigned to Adam and Eve on the old Earth. “They will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:5).

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Because Christ will be the King of kings, this will be the Kingdom of kingdoms- the _____ kingdom in human history. Yes, *human history*, for our history will not end at Christ's return or upon our relocation to the New Earth. It will continue forever, to the glory of God.

WHY ARE WE SURPRISED THAT WE'LL RULE THE EARTH?

Because I teach on the subject of redeemed humanity ruling the earth. I've had many opportunities to observe peoples responses. Often they're _____ to learn that we will reign in eternity over lands, cities, and nations. Many are skeptical- it's a foreign concept that seems fanciful. Nothing demonstrates how far we've distanced ourselves from our biblical calling like our lack of knowledge about our destiny to rule the earth. Why are we so surprised, when it is spoken of throughout the Old Testament and repeatedly reaffirmed in the New Testament.

In his parable, Jesus speaks of our _____ over cities (Luke 19:17)

"Do you not know that the saints will _____ the world?. . Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

Remembering again that a "crown" speaks of ruling authority, consider the following examples from one small portion of Scripture, Revelation 2-5:

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you _____ over the nations. (2:10)

To him who _____ and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations. (2:26)

I am _____ soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. (3:11)

OUR INHERITANCE: OWNING AND RULING THE LAND

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs- _____ of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Romans 8:16-17).

God has _____ sovereignty to his firstborn son, Jesus. Christ, in turn, gladly shares his dominion with the redeemed- his siblings- who are co-heirs of the Father's throne. They will rule with Christ over the Kingdom.

Christ, the firstborn, is the _____ ruler, but we are called "co-heirs with Christ." God entrusts us to rule one prime piece of territory- Earth, which he created specifically for us.

The inheritance that God grants us is the very same Earth over which _____ battles have been fought since Satan's first attack in Eden. Our inheritance is not only physical but also eternal: "The days of the blameless are known to the Lord, and their inheritance will endure forever" (Psalm 37:18).

After the final battle is won by Christ, we will _____ the earth with him as co-heirs of his Kingdom.

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SHOULD WE WANT TO RULE?

The government of the New Earth _____ be a democracy. It won't be majority rule, and it won't be driven by opinion polls. Instead, every citizen of Heaven will have an appointed role, one that fulfills him or her and contributes to the whole. No one will "fall through the cracks" in God's Kingdom. No one will feel worthless or insignificant.

There will be a social hierarchy of government, but there's no indication of a _____ hierarchy. In other words, the apostle Paul will be in a position of greater leadership than most of us, but that doesn't mean he'll be inaccessible. There will be no pride, envy, boasting, or anything sin-related. Our differences will be a manifestation of God's creativity. As we're different in race, nationality, gender, personality, gifting, and passions, so we'll be different in positions of service.

Imagine responsibility, service, and leadership that's _____. The responsibility that God will entrust to us as a reward can only be good for us, and we'll find delight in it. To rule on the New Earth will be to enable, equip, and guide, offering wisdom and encouragement to those under our authority.

WHOSE IDEA IS OUR RULERSHIP?

Many people have told me they're uncomfortable with the idea that mankind will rule the earth, _____ cities, and reign forever. It sounds presumptuous and self-important. I would agree- if it was *not* our idea, it was God's. And it's not a minor or peripheral doctrine; it's at the very heart of Scripture.

God governed the universe before Satan fell. Likewise, he created mankind as his image-bearers, with the capacity for ruling, and before Adam and Eve sinned, God specifically _____ them to rule the earth. Ruling isn't a bad thing, it's a good thing. God has called us to it and has equipped us for it- to rule the earth, rule it well, and find pleasure in ruling it. Because we're sinners, power tends to corrupt us. But on the New Earth there will be no sin. Therefore, all ruling will be just and benevolent, devoid of abuse, corruption, or lust for power.

Some Christians err by demeaning and _____ politics, thereby failing to exercise their God-given stewardship. Others put too much confidence in politics, failing to understand God's insistence that he alone will establish a perfect government on Earth.

When have we ever experienced the "peace on Earth" _____ at Christ's birth? We haven't yet, but we will (Zechariah 9:9-10; Ezekiel 37:26-28; Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:18-21).

LOOKING FORWARD TO WHAT GOD HAS FOR US

God is _____ us for leadership. He's watching to see how we demonstrate our faithfulness. He does that through his apprenticeship program, one that prepares us for Heaven. Christ is not simply preparing a place for us; he is preparing us for that place.

