

Heaven, Part 2: Resurrected Living on a New Earth

If you had the opportunity to **spend the evening with any person who's ever lived, whom would you choose?** Probably someone **fascinating, knowledgeable, and accomplished.** Perhaps you'd choose someone beautiful and talented and creative. Someone with a big mind and a big heart. Someone who's more than just a celebrity, **someone with great depth.**

High on my list would be **C. S. Lewis, A. W. Tozer, Jonathan Edwards, Hudson Taylor, and Charles Spurgeon. Ruth, David, Mary, Paul, Adam and Eve.**

Who's high on your list? **Who is the very first person on your list?**

Is Jesus the first person you would choose?

Who is more beautiful, talented, knowledgeable, fascinating, and interesting?

If you're a Christian, **you'll be with him for eternity** and enjoy endless fascinating conversations and experiences.

Most of us would love to spend the evening with a great musician, artist, writer or head of state. God is the master artist who created the universe, the inventor of music, the author and main character of the unfolding drama of redemption.

Head of state? He's king of the entire universe. Yet if someone says, "I want to be with God forever," some think, *Wouldn't that be boring?*

What are we thinking?

All the qualities we admire in others are true of God. **He's the source of everything we find fascinating.** Who made Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart? Who gave them their gifts? Who created music itself and the ability to perform it?

Who went to the cross to take on the hell we deserve so we could have the Heaven we don't deserve?

All that is admirable and fascinating in human beings comes from our Creator. If we crave goodness and greatness and learning and art and music and architecture and fun and rest and play and intellectual pursuits, it is **God** we crave. **It is Heaven we long for.**

⌘ They will see His face.

⌘ Revelation 21:4

⌘ The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things...but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in anything else whatsoever, that will yield them delight and happiness, will be what will be seen of God in them.

⌘ *Jonathan Edwards*

⌘ 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

- **[click]** Primary Joy (Source)
- **[click]** Secondary Joys (Derivative)

God created adventure. God is the Primary Joy. He gives us many secondary (Derivative) Joys

God is the source of all good. Niagara Falls is powerful because God is powerful. Flowers are beautiful because **God is beautiful**. Mountains are majestic because **God is majestic**. Puppies are delightful because **God is delightful**. A person is interesting because **God is interesting**. A story is compelling because **God is compelling**.

This is the tragedy of hell. Some people say “I don’t want God.” I want all these other things instead—but what **makes anything good is God**. When God withdraws his presence, it’s the very definition of Hell. **No God, no good.** People spend their lives running from God in order to find joy elsewhere. But God is the greater joy who is the fountain head of all the lesser streams of joy. **Trace them back to their source and you find God.**

If we think correctly about Heaven, we will realize it is the great adventure. **It should thrill our hearts and capture our imaginations.**

Victor Hugo, the great writer, known for his book *Les Miserable*, a powerful story of the grace of Christ. If you’ve read the book, seen the play or the movie, you know what a captivating story it is.

Victor Hugo could tell such a compelling story of grace because he was a Christian. Near the end of his life, reflecting on Heaven, **Hugo wrote** this:

I feel within me that future life. I am like a forest that has been razed; the new shoots are stronger and brighter. I shall most certainly rise toward the heavens the nearer my approach to the end, the plainer is the sound of immortal symphonies of worlds which invite me. For half a century I have been translating my thoughts into prose and verse: history, drama, philosophy, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song; all of these I have tried. **But I feel I haven't given utterance to the thousandth part of what lies within me.** When I go to the grave I can say, as others have said, "My day's work is done." **But I cannot say, "My life is done." My work will recommence the next morning.** The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes upon the twilight, but opens upon the dawn.

