

**HEAVEN: DISCUSSION AND STUDY NOTES
FOR THE BOOK BY RANDY ALCORN**

By

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Introduction

This week, I will complete leading my third group through Randy Alcorn's wonderful book *Heaven*. The present group is a Bible study of fifty or so business and professional men (some retired) called *Daybreak for Men*, which meets every Friday morning here in the suburb of Atlanta where I live. Another was a home group of about twenty-five men and women (friends) from our church. And the third group was a Bible study of about twenty people from our neighborhood.

When I first started reading the book, I noticed the blurb by Stu Weber on the cover, "Other than the Bible itself, this may well be the single most life-changing book you'll ever read." I thought to myself, "Wow! That's a pretty bold statement! With all of the great Christian books I've read and studied, that is difficult to imagine." Having spent a significant part of the last three years reading, studying, outlining, and teaching *Heaven*, I can honestly say that the blurb is certainly true for me—next to the Bible, *Heaven* is the most life-changing book I've ever read. Why?

Well for one thing, as much as I hate to admit this, I just didn't have a very accurate understanding of what Heaven was like at all. In fact, before reading *Heaven*, my mental image of Heaven was me doing back-strokes through the ether with an occasional somersault thrown in for style points. How sad! Now, understanding infinitely more about the place I'll spend eternity, I am intensely motivated to live in such a way that God, with whom I'll spend eternity in the New Heavens on the New Earth, will be totally pleased with my life. And just so you don't get the wrong impression, I'm not a rookie—I've been walking with Jesus for almost sixty years.

So what's the deal with the *Discussion and Study Notes*? I've been teaching stuff for the last fifty years, almost thirty of those in the university. I know the major challenge for teachers is to figure out what the important points in a body of material are so that they can be covered well. So the *Discussion and Study Notes* serve as a framework for teachers. Suppose you decide to lead a small group or a class through *Heaven*; as you read through each chapter of *Heaven*, have a set of the *Discussion and Study Notes* open and jot down examples, illustrations, and other teaching ideas in the margins as you go. Then, when you are done reading, you'll be set to present the ideas to your group.

The major challenge for someone who is a student in a small group or class is taking notes of the important things the teacher covers. For students, the *Discussion and Study Notes* serve as a set of notes which can be annotated as the teacher covers the topics. I recall some years ago running across my notes from the best professor I had in grad school. He was so good, and entertaining, when I opened my old notes, there was virtually nothing in the notebook! I was too busy listening to take notes. We don't want that to happen. We want students in our small groups and classes to come away with the salient points ready at hand!

In the last twenty years, I have had the privilege of being able to devote a significant portion of my time to studying the Bible and some of the classic books about the Bible. And having four, more or less, permanent teaching gigs, I've prepared Discussion and Study Guides/Notes for many of the studies I've done, including *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* by Os Guinness, *The Training of the Twelve* (1871) by A.B. Bruce, *The Man in the Mirror* by Patrick Morley, as well as all four Gospels, *Acts* and *The Revelation*. I jokingly tell people I have the spiritual gift of outlining. I hope you will benefit greatly from your study of *Heaven* and that when you finish your study in a few days, weeks, or months, you'll have a much better understanding of the place you'll spend eternity, and that my notes will have been helpful.

In Him,

Rae Mellichamp

HEAVEN

1. Are You Looking Forward to Heaven?

Quotation

“It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven...to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end and true happiness?” Jonathan Edwards

The Problem Surfaced

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end.” [Blaise Pascal] Alcorn concludes that if this is really so, we should seek happiness where it can actually be found.

- In the person of Jesus.
- In the place called Heaven.

To illustrate how far away we are from seeking happiness in the place called Heaven, Alcorn gives us a couple of glimpses of what some people think of it.

- A pastor. “I can’t stand the thought of that endless tedium.”
- A laywoman. “I wouldn’t know anyone or anything from earth.”

Our Unbiblical View Of Heaven

Here are a few views of Heaven that show how far off the mark we really are in our understanding of what Heaven is really like.

- An English vicar. “...I suppose I will enter into eternal bliss, but I really wish you wouldn’t bring up such depressing subjects.”
- John Eldredge. “Nearly every Christian I have spoken with has some idea that eternity is an unending church service.”
- Gary Larson. In a *Far Side* cartoon, a man with a pair of angel wings and a halo sits idly on a cloud and says, “I wish I’d brought a magazine.”
- Huckleberry Finn. Hearing about heaven from Miss Watson, “...all a body would have to do there was play a harp and sing forever and ever.”
- Mark Twain. “[we] vanish from a world where [we] were of no consequence; where [we] achieved nothing; where [we] were a mistake and a failure...”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon had an entirely different take on what happens at the end of one’s life on earth: “To come to Thee is to come home from exile, to come to land out of the raging storm, to come to rest after long labor, to come to the goal of my desires and the summit of my wishes.”

Theological Neglect Of Heaven

Alcorn suggests that one of the reasons that we are never challenged to think about Heaven is “theological neglect of Heaven.”

Especially notable is the lack of coverage of the topic in theology treatises. Here are some examples:

- Reinhold Niebhuur has nothing to say about Heaven in his two volume work *The Nature and Destiny of Man*.
- William Shedd's three volume *Dogmatic Theology* contains eighty-seven pages on eternal punishment, but only two on Heaven
- Martin Lloyd-Jones' nine-hundred page *Great Doctrines of the Bible* devotes less than two pages to the eternal state and the New Earth.
- Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* devotes fifteen pages to the "intermediate state," two pages to Hell, and one page to the "eternal state."

Theology professor A.J. Conyers states that "until recently the doctrine of Heaven was enormously important to the church.... Belief in Heaven was a central, life-sustaining conviction."

Why is this no longer true?

Off Our Radar Screens

A Barna Research Group poll suggests that "An overwhelming majority of Americans continue to believe that there is life after death and that heaven and hell exist." What people believe about Heaven and Hell varies widely.

Alcorn suggests a very simple reason that this is so: Heaven gets short shrift because the primary texts that really describe the place are in Revelation 21-22.

- His own experience in college and seminary. "I don't recall a single classroom discussion about the New Earth."
- Heaven suffers as a subject because it comes last, not only in theological works but also in seminary and Bible college classrooms.

So he asks, "How can we set our hearts on Heaven when we have an impoverished theology of Heaven? Why do we talk so little about Heaven? And why is the little we have to say so vague and lifeless?"

Where Do We Get Our Misconceptions

Before answering these questions Alcorn addresses the issue of from where do our misconceptions concerning Heaven come? He offers the simple answer: Satan.

- Satan was forcibly evicted from Heaven. Isaiah 14:12-15
- Satan hates the New Heaven and the New Earth passionately.
- He doesn't need to convince people that Heaven doesn't exist.
- He simply has to suggest that Heaven is boring and unearthly.
- Because we are blinded spiritually by sin we fall for the deception.

Resisting Naturalism's Spell

Alcorn offers one other important reason for our misconceptions about Heaven—naturalism, the belief that the world can be understood in scientific terms, without recourse to spiritual or supernatural explanations.

- He cites the prevailing wisdom that whatever cannot be perceived with the senses must be imaginary—the essence of naturalism.
- If this is true, why is it that the imaginary things (good and evil) seem so much more important than the real ones (quarks, black holes, etc.)?

Alcorn concludes by suggesting that we must resist the spell of naturalism. “Sitting here in a dark world, we must remind ourselves what Scripture tells us about Heaven.”

HEAVEN

2. Is Heaven Beyond Our Imagination?

Quotation

“While reason is the natural organ of truth, imagination is the organ of meaning” C.S. Lewis

Why Is This So Hard?

The writers of Scripture present Heaven in many ways, which give us a bridge to understanding Heaven. Some of these ways are:

- A garden.
- A city.
- A Kingdom.

While these are analogies, and analogies can be taken too far, in each there is some actual correspondence to Heaven. It is a place which is:

- Familiar.
- Physical.
- Tangible.

As human beings, whom God made to be both physical and spiritual, we were designed to live in a physical realm—now and eternally.

The Importance Of Using Our Imaginations

Alcorn thinks that if we can't imagine something (Heaven), we can't anticipate it. Thus Scripture provides us with information about the world to come.

- Enough detail so that we can envision it.
- But not so much that we can apprehend it.

Alcorn, who has read nearly all of his 150 books on Heaven, concludes that they uniformly:

- Say we can't know what Heaven is like.
- Say it will be more wonderful than anything we can imagine.

Picturing Heaven

One way of imagining what Heaven must be like is:

- To picture the creation without:
 - Sin and death.
 - Suffering and corruption.
- God once said, “It is very good.”

Having done this, next time someone says, “We can’t begin to imagine what Heaven is really like,” you can respond, “I can.”

If “No Eye Has Seen,” How Can We Know?

A number of Scripture verse are frequently cited to prove that from our limited perspective, we simply can’t know what Heaven is really like:

- “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:9-10
- “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows...—such a man was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.” 2 Corinthians 12:2-4
- “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as far as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9

These verses actually say the opposite of what they are typically cited to prove.

God commanded John to write in detail what he saw in Heaven in the book of Revelation. Other Biblical writers also describe what Heaven is like, among them:

- Isaiah.
- Ezekiel.

Setting Our Hearts and Minds on Heaven

“If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” Colossians 3:1-2

Since you’ll spend the next life-time living in Heaven, why not spend this life-time seeking Heaven, so you can eagerly anticipate it and prepare for it?

“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next.” C.S. Lewis

Fueling Our Imagination

“The Christian is the really free man—he is free to have imagination. This too is our heritage. The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars.” Francis Schaeffer

HEAVEN

3. Is Heaven Our Default Destination...Or Is Hell?

Quotation

“The safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.” C.S. Lewis

Heaven or Hell?

Judging by what’s said at most funerals, you’d think that nearly everyone is going to Heaven, wouldn’t you? The great danger is that people just assume that they are headed for Heaven.

- But this is in contrast to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14.
- What keeps us out of Heaven is universal. Romans 3:23
- Unless our sin problem is resolved, our default destination is:
 - Not Heaven,
 - But Hell.

We can know with certainty that when we die we will go to Heaven.

- We shouldn’t just cross our fingers and hope that our names are written in the Book of Life.
- Since we may die at any time, we need to know now—not next month or next year.

Hell: Heaven’s Awful Alternative

Hell will be inhabited by people who haven’t received God’s gift of redemption in Christ. Revelation 20:12-15

- The unsaved—everyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life,
- Will be judged by their works which include sin.
- People on their own, without Christ, cannot enter the presence of God.
- They will be consigned to a place of everlasting destruction.

Hell will not be like it is often portrayed in comic strips, a giant lounge where between drinks people tell stories of their escapades on Earth.

- It is a place of utter misery.
- It is a place of conscious punishment.

Dante, in the *Inferno*, imagined a sign over Hell’s gate, “Abandon Hope all ye who enter here.”

It is common to deny the clear teaching of Scripture about Hell:

- Hell seems disproportionate, a divine overreaction.
- Endless torment is an outrageous doctrine to some.

Many imagine that it is civilized, humane, and compassionate to deny the existence of an eternal Hell. But in fact it is:

- Arrogant that we think we could know better than what God has clearly revealed.
- Shocking in light of all the facts that *anyone at all could go* to Heaven.

“The doctrine of Christ’s vicarious atonement logically stands or falls with that of eternal punishment.” William G.T. Shedd

What Did Jesus Say About Hell?

In the Bible, Jesus says more about Hell than any other person.

- He refers to it as a literal place.
- He describes it in graphic terms:
 - With raging fires.
 - And eternal worms.
- He says the unsaved...
 - Will be thrown outside into darkness.
 - Where there is weeping and gnashing.

How long will Hell last? “‘They will go away to eternal punishment,’ Jesus said of the unrighteous, ‘but the righteous to eternal life.’” Matthew 25:46

C.S. Lewis says the biblical teaching on Heaven and Hell stands or falls together.

If I make what I want—or what others want—the basis for my beliefs then I:

- Am a follower of the culture,
- Not a follower of Jesus Christ.

C.S. Lewis again, “There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of our Lord’s own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason.”

Is It Unloving To Speak Of Hell?

The most basic truth is that there are only two possible destinations after death: Heaven and Hell. Unless and until we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, we are headed for hell.

- We were born with our auto pilot set toward Hell.
- All roads do not lead to Heaven. John 14:6

Why then do we not tell unsaved people about the cancer of sin and how the inevitable penalty of eternal destruction can be avoided by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

Earth: The In-Between World

Hell is not Heaven's equal opposite. Earth is an in-between world touched by both Heaven and Hell:

- The best of life on earth is a glimpse of Heaven.
- The worst of life on earth is a glimpse of Hell.

God determined that He would rather go to Hell on our behalf than live in Heaven without us.

But is it really possible to know that you will go to Heaven when you die? That's next.

HEAVEN

04. Can You Know If You're Going To Heaven?

Quotation

“Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don’t believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before.” D.L. Moody

RSVP

“Nothing impure will ever enter [the city], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Revelation 21:27

Throughout the ages, countless people have been too busy to respond to Christ’s invitation to His wedding banquet.

- Many assume that the good they’ve done—attending church, being baptized, etc.—will be enough to gain entry into Heaven.
- People who do not respond to Christ’s invitation to forgive their sins are those whose names *are not* written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

To be denied entrance to Heaven will mean being cast into Hell forever.

Preparing For The Journey

Q. Can we really know in advance where we are going when we die?

A. “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that *you may know that you have eternal life.*” 1 John 5:13 [emphasis added]

The goal of getting to Heaven is worthy of greater advanced planning than we would give to any other journey—yet some people spend far more time preparing for a trip to Disney World.

What You Need To Know And Do

To sin is to fall short of God’s holy standards.

- Sin is what ended Eden’s Paradise. And all of us, like Adam and Eve, are sinners.
- Sin has consequences, but God has provided a solution for our sin:
 - “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 who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - “Salvation 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

Because of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf, God freely offers forgiveness. “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our

iniquities. ... As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:10-12

But forgiveness is not automatic. If we want to be forgiven, we must recognize and repent of our sins.

- “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whosoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” Proverbs 28:13
- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

We come to Christ empty-handed. We can take no credit for salvation. “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

Joining The Body Of Christ: The Church

You may think that you don’t deserve forgiveness after all you’ve done. That’s exactly right. No one deserves forgiveness.

But we must be alert. There are numerous groups afoot, religious and secular, that will assure you that Heaven is your automatic destination or that it can be attained by your hard work and abstention from certain things. This is false—there is no salvation except by Jesus and His redemptive work.

This is why a good church is so important. It will teach you God’s Word and provide love, help, and support. So be sure that you belong to a church where the Bible is believed, taught, and followed.

Do not merely assume that you are a Christian and are going to Heaven. Make the conscious decision to accept Christ’s sacrificial death on your behalf. When you choose to accept Christ and surrender control of your life to Him, you can be certain that your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Water For The Thirsty

Why would you not come to Jesus? What reason could be good enough to turn away from Jesus and from eternal life in the new heavens and New Earth?

C.S. Lewis puts it this way: “All your life an unattainable ecstasy has hovered just beyond the grasp of your consciousness. The day is coming when you will wake to find, beyond all hope, that you have attained it, or else, that it was within your reach and you have lost it forever.”

You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place. They are a package—you can’t get Heaven without Jesus or Jesus without Heaven.

HEAVEN

05. What Is the Nature of the Present Heaven?

Quotation

“After these things, I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice ... said, ‘Come up here...’” John in Revelation 4:1

We Need To Know What Happens When We Die

The apostle Paul thought it was extremely important for us to know what will happen to us when we die.

- “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13
- If we are living when Jesus returns, we will be “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And ... be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thessalonians 4: 17-18

Scripture actually describes Heaven in two stages:

- The eternal Heaven—the place where we will live forever after the final resurrection.
- The present Heaven—the place where Christians go immediately upon dying.

Most of this book focuses on the eternal Heaven, but we want a clear picture of both places.

The Temporary Nature Of The Present Heaven

When a Christian dies, he or she enters into an intermediate state or transitional period between our lives on Earth and our future resurrection to life on the New Earth.

- The Present or intermediate Heaven.
 - Is only temporary, it is
 - Not our final destination.
- The eternal Heaven.
 - Is where resurrected believers,
 - Live on a resurrected Earth.

Will We Live In Heaven Forever?

When we die, believers in Christ will not go to the Heaven where we will live forever. Instead we'll go to an intermediate Heaven. Will we be with the Lord forever? Yes.

- The intermediate or Present Heaven. What is it like?
 - We'll be in Christ's presence.
 - We'll be joyful.
- The intermediate or Present Heaven. What will we do?
 - We will await Christ's return to Earth.
 - We'll await our bodily resurrection.

- We'll await the final judgment.
- We'll await the creation of the new heavens and the New Earth.

Does Heaven Really Change?

Heaven is not synonymous with God. It is a place He created. Thus:

- He does not have to dwell there.
- He chooses to dwell in Heaven.

Heaven is a place.

- Angels also live in Heaven.
- Finite beings come and go.
- It is a finite environment.
- It is a specific location.

Because God created Heaven,

- It had a beginning; it is neither:
 - Timeless, nor
 - Changeless.
- It has an existence:
 - A past: prior to Christ's incarnation.
 - A present: where believers go at death.
 - A future: The eternal Heaven, or New Earth.

Alcorn uses two designations for Heaven:

- The Present or Intermediate Heaven.
- The Eternal Heaven or New Earth.

We must be careful as we proceed in our study.

- When we talk of the New Earth as in much of the book, some of what is described is *not true* of the Present Heaven.
- When we talk of the Present Heaven it will not necessarily correspond with the eternal Heaven or New Earth.

God clearly tells us in Revelation 21:1, things concerning Heaven and Hell will change.

- The present Heaven will be relocated to the New Earth.
- At that time Hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Distinguishing The Present And Future Heavens

What is Heaven like? What will Heaven be like? These are two perfectly legitimate questions.

- The present, intermediate Heaven is the angelic realm, distinctly separate from Earth.
- The future Heaven will be in the human realm, on Earth.

Then the dwelling place of God will also be the dwelling place of humanity in a resurrected universe.

Notice what happens to the New Jerusalem.

- It was originally in Heaven.
- It will come down to Earth.

From that time onward the “Dwelling of God” will be with redeemed mankind on Earth.

In the beginning, God could have taken Adam and Eve to Heaven to visit Him. Instead:

- He came to Earth to visit them. Genesis 3:8
- God’s plan now is to be with us. John 14:23.

Another way of putting it is:

- The incarnation is about God inhabiting space and time as a human being.
- The new heavens and New Earth is about God making space and time His eternal home.

Simply put, though the Present Heaven is “up there,” the future, eternal Heaven will be “down here.”

Do We Remain Conscious After Death?

Scripture is very clear that we remain conscious after we die.

- The Rich Man and Lazarus. Luke 16:22-31
- The Thief on the Cross. Luke 23:43
- The Apostle Paul’s claims.
 - Philippians 1:23
 - 2 Corinthians 5:8

What about “soul sleep” or a long period of unconsciousness between life on Earth and life in Heaven?

- “Fallen asleep” is a euphemism for death. 1 Thessalonians 4:13
- At death, our spirits and bodies are separated.
 - Our spirit relocates to conscious existence in Heaven. 2 Corinthians 5:8
 - Our body “sleeps” until the resurrection at the coming of Christ. Daniel 12:2-3

Every reference to believers in Heaven in Revelation prior to the Second Coming implies consciousness.

Will We Be Judged When We Die?

When we die, we immediately face the judgment of faith.

- Those who have believed go to the intermediate Heaven.
- Those who have rejected Jesus go to Hell.

Both believers and unbelievers face a final judgment—a judgment of works, not faith—at the Second Coming.

- For the believer, works do not affect our salvation, they affect our rewards.
- For the unbeliever, their works are judged, confirming their eternal destination.

Is The Present Heaven Part Of Our Universe Or Another?

[The discussion about parallel universes is moot, we can't know whether they exist or not. Thus the only logical answer is the Present Heaven is part of our universe.] Scripture supports this view:

- Stephen- Acts 7
- Gehazi- 2 Kings 6:17

We will consider the physical nature of the present Heaven in the next chapter.

HEAVEN

06. Is The Present Heaven A Physical Place?

Quotation

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” John 5:28-29

A Fitting Abode

The question we must now answer is whether people, being by nature both spiritual and physical, can dwell in a realm without physical properties.

We begin by considering the inhabitants of the Present Heaven.

- God.
- Angels.
- Humans.

Why are we so resistant to the notion of Heaven as a physical place? Alcorn believes it is the result of an unbiblical view that holds:

- The spirit realm is good.
- The material world is bad.

This view is called Christoplatonism. The Greek philosopher, Plato, believed:

- Material things—the human body and the Earth—were evil.
- Immaterial things—the human soul and Heaven—were good.

The early church under the influence of Platonism came to believe that:

- Human spirits were better off without bodies.
- Thus, Heaven would be a disembodied state.

Scripture, however, gives considerable evidence that the Present Heaven has physical properties.

Heaven As Substance, Earth As Shadow

A rarely discussed idea which has biblical support is the notion that Earth is a shadow of Heaven.

- Heaven is filled with smoke from the glory of God. Revelation 15:8
- There are physical objects in Heaven.
 - Scrolls. Revelation 5:1; 10:2
 - Elders. Revelation 4:4; 19:4
 - Martyrs who wear clothes. Revelation 6:9-11
 - People holding palm branches. Revelation 7:9-10
- There are musical instruments in Heaven. Revelation 8:6

- Horses come in and out of Heaven. Revelation 19:14
- An eagle flies overhead in Heaven. Revelation 8:13

Are these objects symbolic or literal?

Alcorn suggests that the book of Hebrews seems to say that the Earth is a derivative realm and Heaven is the source realm. Hebrews 9:11-24, 12:22

- These verses suggest that God created Earth in the image of Heaven.
- Thus earthly realities may be derived from heavenly counterparts.

Does Paradise Suggest A Physical Place?