Through the _____ you now face, what dreams might God be preparing you to live out on the New Earth?

Next Week: Chapters 22 and 23

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Section Seven— Week Eleven

November 21, 2010

Chapter 22 –How Will We Rule God’s Kingdom?

When we read that God _____ us “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade- kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4), we may think of this inheritance as Heaven or its pleasures. But God not only gives pleasures to his heirs, he also gives us power- positions of authority in his eternal Kingdom.

Our vested interest in the New Earth couldn’t be greater. It was _____ on the cross by the blood of God’s Son. The New Earth isn’t a blissful realm that we’ll merely visit, as vacationers go to a theme park. Rather, it’s a realm that we’ll joyfully rule with Jesus, exercising dominion as God’s image-bearers.

In Romans 8:16-17, Paul writes, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs- heirs of God and _____ with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

While we’re on Earth, we serve Jesus, rejecting Earth’s value system, but not because we despise the earth or have no interest in it. On the contrary, we reject much of what this fallen Earth offers us *precisely because we want all of what God offers us on the _____ d Earth*. We will forever please our Father by ruling over the earth that we’ll share in the glory of the sovereign ruler himself.

Some might protest, “How dare we imagine such a future for ourselves!” Certainly it would be blasphemous for fallen humans to claim a share of God’s throne if it was *our* idea; But again, it’s not our idea; it’s God’s idea. It’s his _____, laid out before the foundation of the world, which he has gone to sacrificial lengths to implement. If we reject the idea that God has called us to rule the earth, then we reject his explicitly stated plan and his sovereignly orchestrated purpose. *How dare we?*

It’s in the context of our being heirs and co-heirs with Christ, heirs and future _____ of the earth, that Paul writes of all creation groaning as it waits to be “liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

WHY GOD CREATED MANKIND AND THE EARTH?

In *The End for which God Created the World*, Jonathan Edwards writes, “God has a disposition to communicate himself, to spread abroad his own fullness. His purpose was for his goodness to over-spill his own Being, as it were. He chose to create the heavens and the earth so that his glory could come pouring out from himself in abundance. He brought a physical reality into existence in order that it might experience his glory and be filled with it and reflect it- every atom, every second, every part and moment of creation. He made human beings in his own image to reflect his glory, and he placed them in a perfect environment which also reflected it.”

Earth exists for the same reason that mankind and everything else exists: to _____ God. God is glorified when we take our rightful, intended place in his creation and exercise the dominion that he bestowed on us. God appointed human beings to rule the earth:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have _____ over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing

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that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:26-28, NKJV).

_____encompasses commerce, the arts sciences, athletics-anything and everything that God-empowered, creative human minds can conceive and strong human bodies can implement.

In *The King of the Earth*, theologian Erich Sauer writes of the phrase in Genesis 1:26 "let them have dominion": "These words plainly declare the _____ of the human race to rule. They also call him to progressive growth in culture. Far from being something in conflict with God, cultural achievements are an essential attribute of the nobility of man as he possessed it in Paradise. Inventions and discoveries, the sciences and the arts, refinement and ennobling, in short, the advance of the human mind, are throughout the will of God. They are the taking possession of the earth by the royal human race (Genesis 1:28), the performance of a commission, imposed by the Creator, by God's ennobled servants, a God-appointed ruler's service for the blessing of this earthly realm."

Friendship with the world [*as it is now, under the Curse*] is hatred toward God. (James 4:4)

Do not be conformed to this world [*as it is now, under the Curse*]. (Romans 12:2, NKJV)

The wisdom of this world [*as it is now, under the Curse*] is foolishness with God. (1 Corinthians 3:19, NKJV)

The world as it was, and the world as it will be, is _____ good. The world *as it is now*, inhabited by humanity *as we are now*, is twisted. But this is a temporary condition, with an eternal remedy: Christ's redemptive work.

GOD'S KINGDOM. . . AND OURS

In Daniel 7 we're given a prophetic revelation of four earthly kingdoms, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, that will one day be forever _____ by a fifth kingdom. "There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14) Because the four pagan kingdoms are on Earth, the implication is that the fifth kingdom- God's eternal Kingdom- will also be on Earth.

Notice the _____ between the ultimate earthly kingdom of the Messiah and the previous earthly kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, from which eventually comes the kingdom of the Antichrist. The kingdom with the everlasting dominion is not a dominion over a *different* realm but over the *same* realm- Earth. In speaking of these kingdoms, God is not comparing apples (Earth) with oranges (a spirit realm), but apples with apples.