The guarantee of our future as resurrected beings on a resurrected earth is Christ's resurrection:

⊞ *[The apostles] were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. [Jesus] said to them, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ...He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. Luke 24:37-43*

Did Jesus HAVE to eat? No! He's making a point! Repeated references in Scripture to our **eating together in Heaven.** Isaiah 25 says the Lord himself will prepare a meal for us, wedding supper of the lamb, **Jesus said he would eat and drink with us in the kingdom,** he said people would come from the east and west to sit down and feast together, with **Abraham and Isaac and Jacob** (by name). **Will our resurrection bodies be able to eat? Absolutely.**

⊞ *All the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other.*

⊞ **The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646**

Continuity

⊞ *The Lord Jesus Christ ... will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

⌘ **Philippians 3:20-21**

⌘ ***We know that when he [Christ] appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.***

⌘ **1 John 3:2**

John Piper says, “What happens to our bodies and what happens to the creation go together. And what happens to our bodies is not annihilation but redemption.... Our bodies will be redeemed, restored, made new, not thrown away. And so it is with the heavens and the earth.”

Bulletin insert: What we assume about heaven v. What the Bible says about Heaven. **We assume it's unearthly**, the Bible says it's on a new earth. We assume it's ghostly, the Bible says it's resurrected (embodied). We assume it's static, the Bible portrays it as **dynamic**. **Ephesians 2 tells us that “in the coming ages” God will be showing to us “the incomparable riches of his grace.”** That means we'll learn more and more of Him as eternity unfolds.

Chart in your bulletin **last week** compared the first two and last two chapters of the Bible, which are bookends. God's original design:

⌘ **Genesis 1:24 ff.**

⌘ ***And God said, "Let the land [earth] produce living creatures according to their kinds...And God saw that it was good."²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth..."***

⌘ ²⁷ ***So God created man in his own image...²⁸ God... said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the earth....³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.***

⌘ **Genesis 2**

⌘ ⁷ ***The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground [earth] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees***

⌘ ***...that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life... A river watering the garden flowed from Eden... through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are there.)...The LORD God put man in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.***

The original earth: a world of natural wonders, trees with fruit, a great river, treasures in the forms of precious stones and minerals. And **God would come down to walk with them in the cool of the day.**

Then what? Sin and death and curse; people thrown out of Eden. **It appears God loses, God will have to abandon his plan** for physical men and women ruling a physical earth. But in Genesis 3 he promises a man will be born who will smash the serpent's head and reclaim a fallen world.

What do we find in the last two chapters of the Bible? A return to the first two chapters. It talks about a great city, an architectural wonder with walls and gold and precious stones:

⌘ **Rev. 21:24 The NATIONS will walk by [the Lamb's] light, and the KINGS OF THE EARTH will bring their splendor into [the city]. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut...26 The glory and honor of the NATIONS will be brought into it22:1 the river of the water of life...flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle**

This is culture!!! People of every tribe, nation and language.

⌘ **of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of**

the **NATIONS**. 3 No longer will there be any curse. [God's] servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face.... 5 And they will *reign* for ever and ever.

Forever and ever: NOT just 1000 years. Not talking about the millennium.

To reign means to **rule, to have dominion**. *Sound familiar?* Exactly what God told the first man and woman he wanted to do. **Rule the earth**, and **steward the creation** and **care for the animals** and be God's image bearers who **create** and **invent** and **utilize resources** and make art and music and technology and culture **to the glory of God**.

In Genesis, **God plants the Garden on Earth, with tree of life**; in Revelation, he brings down to the New Earth, **the New Jerusalem, with the tree of life at its center**. 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, man and woman fail to rule the earth in righteousness; **in Revelation righteous man and woman rule the New Earth, under King Jesus**.

There is a perfect symmetry to God's plan. Satan will not thwart God's plan for righteous humanity to rule the earth!

ROMANS 8

- ⌘ The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be *revealed in us*. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be *revealed*. For the creation was subjected to frustration [curse]... 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

Main point: **As goes humanity, so goes all creation:** the earth, the animals, and all creation. **As creation fell on our coat-tails, creation will rise on our coat-tails.** As creation wasn't only about us, so **redemption is not only about us.**

The “redemption of our bodies” refers to the resurrection of the dead. Paul says that not only we but “the whole creation” longs for and cries out for **the earthwide deliverance** that will come with **our** bodily resurrection.