What did Jesus mean by Paradise when speaking to the thief on the cross? Luke 23:43

- The word *paradise* comes from the Persian word *pairidaeza*, meaning a walled park or enclosed garden.
- The word *paradise* does not refer to wild nature but specifically to nature under mankind's dominion.

In New Testament understanding:

- Paradise was not generally understood as mere allegory with a metaphysical or spiritual meaning.
- Paradise was understood as an actual physical place where God and His people lived together.
 - Surrounded by physical beauty.
 - Enjoying pleasures and happiness.

In the Old Testament:

- The tree of life was in Eden, the paradise of God. Genesis 2:7
- The tree of life will one day be in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 22:2

Shouldn't we assume that 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?

What Happened to Eden After the Fall?

- It wasn't stripped of its physicality and transformed into a spiritual entity.
- It appears to have remained as it was except with human access prevented.

God is not done with Eden.

- He has not preserved it as a museum piece.
- He has preserved it as a place to be occupied again.

What about the tree of life?

- It will be in the New Jerusalem on both sides of a great river which runs through the city. Revelation 22:2
- The letter to the Ephesus church tells us that the tree is presently in Paradise. Revelation 2:7

The presence of the tree of life in the present Heaven suggests that Heaven too has physical properties and is capable of containing physical objects.

Do People Have Intermediate Bodies In The Present Heaven?

God may give us some physical form in the present Heaven that will allow us to function as human beings.

- We will be awaiting the resurrection of our bodies.
- Since we will eat and wear clothing we will need substance. Revelation 6:9-11,7:9-10
- Martyrs are described using the Greek word for soul, *psuche*:
 - Which does not normally mean disembodied spirit.
 - But usually refers to a whole person, body and spirit.
- When John visited Heaven (Revelation 10:9-10) he is said to have:
 - Grasped
 - Eaten
 - Held
 - Tasted
 He couldn't do these things without a body of some kind.

What about our resurrection bodies?

- We don't receive resurrection bodies immediately after death.
- At the resurrection, all believers in Heaven receive resurrection bodies.

But some sort of intermediate body in no way invalidates the notion of a general resurrection.

We know there is at least one resurrection body in Heaven.

- When Jesus ascended, He did so in His resurrection body.
- It seems only logical to assume there are other physical entities.
 - Clothing
 - Bodies

Enoch, Elijah, And Moses

There are clearly cases of individuals in both the Old and New Testaments who were in Heaven in bodily form.

Old Testament Cases

- Enoch- Genesis 5:24
- Elijah- 2 Kings 2:11-12

New Testament Cases. Luke 9:28-36

- Moses
- Elijah

What Can We Learn From The Rich Man And Lazarus?

In the New Testament parable, Jesus ascribes physical properties to people who have died. Luke 16:19-31

Alcorn thinks it is a mistake to dismiss this parable as strictly figurative based on assumptions that the afterlife consists of disembodied people in a non-physical realm.

The best explanation for the parable is that Jesus was speaking of what actually happened to two real men when they died. What are the lessons we can learn from the parable if this is so:

- The rich man and Lazarus had physical forms.
- They were fully conscious after death.
- They had memory of Earth and people.

Alcorn suggests that as a minimum we should consider an alternative position that doesn't insist that every detail is literal but also recognizes that Jesus intended for us to picture people in the afterlife as real humans with thoughts and capacities (and perhaps even forms), and with the same identity, memories, and awareness from their lives and relationships on Earth.

HEAVEN

07. What Is Life Like In The Present Heaven?

Quotation

“When I was a boy, the thought of Heaven used to frighten me more than the thought of Hell. I pictured Heaven as a place where time would be perpetual Sundays, with perpetual services from which there would be no escape.” David Lloyd George

Observations About Heaven

According to Alcorn, we can learn a great deal about Heaven from three key verses in Revelation.

- The passage: Revelation 6:9-11
- The observations: twenty-one [see text for the observations]

These observations apply specifically to martyrs in the present Heaven, but Alcorn thinks they apply generally to everyone there.

Do Heaven’s Inhabitants Remember Life On Earth?

The martyrs in Heaven provide proof that those in Heaven remember their life on Earth.

- If they remember their martyrdom, they would surely remember other aspects of their lives.
- All who endure bad things on Earth will be comforted—only necessary if memory exists.

Alcorn thinks our memory in Heaven will be far better than it is now. At death according to 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Matthew 12:36,

- We will give an account of our lives,
- Down to specific actions and words.

In addition, Alcorn suggests that the doctrine of eternal rewards implies that we remember our lives on Earth.

- Our rewards hinge on specific acts of faithfulness and are brought into Heaven with us. 1 Corinthians 3:14
- Our positions of authority and treasures we are granted will remind us of our Earthly lives. Matthew 6:19-21

Finally, Alcorn points out that memory is a basic element of personality. If we are truly ourselves in Heaven, there must be continuity of memory from Earth to Heaven.

Do People In The Present Heaven See What Is Happening On Earth?

We are given a number of examples to show that people in Heaven are aware, to some extent, of what is happening on Earth.

- The martyrs in Heaven know that God has not brought judgment on their persecutors. Revelation 6:10
- When Babylon is brought down, people in Heaven are commanded to rejoice. Revelation 18:20
- Heaven's saints will return with Jesus to set up His Kingdom. Would they be uninformed about what has happened?
- When Saul communicated with Samuel, Samuel was aware of events in Saul's life. 1 Samuel 28:16-19
- In Hebrews 12:1 we are commanded to "run with endurance" and are reminded of "the great cloud of witnesses."
- Angels in Heaven saw Jesus on Earth (1 Corinthians 4:9). If angels watch wouldn't people in Heaven also watch?
- Abraham and Lazarus saw the rich man in Hell (Luke 16:23-26). If they could see Hell, they could surely see Earth.
- If there is to be more rejoicing in Heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15:7,10), how will they know?

Do People In Heaven Pray For Those On Earth?

There is Scriptural evidence, Alcorn believes, which suggests that departed saints in the present Heaven intercede for people on Earth.

- Jesus is an example of one who has died and gone to Heaven and is interceding for us. Romans 8:34
- The martyrs in Heaven pray to God for justice; this has implications for those enduring persecution.
- Revelation 6 makes it clear that some who have died are praying concerning events on the Earth.
- If people in the present Heaven can see what is happening on Earth, would they not be compelled to pray?

Can It Be Heaven If People Are Aware Of Anything Bad On Earth?

Alcorn concludes the chapter by giving several arguments that those in Heaven can be aware of bad things happening on Earth.

- Jesus grieved for people when He was on Earth; would He stop because He is now in Heaven?
- It seems logical if Jesus is grieved by the conditions on Earth that His followers would also be grieved.
- The verse most cited on the subject of sorrow in Heaven (Revelation 21:4) refers to the New Heaven, not the present Heaven.
- The Scriptures simply do not anywhere suggest or state that there is no sorrow in the present Heaven.

We on Earth can relax and rejoice for our loved ones who are in the presence of Christ. Our parting is not the end of our relationship, only an interruption.

HEAVEN

08. This World Is Not Our Home...Or Is It?

Quotation

“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.” Randy Alcorn

What About The New Earth?

Many books on Heaven say nothing about the New Earth. Others are vague. Some dismiss the concept out-of-hand.

- Douglas Connelly writes, “Is this new earth like our present earth? Probably not.” Alcorn wonders if the new earth is not like the present earth, why does God call it the “New” Earth?
- Paul Marshall writes, “Our destiny is an earthly one: a new earth, an earth redeemed and transfigured. An earth reunited with heaven, but an earth nevertheless.”

Our Longing For Eden

We long for a return to Paradise—a perfect world, without the corruption of sin, where God walks with us and talks with us in the cool of the day.

- We are homesick for Eden. We’re nostalgic for what is implanted in our hearts—perhaps at a genetic level.
- We long for what Adam and Eve once enjoyed—a perfect and beautiful Earth with free and untainted relationships with:
 - God
 - Each other
 - Animals
 - The environment
- Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us and would take us to be with Him there forever. John 14:2-3
- What is this place? It is the New Earth (Revelation 21). When we are finally in the New Jerusalem, we will be truly home.

Clues To The Nature Of The Eternal Heaven

If the eternal Heaven will be a New Earth, doesn’t that suggest the current earth is bursting with clues about what Heaven will be like? Alcorn suggests several.

- We are told that Heaven is a city. Hebrews 11:10, 13:14
- Heaven is described as a country. Hebrews 11:16
- We should expect to find earthly things there. Revelation 21-22
 - Atmosphere
 - Water
 - People.
 - Mountains
 - Trees
 - Houses
- We are told that in Heaven we will rest. Revelation 14:13

- We will serve Christ there for His glory. Revelation 22:3

Is The Eternal Heaven An Actual Place?

Many people spiritualize Heaven by saying it is a “state” rather than an actual place.

- If Heaven isn’t an actual place, would Jesus have said it was?
- If we conclude otherwise, we strip Jesus’ words of meaning!

Are We Just A-Passing Through?

The old gospel song, “This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through,” is not quite accurate. We may pass from earth through death, but eventually we’ll be back to live on the restored earth.

- The world as it was, and as it will be is our home. We are pilgrims in this life, not because our home will never be on Earth, but because our eternal home is not currently on Earth.
- Will the Eternal Heaven be occupied by familiar, tangible, physical features and fully embodied people? The Bible clearly answers yes.
- If we want to know what the eternal Heaven is going to be like, the best place to start is by looking around us.
- The idea of the New Earth as a physical place isn’t a human invention, it is the invention of a transcendent God.
 - God chose to become a man on the present Earth,
 - In order to redeem mankind and the Earth.

Why did God do this? In order to glorify Himself and enjoy our company in a perfect setting.

The Three Phases Of Earth’s History?

Alcorn thinks that to have a biblical worldview, we must have a sense of our past, present, and future, and how they relate to each other. To understand God’s future plan for mankind and the Earth, we must understand His original plan.

Alcorn gives a chart on pp. 82-85 which shows how elements of human history and destiny relate.

Alcorn reviews the parallels between what he calls the bookends of human history:

- Genesis tells the story of Paradise lost.
 - God plants a Garden on Earth.
 - In the Garden there’s no sin, death, or Curse.
 - Humanity’s stewardship is squandered.
 - The Redeemer is promised.
- Revelation tells the story of Paradise regained.
 - The Redeemer returns.
 - God brings the New Jerusalem to Earth.

- On the New Earth there's no sin, death, or Curse.
- Humanity's stewardship is triumphant.

HEAVEN

09. Why Is Earth's Redemption Essential To God's Plan?

Quotation

“It is quite striking that all of the basic words describing salvation in the Bible imply a return to an originally good state or situation. Redemption is a good example. To redeem is to ‘buy free,’ literally to ‘buy back.’ ... The point of redemption is to free the prisoner from bondage, to give back the freedom he or she once enjoyed.” Albert Wolters

God Promises To Renew Earth

The physical universe was created for God's glory—just as He promises to make men and women new, He promises to renew the earth itself.

- God's redemptive plan climaxes,
 - Not at the return of Christ,
 - But on the New Earth.
- He isn't going to abandon His creation.
- He's going to restore the creation.

God's Earthly Renewal Plan

God hasn't given up on His original creation; we've overlooked a whole biblical vocabulary that makes this point clear.

- Consider the following words:

- Reconcile	- Redeem
- Restore	- Recover
- Renew	- Return
- Regenerate	- Resurrect
- These words suggest that God sees us in light of what He intended us to be.
- Likewise, He sees the earth in terms of what He intended it to be.
- Moreover, He is going to restore the earth to its original design.

Alcorn thinks it is impossible to understand the ministry of Christ without the larger view of redemption's sweeping plan. God determined from the beginning that:

- He will redeem mankind and restore earth.
- Why? So His original plan will be fulfilled.

Alcorn wonders what is behind our notion that God is going to destroy the earth and be done with it. He thinks it is a weak theology of God:

- We see Him as a thwarted inventor whose creation failed.
- Realizing His mistake, He'll trash most of creation.
- His consolation is that He rescues some of us from Hell.

But this idea is absolutely refuted by Scripture.

The New Earth Is The Old Earth Restored

According to Alcorn, the Prophets clearly tell us that God intends to restore the earth.

- Peter tells us that Christ must remain in Heaven until God restores everything as prophesied (Acts 3:21).
- The prophets were not concerned with some far-off realm of disembodied spirits, but the earth they walked on.
- When Peter mentioned to Jesus that the disciples had left everything to follow Him (Matthew 19:28), Jesus
 - Did not rebuke him for selfish motives.
 - But speaks of “rewards” at the renewal.

According to the prophets, the apostle Peter, and Christ Himself our destiny is to live forever on a restored and renewed earth.

Redemption = Return

God’s original purpose in creating Adam and Eve (and their children) was that they would extend the blessings of Paradise throughout the entire world.

- Salvation restores man to his original calling and purpose.
- It guarantees that man’s original mandate will be fulfilled.

Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever [Westminster Shorter Catechism].

- We glorify God by doing what He wants us to do.
- Carrying out His plan for a Christ-centered culture,
In a resurrected universe.

Christ’s mission in God’s plan is twofold:

- He redeems what was lost in the Fall.
- He destroys contenders to God’s:
 - Dominion
 - Authority
 - Power

God’s Glory On God’s Earth

Alcorn identifies several passages that promise God’s glory will be shown to all the nations of the earth, particularly in the New Jerusalem.

- Psalm 102:15-16
- Isaiah 11:9-10
- Isaiah 66:19-20
- Haggai 2:6-7

God’s Kingdom and dominion are not about what happens in some remote, unearthly place; they are about what happens on the earth, which God created for His glory.

- God has tied His glory to the earth.
- The earth is not disposable, it is essential.

In a redemptive work far larger than most imagine, Christ bought and paid for our future and the earth's.

A Vision Of The New Earth

Alcorn suggests that Isaiah 60 is the best biblical commentary on Revelation 21-22, the New Earth.

- It's clear that the passage is a prophetic depiction of the future New Earth.
- One's understanding of Christ's millennial reign may prefigure the fulfillment.

Redemption Of Nations And Culture

In this last section, Alcorn addresses what Scripture teaches about culture and the nations on the New Earth.

- Both Isaiah and Revelation indicate that the products of human culture will be important on the New Earth.
- Isaiah and John state that "the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24, 26)."
- Isaiah and John help us envision the New Earth not only as a world of natural wonder, but as one that includes multinational citizens and cultural treasures.

"It was the incarnation, atonement, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that brought redemption to mankind, Jerusalem and the earth. Christ's mission was to reclaim and set free not only the earth's inhabitants, but the earth itself."

HEAVEN

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

Quotation

“When God put Adam in Paradise at the beginning, Adam fell, and all fell with him, but men and women are meant to live in the body, and will live in a glorified body in a glorified world, and God will be with them.” Martin Lloyd Jones

The Curse

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, Satan appeared to have ruined God’s plan for a righteous, undying humanity to rule the earth to God’s glory. But immediately after the Fall, God promised a Redeemer, the seed of the woman, who would one day come and crush the serpent.

- Since one of the results of sin had been death, the promised victory would somehow have to include victory over death.
- Another result of sin was banishment of men from Eden, thus the victory would have to include restoration of man to paradise.

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.

Taking Our Inheritance

After the final judgment, Jesus will say, “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).”

- God hasn’t changed His mind.
- He hasn’t fallen back to Plan B.

God isn’t going to throw away His handiwork and start again from scratch.

Uniting Heaven And Earth

God’s plan of the ages is “to bring all things in heaven and on Earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10).”

- Heaven and Earth will be forever united in the new physical universe.
- Christ will make Earth into Heaven and Heaven into Earth.

When God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden, Earth was Heaven’s backyard. The New Earth will be even more than that—it will be Heaven itself. And those who know Jesus will have the privilege of living there.

Who Will Reign Over The Earth?

The Bible's central story revolves around a question: who will reign over the earth? In Scripture, several are said to have thrones:

- God- Revelation 22:1
- Christ the Son- Hebrews 1:8
- God's children- Revelation 4:4, 11:16
- Satan- Revelation 2:13

God's claim is absolute, as is Christ's. The claim of humans is valid but only if they submit to God. Satan's claim is false.

The Last Adam Defeats Satan

Satan appeared to succeed when the last Adam (Jesus) died. But Jesus didn't die because He had sinned. He chose to pay the price for mankind's sin, tracing all the way back to the first Adam and forward to the final generation of the fallen Earth.

- When Christ rose from the dead, He dealt Satan a fatal blow, assuring both Satan's destruction and the resurrection of mankind and the earth.
- Once Satan is cast into the lake of fire, and God refashions the old Earth into the New Earth, mankind and Earth will slip forever from Satan's grasp.

It is Satan's desire to destroy the world. God's intent is not to destroy the world but to deliver it from destruction.

Removing The Curse

What would our lives look like if the Curse were lifted? When the Curse is reversed:

- We will no longer engage in painful toil, but will enjoy satisfying caretaking.
- No longer will the earth yield thorns and thistles, defying our dominion.
- No longer will we return to the ground, swallowed up in death.

As a result of the Curse, the first Adam could no longer eat from the tree of life which would have allowed him to live forever in his sinful state.

Before the Fall:

- Food was readily available with minimal labor.
- Time was available to pursue thoughtful aesthetic ideas.
- To work for the sheer pleasure of it, to please and glorify God.

After the Fall:

- People eked out an existence trying to find food and shelter.
- Mankind has been distracted and debilitated by sickness and sin.

Even so, some of the things we do, even in our fallenness, such as painting, performing beautiful music, finding cures for diseases, and other cultural, scientific, and commercial pursuits are good.

As Far As The Curse Is Found

Jesus came not only to save spirits from damnation. No, He came to save His whole creation from death.

- This means our bodies too, not just our spirits.
- It means the earth, not just humanity.
- And it means the universe, not just the earth.

“If the present Earth, so diminished by the Curse, is at times so beautiful and wonderful; if our bodies, so diminished by the Curse, are at times overcome by a sense of the earth’s beauty and wonder; then *how magnificent will the New Earth be?* And what will it be like to experience the New Earth in something else we’ve never known: perfect bodies?”

HEAVEN

11. Why Is Resurrection So Important?

Quotation

“Make no mistake: if He rose at all it was as His body; if the cells’ dissolution did not reverse, the molecules reknit, the amino acids rekindle, the Church will fall... Let us not mock God with metaphor, analogy, sidestepping transcendence; making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the faded credulity of earlier ages; let us walk through the door.” John Updike

Does The Resurrection Matter?

The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of redemption—both for mankind and for the earth. One of the leaders of the Jesus Seminar, Marcus Borg, and the apostle Paul have widely differing views of the resurrection.

- “It is irrelevant whether or not the tomb was empty. Whether Easter involved something remarkable happening to the physical body of Jesus is irrelevant.” Marcus Borg
- Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins... [and] we are to be pitied more than all men.” 1 Corinthians 15:17,19

The Resurrection Is Physical

The major Christian creeds state, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” But many Christians tend to spiritualize the resurrection of the dead, effectively denying it.

- Of Americans who believe in the resurrection of the dead, two-thirds believe they will not have bodies after the resurrection.
- The biblical doctrine assures we will not be disembodied spirits in the world to come, but redeemed spirits, in redeemed bodies, in a redeemed universe.

If we don’t get it right on the resurrection of the body, we’ll get nothing else right.

The Corinthian believers, more than any others, were steeped in the Greek philosophies of Platonism and dualism (a dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical).

- From a christoplatonic perspective, our souls merely occupy our bodies, like a hermit crab in a seashell, and our souls could naturally—or even ideally—live in a disembodied state.
- The biblical doctrine is radically different. Our bodies are an integral part of our total being. Our physical bodies are an essential aspect of who we are, not just shells for our spirits to inhabit.

When God sent Jesus to die, it was for our bodies as well as our spirits.

- When we die, it isn't that our real self goes to the present Heaven and our fake self goes to the grave; it's that part of us goes to the present Heaven and part goes to the grave to await our bodily resurrection.
- Any views of the afterlife that settle for less than a bodily resurrection—including Christoplatonism, reincarnation, and transmigration of the soul—are explicitly unchristian.
- Incorrect thinking about bodily resurrection stems from our failure to understand the environment in which resurrected people live—the New Earth. Resurrected bodies are not intended to float in space or to flit from cloud to cloud.

Continuity Is Critical

Deep in our hearts we desire a resurrected life on a resurrected Earth instead of a disembodied life in a spiritual realm. Why is this so?

- Because God intends for us to be raised to New Life on the New Earth.
- It is God who created us to desire what we were made for.
- It is God who set eternity in the hearts of men. Ecclesiastes 3:11
- It is God who designed us to live on Earth and desire earthly life.

It is our bodily resurrection that will allow us to return to an earthly life—this time freed from sin and the Curse.

As Paul writes, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 Alcorn suggests we go through three radical changes:

- At spiritual birth.
- At physical death.
- At the resurrection.

Despite the radical changes that occur through salvation, death, and resurrection, we remain who we are. We have the same history, appearance, memory, interests, and skills. This is the principle of *redemptive continuity*.

Just as those reborn through salvation maintain continuity with the people they were, so too the world will be reborn in continuity with the old world (Matthew 19:28). Continuity is evident in passages that discuss the resurrection.

- 1 Corinthians 15:53- “For the perishable...”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17- “And so we will...”
- Matthew 22:32- “He is not the God...”

The Nature Of Our New Bodies

If resurrection meant the creation of a new body, Christ's original body would have remained in the tomb.

- His disciples saw the marks of His crucifixion, unmistakable evidence that this was the same body. Luke 24:39

- “The self-same bodies which were laid in the grave, being then united again to their souls forever.” Westminster Larger Catechism
- “All the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other.” Westminster Confession
- The same bodies God created for us will be raised up to greater perfection than we’ve ever known.
- Because we each have a physical body, we already have the best single reference point for envisioning a new body.

Christ’s Resurrected Life Is The Model For Ours

We have an example in Scripture of what a resurrection body is like—Christ’s.

- He was not a ghost.
- His body was suited for life on Earth.