Daniel 7:21-22 says that an earthly ruler "was waging war against the saints and defeating them, *until* the Ancient of Days came and _____ judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom" (emphasis added).

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The same earthly kingdoms ruled by ungodly human beings will ultimately be ruled by _____ human beings. Christ's promise wasn't figurative- the meek really *will* inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). And they will rule what they inherit.

THE KINGDOM TRANSFER

Daniel 7:25 tells us that the saints will be _____ over to the earth's kingdoms, which will persecute them for a season. But then a stunning reversal will occur. "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him" (v.27).

The Kingdom will be God's, yet he will _____ his saints as rulers under him, and they "will worship and obey him."

What is the "greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven" that will be "handed over to the saints"? I believe it _____ all that makes the nations great. That would include, among other things, their cultural, artistic, athletic, scientific, and intellectual achievements. All of these will not be lost or destroyed but "handed over to the saints" as they rule God's eternal Kingdom on the New Earth. We will become the stewards, the managers of the world's wealth and accomplishments.

Consider the marvels of this revelation. God's children who _____ under ungodly earthly kings *will forever take their place as earthly kings*. The great cultural accomplishments of ungodly nations will be handed over to God's people to manage and (I assume) develop and expand.

If the Bible made no other references to believers ruling over an earthly kingdom, the _____ message of Daniel 7 would suffice: *The saints of God will rule the earth forever*

Many people believe that if God rules the universe, there's no _____ for others to rule. But this can't be true, because we're told that "all rulers will worship and obey him (v.27). As we've seen from Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21, there will still be nations on the New Earth, and they will still have rulers. But they will be *righteous* rulers, subordinate to Christ. People of every national and ethnic group ("tribe and language and people and nation") will worship the Lamb (Revelation 5:9). Some will rule over cities; others will rule over nations.

AN EVER-EXPANDING GOVERNMENT

God says of the reigning Messiah, "Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). What does this mean? If it was simply that the Messiah's reign will _____ cease, it would more likely say, "His government shall never end." That's true of course, but it's not the point of the text. If it means only that his government shall be all-encompassing, it might say, "Of his governmental authority there will be no limit." That's also true, but again it's not the point. The key word in Isaiah 9:7 is *increase*. Nearly every major English translation of the Bible renders the Hebrew word *marbiyth* as "increase" or "expansion." In other words, Christ's government of the New Earth and the new universe will be *ever-expanding*.

THE SAINTS WILL RULE

God's throne is referred to forty times in the book of Revelation, appearing in sixteen of the twenty-two chapters. In *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven*, Wilbur Smith writes, "The basic undertone of all that is revealed in the

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Apocalypse concerning the activities of heaven may be summed up in this one word_____.”

Revelation isn’t primarily a book about the Antichrist or the Tribulation; It’s a book about God reigning. He reigns over the fallen universe now, and he will reign uncontested over the new universe, with mankind reigning by his side. Concerning the repeated references to our reigning over God’s universe, Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness writes, “We must not regard this as a figure of speech, but as the description of an actual reality.”

By rebelling against the King of kings, mankind abdicated dominion over the earth. But Christ will _____ us to the throne occupied so briefly by Adam and Eve.

SERVICE AS A REWARD

Those coming out of the Great Tribulation will be specially _____ by being given a place “before the throne of God,” where they will “serve him day and night” (Revelation 7:14-15). Notice that the Master rewards his faithful servants not by taking away responsibilities but by giving them greater ones.

Service is a reward, not a punishment. This idea is foreign to people who dislike their work and only put up with it until retirement. We think that faithful work should be rewarded by a vacation for the rest of our lives. But God offers us something very different: more work, more responsibilities, increased_____, along with greater abilities, resources, wisdom, and empowerment. We will have sharp minds, strong bodies, clear purpose, and unabated joy. The more we serve Christ now, the greater our capacity will be to serve him in Heaven.

Will everyone be given the opportunity to rule in the new universe? The apostle Paul said that eternal rewards are available “not only to me, but also to all who have _____ for his appearing” (2Timothy 4:8). The word *all* is encouraging. “The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free” (Ephesians 6:8). The word *everyone* is again encouraging. It won’t be just a select few rewarded with positions of leadership.

Should we be _____ that God will reward us by making us rulers in his Kingdom? Absolutely. Jesus said, “Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12).

God will choose who will _____ as kings, and I think some great surprises are in store for us. Christ gives us clues in Scripture as to the type of person he will choose: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. . . Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3, 5, 10); ““God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1Peter 5:5-6).