Do you find yourself sighing and groaning? Can you hear it in the cold wind? Have you seen the look in the eyes of a **suffering animal**, and thought, the **creation cries out for deliverance**? **The tragedy in Southeast Asia.**

We know instinctively **there's something better than this.** We catch glimmers of greatness, we have foretastes of joy, but **they are elusive.**

We groan for what creation groans for—redemption. Genesis 3 shows us **God put the Curse not only on mankind but also on the earth and animals.**

Human beings and the earth are inseparably linked. The earth fell on our coat-tails. **And it shall rise on our coat-tails. Together we fell, together we shall rise.**

We will glorify him by ruling over the physical universe, showing respect and benevolence for all we rule. The righteous potential of humanity will **at last be revealed at our resurrection.** **We'll be righteous people with incorruptible bodies.** We will not be inhuman in eternity, **we will be more fully human than we've ever been.** Sin and curse are not intrinsic to humanity—**they are foreign to it.** They are **invaders**, to be defeated.

God will transform the fallen human race into a renewed human race and the present Earth into the New Earth. It's a place that won't be ruined by tsunami and floods and earthquakes and typhoons.

The text obviously includes the only beings besides humans that walk the earth that are capable of true suffering: **the animals.** Isaiah 11, 60, and 65 all depict animals on the new earth, as does Ezekiel 47. **Animals will not kill each other. Two chapters on animals in the *Heaven* book.**

The entire creation fell under us, and the entire creation longs for a deliverance from suffering that will one day come—in the resurrection. **As the creation fell on our coat-tails it will rise on our coat-tails.**

We will have new bodies, not non-bodies. We will live on a new earth, not a non-earth. A new car is first and foremost a car. It is not a non-car. A new earth will be first and foremost an earth, not a non-earth. That means we have a reference point by which to understand the new earth. The current earth is bursting with clues suggesting what we will find on the New Earth.

“Joy to the World”

No more let sins and sorrows grow

Nor thorns infest the ground;

He comes to make His blessings flow

Far as the curse is found.

How far does Christ’s redemptive work extend? Far as the curse is found. If redemption failed to reach the farthest boundaries of the Curse, it would be incomplete. Our spirits, our bodies, the earth itself, the animal kingdom, all are under the Curse, and will be delivered from the curse. God will not abandon his creation—he will redeem it.

- ⊞ **Redemption:** buying back what was formerly owned.
- ⊞ **Reconciliation:** regaining a friend.
- ⊞ **Renewal:** making new again, restoring to an original state.
- ⊞ **Resurrection:** becoming physically alive again, after death.
- ⊞ **Regeneration:** being born again, having a new beginning.
- ⊞ **Restoration:** bringing back the lost

God is the ultimate salvage artist. He loves to restore things to their original condition—and make them even better. A phrase from the hymn “Hallelujah, What a Savior!”: “ruined sinners to reclaim.”

Reclaim is another re- word. It recognizes that God had a prior claim on humanity that was temporarily lost but is fully restored and taken to a new level in Christ. **Stripping old paint off an antique to restore to original.**

Jesus said,

- ⊞ **At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

⌘ Jesus, Matthew 19:27-28

He could have said at **the destruction of all things**. No, at the **renewal**.
“All things” means that this earth is bursting with suggestions of what the New Earth will be like. **What will be gone is sin and death and curse!**

⌘ “In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

⌘ 2 Peter 3:13

A new earth is a renewed earth, a reclaimed earth, a redeemed earth, a resurrected earth.

⌘ “[Christ] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets”

⌘ Acts 3:21

God’s plan to restore everything is found in the prophets:

⌘ Isaiah 60

⌘ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn... 5 the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. 6 Herds of camels will cover your land...And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD....