Jesus showed us how we will live in our resurrection bodies:

- He walked
- He looked
- He interacted
- He ate
- He talked
- He stood
- He was touched

Once we understand that Christ’s resurrection is the prototype for the resurrection of mankind and the earth, we realize that Scripture gives us a pattern for understanding human resurrection and life on the New Earth.

The Glorified Christ

It appears that the risen Christ, before His ascension, was not yet fully glorified (Matthew 17 and Revelation 1).

- Paul experienced Christ as a great light from heaven. Acts 22:6-11
- The glorified Christ will be the most glorious being in Heaven.
- Christ will remain a man, but His deity will shine through His humanity.

Our resurrection bodies will continue to be—in both the same and greater ways—the functional physical bodies that God designed from the beginning.

The Dust Of The Earth

Some might object on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:47-48, “The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.” Alcorn tells of a Bible teacher who thinks that our resurrection bodies will not be earthly as our present bodies are. Alcorn’s answer:

- Surely the risen and glorified Christ remains a descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David. It is difficult how He could claim Messiahship if this were not so.

- The nail prints in Christ’s hands and feet are the strongest possible affirmation that the same earthly body that was crucified is now the heavenly body that was raised.
- “Heavenly” transcends “earthly” but does not negate it. The earthly becomes heavenly, not losing its original properties, but gaining much more.

Alcorn suggests that the passage does not simply focus on a new state and a new life, but on the reversal of the Curse, and the conquest of sin and death.

The Promise Of Imperishable Bodies

Paul speaking of our resurrection bodies in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 makes the following contrasts:

- Our earthly body is sown perishable; our resurrection body raised imperishable.
- Our earthly body is sown in dishonor; our resurrection body is raised in glory.
- Our earthly body is sown in weakness; our resurrection body raised in power.
- Our earthly body is sown a natural body; our resurrection body raised a spiritual one.

A spiritual body appears most of the time to look and act like a regular physical body, with the exception that it may have (and in Christ’s case it does have) some powers of a metaphysical nature; that is, beyond normal physical abilities.

What about physical bodies before the Fall? Because there was no [human] death before the Fall, Adam and Eve’s original bodies were either indestructible or self-repairing. Yet truly flesh and blood.

You may not be satisfied with your current body or mind—but you’ll be thrilled with your resurrection upgrades.

HEAVEN

12. Why Does All Creation Await Our Resurrection?

Quotation

“The kingdom of God ... does not mean merely the salvation of certain individuals nor even the salvation of a chosen group of people. It means nothing less than the complete renewal of the entire cosmos, culminating in the new heaven and the new earth.” Anthony Hoekema

Broadening Our View Of Redemption

Most of us, Alcorn believes, have come to think of redemption far too narrowly. That’s why we’re fooled into thinking that Heaven must be fundamentally different from Earth—because in our minds, Earth is bad, irredeemable, beyond hope.

- But not so fast. Alcorn reminds us that God called the original earth “very good”—the true earth as He designed it to be. Genesis 1:31
- The power of Christ’s resurrection is enough not only to remake us but also to remake every inch of the universe:

- Mountains	- Rivers
- Plants	- Animals
- Stars	- Nebulae
- Quasars	- Galaxies

All Creation Waits in Eager Anticipation

Alcorn asks us if we have ever sensed creation’s restlessness. He comments that despite the presence of beauty and joy, something on earth is terribly wrong. Paul describes this in Romans 8:19-23.

- The redemption of our bodies refers to the resurrection of the dead. Paul writes that we ourselves and the whole creation await deliverance that will come.
- God subjected the whole creation to frustration, by putting the Curse not only on mankind but also on the earth. Genesis 3:17

When we are redeemed, we will glorify Him by ruling over the physical universe with creativity and camaraderie, showing respect and benevolence for all we rule.

As Mankind Goes, So Goes Creation

John Calvin in his commentary on Romans wrote, “...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.” Alcorn asks what is the “whole creation” that groans for our redemption.

- The heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1
- The Earth and the cosmos.

He suggests that the creation and mankind are inextricably linked: *as mankind goes, so goes the creation*.

- Just as all creation was spoiled through our rebellion, the deliverance of all creation hinges on our deliverance.
- Adam and Eve's sin did not merely create a personal catastrophe or a local, Edenic catastrophe, it was a catastrophe of cosmic proportions.

Alcorn relates how as a boy he was fascinated by the violent collisions of galaxies, explosions of stars, and implosions into neutron stars and black holes.

- On one hand, these cataclysms declare God's greatness.
- On the other, they suggest something out of order on a massive scale.

He suggests that entropy (the fact that all things are deteriorating) may have been a consequence of the Fall.

- Some people believe in *uniformitarianism*, the idea that processes acting in the same manner as at present over long spans are sufficient to account for:
 - All current features of the universe, and
 - All past changes in the universe.
- Alcorn looks at the cycle of death in nature and sees no biblical evidence that God designed the creation to devolve into death, either,
 - The death of people in the beginning. or
 - The death of animals prior to the Fall.

Thus, the new heaven and the new earth can come only after the great white throne—after the completion and conclusion of the history of human redemption.

Was There Really No Death?

Alcorn, like many others, is troubled by the suffering and death of creatures as they are consumed by other creatures higher up on the food chain.

- Was it true in Eden as it will be on the New Earth, "Animals will neither harm nor destroy?" (Isaiah 11:7). Alcorn thinks so.
- Was the animal world of Eden different than the animal world we know today? Alcorn thinks so.

Whatever view we take, we know that the whole creation has come under mankind's Curse, and that God will deliver the whole creation by our resurrection.

From The Fall To Our Resurrection

How will the effects of our bodily resurrection be felt by the entire universe?

- If the whole creation is as complex as it appears, then there is not an amoeba or chromosome, or DNA strand, or galaxy unaffected by mankind's fall.
- That is the bad news. The good news is that what went down with the Fall will come back up with us when Christ's redemptive work is finished.

John Piper writes, “What happens to our bodies and what happens to the creation go together. And what happens to our bodies is not annihilation.”

The Pains And Promise Of Childbirth

Most Christians believe that there will be no carryover into Heaven of our present culture, art, technology, or the product of human creativity. If this is so, what analogy should Paul have used for what will happen to creation?

- A dying old man?
- A wounded soldier?

But instead he used the analogy of childbirth.

- The pains of childbirth are analogous to the present sufferings of mankind, animals and the entire universe.
- The fallen but redeemed children of God will be transformed into something new: wise stewards of the earth.
- Today the earth is dying, but before it dies—or in its death—it will give birth to the New Earth.

It is no coincidence that the beginning and the ending of the Bible are connected:

- The Bible begins with the creation of the heaven and earth. Genesis 1-2
- And the Bible ends with the re-creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Revelation 21-22

All that was lost at the beginning will be restored at the end. And far more will be added besides.

HEAVEN

13. How Far-Reaching Is The Resurrection?

Quotation

“Why does God go to all the trouble to dirty His hands, as it were, with our decaying, sin-stained flesh, in order to reestablish it as a resurrection body and clothe it with immortality? ... Because His Son paid the price of death so that the Father’s purpose for the material universe would be fulfilled, namely, that He would be glorified in it, including our bodies forever and ever.” John Piper

Final Destinations

Jesus became a man and lived on Earth in order to redeem mankind. So Earth is the setting for much of the activity in God’s eternal plan.

- Jesus’ victory over sin and death took place on Earth. He will return to Earth to set up His Kingdom.
- We were created from the earth to live on the earth. We will be delivered from our bodies into new bodies.

The Resurrection Of Our Deeds

Just as we will be carried over from the old world to the New, so will our labor (works).

- Every Kingdom work, whether performed publicly or privately, partakes of the Kingdom’s imperishable nature. Every:

- Honest intention	- Word of witness
- Resisting of temptation	- Step of repentance
- Gesture of concern	- Routine engagement
- Act of worship	- Show of obedience
- Mumbled prayer	
- Everything which flows out of our relationship with Jesus will find its place in the New Heaven and the New Earth.
- Resurrection is not figurative. If our physical bodies survive, shouldn’t other physical things survive also?

Alcorn cites several Scripture verses to support this contention, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Revelation 14:13, and Psalm 90:17.

Using Our Imagination About The Resurrection

Some people think it is silly to believe that nature, animals, paintings, books, or even a baseball bat might be resurrected. Alcorn thinks exactly the opposite.

- It elevates resurrection, emphasizing the power of Christ to radically renew mankind—and far more.

- God promises to resurrect not only humanity but also the creation that fell as a result of our sin.

What's done on Earth for Christ's glory will survive.

Reforming Our Vocabulary To Fit The Resurrection

Alcorn suggests we need to alter the way we think and speak to reflect a correct biblical view of Heaven. To prove his case, he cites a story of a Christian woman whose Christian husband had died, "Little did she know when she hugged her husband that morning, she would never hug him again." Well intentioned, but wrong.

- This is difficult for us because we are accustomed to speak of Heaven as the opposite of Earth.
- We must teach ourselves to embrace the principle of continuity of people and of the earth in the resurrection.

Resurrection Day

Alcorn concludes the chapter with a section from his novel, *Safely Home*, which, in his mind, describes what it will be like on Resurrection Day when we return with Jesus and are given new bodies to colonize a New Earth.

"The battle cry of a hundred million warriors erupted from one end of the heavens to the other ... What they knew in that moment, in every fiber of their beings, was that this Person, and this Place were all they had ever longed for ... and ever would."

HEAVEN

14. Where And When Will Our Deliverance Come?

Quotation

“There is not one inch in the entire area of our human life about which Christ, who is Sovereign of all, does not cry out, “Mine!” Abraham Kuyper

Our Destiny

The prophets are very clear about the destiny of God’s people. They will live in peace and prosperity, as free people in their promised land.

- What about recipients of these promises who have died?
- They did not receive these promises, they saw them by faith.

The Old Testament Hope For A New Earth

The “country of their own” (Hebrews 11) is:

- A real country with a real capital, the New Jerusalem.
- It is an actual place where they will live in actual bodies.

The fulfillment of these prophecies requires exactly what Scripture elsewhere promises—a resurrection of God’s people and God’s Earth.

What thrilled these expectant people was:

- Not that God would rule in Heaven—He already did.
- Their hope was that He would rule on Earth one day.

We have the impression that the Old Testament’s concept of Heaven is stunted. This is not true. The Old Testament:

- Says very little about the Intermediate Heaven.
- Says a great deal about the eternal Heaven.

Unfortunately, when we read passages about a future earthly kingdom, we assume they don’t refer to Heaven. But they do!

The Question Of The Millennium

Many have reduced the coming reign of Christ on Earth to a thousand-year millennial kingdom on the old Earth. Thus, they don’t understand the biblical promise of an eternal reign on the New Earth.

So we must take a closer look at the Millennium—a truly controversial subject. In general, Christians hold to one of three views about the Millennium:

- Postmillennial View: After His reign is established through His people for a long duration (not necessarily a literal thousand years) Christ will physically return to an already substantially redeemed world.
- Premillennial View: The Millennium will be a literal thousand-year reign of Christ which will begin immediately upon His return when He defeats His enemies in the battle of Armageddon.
- Amillennial View: The Millennium isn't a literal thousand years, nor is it a future state. The events described in Revelation 4-19 are happening right now as Christ's church reigns with Him over the earth.

Our view about the Millennium doesn't necessarily affect our understanding about the New Earth. The Millennium question relates to when the old Earth will end.

- After the return of Christ. Or,
- After the thousand-year reign.

Regardless, at some point, the New Earth will begin.

The Promised New World

A dominant theme in Old Testament prophecies involves God's plan for an earthly kingdom of righteousness.

- The Messiah will reign on David's throne. Isaiah 9:7
- He will defend the poor and exploited. Isaiah 11:1-10
- He will rule the wicked and destroy them. Isaiah 11:4
- He will bring peace to the animal kingdom. Isaiah 11:6

Where will this happen? Not up there in a distant Heaven, but down here on Earth, in Jerusalem.

It is common for prophetic statements to have partial fulfillment in one era and complete fulfillment in another. These prophecies, though, go far beyond a temporary kingdom.

- They speak of an eternal kingdom, and
- A Messianic reign over an eternal Earth.

Those who insist that Revelation 21-22 be taken figuratively must also take these Isaiah passages figuratively.

We should expect Isaiah's prophecies about the Messiah's second coming to be fulfilled literally because:

- Isaiah's prophecies about His 1st coming were fulfilled literally, and
- Restoring the Kingdom of God on Earth was His ultimate mission.

The Messiah's Earthly Kingdom

God promises that He has a great future in store for Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:12).

- "I will extend peace to her."

- “Like a flooding stream”

When Jewish people greet each other with, “Shalom,” they express the God-given cry of the heart to live in a world with no sin, suffering, or death.

- There was once such a world enjoyed by only two people and some animals.
- There will again be such a world enjoyed by its inhabitants who all know Jesus.

Scripture’s repeated promises about land, peace, and the centrality of Jerusalem among all the cities and nations will be fulfilled.

HEAVEN

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

Quotation

“In his redemptive activity, God does not destroy the works of his hands, but cleanses them from sin and perfects them, so that they may finally reach the goal for which he created them. Applied to the problem at hand, this principle means that the new earth to which we look forward will not be totally different from the present one, but will be a renewal and glorification of the earth on which we now live.” Anthony Hoekema

Destroyed Or Renewed?

Will the present Earth and the entire universe be utterly destroyed, and the New Earth and new universe made from scratch? Or will the original universe be renewed and transformed into the new one?

Some Scriptures seem to suggest destruction:

- Psalm 102:25-26- “Discarded”
- Luke 21:33- “Pass away”
- 2 Peter 3:10- “Destroyed”
- Revelation 21:1- “Passed away”

Some Scriptures describe the Earth as renewed:

- Ecclesiastes 1:4
- Psalm 78:69

One thing is crystal clear; the earth as it now is will not remain forever.

Burned Up Or Refined?

The problem lies in interpreting words such as “destroy” to mean absolute or final destruction rather than what Scripture teaches as a temporary destruction that is reversed through resurrection and restoration.

Alcorn suggests that what Paul describes as the judgment of works in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 is similar to what Earth will experience.

- Works of wood, hay, or straw are destroyed.
- Works of Gold, silver, or costly stones are purified.

Several theologians take the same position as Alcorn—the earth and universe are not absolutely destroyed.

- Grudem suggests that Peter may be speaking only of things on the surface of Earth, not Earth itself.

- Hoekema allows that if God was obliged to destroy the earth and the universe, Satan would have won a victory.
- Piper argues that God did not create matter to throw it away; that the present condition of Earth “passes away.”

Alcorn has no problem envisioning God remaking a charred Earth into a fresh, vibrant New Earth.

Redemption Means Restoration

Theologian Albert Wolters says that redemption means restoration, that is, the return to the goodness of an originally unscathed creation, not the addition of new elements (e.g., a New Earth) to the marred creation.

Alcorn thinks there is a clear parallel between the Flood in the time of Noah and the destruction of the Earth at Christ’s return.

- The Flood was cataclysmic and devastating. But did it obliterate the world and make it cease to exist? No.
- The cleansing by fire at the end will be more thorough than the Flood in that it will permanently eliminate sin.

Thus, just as God’s judgment by water didn’t make the earth permanently uninhabitable, neither will His judgment by fire.

Cornelius Venema explains what the process will be like:

- The word used in the older and better manuscripts conveys the idea of a process that does not so much destroy or burn up, but uncovers or lays open for discovery the creation, now in a renewed state of pristine purity.
- The new heavens and earth will issue from God’s sovereign and redemptive work...It will involve the renewal of all things, not the creation of all new things...and life in the new creation will be as it was intended at the beginning.

Other theologians have argued along these same lines, including:

- Jerome.
- Augustine.
- Gregory the Great.
- Thomas Aquinas.

The Meaning Of New

Looking at the Greek words used in describing the New Earth is also useful.

- The Greek word *kainos* means new in the sense that what was old has become obsolete.
- The new is superior in kind to the old; therefore the old should be replaced by the new.

So, will the earth be destroyed or renewed? Both. But the destruction will be temporal and partial; the renewal will be eternal and complete.

Theologian Greg Beale argues that the “new creation” should be at the center of all New Testament theology.

- The Old Testament begins with the original creation which is corrupted.
- The remainder of the Old Testament is a redemptive historical process working toward restoration.
- The New Testament sees the beginning of the fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes, and
- Prophesied a future fulfillment which is consummated in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

The doctrine of the New Earth is not some new theological fad, but the central element in the Bible narrative. Broader even than the themes of:

- Kingdom
- Covenant
- Resurrection
- Salvation

The destruction of the Old Earth in God’s purifying judgment will be immediately followed by its resurrection to the New Earth.

HEAVEN

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

Quotation

“The life we now have as the persons we now are will continue in the universe in which we now exist.” Dallas Willard

Our Deepest Longings

We’ve been taught to think, “This world’s not my home.” But we realize that in a way we really wish it was.

- Sometimes when we look at the world’s breathtaking beauty—standing in a gorgeous place where the trees and flowers and rivers and mountains are wondrous—we feel a twinge of disappointment.
- What we really want is to live forever in a world with all of the beauty and none of the ugliness—a world without sin, death, the Curse, and all the personal and relational problems and disappointments they create.

Thinking that the world is not suitable for Heaven accuses God of failure, because it assumes He will never accomplish a lasting state of righteousness on Earth.

What Will Our Home Really Be Like?

Understanding and anticipating the physical nature of the New Earth corrects a multitude of errors.

- It frees us to love the world that God has made, without guilt, while saying no to the world corrupted by our sin.
- It reminds us that God Himself gave us the earth, gave us a love for the earth, and will delight to give us the New Earth.

Alcorn notes that Adam and Eve are the only humans who will have lived on three Earths.

- One unfallen.
- One fallen.
- One redeemed.

A common misunderstanding about the eternal Heaven is that it will be unfamiliar. Alcorn presents a chart which contrasts assumptions about Heaven with biblically based characteristic of Heaven to show that this is simply not true. [p.161]

No wonder Satan doesn’t want us to learn the truth about Heaven.

- If we fall in love with the place and look forward to the future that God has for us in Heaven,
- We’ll fall more in love with God and follow Him with greater resolve and perspective.

The moment we set foot on the New Earth, we'll know it's exactly where we belong.

The Familiarity Of Home

When the Bible tells us that Heaven is our home, how should we understand this? With familiarity and pleasant memories.

- Home is a place with loved ones.
 - We'll be with people we love.
 - We'll love no one more than Jesus.
- Home is a place where we fit right in.
 - It is the place for which we were made.
 - It's the place where we can be ourselves.

What kind of home can we expect that God has prepared for us?

- God who commends hospitality will not be outdone in His hospitality to us.
- Jesus the carpenter is an expert at repairing what has been damaged. Whether
 - People, or
 - Worlds.

New Song, New Car, New Earth

The word “new” is an adjective describing a noun. The noun is the main thing. A new car is first and foremost a car.

- The New Earth will not be a non-Earth, but a real Earth.
- The Earth spoken of in Scripture is the Earth we know with:

- Dirt	- Water
- Rocks	- Trees
- Flowers	- Animals
- People	- Natural wonders

An Earth without these things would not be Earth.

The Greek word translated “earth” is *ge* from which we get geology.

- It is tangible and concrete.
- It speaks of an earthly realm.

Alcorn informs us that in many Scripture passages using *ge* references mankind and Earth are inseparable.

- Without people, the New Earth would be incomplete.
- Without the earth, people would be incomplete.

In Revelation 21:1 we are told the “first earth” will pass away.

- The word used for first is *prōte*, thus,
- The first earth is the prototype or pattern for the New Earth.

Does Earthliness Demean Heaven?

Scripture portrays God as holy and transcendent. Because Heaven is His dwelling place it seems inappropriate to think of Heaven in earthly terms. And we have good examples of why this is a concern.

- In Greek mythology, the gods on Mt. Olympus indulged in scandalous behavior.
- In Islam's heaven, promiscuity is thought to be an eternal reward for followers.

We rightly recoil at such notions.

But even before Christ's incarnation, God came to Earth to walk in the Garden with Adam and Eve.

- In Christ's incarnation and resurrection, one member of the transcendent, triune God became permanently immanent.
- Before the incarnation Heaven was transcendent; by virtue of the incarnation, Heaven became immanent.

Theologian Paul Marshall writes, "What we need is not to be rescued from the world, not to cease being human, not to stop caring for the world, not to stop shaping human culture. What we need is the power to do these things according to the will of God. We, as well as the rest of creation, need to be redeemed."

Homesick At Home

We are actually homesick for Heaven. Several writers have expressed how our hearts ache for home.

- C. S. Lewis writes, "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."
- G. K. Chesterton says, "The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I felt depressed... When I heard I was in the wrong place...my soul sang for joy."

Chesterton added that he realized then how he could feel homesick at home [on Earth].

Alcorn's chance meeting with a Christian sums up the situation in which we find ourselves.

- The man confessed he was concerned because he really didn't long for Heaven.
- What he really yearned for was an Earth that was like God intended for it to be.

Alcorn says that the very place the man has longed for, an Earth where God is fully glorified, is the place where he will live forever.

HEAVEN

17. What Will It Mean To See God?

Quotation

“I shall rise from the dead ... I shall see the Son of God, the Sun of Glory, and shine myself as that sun shines. I shall be reunited to the Ancient of Days, to God Himself, who had no morning, never began ... No man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not live until I see God; and when I have seen him, I shall never die.” John Donne

First Things First

Alcorn would have started his book on Heaven with a chapter on being with God and having an eternal relationship with Him. But he deferred for two reasons:

- Without the foundation already laid, the idea of seeing God would be colored by christoplatonism.
- If our perspective of Heaven is not based on bodily resurrection and the New Earth, it will be:
 - More like Eastern mysticism,
 - Than biblical Christianity.

We may imagine we want a thousand different things, but God is the one we really long for.

- His presence brings satisfaction. His absence brings thirst and longing. Our longing for Heaven is longing for God.
- 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

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.