Look around you to see the meek and the humble. They may include street sweepers, locksmith’s, bus drivers, or stay-at-home moms who spend their days changing diapers, doing laundry, packing lunches, drying tears, and driving carpools for God.

PART III – LIVING IN LIGHT OF HEAVEN

Chapter 45- Reorienting Ourselves To Heaven As Our Home

Chapter 46- Anticipating The Great Adventure

Heaven- Randy Alcorn

Part III— Living in Light of Heaven- Week Twelve

November 28, 2010

Chapter 45 –Reorienting Ourselves To Heaven As Our Home

When I see ocean fish in an aquarium, I enjoy watching them, but I feel as if something's _____. They don't belong there. It's not their home. The fish weren't made for that little glass box; they were made for a great ocean.

I suppose the fish don't know any better, but I wonder if their instincts tell them that their true home is elsewhere. I know *our* instincts tell us that this fallen world isn't our home- we were made for _____ better. As we've seen, the Bible repeatedly confirms this instinct.

WHAT HOME IS LIKE

When it comes to our eternal home, we often fail to think _____ in two ways. First, we imagine we won't be fully human and our ultimate home won't be physical and earthly. Second, we imagine that this world as it now is, under the Curse, is our ultimate home. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home."

Graham Scroggie was right: "Future existence is not a purely spiritual existence; it demands a life in a body, and in a _____ universe." Though many of us affirm a belief in the resurrection of the dead, we don't know what that really means. Our doctrine dresses up men and women in bodies, then gives them no place to go. Instead of the New Earth as our eternal home, we offer an intangible and utterly unfamiliar Heaven that's the *opposite* of home. No wonder there is such ambivalence and uneasiness about Heaven in our churches.

GOING TO THE PARTY

Remember, Jesus said, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (Luke 6:21). He said, "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). _____ and rejoicing- a party awaits us. Don't you want to join it? Yet even that party, in the present Heaven, is a preliminary celebration. It's like the welcome at the airport for a woman who's come home for her wedding. Sure, she's home now, and it's wonderful, but what she's really looking forward to is the wedding, and the wedding feast, which will be followed by moving into her new home with her beloved bridegroom.

To be in _____ bodies on a resurrected Earth in resurrected friendships, enjoying a resurrected culture with the resurrected Jesus- now *that* will be the ultimate party! Everybody will be who God made them to be- and none of us will ever suffer or die again.

LONGING FOR RESURRECTION

As Christians, we're _____ to Heaven in ways too deep to comprehend. Somehow, according to Ephesians 2:6, we're already seated with Christ in Heaven. So we can't be satisfied with less.

Desire is a signpost pointing to Heaven. Every longing for better health is a _____ for the New Earth. Every longing for romance is a longing for the ultimate romance with Christ. Every desire for intimacy is a desire for Christ. Every thirst for beauty is a thirst for Christ. Every taste of joy is but a foretaste of a greater and more vibrant joy than can be found on Earth as it is now. A.W. Tozer said, "In nature, everything moves in the direction of its

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hungers. In the spiritual world it is not otherwise. We gravitate toward longing, provided of course that those longings are strong enough to move us.”

That’s why we need to spend our lives _____ our love for Heaven.

HEAVEN: OUR SOURCE OF OPTIMISM

No Christian should be a _____. We should be realists- focused on the *reality* that we serve a sovereign and gracious God. Because of the *reality* of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and his promises, biblical realism is *optimism*.

Knowing that our suffering will be relieved doesn’t make it easy, but it does make it bearable. It allows joy in the midst of suffering, Jesus said, “Blessed are you when men _____ you, when they exclude you and insult you. . . Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven” (Luke 6:22-23). Paul said, “I rejoice in my sufferings” (Colossians 1:24), and James said, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2). The apostles didn’t enjoy suffering, but they rejoiced in the midst of it, because they trusted God’s sovereign plan and they looked forward to Christ’s return, their bodily resurrection, and the redemption of all creation.

THROUGH THE DOORWAY

Every person reading this book is dying. Perhaps you have reason to believe that death will come very soon. You may be troubled, feeling uncertain, or unready to leave. Make sure of your _____ with Jesus Christ. Be certain that you’re trusting him alone to save you- not anyone or anything else, and certainly not any good works you’ve done. And then allow yourself to get excited about what’s on the other side of death’s door.