⌘ *11 Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations--their kings led in triumphal procession. 13 The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together...and I will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

⌘ *17 I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler. 18 No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin*

or destruction within your borders, but you will call your *walls* Salvation and your *gates* Praise. 19 The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the

⌘ brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light and your days of sorrow will end. 21 Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land [*erets, the earth*] forever.

⌘ Isaiah 65

⌘ "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. ...18 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. 19 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.

⌘ ...21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ...The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but *dust will be the serpent's food*. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

⌘ Ezekiel 47

⌘ I saw water coming out from under the temple... a great number of trees on each side of the river. When [the river] empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. 9 *Swarms of living creatures* will live wherever the river flows.... water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.

⌘ 12 Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."

⌘ In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to

another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself **endure forever**.

⌘ Daniel 2:35, 44

⌘ He [Son of Man, Messiah] was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is *an everlasting dominion that will not pass away*, and *his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed*.

⌘ Daniel 7:14

⌘ But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, *forever and ever*.

⌘ Daniel 7:18

This is my Father's World: “Jesus who died shall be satisfied, and earth and Heaven be one.”

⌘ He made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring *all things* in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

⌘ Ephesians 1:10

Christ is the King who will defeat his enemies in the ultimate battle.

Isaiah 25 says “God will swallow up death forever.” Christ will defeat death and reign as King of the Earth. **Share a clip from the Return of the King.**

– **Cuts from Return of the King!!!**

Now come the days of the King! May they be blessed.

⌘ **Aragorn slide:** King of Kings and Lord of Lords

☞ You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born.

Destruction of Mordor. Death defeated, King will reign.

1 Corinthians 15 says at the resurrection, the saying will come true, “Death has been swallowed up in victory. **Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?**”

Why do we love the great stories? Because they are pictures of the greatest story. There hasn’t ever been a story yet with people **living happily ever after**, since people die. **But one story will come out that way.** It’s a true story. And you and I are part of it. Our redeemer is our king, who took on death and hell, and defeated them. **He will destroy death** and cast Satan into the lake of fire.

Why did I as a young Christian lose myself in the fiction of **C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien**? Why did I lose myself in the **Chronicles of Narnia** and the **Lord of the Rings**? Because they reflected a drama with eternal stakes. Though they were fiction, **they were filled with far more truth** than the world’s nonfiction. Why do people love Victor Hugo’s **Les Miserable**? It’s a reflection of the great story. Read reviews of top novels and movies and see how often the word “redemptive” is used of stories in secular reviews.

Tolkien and Lewis spoke of “true myth”—the real epics of God’s creation and redemption are the substance that casts the shadows of the world’s myths. **The myths are signposts** pointing to truths far **greater and truer than themselves.**

People long for stories that give their lives meaning. **We need to be offering the world a better story.** Not make it up—tell the true story of creation and redemption—**the wondrous past, the difficult present** with its **darkness and yet glimmers of light**, and **the magnificent future on a new earth.** **We need to tell the full story--not leave out the climax and resolution: the New Earth.**

You couldn’t make up a better story than the truth of God’s unfolding drama of redemption. **You can’t find a greater hero than Jesus.** The climax will be the return of the King and the establishing of His kingdom. Where? **His reign will be on earth. The meek will inherit the earth.**