To be told that we will see God’s face is shocking to anyone who understands God’s transcendence and inapproachability. Consider the following passages:

- Exodus 33:18-23
- 1 Timothy 6:16
- Hebrews 12:14

Not only will we see His face and live, we will wonder if we ever lived before we saw His face.

- To see God will be our greatest joy.
- To see God will be the measure of all joys.

The blood of Jesus Christ has bought us full access to God’s throne room and His Most Holy Place.

- Now He welcomes us there in prayer.
- In eternity He will welcome us in person.

Faces Of Father And Son

David was preoccupied with God's person, and also with God's place, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." Psalm 27:4

- Whenever we see Jesus in Heaven, we will see God.
- A primary way we see the Father on the New Earth is through Jesus.

Several passages in Scripture assure us that we will see God:

- Matthew 5:8
- Revelation 22:4

We don't understand how this can be [see John 4:24], but in some sense we will.

Seeing God With Our New Bodies

One book on Heaven suggests that we will not see God with physical eyes [but with spiritual eyes]. Alcorn strongly suggests otherwise citing Scripture to prove his point.

- Job 19:25-27
- 2 Corinthians 3:18

If we are impatient, we can catch glimpses of God now Paul tells us, Romans 1:20.

Seeing God Is Our Primary Joy

Our primary joy in Heaven will be knowing and seeing God.

- 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, because He will be the lens through which we see everything else—people, ourselves, and events.

Asaph [the psalmist], Augustine, and others have put seeing God in proper perspective vis-à-vis everything else.

- Asaph- Psalm 73:25
- Augustine- Page 176

God is the source of all lesser goods, so when they satisfy us, it is God Himself who satisfies us.

God is the ultimate source of joy, all secondary joys emanate from Him

- To have secondary joys on Earth and in Heaven,
- Will be to love God—their source.

If God provides everything for our enjoyment [1 Timothy 4:3-5, 6:17], why should we feel guilty for enjoying things?

God isn't displeased when we enjoy a good meal, marital sex, a football game, a cozy fire, or a good book. He is not in Heaven frowning and saying:

- “Stop it—you should only find joy in Me!”
- This would be foreign to God's nature.

God is a lavish giver. Romans 8:32

We can enjoy the people and things God made, and in the process enjoy the God who designed and provided them for His pleasure and ours.

We shouldn't ignore or minimize God's lavish gifts, but we should enjoy them and express heartfelt gratitude to God for all life's joys. When we do this, instead of things drawing us *from* God, they draw us *to* God.

Seeing God In Everything Good

God wants to be recognized as the source of all our joys, and He wants us to draw close to Him through partaking of His creation. Alcorn cites two authors to support this.

- Storms, page 179
- Augustine, page 179

Many commoners in history would have thought it the ultimate experience to gain an audience with their human king, to meet him face-to-face. How much greater will it be to see God in His glory?

Eden's greatest attraction was God's presence. The greatest tragedy of sin and the Curse was that God no longer dwelt with His people.

God's presence has been in the world since Eden in various ways:

- In the Holy of Holies, in the Tabernacle and the Temple.
- His shekinah glory returned in Christ. John 1:14
- Simeon saw it when Mary and Joseph presented Jesus. Luke 2:25-32

Being with Him. Gazing at Him. Talking with Him. Worshiping Him. Embracing Him. Eating with Him. Walking with Him. Laughing with Him. Imagine it!

The Blind Boy And The King

Alcorn concludes this chapter with a paraphrase of a story from *The Happiness of Heaven* in which an earthly king adopts a blind orphan boy and takes him into the palace. He likens our situation to that of the boy who is healed and can finally see this one who gave him everything.

The great day we await is the establishing of the new heavens and New Earth, where, we are told, as resurrected beings we will actually see God's face.

HEAVEN

18. What Will It Mean For God To Dwell Among Us?

Quotation

“If the goodness, beauty, and wonder of creatures are so delightful to the human mind, the fountainhead of God’s own goodness (compared with the trickles of goodness found in creatures) will draw excited human minds entirely to itself.” Thomas Aquinas

Visiting God

Visiting God will be much simpler on the New Earth than it was in Eden.

- In Eden, God came down to Earth whenever He wished.
- On the New Earth, God and mankind will be together whenever they wish.

Several Scripture verses support this idea:

- Leviticus 26:11-12
- Ezekiel 37:27
- 2 Corinthians 6:16

The Marriage Of God And Heaven And Earth

The marriage of the God of Heaven with the people of Earth will also bring the marriage of Heaven and Earth. There will not be two divisions of the cosmos:

- One, the primary home of God and angels.
- Another, the primary home of humanity.

Once God and mankind dwell together, there will be no difference between Heaven and Earth.

- Earth will become Heaven because,
- Heaven is where God makes His home.

The purpose of God will finally be achieved—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

Philosopher Dallas Willard made these observations:

- There is not another universe besides this one.
- The created universe is within the kingdom of God.

Thus, when we die, we don’t go to a different universe, but to a place within our universe that we can’t see now. When we pass through what we call death:

- We do not lose the world, instead
- We see it for the first time as it really is.

The Joy Of A God-Centered Heaven

Wherever we go in Heaven, we will be in the immediate presence of the full glory of God. Throughout all eternity, we will never be separated from direct, unhindered fellowship with God.

- However great the wonder of Heaven, God Himself is Heaven's greatest prize.
- In Heaven, we'll be freed of self-righteousness and self-deceit. We will see God.

The popular concept of Heaven presented in *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, is quite different. It portrays:

- A Heaven that's not about God's glory, but our healing.
- A Heaven that's not about God's grace, but our goodness.

Jonathan Edwards said that, "God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of Him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied."

Heaven Relocated To Earth

Not only will God come to dwell with us here on Earth, He will also bring with Him the New Jerusalem, an entire city of:

- People
- Streets
- Rivers
- Structures
- Walls
- Trees

This city is now present in the intermediate Heaven.

It appears that God has already fashioned the New Jerusalem.

- He has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:16
- It is possible that it is inhabited even now.

God's new center of government will be the New Earth, and the will of God shall finally be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.

Being With God

Scripture teaches that the main focus of Heaven is being with God and Jesus.

- One wouldn't spend an evening with a king and come away talking about the place settings.
- John went to Heaven and wrote about it to the church—about Jesus from beginning to end.

Others have written about Heaven in terms of God's presence.

- Teresa of Avilla- "Wherever God is, there is heaven."
- John Milton- "Your presence makes our Paradise."

The best part of life on the New Earth will be enjoying God's presence, having Him actually dwell among us.

In the Old Testament, the Holy of Holies contained the dazzling presence of God. And the New Jerusalem will contain His presence.

- The Holy of Holies was a thirty foot cube,
- The New Jerusalem will be a 1400 mile cube!

In the New Jerusalem there will be no temple. Everyone will have unimpeded access to God's presence.

Being With Jesus

And Jesus will be there as well as Scripture clearly teaches.

- John 14:3
- 2 Corinthians 5:8
- Philippians 1:23

We'll worship Jesus as the Almighty and bow to Him in reverence.

- There is no contradiction between Jesus acting for His glory and for our good.
- "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." John Piper

Christ's desire for us to see His glory should touch us deeply. What an unexpected compliment that the Creator of the universe has gone to such great lengths, at such sacrifice, to prepare a place for us where we can behold and participate in His glory.

- Have you ever imagined what it would be like to walk the earth with Jesus?
- Have you ever wished you had that opportunity? You will on the New Earth.

This is an intimacy with God unthinkable to any who don't grasp the significance of the Incarnation.

How Can Millions Of People All Be With Jesus And Receive Personal Attention?

Because the resurrected Jesus is both man and God, the issue of whether He can be in more than one place at the same time invokes a paradox not only in the future, but also in the present. Alcorn offers the following resolution:

- Perhaps Jesus' humanity defined the extent of His presence in His first coming and life on Earth (humanity thereby trumping deity by limiting omnipresence).
- But His deity may well define the extent of His presence in His second coming and life on the New Earth (deity thereby trumping human inability to be in two places).

Since we can accurately say that Jesus' functioning as a man does not prohibit Him from being God, we must also say that Jesus' functioning as God does not prohibit Him from being a man.

Being with Jesus is the very heart of Heaven, so we should be confident that we will have unhindered access to Him.

Will God Serve Us?

Jesus says that the Master will do something culturally unthinkable—become a servant to His subjects.

- Why? Because He loves them.
- What greater reward could He bestow?

What will be the Holy Spirit's role in the New Heaven and New Earth?

- He may continue to indwell believers (John 16:7).
- He'll empower us to rule wisely with Jesus (Deuteronomy 34:9).
- He may move us to glorify and worship the Father (John 16:14).
- He'll continue forever as one of the Triune Godhead (Hebrews 9:14).

Whom Would You Choose?

If you had the opportunity to spend the evening with any person who's ever lived, whom would you choose?

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| • C.S. Lewis | • A.W. Tozer |
| • Jonathan Edwards | • Hudson Taylor |
| • Charles Spurgeon | • Ruth |
| • David | • Mary |
| • Paul | • Adam |
| • Eve | |

Is Jesus the first person you would name? Who is more beautiful, talented, knowledgeable, fascinating, and interesting than He? He'll enjoy your company—He paid the ultimate price just so He could have us over to His place for eternity.

Hidden With Christ In God

Heaven isn't only our future home. It's our home already, waiting over the next hill.

- If we really grasp this truth, it will have a profound effect on our holiness.
- If we see ourselves in Heaven with Christ, we'll be drawn to Him now.
 - To worship Him.
 - To serve Him.

HEAVEN

19. How Will We Worship God?

Quotation

“What is the essence of heaven? ... [It is the] beatific vision, love and enjoyment of the triune God. For the three divine persons have an infinitely perfect vision and love and enjoyment of the divine essence and of one another. And in this infinite knowing, loving, and enjoying lies the very life of the triune God, the very essence of their endless and infinite happiness. If the blessed are to be endlessly and supremely happy, then they must have the very life of the triune God, in the divine life that makes them endlessly and infinitely happy.” E.J. Fortman

The Presence Of God

Have you ever, even for a few moments, experienced the presence of God?

- What will it be like to behold God’s face and never be distracted by lesser things?
- What will it be like when every lesser thing unfailingly points us back to God?

In Heaven, we’ll be at home with the God we love and who loves us wholeheartedly.

- The members of the triune Godhead exist in eternal relationship with one another.
- To see God is to participate in the infinite delight of their communion.

All-Encompassing Worship

Most people know that we’ll worship God in Heaven. But they don’t grasp how thrilling that will be.

People of the world are always striving to celebrate—they just lack ultimate reasons to celebrate.

- As Christians we have those reasons—our relationship with Jesus and the promise of Heaven.
- Does this excite you? If it doesn’t, then you are not thinking correctly, you haven’t grasped it yet.

Many people stereotype life in Heaven as an interminable church service.

- There will be no church services in Heaven.
- The church (Christ’s people) will be there.

Worship in Heaven will be all-encompassing. Every legitimate activity of new creaturely life will be included within the life of worship of God’s people.

Will we always be on our faces at Christ’s feet? No. Scripture says we’ll be doing many other things:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Living in dwelling places. | • Eating and drinking. |
| • Reigning with Christ. | • Working for Christ. |

- Standing, walking, traveling.
- Gathering at feasts.

Everything we do will be worship. We'll enjoy full unbroken, fellowship with Jesus.

In Heaven, God will always be first in our thinking. We will be able to be joyful, pray, and give thanks while doing other things.

God seeks worshipers—John 4:23. But He has no policy of compulsory adulation.

- We were created to worship God.
- There is no higher pleasure for us.

Why Worship Can't Be Boring

Nothing is more fascinating than God. The deeper we probe into His being, the more we want to know.

- The thrill of knowing Him will never subside.
- The desire to know Him will motivate all we do.

We will see God and understand why the angels and other beings delight to worship Him.

We can never get enough of God. There is no end to what He knows, no end to what He can do, no end to who He is.

- He is mesmerizing to the depths of His being.
- The depths of His being are never exhausted.

J.I. Packer wrote that, "Hearts on earth may say in the course of a joyful experience, 'I don't want this to ever end.' But invariably it does. The hearts of those in heaven say, 'I want this to go on forever.' And it will. There is no better news than this."

Christ And His Bride

Jesus called His disciples friends (John 15:15). Our relationship with Christ goes even beyond friendship.

- We'll be invited to the King's wedding.
- And, even more amazing, we'll be the bride.

What does the fine linen of the bride represent?

- Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints (Revelation 21:2).
- The bride, empowered by the Spirit, has spent her life on her dress.
 - Each prayer
 - Each gift
 - Each fast
 - Each kindness

If the bride has been diligent to prepare, her dress will be substantial and complete.

Absorbing, But Not Absorbed

Unlike what we find in other religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, or New Age mysticism—though God will be absorbing, we will not be absorbed into Him. Though we may feel lost in His immensity, we will not lose our identity.

- We will not know God exhaustively.
- But we will know Him accurately.

It is characteristic of our Western cultural independence that we think of Heaven in highly individual ways.

- God views us corporately as Christ's bride, as part of a great community in which we'll love our Lord together and undertake cooperative pursuits for His glory.
- We will always be individuals, but Heaven will not be a place of individualism. We aren't individually brides of Christ; but we are collectively the bride of Christ.

Because we will be part of a community of saints that constitutes the bride of Christ for eternity, and because we will worship and serve Him together, to prepare properly for Heaven, we must be part of a church now.

No Rivalry Between Christ And Heaven

We were made for a person (Christ) and a place (Heaven). There is no rivalry between Christ and Heaven.

- The right kind of longing is a longing for God.
- And longing for God is itself longing for Heaven.

Some assume erroneously that the wonders, beauties, adventures, and relationships of Heaven must somehow be in competition with the One who created them.

- The wonders of the New Heavens and New Earth will be a primary means by which God reveals Himself and His love to us.
- Our enjoyment of what God has provided for us should be inseparable from worshipping, glorifying and appreciating Him.

So, thinking about Heaven shouldn't be viewed as an obstacle to knowing God but as a means of knowing Him.

- Next to the incarnate Christ,
- Heaven is our best God source.

That's why Paul could tell us to set our hearts on Heaven, not just "set your hearts on God (Colossians 3:1-2)." To do one is to do the other.

If we think unworthy thoughts of Heaven, we will think unworthy thoughts of God. If Heaven fills our hearts and minds, God will fill our thoughts and minds.

HEAVEN

20. What Does God's Eternal Kingdom Involve?

Quotation

“Why do we not know the country whose citizens we are? Because we have wandered so far away that we have forgotten it. But the Lord Christ, the king of the land, came down to us, and drove forgetfulness from our heart. God took to Himself our flesh so that He might be our way back.” Augustine

What Is A Kingdom?

If one wished to describe a kingdom, what elements would be included?

- A king or ruler
- Subjects
- Territory
- Government
- Culture

Why, Alcorn wonders, when we think about the Kingdom of God, do we think about the King and His subjects, but neglect the territory and the culture?

Didn't Jesus Say His Kingdom Wasn't Earthly?

Some of Jesus' comments about His Kingdom have been misunderstood.

- When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees in John 8:23, saying, “I am not of this world,” He was speaking of His place of origin.
- When He was on trial before Pilate in John 18:36-37, He said, “My Kingdom is not of this world...” He meant its origin.
 - It is uncontaminated by the fallen Earth.
 - It operates by different principles.

“Christ's Kingdom touches this world through His indwelling Spirit, [through] the presence of the church, and [through] His providential reign.”

It is important in this regard to distinguish between what is worldly and what is earthly and physical.

- God's creation is *earthly* (Genesis 1:31).
- The product of fallen culture is *worldly* (Romans 12:1-2).

Although our physical bodies are under sin and can be instruments of sin, they aren't the ultimate source of sin.

Jesus, Worthy King Of The New Earth

Revelation 5:1-10 depicts a powerful scene in Heaven. God, the Father, sits on His throne holding a sealed scroll in His right hand.

- The scroll is sealed to avoid any possibility of tampering.
- The scroll contains God’s will, His plan for His estate:
 - Its disposition,
 - And management.

No man is worthy to take the role God intended for Adam and his descendants. God’s original intention is stated in Revelation 5:10: “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on earth.”

The vanquishing of sin doesn’t mean the end of Christ’s rule.

- It means the end of His contested rule, and
- The beginning of His earthly uncontested rule.

He will delegate earthly rule to His co-heirs. That’s why we will find on the New Earth:

- Nations will exist and,
- Kings will bring tribute.

The Importance Of Land

An essential component of any kingdom is land. Thus salvation involves a restoration to land and property.

- Man is not saved by being delivered out of his environment.
- Salvation does not rescue us from the material world, but
 - From sin, and from
 - The effects of the Curse.

The biblical ideal is for every man to own property—a place where he can have dominion and rule under God.

Consider how the theme that the Earth belongs to God and His people (not to the unrighteous who sometimes rule it now) is carried out through The Psalms and Isaiah:

- Psalm 8:6
- Psalm 25:13
- Psalm 47:2
- Isaiah 57:13
- Psalm 24:1
- Psalm 37:9, 11, 22
- Isaiah 49:8

The word “erets” meaning “land” is the fourth most frequently used noun in the Old Testament, occurring more than 2,500 times. This fact, alone, argues for the importance of land in God’s plan for His creation.

New Covenant Christians, not just Israel, are heirs of the promises made to Abraham—and these promises center on possessing the land.

The Goal Of History

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.
- He delights to entrust the rule of the Earth to His children.
- He created and gifted us to handle these responsibilities with joy.

That's what we'll do for eternity:

- Manage God's assets
- Rule His universe
- Represent Him as His:
 - Image-bearers
 - Children
 - Ambassadors

Remember God's explicitly stated plan: "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10)." We must see history as moving toward the goal of a finally restored and glorified universe.

Nothing of ultimate worth from the long history of the nations will be omitted from the heavenly community.

- Everything which authentically represents the God of truth,
- All that is of abiding worth from:
 - National stories and
 - Cultural inheritance,
 Will find its place in the New Jerusalem.

HEAVEN

21. Will We Actually Rule With Christ?

Quotation

“In the messianic kingdom the martyrs will reclaim the world as the possession which was denied to them by their persecutors. In the creation in which they endured servitude, they will eventually reign.” Iranaeus

Jesus Christ Will Reign Forever

God created Adam and Eve to rule the earth for the glory of God. They failed. God was not surprised by this, His intention all along was:

- Jesus, the Last Adam, will exercise dominion over all nations of the earth.
- God’s saints will fulfill on the New Earth the role assigned to Adam and Eve.

Human kingdoms will rise and fall until Christ sets up a kingdom that forever replaces them; one where mankind rules in righteousness.

This will be the Kingdom of Kingdoms—the greatest kingdom in human history. Scripture supports this notion in the following passages:

- Zechariah 9:9-10
- Revelation 19:11-16
- Zechariah 14:9

First century Jews were wrong about the Messiah’s identity, but they were right to believe that He would rule forever on earth. He will.

- Prior to His return, His Kingdom will be intermingled with the world’s cultures.
- During this time, His followers will be growing in character and proving able to rule.

Why Are We Surprised That We’ll Rule The Earth?

Alcorn has observed that many people are surprised to learn that we will reign in eternity over land, cities and nations.

- Many are skeptical—it’s a foreign concept—fanciful.
- It shows how far we’ve strayed from our biblical calling.

Why are we surprised? It’s repeated throughout Scripture.

Because crowns are the primary symbol of ruling, every mention of crowns as rewards is a reference to our ruling with Christ.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| • Luke 19:17 | • 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 |
| • 2 Timothy 2:12 | • Revelation 22:5 |
| • Psalm 8:6 | |

Consider the examples of a “crown” symbolizing ruling authority just in Revelation 2-5.

- Revelation 2:10
- Revelation 3:11
- Revelation 4:10
- Revelation 2:26
- Revelation 3:21
- Revelation 5:9-10

Who does God say will reign? Believers of every tribe, language, people, and nation. Where will they reign? On Earth, not in some intangible heavenly realm. Where on Earth? Probably with their own people group (Revelation 21:24, 26; 22:12).

Our Inheritance: Owning And Ruling The Land

God has delegated Sovereignty to His Son Jesus. Jesus, in turn, gladly shares His dominion with the redeemed—His siblings—who are co-heirs of the Father’s throne.

Because God owns the entire universe, the Kingdom that falls into the lap of His heirs, His children, encompasses the entire universe.

- He entrusts to us to rule one prime piece of territory—Earth, which He created specifically for us.
- God did not arbitrarily assign the Earth for us to rule:
 - It’s our land, our kingdom, granted us by the Father,
 - It was taken from us by the pseudo-king Satan.
 - It was won back by the mighty valor of Jesus

It was purchased along with our freedom by His shed blood.

If we understand God’s plan for His Creation, we’ll realize that:

- He would not deliver us from Earth to live forever in some disembodied realm.
- He grants us the same Earth over which epic battles have been fought since Eden. This is our inheritance.

Currently, on the earth under the Curse, we serve Christ and share in “His sufferings.” Why?

- Because the Earth is under siege. It’s being claimed:
 - By a false king, Satan, and his false princes, the fallen angels.
 - By human kings, rebels who set themselves up against God.
- Those who are co-heirs with Christ:
 - Engage in spiritual warfare.
 - To reclaim the hearts of mankind.
 For God’s glory.

Should We Want To Rule?

What will the government of the New Earth be like?

- It won’t be majority rule.
- It won’t be driven by polls.

Every citizen will have an appointed role. One that:

- Fulfills the person.
- Contributes to the whole.

We are part of God's family. Ruling the universe is family business.

- To say we want no part of it is to want no part of the Father.
- The right response is to be interested in God's plans and purposes.

Who will we rule?

- Other people
- The angels
- Other beings?

Who will rule over us? Other people.

There will be a social hierarchy of government, but there's no indication [in Scripture] of a relational hierarchy.

- For example, Paul will be in a greater leadership role than most.
- There will be no pride, envy, boasting, or anything sin-related.

Scripture teaches that our service for Him now on Earth will be evaluated to determine how we'll serve on the New Earth.