Chapter 46 –Anticipating The Great Adventure

When H.S. Laird’s father, a Christ-loving man, lay dying, his son sat at his bedside and asked, “Dad, how do you feel?” His father replied: “Son, I feel like a little boy on _____ Eve.”

Christmas is coming. We live our lives _____ the first Christmas and the second. We walk on disputed turf, between Eden and the New Earth, not that far from either. The dispute will soon be settled. Christ will forever reign over the universe. And we will reign with him.

In this chapter, I want to draw us _____ Heaven-influenced living, and further prepare us for the adventure that awaits us on death’s other side.

CHAPTER ONE OF THE GREAT STORY

Read page 465 & 466 *The Last battle*

By God’s grace, I know that what awaits me in his presence, for all eternity, is something so _____ it takes my breath away even now. Job said it most succinctly; “In my flesh I will see God;. . . I, and not another (Job 19:26-27). The prospect of seeing God eclipsed all of Job’s heartaches. Surely it can eclipse yours and mine. Our ship of happiness may not come in today- but it will certainly come in. Meanwhile, laying claim to Christ’s bought-and-paid for happiness brings us joy today.

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WHAT CAN DEATH DO TO US

We shouldn't glorify or romanticize death-Jesus didn't. He _____ over it (John 11:35). For every beautiful story of people peacefully slipping into eternity, there are other stories of confused and shrunken people, wasting away mentally and physically, leaving behind exhausted, confused, and grief stricken loved ones. I've often seen death close-up. Unless Christ returns in our lifetime, it's certain that my own death- and that of everyone I love- awaits.

Death is painful, and it's an _____. But for those who know Jesus, death is the *final* pain and the *last* enemy. "For [Christ] must reign until he has put his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

Death's destruction was foretold in ancient prophecy: "[God] will _____ the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:7-8).

The apostle Paul echoes Isaiah, saying, "When the perishable has been _____ 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?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Consider Romans 8:35, 38- 39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?. . . _____ death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Don't let a day go by without anticipating the new world that Christ is preparing for us. God loves the Heaven bound, but he is proud of the Heaven _____: "They were longing for a better country- a heavenly one. *Therefore* God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16).

QUESTIONS IN LIGHT OF HEAVEN

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I daily _____ on my own mortality
- Do I daily _____ there are only two destinations- Heaven or Hell- and that I and every person I know will go to one or the other?
- Do I daily _____ myself that this world is not my home and that everything in it will burn, leaving behind only what's eternal?
- Do I daily _____ that my choices and actions have a direct influence on the world to come?
- Do I daily realize that my life is being _____ by God, the Audience of One, and that the only appraisal of my life that will ultimately matter is his?
- Do I daily reflect on the fact that my _____ home will be the New Earth, where I will see God and serve him as a resurrected being in a resurrected human society, where I will overflow with joy and delight in drawing nearer to God by studying him and his creation, and where I will exercise, to God's glory, dominion over his creation?

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INCENTIVES FOR RIGHTEOUS LIVING

Knowing that this present world will end and be resurrected into new heavens and a New Earth should profoundly _____ our daily behavior. "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God. . . In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:11-14).

A LIFE THAT GETS US READY

"Everyone who has this hope _____ on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). If my wedding date is on the calendar, and I'm thinking of the person I'm to marry, I shouldn't be an easy target for seduction. Likewise, when I've meditated on Heaven, sin is terribly unappealing. It's when my mind drifts from Heaven that sin seems attractive. Thinking of Heaven leads inevitably to pursuing holiness. Our high tolerance of sin testifies of our failure to prepare for Heaven.

To be Heaven-oriented is to be _____ in the best sense. Paul says, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Thinking of Heaven will _____ us to live each day in profound thankfulness to God: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).

ALL THINGS MADE NEW

The most ordinary moment on the New Earth (Heaven) will be _____ than most perfect moments in this life- those experiences you wanted to bottle or hang on to but couldn't. It *can* get better, far better, than this- *and it will*. Life on the New Earth will be like sitting in front of the fire with family and friends, basking in the warmth, laughing uproariously, dreaming of the adventures to come- and then going out and *living* those adventures together. With no fear that life will ever end or that tragedy will descend like a dark cloud. With no fear that dreams will be shattered or relationships broken.

If ideas presented in this book were merely the product of my _____, they would be meaningless. But here's what the apostle John recorded near the end of the Bible:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . And I heard a loud voice from the _____ saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live 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." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:1, 3-5).

These are the words of King Jesus. _____ on them. Take them to the bank. Live every day in light of them. Make every choice in light of Christ's certain promise. We were all made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place.