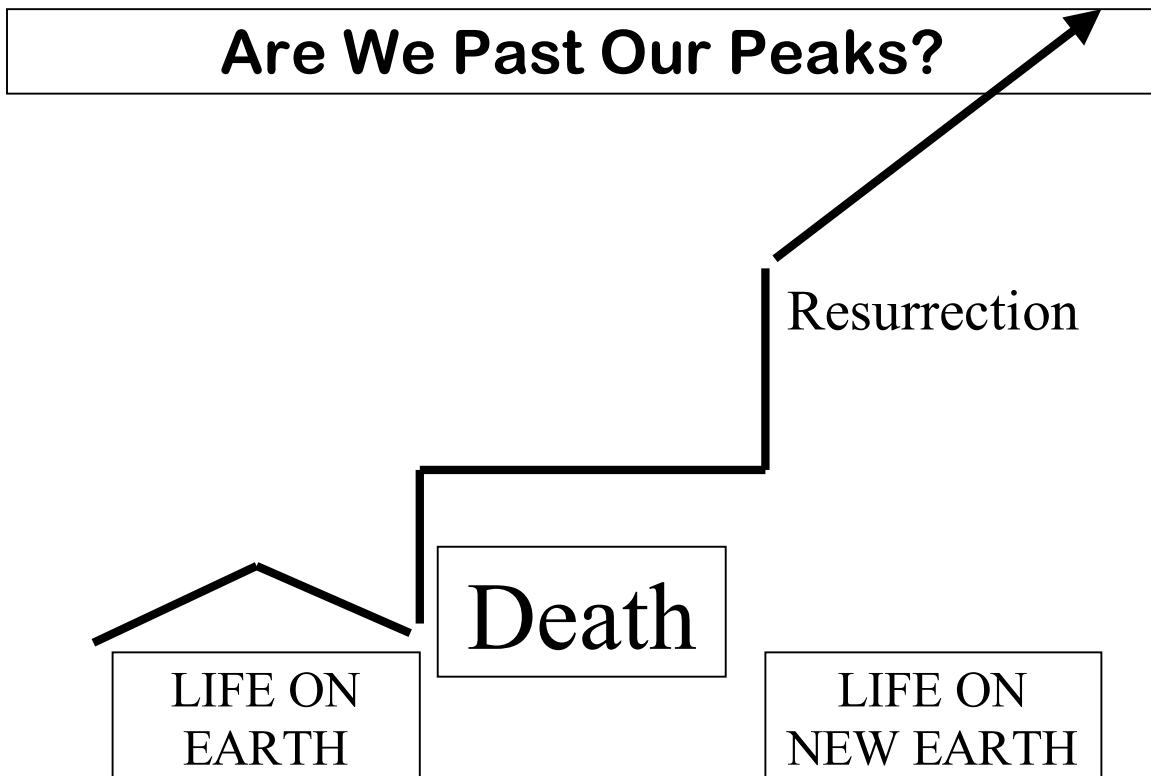
The enemy has confused us. It isn't a story of God yanking us away from a physical earthly existence to a realm of disembodied spirits. **It is God reclaiming the universe he created**, coming down to establish his kingdom on earth, where **He will dwell among his people and we will reign with him.**

⌘ CHART: Not past our peaks!

Nanci's father is the only of our four parents still alive. **Elmer's body and mind were once strong, now they are both weak.**

But a biblical perspective changes everything. Nanci's dad loves Jesus. And that means **Elmer Noren is not past his peak.** When he dies he will go to heaven where his mind will be clear, and he will be free from suffering. But ultimately he will be resurrected, and he will live on the New Earth with a sharper mind and a stronger body than he's ever had.

God's people in wheelchairs, bedridden or in constant pain or in prison, here's the truth: **"You have *not* passed your peak. You haven't yet come close to it."** The strongest and healthiest you have ever felt will be **far exceeded.** **This is not wishful thinking. This is God's promise.** **Bank on it!** The best is yet to be.



Calvin Miller is right: **Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.**

Victor Hugo was right: **The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes upon the twilight, but opens upon the dawn.**

In the final book of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Last Battle*, C. S. Lewis paints a beautiful picture of the eternal Heaven. Early in the book, Jill and Eustace are **traveling on a train, when there is a loud sound and violent shaking** and suddenly *they are thrust into that world called Narnia*. When their adventure is over, the children—having experienced the joys and wonders of Narnia and the presence of Aslan, the great lion—are afraid they will be sent back to Earth again.

Then, in a section called “Farewell to Shadowlands,” Aslan gives the children some good news: **“There was a real railway accident,’ said Aslan softly. ‘Your father and mother and all of you are—as you used to call it in the Shadowlands—dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.’**

Then Lewis concludes the story with my favorite paragraph in all of literature:

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.