- The humble servant will be put in charge of much, unlike the one who lords it over others. Luke 14:11.
- The faithful servant on the present Earth will have a permanent position on the New Earth. Luke 16:10.

To rule on the New Earth will be to enable, equip, and guide, offering wisdom and encouragement to those under our authority.

If God wants us to do something on the New Earth, He will wire us and equip us to do it.

- Fear, anxiety, dread, and turmoil will be absent.
- There will be no drudge jobs; we'll want to do them.

Ruling will likely involve the management of all of God's creation, not just management of people.

We'll have no more skepticism and disillusionment with government. Why?

- Because we'll be governed by Christ-like rulers and,
- Because we'll all be under the government of Jesus Himself.

Whose Idea Is Our Rulership?

Many people have told Alcorn that they are uncomfortable with the idea that they will rule over the Earth, govern cities, and reign forever. But it's God's idea, not ours.

- Dozens of Scripture passages affirm it.
- A literal understanding of stewardship requires it.

Ruling isn't a bad thing, it's a good thing.

- God has called us to do it and has equipped us for it, and to find pleasure in it.
- All ruling will be just and benevolent, devoid of abuse, corruption, or lust for power.

Many Christians have wrong attitudes about politics and government.

- Some demean and ignore the process, thus failing to exercise their God-given stewardship.
- Others put too much confidence in politics, failing to see that God alone can bring right government.

Christians should be involved in the political process, remembering that only when Jesus returns will governments be reformed globally.

The rule spoken of in Scripture is actual rule in a physical, earthly kingdom, not "spiritual" rule in a disembodied state.

Looking Forward To What God Has For Us

"A place in God's creative order has been reserved for each one of us from before the beginning of cosmic existence. His plan is for us to develop as apprentices to Jesus, to the point where we can take our place in the on-going creativity of the universe." Dallas Willard

- God is grooming us for leadership. He's watching to see how we demonstrate faithfulness.
- Christ is not simply preparing a place for us; He is even now preparing us for that place.

HEAVEN

22. How Will We Rule God's Kingdom?

Quotation

“Our liveliness in all duties, our enduring of tribulation, our honoring of God, the vigor of our love, thankfulness, and all our graces, yea, the very being of our religion and Christianity, depend on the believing, serious thoughts of our rest [heaven].” Richard Baxter

Ruling God’s Kingdom

When we read that God promised us “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—kept in heaven for [us]” (1 Peter 1:4), we may think of this inheritance as Heaven or its pleasures. God not only gives us pleasures, He gives us power—positions of authority.

- The New Earth isn’t a blissful realm that we’ll merely visit, as a vacationer does a theme park,
- Rather, it’s a realm, a Kingdom, we’ll joyfully rule with Jesus, exercising dominion as God’s image-bearers.

While we are on Earth, we serve Jesus, all the while rejecting Earth’s value system.

- And we reject the Earth’s value system not because we despise the earth or have no interest in it.
- We reject what the fallen Earth offers because we want what God offers on the redeemed Earth.

It would be blasphemous for fallen humans to claim a share of God’s throne if it was our idea. But it is God’s idea. It is His sovereign plan, laid out before the foundations of the world.

It is in the context of our being heirs and co-heirs, heirs and future rulers that Paul writes in Romans 8:21 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.

Why God Created Mankind And The Earth

God chose to create the heavens and the earth so that His glory could come pouring out from Him in abundance.

- 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 glorify God. God is glorified when we take our place and exercise dominion.

God’s intention for humans was that we would occupy the whole Earth and reign over it.

- This dominion would produce God-exalting societies in which we would exercise the creativity, imagination, intellect, and skills befitting beings created in God's image, thereby manifesting His attributes.
- To be made in God's image involves a communicative mandate: that through our creative industry as God's sub-creators, we should together make the invisible God visible, thus glorifying Him in creation.

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:

- Entirely the will of God as,
- Taking possession of the Earth

Because God hates sin, He rejects the sinful world that fallen humanity tries to create. But God loves the world He created, and He'll restore it as part of His grand plan for humanity's redemption.

Alcorn uses the example of Germany during Nazi rule to illustrate this situation. Consider the predicament of decent Germans.

- They loved the real Germany, the beautiful countryside, a concerto, the eyes of a kind neighbor.
- They hated the arrogance, depravity, bigotry, brutality, and persecution of the Nazi government.

It was their very love for Germany that fueled their opposition to Nazi Germany.

Alcorn gives some Scripture verses to prove the point and recommends adding the words "as it is now, under the Curse" to clarify their meaning:

- James 4:4
- Romans 12:2
- 1 Corinthians 3:19

The world as it was, and the world as it will be is exceedingly good. The world as it is now, inhabited by humanity as we are now, is twisted.

God will not bring an end to the earth—rather, He will bring an end to this temporary rebellion. He will transform Earth into a realm of unsurpassed magnificence, for His glory and for our good.

God's Kingdom ... And Ours

Daniel 7 gives a prophetic vision of four earthly kingdoms that will one day be replaced by a fifth kingdom. Because the four kingdoms are on Earth, the implication is that the fifth kingdom—God's eternal Kingdom—will also be on Earth.

- The kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome were tenuous and temporary; they passed away.
- The Kingdom of the Messiah will be over the same realm as the four, but it will be everlasting; it won't pass away.

Daniel informs us that the Saints of the Most High will receive the Kingdom and possess it forever. Daniel 7:18

Where is this eternal Kingdom located?

- If the other four kingdoms, spanning centuries, rose “from the earth,”
- Then for God's Kingdom to replace them, it must be on the Earth.

The ongoing succession of Earth's unrighteous rulers should make us hunger for the day when our righteous God will rule, not just in Heaven but on Earth.

- At stake is whether God's will shall be done on Earth.
- The conclusion is it will be done on Earth, for all eternity,

Under the reign of Christ and redeemed mankind, His servant kings.

Earth is unique.

- It is the one place where God chose to act out the unfolding drama of redemption and reveal the wonders of His grace.
- It is on the New Earth, the capital planet of the new universe that He will establish an eternal Kingdom.

The Kingdom Transfer

The Kingdom will be God's, yet He will appoint His saints as rulers under Him, and they “will worship and obey Him.” What, exactly, will be handed over to the saints? Alcorn believes it includes:

- Cultural
- Athletic
- Intellectual
- Artistic
- Scientific

achievements. We will become the stewards, the managers of the world's wealth and accomplishments.

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

As we've seen from Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21, there will still be nations on the New Earth, and they will have rulers.

- Some will rule over cities.
- Some will rule over nations.

An Ever-Expanding Government

We are told in Isaiah 9:7 that Christ's government of the New Earth and the new universe will be ever-expanding. There are two ways in which government can expand:

- Expanding into previously ungoverned territories.
- By creating new territories (not a human option).

The restoration of the current universe alone will provide unimaginable territories for us to explore and establish dominion over to God's glory.

If Christ expands His rule by creating new worlds, whom will He send to govern them on His behalf? His redeemed people.

- Some may rule towns and cities.
- Some may rule planets and solar systems.
- Some may rule galaxies.

The proper question is not, why would God create new worlds? That's obvious. God is by nature a creator and ruler.

- God is glorified by what He creates.
- He delights to delegate rule to His children.

The Saints Will Rule

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.

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

Service As A Reward

Service is a reward, not a punishment. God offers us an eternity of serving Him with work that will be very different than toil on the present Earth.

- We will have sharp minds, strong bodies, clear purpose, and unabated joy.
- The more we serve Christ now, the greater our capacity to serve in Heaven.

Will everyone be given the opportunity to rule in the new universe?

- The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Ephesians 6:8
- God will choose who will reign as kings, and Alcorn thinks there are some great surprises in store for us.

Alcorn closes the chapter with a story of a bellman to whom he gave a copy of one of his books. He says he saw Jesus in the bellman because of his humility.

HEAVEN

23. Will The New Earth Be An Edenic Paradise?

Anticipating Heaven

The New Earth will be a place of sensory delight, breathtaking beauty, satisfying relationships, and personal joy.

- In the same way that God paid attention to the details of the home He prepared for Adam and Eve,
- Jesus is paying attention to the details as He prepares for us an eternal home in Heaven (John 14:2-3).

God poured out Himself, His creativity, and His love into making Eden for His creatures.

- In Eden, we were His creatures and image-bearers.
- In Heaven, we will be His children and bride.

Would we expect Heaven to be more or less satisfying and fulfilling than Eden? Of course, more.

Will The New Earth Be A Return To Eden?

Some people assume that the New Earth will “start over” with Eden’s original Paradise. Scripture says otherwise.

- The New Earth will involve a carryover of nations and culture.
- The New Earth will include technological progress made since Eden.

Read Albert Wolters quote on page 242-43. Life in the new creation will be a restoration of all things—involving the removal of all sinful impurity and the retention of all that is holy and good, including:

- The music of Bach and Mozart.
- The paintings of Rembrandt.
- The writings of Shakespeare.
- The discoveries of science.

How Does Eden Anticipate The New Earth?

Alcorn thinks that the onyx stones referred to in Scripture were intended to remind us of Eden and to point us toward the New Jerusalem.

- Onyx stones in the ephod worn on the shoulders of Aaron the high priest (Exodus 28:9-12)
- Onyx stones will be the foundation for the walls of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:19-20).

The Scripture contains many references indicating the connection between Eden and the New Earth, including:

- Isaiah 51:3
- Ezekiel 36:35
- Isaiah 31:5
- Isaiah 55:13

Theologian Anthony Hokema writes that “Keeping the doctrine of the New Earth in mind... will open up the meaning of large portions of Old Testament prophetic literature in surprisingly new ways.”

What Will New Nature Be Like?

We’ve never seen nature unchained and undisciplined. We’ve only seen it cursed and decaying.

- If the “wrong-side” of Heaven can be so beautiful what will the “right-side” look like?
- If the smoking remains are so stunning what will the earth resurrected and made new look like?

C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien both wrote about this prospect. Lewis wrote, “We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be reunited with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”

Will This Earth’s Places Be Resurrected To The New Earth?

The New Earth will be just as much [the old] Earth as the new us will still be us. C.S. Lewis again, “I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this.” [The Unicorn speaking as the characters move into Aslan’s Country (Heaven) in *The Last Battle*.]

Lewis captured the biblical theology of the old and New Earth. Our world is a shadowlands, a copy of something that once was, Eden, and yet will be, the New Earth.

- On the New Earth we will see the real Earth.
- The good things of God’s natural creation and,
- The good things of man’s creative expression.
- On the New Earth, no good thing will be destroyed.

Will We Miss The Old Earth?

The New Earth will be a place of healing (Revelation 22:2). Heaven will be a place where all hurts are healed, all suffering eclipsed by joy.

Whenever Jesus healed individuals in the New Testament, the act spoke of:

- Wholeness and health.
- The original perfection of Eden.
- The coming New Earth.

Once we understand this we won't regret:

- Leaving all the wonders of the world we've seen, or
- Not having seen its countless other wonders.

Why? In Heaven we'll still be able to see them.

HEAVEN

24. What Is The New Jerusalem?

Heaven: A City Or A Country?

Scripture describes Heaven as both a country and a city.

- Luke 19:12, Hebrews 11:14-16
- Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 21:2

Everyone knows what a city is. Cities usually include the following entities:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| • Buildings | • Streets |
| • Residences | • Residents |
| • Government | • Visitors |
| • Activities | • Cultural events |
| • Gatherings | |

If the capital city of the New Earth doesn't have these defining characteristics of a city, it would seem misleading for Scripture to continually refer to it as a city.

The city at the center of the future Heaven is called the New Jerusalem.

- It is portrayed as a walled city, absolutely secure.
- It is perched on the peak of a hill.
- Its walls are so thick as to be impenetrable,
- And so high that a human could not scale them.

Of course, the city will never be under attack, but its structure will remind us of God's might and protection.

Review or read the illustration of the jasper stone.

What Are The City's Dimensions?

The apostle John tells us in the Revelation the dimensions of the New Jerusalem.

- 1,400 miles long
- 1,400 miles wide
- 1,400 miles high

Alcorn thinks these figures are both literal and symbolic. He deliberates about the meaning of the height of 1,400 miles and suggests two possibilities:

- The height of the tallest buildings.
- There will be multiple levels.

And he assures us that Heaven won't be crowded—the footprint of the city being nearly two million square miles.

- Forty times larger than England.
- Ten times as large as France or Germany.

What Is The Significance Of The City Gates?

Scripture informs us that a great, high wall encloses the city; there will be three gates on each side of the city, each gate guarded by an angel (Revelation 21:12-13). We are also told that the gates to the city will never be closed (Revelation 21:25). Why is this?

- Not because of the angels guarding the gates.
- But because there are no enemies outside the wall.

Citizens from outside the gates will regularly travel in through them (Revelation 21:24, 26).

The open gates guarded by angels should remind us of a couple of important facts.

- Our safety has been bought and permanently secured by our God.
- There is no elitism in Heaven—everyone will have access to God.

Will people on the New Earth be less relational than we are now [something we might conclude because Jesus told us that humans neither marry nor are given in marriage in Heaven]? Alcorn thinks we will be more relational.

- We won't have the fears, inadequacies, and sins that affect relationships now.
- We will be eager to hear the stories of others and we'll have our own to tell.

What Will It Be Like For The City's Citizens?

The apostle Paul reminded the Philippians who were proud of their Roman citizenship that, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). While

- Our citizenship in Heaven is present.
- Our residence in Heaven will be future.

In Old Testament times, Abraham "was looking forward to the city whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

- The New Jerusalem is that city. God built it to last.
- It will have all the advantages, none of the disadvantages.
- It will be filled with:
 - Natural wonders
 - Magnificent architecture
 - Thriving culture
- It will be devoid of:

- Crime	- Fatalities
- Pollution	- Garbage
- Noise	- Homelessness

It will be Heaven on Earth!

The Artist's fingerprints will be everywhere—every feature speaks of His attributes:

- The priceless stones speak of His heavenly grandeur.
- The open gates should remind us of His accessibility.

We can tell a lot about people by walking through their homes.

- The whole universe will be God's home.
- The New Jerusalem will be His living room.

God will delight to share with us the glories of His capital city—and ours.

HEAVEN

25. What Will The Great City Be Like?

Seekers And Explorers

We were made to seek out new worlds—we are seekers and explorers. As we explore God's creation, we'll

- Grow in our knowledge of God.
- Be motivated to explore His wonders.

The first place we'll explore will be the capital city of the New Earth. The New Jerusalem will be a place of extravagant beauty and natural wonders.

- It will be a vast Eden, having the best of human culture under the reign of Christ.
- More wealth than has been accumulated in history will be spread across the city.

How Extravagant Will The City Be?

Presumably many other cities will be on the New Earth, such as those Jesus mentioned in the stewardship parables (Luke 19:17-19). The kings of the nations who bring their treasures into the city reside somewhere and will return.

But no city will be like this one. It will be called home by the King of kings.

- Heaven's capital city will be filled with visual magnificence.
 - It shines with the glory of God.
 - Its brilliance is like jewels.
 - Its walls are made from jasper.
 - It is a city of pure gold.
- The stones and gold represent incredible wealth suggestive of:
 - The exorbitant riches,
 - Of God's splendor.
- The pearl may symbolize Christ's suffering on our behalf.

What Is The River Of Life?

The apostle John tells us in the Revelation that the river of the water of life runs from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.

- The city is a center of human life and water is an essential requirement of life.
- The great river represents the thirst-quenching and need-satisfying nature of God.

The fact that the water is flowing down from it, suggests the throne's high elevation. One need only follow the street—or the river—up to its source to arrive at the city's centerpiece: the Lamb's throne.

What Is The Tree Of Life?

The tree of life is mentioned three times in Genesis 2 and four times in Revelation. These references show the tree located:

- In the Garden of Eden.
- In the Present Heaven.
- And in the Eternal Heaven.

Apparently the tree is relocated twice.

Since Eden, death has reigned throughout history and humans have been denied access to the tree of life. On the New Earth, however:

- Our access to the tree of life is forever restored.
- The fruit is not merely to be admired, but consumed.

There is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil on the New Earth. The redeemed have known sin and its devastation; they will desire it no more.

Since we won't experience hunger, pain, or disease in Heaven, what is the point of having a tree bearing fruit and having leaves for healing? Perhaps the fruit and leaves have:

- Life sustaining, or
- Life enhancing

properties that help us maintain health and energy. Moreover, the organic nature of edible fruit and medicinal leaves,

- Emphasizes the tie of mankind to Earth, and
- Suggests that eternal life may not be that different from life in Eden as we often assume.

Thus, our well-being is not granted once and for all but will be forever sustained and renewed as we depend on God and draw from His provision.

Will The New Earth Have Other Natural Wonders?

Since this is the New Earth, should we expect geographical features of Earth: mountains, waterfalls, and other natural wonders?

- The New Earth's natural wonders will presumably be more spectacular than those we now know--progression.
- We will look back at the Present Earth and conclude that God was just "warming up and getting started."

Some current earthly phenomena may not occur on the New Earth, including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and volcanoes.

Will The New Jerusalem's Beauty Be Natural Or Designed?

To answer this question, Alcorn falls back on J.R.R. Tolkien's concepts of Elvish and Dwarvish beauty in his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. As he reads Revelation 21-22, he is struck by:

- How the Elven paradise reflects the Edenic elements of the New Jerusalem.
- How the Dwarfs' view is represented in the architecture and precious stones.

Wherever we go and whatever we do, we'll never leave the presence of the King. For although He dwells especially in the New Jerusalem, He will yet be fully present in the far reaches of the universe—in which every subatomic particle will shout His glory.

HEAVEN

26. Will There Be Space And Time?

Seekers And Explorers

Alcorn cites a book that describes Heaven as a “mode of existence where space and time are meaningless concepts.”

He thinks that for too long we’ve allowed an unbiblical assumption (that there will be no time in Heaven) to obscure biblical revelation to the contrary.

In this chapter he explores biblical evidence that suggests that there is space and time in heaven.

What Will The New Celestial Heavens Be Like?

What does the Bible mean by the term new heavens?

- Genesis 1:1- “The heavens and the earth” are synonymous with “the universe.”
- Revelation 21:1-2- The “new heaven” refers to the same heavens as Genesis 1:1.
- Isaiah 65:17- The new heaven(s) is the same identical concept (also Isaiah 66:22).

No part of the present creation—including the earth and the celestial heavens—is as great as it will be in the new creation.

- Some passages suggest that the universe will wear out and the stars be destroyed, others that the stars will last forever. Psalm 148:3-6
- We also will be destroyed by death, yet we will last forever. The earth too will be destroyed in God’s judgment, yet it will last forever.

Will the new planets be mere ornaments, or does God intend for us to reach them some day?

- What will we be able to accomplish for God’s glory with:
 - Resurrected minds
 - Unlimited resources
 - Scientific cooperation
 - No more death
- Alcorn thinks we will expand the borders of righteous mankind’s Christ-centered dominion:
 - Not as conquerors who seize what belongs to others,
 - But as faithful stewards who occupy and manage.

What Is The Morning Star?

Jesus says of the over-comer, “I will also give him the morning star” Revelation 2:28.

- Does this suggest that God might entrust planets or stars in the new heavens to His children?

- We know for certain that God will put one world under His children’s authority—Earth.
- Perhaps we will inhabit and govern other resurrected planets also [finally the SETI quest succeeds].

In the same way that the New Earth will be refashioned, and still be a true earth, with continuity to the old, the new cosmic heavens will be the old renewed.

God has built into us the longing to see the wonders of His far-flung creation. We possess a God-given longing to know a greater intelligence and to explore beyond our horizons.

Will We Live In A Spatial World?

The fact of the resurrection is an emphatic statement that we will forever occupy space.

- We’ll be physical human beings living in a physical universe.
- Jesus walked on Earth, He occupied space. So will we.

Now Alcorn addresses the possibility (suggested by one writer) that humans will be infinite.

- There is no Scriptural evidence at all that we will be able to be in several places at once.
- If we plan to get together with friends—where and when? Where is space, when is time.

There is no suggestion that even the resurrected Jesus was in two places at once. The biblical texts speak of space and time in the New Earth similar to how they speak of them here and now.

- The present Heaven occupies space.
- So will the New Heavens and Earth.

Isaac Newton remarked that God is the one who inhabits eternity. So where does this leave humans?

- Creatures inhabit time and space.
- Jesus inhabits time and eternity.
 - By being with Him on the New Earth,
 - We share space and time with God.

Will We Experience Time In Heaven?

“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Peter 3:8). Does this mean there will be no time in Heaven?

The natural understanding of a New Earth is that it would exist in space and time, with a future unfolding progressively as it does now.

Alcorn thinks a misleading translation in the KJV is responsible for the misconception. “There should be time no longer” (Revelation 10:6, KJV). The verse should read, “There will be no more delay!”

Alcorn cites numerous verses to reinforce the idea that there will be time in Heaven. See pages 267-268.

It seems clear that we will live for eternity as finite human beings.

Is Time Good Or Bad?

Time is not a mark of the world’s fallen state. We can live only in the present. Time is our environment.

- Time is not the problem; it is not evil.
- The Curse is the problem; death is the enemy.

On the New Earth, we will live with time, no longer under its pressure. When we see God face to face:

- Time will pass, but we’ll be lost in Him.
- We’ll be busy exploring His universe.
- We’ll be busy fellowshiping with Him.

We’ll no longer have to “number our days” (Psalm 90:12) or “redeem the time” (Ephesians 5:16), for time won’t be a diminishing resource about to end.

HEAVEN

27. Will The New Earth Have Sun, Moon, Oceans And Weather?

Sun, Moon, Oceans?

The Bible includes some passages that have led people to think that the New Earth will have no sun, moon, or seas. Is this true?

Will The New Earth Have A Sun And A Moon?

Those who think the New Earth won't have a sun or moon base their conclusion on these passages:

- Revelation 21:23- "The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it."
- Revelation 22:5- "There will be no more night. They will not need...the sun."
- Isaiah 60:19-21- "The sun will no longer be your light by day, nor...the moon."

Notice that none of these verses actually says there will be no sun or moon, only there will be no **need** for their light.

The emphasis isn't on the elimination of the sun and moon.

- They will be overshadowed by God's great light.
- God's light is universal, nothing can obstruct it.
- God will be the light source for the New Jerusalem.

This is a restoration of the original pattern of Genesis 1 before the creation of the sun and moon.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| • Isaiah 60:19 | • John 1:9 |
| • Revelation 21:23 | • John 8:12 |
| • Isaiah 60:3 | |

The New Jerusalem will be a city illuminated not only by God's holiness but by His grace.

Will There Be No More Sunsets?

If the New Jerusalem will be full of the light of God, does that mean we won't see any more sunrises or sunsets? Alcorn thinks we will see many more sunrises and sunsets, on many worlds. And he thinks they will not leave us wondering, "What am I missing?"

Revelation 22:5 says, "There will be no more night." What does this mean?

- Some think it is figurative. Darkness is usually associated with crime, evil done under cover of night.
- But darkness is not evil. Night is also associated with positive things: family times, dinner, and prayer.

God created the celestial heavens to display His glory (Psalm 19:1). When He makes the new heavens, they will perform this function even better.

How will our eyes be able to tolerate the bright light of the New Jerusalem? We'll be designed for our highest purpose—to see God's face.

Will There Be Oceans?

Revelation 21:1 says simply, on the New Earth there will “no longer be any sea.” What does this mean?

- No more warm, inviting waters, no more surfing, tide pools, snorkeling and fun on the beach, and no more wonderful sea creatures?
- Or no more of the cold, treacherous waters that separate nations, destroy ships, and drown our loved ones?

Alcorn thinks the latter, not the former.

Alcorn now quotes Steven Lawson citing scientists who think the oceans were formed at the time of Noah's Flood.

- Lawson concludes, based on this evidence, there will be no sea because the earth will be restored to its original splendor.
- Many scientists, who are believers, would say that the oceans were part of the original creation (Genesis 1:6).

Alcorn cites several arguments which would lead to the belief that the New Earth will have oceans:

- The oceans perform a cleansing function for the fallen earth, but because that function will not be necessary on the New Earth wouldn't require oceans to cease to exist.
- We are told in Revelation 22:1-2 that a great river flows right through the New Jerusalem. Flowing rivers go somewhere. Where does this river go? To a lake?
- Alcorn argues in Chapter 39 the same animals that inhabit our current planet will also inhabit the New Earth. Most animals live in the oceans, thus, oceans must exist.
- Revelation and Isaiah passages suggest that “the wealth of the seas will be brought to you,” and speak of islands and ships on the seas. Hard to reconcile with no oceans.

Alcorn, an avid snorkeler, “predicts” the New Earth will have large bodies of water where we'll dive, perhaps without tanks or masks.

Will There Be Seasons And Varying Weather?

Some people have never thought about Heaven's weather for one of two reasons:

- They don't believe it is a real place, thus, it has no weather.
- They assume it will have only sunshine—no clouds or rain.

Alcorn cites two reasons which indicate that weather declares God's greatness.

- Ezekiel 34:26-27- “There will be showers of blessing.”
- Job 37:3-6- “Lightning, thunder, rain and snow.”

He sees no reason why this won't also be true on the New Earth. He suggests that no one will die or be hurt by adverse weather. No one will perish in a flood or be killed by lightning; no one will drown in the River of Life.

Will there be seasons on the New Earth? Why wouldn't there be? Some argue that fall and winter are about death and since there is no death in Heaven (Revelation 21:4) there will be no fall or winter. Alcorn thinks that the Revelation passage is possibly referring to animal life.

Will We Miss Things From The Old Earth?

Alcorn suggests that going to the New Earth from the present Earth will be like being upgraded from coach to first class—vastly superior. More like being upgraded from the baggage hold to first class.

If we would miss something from our old lives and the old Earth, it would be available to us on the New Earth.

HEAVEN

28. Will We Be Ourselves?

Ourselves Or Disembodied Spirits?

Alcorn gives quotes from *A Christmas Carol* and from the movie *2010* to assure us that we will not be disembodied spirits in the world to come.

- “Who are you?” Scrooge asked... “Ask me who I *was*,” the ghost replied.
- When asked who he is, the ghostly form replies, “I *was* David Bowman.”

Unless we understand the resurrection, we won’t believe we’ll be ourselves in the afterlife.

- We are physical beings.
- We’ll be physical beings.

Or our humanity will be diminished.

The fact that people in Heaven can be called by the same name they had on Earth shows they remain the same people.

- Lazarus- Luke 16:25
- Abraham- Matthew 8:11

Will We Be Unique?

Just as our DNA and fingerprints are unique now, we should expect the same of our new bodies.

- God is the creator of individual identities and personalities.
- Heaven’s inhabitants rejoice over **individuals** coming to Heaven. Luke 15:4-7, 10
- The disciples at the transfiguration recognized:
 - Moses
 - Elijah

Your place in Heaven will be made for you alone, because you were made for it. John 14:2-3.

What makes you *you*?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your body • Your personality • Your passions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your memory • Your gifts • Your interests |
|--|---|

Your deceitfulness, laziness, lust, deafness, disability, and disease are not the real you. They are temporary perversions that will be eliminated.

When you are on the New Earth, for the first time, you’ll be the person God created you to be.

Will We Become Angels?

Death is a relocation of the same person from one place to another. The place changes, the person remains the same. Angels are angels, humans are humans.

In life, angels serve humans.

- They protect us, stand by us, and work on our behalf.
- They may have witnessed every moment of our lives.
- Besides God, no one could know us better than angels.

In Heaven, humans will govern angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

If we really believed angels were with us daily, here and now:

- Wouldn't it motivate us to make wiser choices?
- Wouldn't we feel accountable to God's agents?

We won't be angels, we'll be with angels. That's far better.

Will We Have Emotions?

In Scripture we are taught that God displays emotions.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| • He enjoys | • He loves |
| • He laughs | • He delights |
| • He rejoices | • He is angry |
| • He is happy | • He is jealous |

Rather than saying these are anthropomorphisms, we should conclude that our emotions are derived from God [we are made in His image].

- Our emotions are a reflection of God's emotions.
- To be like God is to have and express emotions.

Emotions are part of our God-created humanity.

- They are not sinful baggage to be destroyed.
- We'll have pure, accurately informed emotions.

Our present emotions are skewed by sin, but they will be delivered from this.

Will we cry in Heaven?

- Not from pain or sorrow. -Revelation 21:4
- Possibly tears of joy. Imagine seeing Jesus!

Will our emotions be more intense at times or always on a plane of exhilaration? Alcorn thinks they will ebb and flow.

Will We Have Desires?

We'll have desires in Heaven, but they won't be unholy desires.

- God created our desires and the objects we desire.
- We won't have to do battle with our desires in Heaven.

Heaven is not the absence of longings, but the fulfillment. Heaven is not the absence of itches; it is the satisfying scratch for every itch.

Christianity is unique in its perspective of our desires, teaching that they will be satisfied and fulfilled on the New Earth.

Alcorn thinks it will be wonderful to be free of uncertainty about desires.

- We'll always desire what is right.
- We'll only desire what pleases God.

God's law will be written on our hearts. There will be no rules. Whatever we want will be what God wants for us.

Will We Maintain Our Own Identities?

You will be you in Heaven; if when you arrived in Heaven you were a different person, then **you** did not go to Heaven.

- After the resurrection, Jesus said, "It is I myself" (Luke 24:39).
- Upon seeing Jesus, Thomas said, "My Lord and My God" (John 20:28).

If we aren't ourselves in the afterlife, we couldn't be held accountable for what we did in this life. The doctrines of judgment and eternal rewards depend on people retaining their distinct identities from this life to the next. Bruce Milton quote, page 287.

In Heaven will we be called by our present names?

- Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- God called people by their earthly names during their lifetimes.
- He calls people by the same names in Heaven:
 - Abraham
 - Isaac
 - Jacob

Our names reflect our individuality, our persona.

In addition to our earthly names, we'll receive new names in Heaven.

- Isaiah 62:2, 65:15
- Revelation 2:17, 3:12

Will We Lose Ourselves?

Will being like Jesus mean the obliteration of self?

- We'll be like Jesus in character; ourselves in personality.
- Until you have given yourself up to Him, you'll not have a real self.

“Look for Christ and you'll find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.” C.S. Lewis

HEAVEN

29. What Will Our Bodies Be Like?

Resurrected Bodies

Everyone is curious. Our resurrected bodies will be real physical bodies just as Jesus' was, and is.

- What will these bodies look like?
- How will these bodies function?

The only bodies we've ever known are weak and diseased models of the original God made for humans.

Will We All Have Beautiful Bodies?

There is a general yearning on Earth for our bodies to be healthy, fit, and beautiful. Will this yearning be fulfilled on the New Earth? Alcorn is speculating here, and here is his take:

- He thinks our bodies will be good-looking with a natural beauty. We won't need cosmetics or touch-ups.
- As for fat, because God created fat as part of our bodies, we'll have some, but in healthy proportions.
- God will decide what our perfect bodies look like, but we shouldn't assume they'll all look alike.

If we saw Adam and Eve as they were in Eden, they would take our breath away. If they had seen us as we are now, they would have been filled with shock and pity.

What about heights and weights, skin colors, and racial identities? Alcorn thinks the following:

- People will be of different heights and weights.
 - People who are tall will have tall resurrection bodies.
 - People who are short will likely be short.
 - People who are naturally thin, will be thin.
 - People who are naturally thick, will be thick.
 But all of these sizes will be healthy and appealing.
- People will have different skin colors; racial identities will continue. Revelation 5:9, 7:9
- What about the size (in years) of people? Augustine, p. 290
- And what about disease? There will be none! There will be no:

- Heart disease	- Diabetes
- Asthma	- Osteoporosis
- Arthritis	- Cancer
- MS	- HIV

No matter what we look like, our bodies will please the Lord, ourselves, and others.

Will Our Resurrection Bodies Have Five Senses?

God designed us with five senses. They are part of what makes us human. Our resurrection bodies will surely have these senses.

- Alcorn thinks they will increase in power and sensitivity.
- Think of the best food you've ever eaten. Heaven will be better.

Will Our Resurrection Bodies Have New Abilities?

When it comes to doing what God wants, and what we want, sometimes our bodies fail us.

- It is possible that the risen Christ has certain physical abilities that we won't have.
- Because we are told in Scripture that our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's:
 - We may have supernatural abilities.
 - We may transcend the laws of physics.

Will Our Bodies Shine?

Alcorn refers to two passages that speak of our bodies shining. Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3.

- Jesus didn't have a halo after He arose, we won't either.
- During the Transfiguration, Jesus' clothing luminesced.
- It is probable that we will experience God's brightness.
- We are God's image-bearers, we live in His presence.

Thus, we may literally shine in the New Heaven. Shining speaks of glory, the outward display of greatness and majesty.

Will Our Bodies Be Perfect?

No other religion, no philosophy promises new bodies and minds. Only in the gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.

Will We Be Male Or Female?

The point of resurrection is that we'll have real human bodies essentially linked to our original ones.

- Gender is a God-created aspect of humanity.
- Gender is not an add-on component of being.
- Gender is an essential part of who you are.

Will We Wear Clothes?

According to Scripture, it appears we will wear clothing in Heaven. Revelation 3:4, 6:11

- Will we wear robes, or dress normally?
- Will our clothing be white exclusively?

Because resurrected people retain their individuality and nationality, we'll probably dress as we always have.

Will We All Appear The Same Age?

What age will we be in Heaven? The age we were when we died?

- Will a child who dies always be that age?
- Will the octogenarian always be elderly?

Alcorn cites three writers who have addressed this question:

- Alister McGrath
- Thomas Aquinas
- Hank Hanegraaff

So Alcorn suggests our bodies will be resurrected at the optimal stage of development determined by our DNA.

Could children be allowed to grow up on the New Earth? Alcorn thinks they might for a couple of reasons:

- Opportunities lost in this life may be wonderfully restored to us in Heaven.
- Parents who lost a child may experience the joy of seeing them grow up.

The New Earth will be a place of both maturity and perfection. We will probably appear ageless. But Alcorn has some caveats:

- He expects us to have child-like qualities.
 - Curiosity
 - Gratefulness
 - Longing to explore and learn.
 - Eagerness to hear and be close.
- Heaven will be full of children—even if we look like adults. We'll exhibit:
 - Joy
 - Curiosity
 - Spontaneity
 - Exuberance
 - Laughter

HEAVEN

30. Will We Eat And Drink On The New Earth?

Meals, Feasts, Banquets?

The Bible speaks repeatedly of eating—meals, feasts, and banquets are recurring subjects.

- Feasting involves celebration, it is relational.
- People who love each other, like to eat together.
- Conversations, story-telling and laughter happen.

So why wouldn't we eat and drink on the New Earth?

Will We Literally Eat And Drink?

Not everyone believes we will eat and drink in Heaven.

- Some cite Romans 14:17 to prove the point.
- But this passage is not about the after-life.

What can we say about the Present Heaven?

- If we don't have intermediate bodies, we won't eat.
- If we do have intermediate bodies, we **might** eat.
- In the Present Heaven is the Tree of Life. Revelation 2:7

Interestingly, when God and angels took on human form, they ate human food. Genesis 18:1-2, 5-8

Alcorn's opinion is that we won't eat in the Present Heaven since it is pre-resurrection.

What about the resurrected Jesus?

- He proved that resurrection bodies are capable of eating real food.
- He could have abstained; that He didn't tells us about His resurrection body.
- Since our bodies will be like His, we can conclude we'll eat. Philippians 3:21

Many other passages indicate that we will eat at feasts with Jesus in an earthly kingdom.

- Luke 22:18
- Matthew 8:11
- Revelation 19:9
- Luke 14:12-15

Alcorn recognizes that the Bible often speaks in a figurative sense, but sees no good reason to assume that when it speaks of eating in Heaven, it is not literal eating and drinking.

Will We Experience Hunger, And Will We Digest Food?

Will we get hungry on the New Earth? Some say no citing Revelation 7:16. But this doesn't mean we'll lack appetite or desire.

- To find pleasure in eating means we desire to eat.
- Hunger and thirst are good things if food and drink are available.

Will we thirst on the New Earth? Revelation 7:17 says the Lamb will lead us to springs of living water.

- Scripture doesn't say we won't need to drink,
- Rather, it says the Lamb will lead us to drink.

The natural stimulus to motivate drinking is thirst. We will:

- Thirst for water.
- Thirst for God.

Some argue that we won't eat or drink in Heaven because they are put off by digestion and elimination. Not a good reason on which to base an important conclusion.

How Will Food Taste?

The great wine Jesus made and served at the wedding of Cana was a foretaste of that best of wines He will provide for us on the New Earth.

- Who created our taste buds? God did.
- Who determined our likes and dislikes? God.

Our resurrected bodies will have resurrected taste buds.

Food isn't just functional. If it were, the optimal food diet would be peanut butter and soybean paste.

- Food is also for our enjoyment,
- Its preparation and consumption.

Will We Eat Meat?

This section is contingent on how one views the Genesis account of Creation—whether one is a Young Earth or Old Earth advocate.

- Young Earth advocates believe:
 - No animals died before the Fall.
 - Animal death was a result of the Fall.
 - People did not eat meat before the Flood.

Hence, it is possible people may become vegetarians on the New Earth as they were before the Flood.

- Old Earth (Progressive Creation) advocates believe:
 - People ate meat from Adam onward.
 - Revelation 21:4 refers to human death.

Thus, they believe that man has always been carnivorous. This explains Isaiah 25:6.

Alcorn notes that the resurrected Jesus ate fish with the disciples, which would seem to prove the point. He continues by speculating about “meat substitutes,” and suggesting the elimination of the food chain. Many people don’t like the idea of animals eating one another.

Will We Drink Coffee In Heaven?

This one is easy. To answer it, Randy looks at the Creation.

- God made coffee plants.
- Coffee grows on the Earth.
- God filled the Earth with resources.
- We are to manage and use them.

Not only will we drink water and wine, we’ll eat from fruit trees (Revelation 22:2). We’ll drink juice made from the twelve fruits of the Tree of Life.

Thus, there is simply no biblical basis for believing that drinking coffee is sinful. Whew!

Should We Look Forward To Feasts?

God promises that on the New Earth we will sit at tables, banquets, and feasts and enjoy the finest foods and drinks.

Don’t you think He wants us to look forward to eating at His table?

HEAVEN

31. Will We Be Capable Of Sinning?

What About Sin?

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect environment, yet they sinned. In Heaven will we also fail?

Some people argue that being human requires free choice. Thus,

- In Heaven we must have the capacity to choose evil.
- If this is true, could we experience another fall?

Can We Know We Won't Sin?

Jesus promised that on the New Earth, "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:4

- The promise of no more death is a promise of no more sin.
- Those who will never die, will never sin, since sinners die.
- Sin causes mourning, crying, and pain. Therefore there will be no sin.

The old order of things included death, mourning, crying, and pain. The sin that caused these things does not exist in the new order of things.

We will have the very righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

- We won't sin in Heaven for the same reason that God doesn't. He can't.
- Our eternal inability to sin has been purchased by Christ's blood.

Nothing impure will ever enter Heaven. Revelation 21:27

- Heaven will be completely devoid of evil, with no possibility of becoming tainted.
- Our risen bodies, and by implication, our new beings will be immune to corruption.
- Christ will not allow us to be vulnerable to the very thing He died to deliver us from.

Will We Have Free Will In Heaven?

Some people think that if we have free will in Heaven, we'll have to be free to sin.

- Adam and Eve were innocent in Eden but had not been made righteous.
- We, on the other hand, have become righteous through Christ's atonement.

To suggest that we could have Christ's righteousness yet sin is to say that Christ could sin.

- God completely delivers us from sin including vulnerability to sin.
- Sin will have no appeal. It will be, literally, unthinkable.

The inability to sin doesn't violate free will.

- The new nature that will be ours is a nature that cannot sin.
- God cannot sin, yet no being has greater choice than He does.

Will We Ever Be Tempted?

Will we be tempted to turn our backs on Christ? No.

- Innocence is the absence of something—sin.
- Righteousness is the presence of something—God’s holiness.

God will never withdraw from us His holiness; therefore we’ll not be able to sin. We will never forget the ugliness of sin.

Because our hearts will be pure, we’ll see people as they truly are, every relationship in Heaven will be pure.

- We’ll all be faithful to the love of our life—Jesus.
- We’ll love everyone, men and women.
- We’ll never be tempted to degrade, use or idolize others.
- We’ll never believe the lie that our needs can be met in:
 - Anyone else,
 - Only in Jesus.

Here on Earth, we often have to remind ourselves that the universe doesn’t revolve around us. In Heaven,

- We’ll never see ourselves again as the center.
- Jesus will be our undisputed center then.

We wouldn’t want it any other way.

Will We Really Be Perfect?

Someone asked Alcorn if some people will still be annoying. He responded:

- Annoyance is usually caused by another’s sin, our own sin, or both.
- Since sin will be eliminated, so will annoyance. No annoying people.

Jonathan Edwards quote, page 314.

Adam and Eve will be with us in Heaven in their resurrection bodies.

- No one will know better what we’ve missed.
- They will have lived on each of the following:
 - The original Earth.
 - The fallen Earth.
 - The New Earth.

Another person asked Alcorn if we’re sinless, will we still be human? To which he replied:

- Sin is part of us now, but it is not essential to humanity.
- It is what keeps us from being what God designed us to be.

Our greatest deliverance in Heaven will be from ourselves. From our:

- Deceit
- Self-righteousness
- Hypocrisy
- Corruption
- Self-sufficiency

All will be forever gone.

Frederick Buchner quote, page 315.

What Is Our Hope Of Living Without Sin?

What is the hope we should live for?

- It's more than freedom from suffering.
- It's deliverance from sin allowing us to be fully human.
- It is a resurrected life in a resurrected world.

May God preserve us from lesser hopes!

HEAVEN

32. What Will We Know And Learn?

Will We Know Everything?

People often say, “We don’t understand now, but in Heaven we’ll know everything.” Will we?

God alone is omniscient. When we die:

- We’ll see things more clearly.
- We’ll know much more.

But we’ll never know everything.

“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

The Greek words for “know” in this verse are:

- *ginosko*. To know, and
- *epiginosko*:
 - Where *epi* intensifies *ginosko*, making it:
 - To really know, to know extensively.

But it never implies absolute knowledge. We will simply know in a fuller or more intensive way.

One day we’ll see God’s face and therefore truly know Him:

- Under the curse we see myopically.
- When we arise, we’ll see correctly.

We’ll at last be able to see eternal realities once inconceivable to us (2 Corinthians 4:18).

God sees clearly and comprehensively.

- In Heaven, we’ll see more clearly.
- But we’ll never see comprehensively.

We’ll spend eternity gaining the greater knowledge we seek.

Will We Learn?

In a Gallop poll of peoples’ perspectives about Heaven, only 18 percent thought people would grow intellectually in Heaven. Does Scripture teach that we will learn in Heaven? Yes.

- Ephesians 2:6-7
- Matthew 11:29

God doesn’t want us to stop learning. He wants us to stop what prevents us from learning.

Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan minister who studied Heaven extensively wrote:

- The saints will be progressive in knowledge to all eternity.
- The number of ideas of the saints will increase to eternity.

Will our knowledge and skills vary? Will some people in Heaven have greater knowledge and specialized abilities than others? Alcorn thinks so. Scripture doesn't teach sameness; we will be individuals.

Paul Harvey was well-known for his "The rest of the story" broadcasts. In Heaven, we'll hear the rest of the story again and again.

- We'll hear how God orchestrated the events of our lives.
- We'll hear how our lives influenced others in various ways.

Some of these stories, we may not hear until we've been there a long time.

Will We Experience Process?

In Heaven will we undergo a revelatory process of growing and learning? Jesus grew when he lived on Earth.

- Luke 2:52
- Hebrews 5:8

We will find in Heaven a continual progression of stimulating discovery and fresh learning as we keep grasping more of God.

We can anticipate an eternity of growing in Christ-likeness as we behold God's face and are "transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

What Will It Be Like To Learn?

Could God impart knowledge so we immediately know things when we get to Heaven? Certainly

- Adam and Ever were created, it appears, with an initial vocabulary.
- Everyone else has learned by experience and study over time.
- When we enter Heaven, we'll presumably begin with the knowledge we had at death.
- God may enhance our knowledge and will correct countless wrong impressions.
- He will reveal many new things and set us on a course of continual learning.

What will we study in Heaven?

- Doctrine (truth) an extension of God's nature, thus inexhaustible.
- Biology, zoology, chemistry, astronomy, physics—all will be the study of God.
- New ideas. We will have a universe to discover—books, music, places, etc.

In Heaven, all education will be a platform to display God's fascinating truth, drawing us closer to Him.

Will We Find Books In Heaven?

Certainly. The Bible will be there. “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (Psalm 119:89). Will there be other books? Yes:

- The Lamb’s Book of Life. Revelation 20:15
- The books [of deeds]. Revelation 20:12
- The scroll of remembrance. Malachi 3:10-18
- The scroll of God’s ordinances. Revelation 5:1,5

Will There Be Other Books Besides God’s?

Alcorn thinks that in Heaven we will read new and old books written by humans. He thinks that because books are a part of culture, they will have a place in Heaven. He surmises:

- Books will play a greater role than now.
- Books will be uniformly accurate and objective.
- The New Earth’s history includes that of the old Earth.

Will What Was Written On Earth Survive?

Alcorn thinks many of the things we wrote on Earth will be preserved.

- Letters of encouragement.
- Books of importance.
- Books we loaned to others.

HEAVEN

33. What Will Our Daily Lives Be Like?

What Will Life In Heaven Be Like?

In what Randy Alcorn calls the most influential book on Heaven, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1629), Puritan pastor Richard Baxter marveled that we don't set aside everything,

- To consider Heaven.
- To ensure we're going.

But our imaginations haven't been captured. What does Scripture say we will do in our eternal home?

Will We Rest?

When God created the world, He rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3).

- Similarly, we can expect rest on the New Earth—times of joyful praise and fellowship.
- Eden is a picture of rest—meaningful work, abundant food, unhindered fellowship with:
 - God
 - Others
 - Animals

Alcorn thinks that the cause for our inability to appreciate Heaven as a place of rest relates to our failure to observe a weekly day of rest now.

- By failing to rest from our responsibilities,
- We fail to anticipate deliverance from the Curse.

The Sabbath was intended to point us to Heaven and to Jesus.

Some people thrive on social interaction, others don't. Some people enjoy solitude, others don't. On the New Earth:

- We'll welcome the lively company of others.
- We'll also enjoy times of restful solitude.

Will We Sleep?

Some people argue that we won't sleep because we'll have perfect bodies. [The same argument also applies to eating, but we've already seen that we will eat in Heaven.]

- Sleep is not an imperfection. It is a matter of God's design for the rhythm of life.
- Alcorn believes we rest and are refreshed in Heaven as we eat, walk, laugh and play.

Will We Work?

When God created Adam, He “took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15).

- The Curse made work menial, tedious, and frustrating.
- On the New Earth, work will be redeemed and transformed.
 - It will be what God intended.
 - We will delight to serve God.

God is the primary worker; as His image-bearers, we’re made to work.

Father Boudreau quote from *The Happiness of Heaven*, page 331.

Numerous Scripture verses underscore the theology of work:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| • 2 Corinthians 9:8 | • Colossians 3:23 |
| • Colossians 4:17 | • 2 Timothy 2:21 |
| • Titus 1:7 | • Hebrews 13:17 |
| • 1 Peter 1:17 | • Revelation 2:2 |

The Stewardship Parables teach that we will have meaningful work in Heaven. Matthew 25:23.

What will we do for eternity in Heaven?

- We’ll exercise dominion over the Earth.
- We’ll demonstrate God’s creativity and ingenuity.
- We’ll produce Christ-exalting culture.

Will We Have Our Own Homes?

In John 14:2, Jesus says, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places...I go there to prepare a place for you (NASB).”

- This does not mean we’ll have large mansions on separate estates.
- The intended meaning is separate dwelling places (rooms) on a single estate.
 - It is an individual space that is a smaller part of a larger place.
 - The term is cozy and intimate. But enough space for everyone.

Will We Open Our Homes To Guests?

Based on the Parable of the Shrewd Servant (Luke 16), Alcorn believes we’ll open our heavenly homes to guests.

And one of the important visitors we will have opportunity to entertain is Jesus.

- Matthew 26:29
- Revelation 3:20

HEAVEN

34. Will We Desire Relationships With Anyone Except God?

Throughout the ages, Christians have anticipated eternal reunion with their loved ones. Alcorn cites Bede, a church historian writing in 710 AD, who chronicles such reunion.

Will We Want Anyone Except Christ?

Alcorn suggests several verses which seem to indicate that we will desire nothing but God in Heaven:

- Revelation 22:13
- Psalm 73:25

But then he quotes Genesis 2:18 in which God concluded that it was not good for Adam to be alone in Eden. Similarly, it would not be good for saints to be alone in Heaven.

God made us to enjoy earthly things:

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| • Food | • Water |
| • Shelter | • Warmth |
| • Work | • Rest |
| • Play | • Friendships |

This won't change in Heaven.

People have said we shouldn't long for Heaven, only for God. If this were true, God would condemn, rather than commend, those who longed for a better country (Hebrews 11:16).

King David saw no contradiction between seeking God Himself and seeking God's Heaven (Psalm 27:4).

God is the source of all joy—all joy comes from Him, joy finds its meaning in Him, and cannot be divorced from Him.

Will We Need Only God In Heaven?

God designed us to need one another. Eden was the forerunner of the New Earth in this respect—we shouldn't expect God to change things from Eden to the New Earth.

Some conclude that when we focus attention on people, it distracts from God. But this is not so.

- Was Jesus distracted from God by spending time with people on Earth? The answer is clearly no.
- We will never experience any conflict between worshiping God and enjoying His people.

Jonathan Edwards' quote page 341.

Jesus taught that the greatest commandment was to love God (Matthew 22:37-39).

- The second great commandment is to love others.
- If we don't love people created in His image, we don't love God.

What Did Paul Say About Reunion In Heaven?

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians shows that it is appropriate to deeply love people and look forward to being with them in Heaven.

- 1 Thessalonians 2:8, 17- "We loved you so much..."
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20- "What is our hope...?"
- 1 Thessalonians 3:9- "How can we thank God...?"
- 1 Thessalonians 3:13- "When our Lord Jesus comes..."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 17-18- "We will be..."

Richard Baxter's quote p. 342.

Finding joy in God and longing for God does not diminish our joy in and longing for others.

What Will We Remember?

Some people think we will not even remember our lives on the world we call earth. They believe such thoughts won't even come to mind. And they usually cite Isaiah 65:17 as proof. But this verse in context deals with God's memory of our past sins, not our memory of our past lives.

Alcorn gives examples that require people to have memory to be correct.

- Luke 16:25- Comfort for those who endured hardships.
- Father Boudreau- Gratitude for forgiveness of sin.
- Revelation 21:12-14- Memorials on the New Earth.

Will We Recognize Each Other?

George McDonald's quote p. 345.

Christ's disciples recognized Him countless times after the resurrection.

At the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah who had died many years before.

Finally, the comfort in mind in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 would be no comfort at all if we did not recognize others in Heaven.

HEAVEN

35. Will There Be Marriages, Families And Friendships?

Will We Have Families And Friends In Heaven?

Nothing will minimize or negate the fact that we were members of families on the old Earth. Resurrection bodies will presumably have chromosomes and DNA, with a signature that forever testifies to our genetic connection with family.

Heaven won't be without families, but will be one big family in which family members are friends and all friends are family members.

- We'll have family relationships with people who were our blood family on Earth.
- We'll also have family relationships with our friends, both old and new.

We can't take material things with us when we die, but we do take our friendships to Heaven and one day they'll be renewed.

Jesus taught that devotion to God creates a bond transcending biological family ties.

- Matthew 12:48- "Who is My mother ..."
- Mark 10:29-30- "You will receive ..."

Alcorn believes those who have missed experiences on the old Earth will realize them on the New Earth:

- Those who didn't have children.
- Those who didn't know parents.

On the New Earth there will be one great family; no one will ever be left out. Every time we see someone, it will be a family reunion.

Will There Be Marriage And Family?

The Sadducees, who didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead, tried to trick Jesus with a hypothetical scenario (Matthew 22:23-32).

- "At the resurrection, whose wife will the woman be since all seven brothers were married to her?"
- "At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels."

Alcorn warns us that the Bible does **not** teach there will be **no** marriage in Heaven.

- The Bible makes it clear that there **will** be marriage in Heaven.
- There will be one marriage, between Christ and His bride—the church.

Earthly marriage is a shadow, a copy, an echo of the true and ultimate marriage.

- The purpose of marriage is not to replace Heaven, but to prepare us for it.
- Our marriage to Jesus will be so completely satisfying, it will be enough.

What about our present marriage partners? Will we become more distant in Heaven? Of course not.

- People with good marriages are each other's best friend. There is no reason to believe they won't be best friends in Heaven.
- Jesus said the institution of marriage would end; He never hinted that deep relationships between married people would end.

The notion that relationships with family and friends will be lost in Heaven is unbiblical.

- It denies the doctrine of continuity between this life and the next.
- It suggests that our earthly lives and relationships have no eternal consequences.

Will There Be Sex?

Jesus made it clear that people in Heaven wouldn't be married to each other.

- He wasn't talking only about the Present Heaven, but "in the resurrection."
- He was specifically saying that there will be no marriage among resurrected people on the New Earth.

Because sex was designed to be part of the marriage relationship, marriage and sex belong together.

- Since there will be no marriage in Heaven, and since marriage and sex go together, there will be no sex.
- This is apparently an exception to the principle of continuity between Earth (Eden) and Heaven.

What we will desire—and always enjoy—is the relational intimacy that was the best part of sex. We may find that marital sex prefigured our new, intimate relationship with Jesus.

Will our bodies have sex organs? We believe men will be men and women will be women in Heaven, so yes—based on the continuity principle.

The purpose of sex will have been fulfilled.

- We will participate in deep intimacy.
- We won't imagine we are missing out.

Our love for Jesus will far exceed any earthly love—including the love of marriage.

Will We Be Reunited With Infants Who Have Died?

The clear teaching of Scripture is that we are born lost and remain lost until we have an encounter with Jesus resulting in salvation. Scripture:

- Makes no mention of an "age of accountability."
- Certainly does not teach the moral innocence of children.

Since all people must come to God through Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5), in what Scripture calls being born again, how could a child be born again without choosing Jesus?

- Alcorn believes that God in His mercy and His love for children has a special way to cover them with the blood of Jesus.
- Alcorn cites several Scriptural instances which seem to point to just such a position:
 - Luke 1:15- John the Baptist
 - Psalm 22:10- David
 - Jeremiah 1:5- Jeremiah
 - 2 Samuel 12:23- David's infant son
- Alcorn relates his concern that this provision may lead to people's indifference about two serious situations:
 - Abortion
 - Neglect

Who Will Be Our Friends In Heaven?

Augustine and Aquinas were both swayed by Christoplatonism, believing that relationships would be minimal or insignificant in Heaven.

Alcorn suggests that since our relationships on earth were determined by God, there is every reason to think they will continue.

He also suggests that it will be OK if we are closer to some in Heaven than others. Jesus clearly had intimates on Earth

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • John | • Peter, James, and John |
| • Lazarus, Mary, and Martha | • Mary |
| • The Twelve | • The Seventy |

There won't be any cliques, exclusiveness, arrogance, posturing, belittling, or jealousy.

Maybe your best friends in Heaven might be someone who sits next to you at one of the banquets. After all, the sovereign God who orchestrates friendships will be in charge of the seating arrangements.

HEAVEN

36. Whom Will We Meet, And What Will We Experience Together?

Whom Are You Looking Forward To Seeing?

Alcorn begins this chapter by pondering the question, will we spend time with people whose lives are recorded in Scripture and church history? He answers by citing Matthew 8:11, regarding the feast in the Kingdom of God.

He continues by identifying many Bible characters whom he wants to meet in Heaven.

- Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Elizabeth and John
- Moses
- Enoch and his wife
- Simeon and Anna
- Noah
- Elijah
- Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

And he identifies other, extra-biblical individuals he wants to see in Heaven including:

- His parents
- C. S. Lewis
- And others
- Old friends
- Francis Schaeffer

People whose contributions to the cause of Christ encouraged him.

He closes by asking us what we are doing for Christ that might cause people to seek us out when we get to Heaven.

Will We Pursue And Develop Relationships?

In this paragraph, Alcorn writes of continuing relationships he had with people during his lifetime and he suggests that we will also initiate new relationships in Heaven.

- Existing relationships:
 - People he knew by telephone and email.
 - People who encouraged him growing up.
 - Friends his family supported in the past.
 - Handicapped friends in new bodies.
- New relationships.
 - The martyrs of church history.
 - New friends with common interests.
 - The angels who witnessed history.

He suggests we will never run out of topics to discuss or friends with which to discuss them.

If Our Loved Ones Are In Hell, Won't That Spoil Heaven?

Most, if not all, people have friends and relatives who died without Christ.

- Will we know about Hell when we are in Heaven?
- How can we enjoy Heaven, knowing those in Hell?

Alcorn offers a reasonable answer for the first question and a quote from J. I. Packer for the second question.

- To be ignorant of Hell would be to have joy dependent on ignorance—not biblical.
 - J. I. Packer’s answer is more difficult, but certainly based solidly on Scripture.
- Thus, from a much different perspective, we will concur with God’s judgment.

Next, Alcorn offers biblical warrant for our agreement with God’s judgment:

- Revelation 6:9-11- Martyrs
- Revelation 18:20- Babylon

And Jonathan Edwards commented on these issues in his writings.

- We will see the dreadful miseries of the damned and know that we deserve the same as well.
- We shall realize that it is only God’s sovereign grace which delivered us from the same fate.
- We will never question God’s justice wondering how He could send good people to Hell.
- We will be overwhelmed at what He has done in order to send bad people (ourselves) to Heaven.
- We will see clearly that God revealed Himself to everyone giving them an opportunity to respond.

Hell’s small and distant shadow will not diminish God’s greatness or our joy in Him. But it should encourage us to share the gospel now while there is still time.

We will fully understand 2 Peter 3:9 and we will marvel at:

- The patience God showed us and our loved ones.
- How He withheld judgment to give us opportunity.

Finally, Alcorn offers us a different perspective from which to understand this difficult prospect.

- None of our loved ones will be in Hell—only some whom we once loved.
- Without God, these people will be stripped of all the qualities we loved.
- We will not love those in Hell, because they do not love or honor Jesus.

And our foremost and consuming desire will be to love whomever and whatever pleases and glorifies and reflects Him.

None of Hell’s misery will ever veto any of Heaven’s joy.

Will We Ever Disagree?

Alcorn thinks we might not agree about everything in Heaven.

- We will be free to disagree on matters of personal taste and preference.
- We will probably disagree on matters of which we have imperfect understanding.

But there will be no personal attacks, no ill-informed biases, and no prideful refusal to grant a valid point.

Alcorn suggests that since we will never be omniscient; there will always be room for progress in understanding.

- While we will have access to Christ's accurate insights, we might not fully understand them.
- Alcorn speculates, somewhat whimsically, that we might seek additional insights from:
 - Angels
 - Luther.
 - Others
 - Paul
 - Augustine

Alcorn wonders why, if we did always agree on everything in Heaven, would there be a need for rulers and judges on the New Earth.

- To arbitrate disagreements?
- To offer wise counsel?

Will We Share Discoveries Together?

The Edward Donnelly quote on page 364 implies that discovery will be a feature of the New Earth of which we'll all be charter members. Alcorn thinks:

- We will discover some things on our own.
- We will enjoy things others have discovered.
- And we'll get to share our discoveries [how?].

Will We Witness Together God's New Creation?

In Job 38:4-7 we are told that the angels witnessed God's original Creation. Likewise, we will witness the recreation of the Creation. Then we will descend to live in that place forever.

HEAVEN

37. How Will We Relate To Each Other?

Will We Have Relationships In Heaven?

Will relationships with people be less important to us in Heaven than they are now?

- We will value relationships that draw us to God.
- God designed us to need other people. Genesis 2:18
- God created us to take pleasure in companionship.
 - His own
 - Others

Any vision of the afterlife that doesn't involve a society of human beings in meaningful relationships with one another and with God is unbiblical.

How Will We Treat Each Other?

We will experience the best of human relationships with none of the worst.

- The "No" paragraph (p. 367-8).
- Jonathan Edwards quote (p. 368).

Will All People Be Equal?

All people are equal in worth, but they differ in gifting and performance. God is the creator of diversity, and diversity means inequality of gifting (1 Corinthians 12:14-20).

Because God promises to reward people differently according to their differing levels of faithfulness in this life, we should not expect equality of possessions and positions in Heaven.

- Our culture worships equality, but equality is not sameness.
- A perfect world is characterized by diversity, not conformity.

Scripture teaches that in Heaven, because of our faithfulness on Earth, we'll have:

- Different rewards
- Different positions

Will We Have Privacy?

Will Heaven be a place of complete communal living where we'll always be with others with no privacy—will it be like an eternal Camp Meeting? Scripture teaches not:

- Luke 16:9- Dwelling places
- Isaiah 65:15- Other names
- Revelation 2:17- Private names

God will love us for our unique attributes, not simply because we are part of His family.

Will There Be Private Ownership?

According to *Theologica Germanica* (14th Century), “In Heaven there is no ownership. If any there took upon him to call anything his own, he would straightway be thrust into hell and become an evil spirit.” This is simply not true—many passages suggest that there will be private ownership in Heaven:

- Luke 16:4, 9- Dwelling places
- Matthew 6:20- Treasures
- 2 Corinthians 5:10- Crowns
- Revelation 2:17- White stones
- Colossians 3:24- Inheritance

Ownership is not wrong when God distributes to us possessions He wants us to own. God is a giver. When He gives to us then we become “havers.”

In Heaven we will no doubt enjoy sharing our treasures with others, but they will still be our treasures, generously given us by God.

Will We Regain Lost Relational Opportunities?

Have you ever foregone relational opportunities for the cause of Christ? If so, Alcorn thinks,

- We’ll regain whatever we passed up in order to serve.
- Scripture clearly supports this view in Mark 10:28-29.

Heaven offers more than comfort Alcorn writes, it also offers compensation.

Alcorn closes this paragraph by giving a synopsis of the movie *Babette’s Feast*, in which Babette prepares a sumptuous dinner for friends in a small French village, thinking she would never have an opportunity to give so lavishly again.

What Will Our Reunions Be Like?

Alcorn describes the reunions that take place in Narnia’s *Last Battle* when everyone who was parted by death is restored to life in familiar resurrected bodies in a familiar resurrected world.

- Then we will have certain reunions. Never again will there be the separation of death, with its suffering and sorrow.
- Those whom you laid in the grave with many tears are in good keeping; you will yet see them again with joy.

HEAVEN

38. What Will New Earth Society Be Like?

What Will Become Of Our Social Activities?

Art, music, literature, crafts, technology, clothing, jewelry, education, food preparation—all are part of society or culture.

- Mankind glorifies God by taking what God made from nothing and shaping it into things useful for:
 - Mankind's good,
 - And God's glory.
- We should expect the old earth's social activities to carry over to the New Earth except when:
 - They are a product of our fallenness.
 - Or when God reveals otherwise.
- Alcorn gives numerous examples of instances in which good outcomes of man's creativity have turned bad:
 - Internal combustion engines—pollution and fatalities.
 - Printing and publishing—godless books and magazines.
 - Television—glorification of immorality and materialism.
 - Computers and the Internet—pornography.
 - The splitting of the atom—the Bomb and fatalities.
 - Medical advances—abortion and euthanasia.

Imagine these advances used for purely righteous purposes. You are imagining the New Earth.

Will We Have Ethnic and National Identities?

Abraham Kuyper wrote, "We will find it extremely difficult to form any idea of the social state in heaven."

- If by "heaven" he meant the Present Heaven, he was right.
- If by "heaven" he meant the eternal Heaven, he was wrong.

The eternal Heaven on the New Earth will be a physical environment with physical people who work, eat, talk, and have positions of authority.

- People live inside and outside the city.
- People enter each other's homes, travel, and worship.
- Leaders of nations will bring the splendor of cultures:
 - Into the city, where
 - Jesus will reign.

Will we have ethnic and national identities? Absolutely.

- Is the risen Jesus Jewish?
- Will we know He is Jewish?

Of course. Why, because:

- Our resurrected DNA will be unflawed, but,
- It will preserve our God-designed uniquenesses.

To support this view, Alcorn cites Revelation 5:9-10, where:

- “Tribe” refers to one’s clan.
- “People” refer to one’s race.
- “Nation” refers to those who share:
 - A common identity.
 - A national culture.

Like the current Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem will be a melting pot of ethnic diversity. But unlike the current situation, in the New City:

- Groups will be united by their common worship of Jesus.
- They will delight in differences not be threatened by them.

Christ died for our sins of racism. His work on the cross put racism to death. There will be no:

- Illusions of racial superiority.
- Disputes over national borders.

Alcorn suggests that the image of God is distributed throughout the peoples of the earth. Thus,

- By looking at different individuals and groups,
- We get glimpses of aspects of God’s nature.

If this is true, racism is not only injustice toward people, but a rejection of God’s very nature.

What Languages Will We Speak?

Will there be one common language in Heaven that we all speak and understand? Some Scripture appears to support such a view.

- Revelation 5:10
- Revelation 7:10

Alcorn notes that originally, all people shared a common language. But at Babel (Genesis 11), God confused their language and disbursed them. In the New Heaven,

- Instead of people building a city for their own glory,
- God will build a city and unite them for His own glory.

So Alcorn’s conclusion is that while we will probably speak a common language, we will maintain our present language. He bases this on Revelation 21:24-26, which states that there will be nations and kings of those nations on the New Earth.

Will Heaven Have Representatives From All Tribes And Languages?

Tribes, peoples, and nations will all make their own particular contribution to the enrichment of life in the New Jerusalem. Alcorn offers the following support for this notion:

- Revelation 5:9, 7:9, 21:24-26
- Daniel 7:14
- 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
- Cornelius Venema quote
- Acts 17:26

Will Ancient Cultures Be Resurrected To The New Earth?

If our new bodies look enough like our old bodies to be recognizable, doesn't it stand to reason that the New Earth will look enough like the old earth for us to recognize it?

Alcorn believes that the New Earth will include resurrected cultures. In support, he offers:

- Richard Mouw quote
- Daniel 7:27

In Heaven, God has determined to have representatives from every tribe, people group, and culture.

HEAVEN

39. Will Animals Inhabit The New Earth?

What Will Happen To Animals?

People often ask Randy about animals in Heaven. We can understand what motivates their two most frequently asked questions:

- Will there be animals in Heaven?
- Will they see their pets again?

God entrusted animals to us, and our relationships with animals are a significant part of our lives. Scripture speaks of a coming era in which animals are mentioned.

- Isaiah 11:6-9
- Isaiah 65:25

Some suggest that the era in view here is the Millennium [Christ's 1,000 year reign on the Present Earth], but these Scriptures are pointing to the New Earth.

- Isaiah 65:17
- Isaiah 66:22

When there will be no more harm on the Earth as stated in Revelation 21:4.

Do Animals Have Souls?

God created animals according to their kinds in the Creation, and they were important in Eden.

- Unless there is revelation to the contrary,
- The principle of continuity suggests,
- They'll be important on the New Earth.

Do animals have souls? They don't have human souls as they weren't created in the image of God as man was. Alcorn thinks they have non-human souls, based on scriptural arguments.

- *Nephesh* (Hebrew)
- *Psyche* (Greek)

These words are translated "soul" when referring to humans and are often used of animals, implying that animals have non-human souls. The classic understanding of living things throughout church history was that animals as well as humans have souls.

Alcorn argues from this that because God has future plans for mankind and Earth, He may have a future plan for animals as well.

Why Did God Save Animals From The Flood?

When God saved people from the destruction of the Flood, He also took great care to save animals, the companions and helpers of humans.

- God's plan for a renewed Earth after the Flood assuredly included animals.
- Wouldn't we expect His plan for a renewed Earth to include animals?

What Does God Show Us About The Importance of Animals?

God often uses animals to fulfill His purposes. There are many examples of such in the Scriptures.

- 1 Kings 17:4, 6- Ravens
- Jonah 1:17- A great fish
- Numbers 22- A donkey

Animals apparently have thoughts and feelings and can be responsive to realities in the spiritual realm to which people are blind.

God cares about the welfare of animals and holds mankind accountable for them.

- God provided for animals in the Fourth Commandment.
- Sacrificial animals show sin's horror and redemption's cost.

How Will People And Animals Relate?

In what we call the *dominion mandate*, God placed animals under man's benevolent care (Genesis 1:28).

- God created us to be stewards of animals.
- God holds us accountable for how we treat them.

We needn't speculate how God might populate a perfect Earth in the future.

- He populated Eden with animals under the rule of people.
- There is every reason to believe He'll do the same on the New Earth.
- We will fulfill our calling to be faithful rulers and stewards.

Would God take away from us in Heaven what He gave, for delight and companionship and help, to Adam and Eve in Eden? Would He revoke His decision to put animals with people under their care?

Will Animals Praise God?

Throughout Scripture we read that animals praise God.

- Psalm 148
- Revelation 5:13
- Revelation 4:8-9

Alcorn explains how a mistranslation of the Greek word *zoon* in the King James Bible as 'living creatures' instead of 'animals,' caused us to overlook the eight examples of animals praising God in the last passage above.

Thus, angels, humans, and animals all praise God in Heaven. This suggests that animals have a spiritual dimension beyond our understanding.

Will We See God's Attributes In Animals?

“For since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (Romans 1:20).”

- Often this verse is understood to refer to stars, mountains, lakes, and other natural wonders.
- We shouldn’t overlook the possibility that God’s invisible qualities are evident in animals.

Adam, Noah, and Jesus are the three heads of the three Earths.

- When God created Adam, He surrounded him with animals.
- When Noah was delivered from the Flood, God surrounded him with animals.
- When Jesus was born, God surrounded Him with animals.

When Jesus establishes the renewed Earth, with renewed men and women, don’t you think He’ll surround Himself with renewed animals?

HEAVEN

40. Will Animals, Including Our Pets, Live Again?

What Does It Mean To Make All Things New?

To open the discussion about animals in the Eternal Heaven, Alcorn cites Jesus' promise in Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I am making all things new." What does He mean?

- Certainly people will be renewed.
- Does this promise include animals?

Jesus seems to be saying, "I'll take all I made the first time, including people, nature, and animals and the earth itself, and bring it back as new, fresh, and indestructible." Is He?

How Closely Are Animals Tied To Our Resurrection?

Did Christ die for animals? People are made in God's image, animals aren't. People sinned, animals didn't. Because they sinned, people need a Savior. According to Romans 8:21-23,

- Christ died for animals indirectly because His death for humanity purchased redemption for what was brought down by humanity's sin, including animals.
- This suggests that on the New Earth, after mankind's resurrection, animals who once suffered on the old Earth will join God's children in glorious freedom from death.

If God were to create a new race of humans on the New Earth, rather than raising the people who had lived on the old Earth, would that fulfill His promise of redemption? No.

- People who are redeemed and resurrected to the New Earth,
- Must be the same people who suffered in the old world.

Many passages indicate that God would bring judgment on "men and animals" or "man and beast" because of mankind's sin:

- Exodus 9:22-25
- Jeremiah 7:20
- Ezekiel 14:12-13, 17

And God's blessings on the righteous extend to their children and animals:

- Deuteronomy 7:13-14
- Deuteronomy 28:1-4

Luke 3:6 says, "And all flesh will see the salvation of God." The Greek word translated "flesh" is *sarx*. Some translations render this "all people" or "all mankind," but *sarx* is more inclusive than this—"all flesh" includes animals.

Psalm 104 demonstrates God's intimate involvement with the lives of His animals and His purposes for them. See especially Psalm 104:29.

Will Extinct Animals Live On The New Earth?

Will the restoration of Earth and the redemption of God's creation be complete enough to bring back extinct animals? Alcorn thinks so, dinosaurs included.

Animals were created for God's glory. Why shouldn't all people have the opportunity to enjoy these great wonders on the New Earth? [Shades of Jurassic Park!]

Will Our Pets Be Restored On The New Earth?

Will Rogers famously said, "If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went."

It would be simple for God to recreate a pet in Heaven if He wants to. He is the *giver* of all good gifts, not the *taker* of them.

God could do one of three different things on the New Earth with regard to animals:

- Create entirely new animals.
- Resurrect animals from the old Earth.
 - Those which had suffered,
 - Would have immortal bodies.
- A combination of these two.

The words *redemption* and *resurrection* can appropriately apply not only to mankind but also the Earth, vegetation, and animals.

Alcorn cites several authors who have written about the future of animals including:

- C.S. Lewis
- Joni Eareckson Tada
- John Piper

Is It Wrong To Grieve A Pet's Death?

If we regard pets as God-created companions entrusted to our care, it is only right that we should experience grief at their loss.

- Who made these enduring qualities in animals? God.
- Who made us to be touched by them? God.

We love animals because God created us—and them—to love each other.

We shouldn't correct our children and grandchildren when they pray they'll be able to see their pets again.

What Future Is God Planning For Animals?

John Wesley imagined a magnificent restoration of the animal kingdom on the New Earth. See quote page 403.

Might Some Animals Talk?

Alcorn cites three Scriptural examples in which animals talked.

- The serpent in Genesis 3
- The donkey in Numbers 21:21-39
- The eagle in Revelation 8:13

And he reminds us that Scripture affirms that “every creature” in the universe is said to sing and give praise to the Lamb in the Present Heaven (Revelation 5:13).

HEAVEN

41. Will Heaven Ever Be Boring?

Do Some People Actually Believe Heaven Could Be Boring?

Alcorn gives us some diverse examples of people who actually believe that Heaven will be boring:

- From *Star Trek Voyager*. “Everything that could be said and done has been ... now there is only repetition and utter boredom.”
- From Isaac Asimov. “I don’t believe in an afterlife, so I don’t have to spend my life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more.”
- Some Christians envision Heaven as boring—nothing beyond strumming a harp and polishing streets of gold

Alcorn suggests these notions are examples of Satan’s strategies to slander God and His dwelling place (Revelation 13:6)

What Will We Do To Avoid Boredom?

“I’d rather have a good time in Hell than be bored in Heaven,” is how some people put it. Unfortunately, there are some serious flaws with this line of thought:

- Hell is a place of torment and isolation, where the friendships and good times they imagine don’t exist.
- Everything that is good, enjoyable, refreshing, fascinating, and interesting comes from God.

Without God life is, well, Hell!

The belief that Heaven will be boring comes from two flawed assumptions:

- The heresy that God Himself is boring. Who do people think came up with the idea of having fun?
- The notion that sin is exciting and righteousness is boring; the belief that sin brings fulfillment.

Freedom from sin will mean freedom to be what God intended; freedom to find far greater joy in everything (Psalm 16:11).

Why Would Anyone Think We’d Be Bored?

Randy shares the story of an older gentleman who, upon becoming a Christian, asked a caregiver in his care center, “Will we have fun in Heaven?” “Oh, no!” She replied, instinctively linking fun with sin, and boredom with holiness.

We will be convinced that God is exciting and Heaven is exhilarating when:

- We’re experiencing the invigorating stirrings of God’s Spirit.
- We’re trusting God to fill our lives with divine appointments.

- We're experiencing the child-like delights of His gracious kindness.

We think of ourselves as fun-loving, and of God as a humorless killjoy—a cosmic spoilsport. The real question for us is how could God not be bored with us?

Will Our Work Be Engaging?

Even under the Curse, we catch glimpses of how work can be enriching, how it can help build relationships, and how it helps us improve ourselves.

- Meaningful work stretches and challenges us in ways that make us smarter, wiser, and more fulfilled.
- The Bible's picture of resurrected people working on a resurrected Earth is a compelling one.
- We will help God run the universe (Luke 19:11-27), we'll serve Him in Heaven (Revelation 7:15, 22:3).
- We will reign with Christ; exercise leadership and authority and make important decisions.
- We will be given specific responsibilities; we will set goals, devise plans, and share ideas.

A disembodied existence would be boring; but the reality of our bodily resurrection puts boredom to death.

Will Our Life's Work Continue?

In *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven*, Wilbur Smith suggests, "In heaven, we will be permitted to finish many of those worthy tasks which we had dreamed to do while on earth but which neither time nor strength nor ability allowed us to achieve." Victor Hugo also wrote about anticipating work in Heaven.

Our calling to glorify God will never end. It will apply as much there and then as it does here and now.

- This should help us as we consider the mystery of life brought to a sudden close often in the fullness of its power.
- What might it be like to be always gaining skill, so that our best work will always be ahead of us?

Will There Be Cultural Developments?

Anthony Hoekema wrote, "In the beginning man was given the so-called cultural mandate—the command to rule over the earth and to develop a God-glorifying culture."

- Culture is the natural God-intended product of His gifting, equipping, and calling for mankind to rule over creation.
- Scripture describes developments in cultural achievement; if God weren't interested, He wouldn't have recorded them.

Rather than the new creation being a radically new beginning, in which the excellent and noble fruits of humankind's fulfillment of the cultural mandate are wholly discarded—the new creation will benefit from, and be immensely enriched by, its receiving of these fruits.

Lifeboat Or Ark Theology?

There is a pervasive belief among men that we (mankind) have wrecked the world. Many assume that what is important now is to escape the wreckage—Alcorn calls this *lifeboat theology*. Accordingly, our focus needs to be on:

- Getting into lifeboats.
- Keeping them afloat.
- Plucking drowning victims.
- Sailing on to Heaven.

An alternative to *lifeboat theology* is what he calls *ark theology*; which was: once the Flood in the time of Noah had subsided, everyone and everything was intended to return again to restore the earth.

The gifts, skills, passions and tasks God grants to each of us will be not only for His glory but also for the good of our larger family.

How Will We Express Our Creativity?

On the New Earth, God's gifts to us will never be lost to age, death, pettiness, insecurity, or laziness. Undistracted and undiminished by sin, and the demands of survival, mankind will create and innovate at unprecedented levels to God's eternal glory.

- There will be better Beethovens, Rembrandts, and Raphaels.
- Scientists will continue to advance technological achievement.
- Architects will continue to build imposing and attractive structures.
- Writers will continue to write better poetry, prose, and drama.
- Astronauts will experience new frontiers in space exploration.

Our culture will glorify God in ways that surpass our most fantastic dreams.

Will We Shape Culture Into New Forms?

Alcorn thinks that God's delegation to man of the task of naming the animals (Genesis 2:19) demonstrates the lofty and meaningful role that God grants us in molding and governing the culture.

- Without imagination, without experimentation, without openness to new questions and new possibilities, there can be no science and technology.
- Angels could have maintained the world as God created it. But it takes God's image bearers to develop, expand and enrich the earth.

God is a creator and He created us to be creators. Hence, what we create is an extension of God's creation. He accepts, embraces, and delights in our creation—even as He did the names Adam gave the animals.

HEAVEN

42. Will There Be Arts, Entertainment, And Sports?

Music, dancing, story-telling, art, entertainment, drama, and books have played major roles in human culture. Will they remain a part of our lives on the New Earth? We'll now answer this question.

Will We Sing And Make Music?

The Bible is full of examples of people praising God with singing and musical instruments. Here are just a few:

- 1 Chronicles 25:1-8
- Isaiah 38:20
- Ephesians 5:19
- Psalm 150
- Mark 14:26
- James 5:13

And we are told there will be music and singing in the Present Heaven:

- Revelation 8:7
- Revelation 14:2-3
- Revelation 15:2-3

Some passages suggest we will sing both old songs and new songs, songs written in Heaven. The songs emphasize the attributes of God (Revelation 5:9-10).

Will We Dance?

Throughout the ages people have danced to God's glory on Earth. Here are some examples.

- Ecclesiastes 3:4
- Exodus 15:20-21
- Psalm 30:11
- Jeremiah 31:12-14
- 2 Samuel 6:13-16
- Luke 15:25

How much more should we expect to dance on the New Earth?

It is God who made us to dance. God placed within us an instinctive response to music. Just as music is a means of worship, so is dancing.

Will We Tell Stories?

History, when viewed accurately, teaches us about God and about ourselves. It's the record of our failures to rule the earth righteously, the record of God's sovereign and gracious redemption of us and our planet.

- We can look forward to endless adventures, encounters, profound sayings, and delightful experiences with Jesus. When He tells a story, we'll be on the edge of our seats.

- The greatest story ever told will be told and retold from many different viewpoints emphasizing many different details—permanently engraved in the hands and feet of Jesus.

Will There Be Art, Drama, and Entertainment?

We, whose lives have been enriched through drama, should recognize its value in the new universe. As C.S. Lewis wrote,

- “When you painted on Earth ... it was because you caught a glimpse of heaven in the earthly landscape.”
- The new earthly landscape will be Heaven’s landscape, thus art may rise to ever higher levels in the new universe.

Rather than forget about our lives on the old Earth, Alcorn thinks we’ll depict them in drama and literature with perspective and gratitude to God.

- Will people write new books on the New Earth? Why not?
- The greatest books, dramas, and poetry may yet to be written.

Will We Laugh?

Martin Luther once commented, “If you’re not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don’t want to go there.” God created all things, including humor.

- Why do people have a sense of humor? Because we are God’s image-bearers and God has a sense of humor.
- Jesus will surely laugh with us; His wit and fun-loving nature will encourage us to laugh with Him.

Alcorn cites several Scripture references which suggest we’ll laugh in Heaven.

- Luke 6:21
- Luke 6:23

Just as our reward will come in Heaven, laughter (itself one of our rewards) will come in Heaven. God won’t only wipe away every tear; He’ll fill our hearts with joy and our mouths with laughter.

One of Satan’s great lies is that God—and goodness—is joyless and humorless, while Satan—and evil—brings pleasure and satisfaction. We know that simply isn’t so.

Who is the most intelligent, creative, witty, and joyful human being in the universe? Jesus Christ. Whose laughter will be the loudest and most contagious on the New Earth? Jesus Christ’s.

Will We Play?

A mother sent Alcorn her son’s question, “Will there be toys in Heaven?” Randy’s answer is “yes.”

- We'll still be human, so why wouldn't we have the human inclination and capacity to enjoy things.
- We'll still have the capacity to craft and create objects, so why not toys and games which are fun?

Will There Be Sports?

According to the principle of continuity, we should expect the New Earth to be characterized by familiar, earthly things. Sports are important on the present Earth; they should be also on the New Earth.

People have told Randy, "There can't be athletics in Heaven, because competition brings out the worst in people." His response:

- In Heaven, there will be no worst in us to bring out.

Others say, "In sports, someone has to lose. And in Heaven, no one could lose. His response:

- This underestimates the nature of resurrected humanity.

Can There Be Thrills Without Risk?

A young man told Randy that Heaven must be boring. Why? "Because you can't appreciate good without bad, light without darkness, or safety without danger. If Heaven is safe, there is no risk, it has to be boring"

Randy thinks this type of thinking is faulty on two counts:

- Assuming there is no good without bad. But God said, the Earth was "very good" before there was sin or anything bad.
- It's a mistake to believe that a person has to *currently* see evil to appreciate good, and to *currently* be in danger to appreciate safety.

After our bodily resurrection, we will still remember the darkness and dangers of this life. We'll contrast our past experiences with the light and safety of the New Earth, and we'll be profoundly grateful.

The same young man complained that there will be no challenges in Heaven. To which Alcorn responds:

- Where does it say there will be no challenges or hard work in Heaven?
- The Bible says there will be no more suffering, not no more challenges.

God didn't create sweat glands after the Fall, did He?

We can be sure there will be more excitement and exhilaration in Heaven than there is on Earth now. Those who know God and believe His promise of bodily resurrection can dream great dreams. One day we will *live* those dreams.

HEAVEN

43. Will Our Dreams Be Fulfilled And Missed Opportunities Regained?

What Does Eternal Life Mean?

Many people don't believe in an after-life. Their life philosophy ought to be, "You only go around once in life, so grab all the gusto you can."

But for children of God, you don't just go around once.

- You don't just get one earthly life. You get another—one far better and without end.
- You'll inhabit the New Earth, with the God you cherish and the people you love.

There are two definitions of eternal life. One, a deception that we've bought into, the other is the true definition.

- The incorrect definition: an off-Earth existence stripped of the defining properties we know life to be.
- The true definition: enjoying forever what life on earth is at its finest moments, what it was intended to be.

Will Unfulfilled Dreams Be Realized In Heaven?

Without an eternal perspective, without understanding the reality that the best is yet to come, we assume people:

- Who die young
- Who don't get married
- Who are handicapped
- Who don't (fill in the blank)

Will miss out on the best life has to offer.

We are presuming that our present Earth, bodies, culture, relationships, and lives are superior to those of the New Earth. *What are we thinking?*

Alcorn believes the New Earth will offer us opportunities we wished for but never had. He bases this on Matthew 5:3-5 interpreting the verses as:

- God's promises to make up for the heartbreaks of this earth.
- On the New Earth we'll have second chances—do-overs.

He says we don't want to live as some other kind of creature in some other world.

- We want to be sinless, healthy people living on the Earth, but without war, conflict, disease, disappointment and death.
- We want to live in the kind of world where our dreams, the deepest longings of our hearts, really do come true.

The reversing of the Curse, and the resurrection of our bodies and our Earth, mean we'll regain lost opportunities and inherit many more besides.

What Joy Will We Find In New Opportunities?

There is every reason to believe most of our God-honoring dreams that were not fulfilled on the old Earth will be fulfilled on the New Earth.

- The standard response when people die with unfulfilled dreams is, “to be with Jesus is better by far.”
- The truth is God has a future for us not just in the present Heaven but as resurrected people on the New Earth.

This holds the potential for us to have the opportunity to fulfill our dreams.

Alcorn thinks this might be why God calls us to be like children and why childlikeness is necessary for Heaven.

- Children aren’t disillusioned, hopeless, and cynical.
- Children’s dreams are great and wide ranging.
- Children don’t list reasons their dreams can’t come true.
- Children’s dreams fuel their imagination and bring joy.

He thinks eternal life on a New Earth means opportunity to fulfill every worthy dream.

How Should The Promise Of Compensation Affect Us?

The lack of an eternal perspective sets us up not only for discouragement but also for sin. We tell ourselves:

- “If I don’t experience an intimate relationship now, I never will.” Or,
- “If I don’t have the means to go to this place now, I never will.”

We are tempted to take short cuts to get what we want. Or we live in regret, greed, and envy.

If we are Christians, we get two opportunities to live on Earth:

- The first one is just a dot on the scale of time.
- The second is a line stretching out infinitely.

We live in the dot, but if we have an eternal perspective, we’ll be living for the line.

Is The Best Yet To Be?

In our society many people look to cosmetic surgeries, implants, and other methods to remodel and renovate our crumbling bodies.

But the gospel promises us eternal youthfulness, health, beauty, and happiness in the presence of our God and our spiritual family.

Are We Past Our Peaks?

Alcorn presents a diagram which shows that for those who know Christ, the best is always yet to come.

Understanding that our peak doesn't come in this life should radically change our view of deteriorating health, which would otherwise produce discouragement, regret, anger, envy, and resentment.

People without Christ can only look back to when they were at their best, never to regain it. Memories are all they have, and even those memories fade. But elderly or bedridden Christians don't have to look back to the peak of their prowess. They look forward to it!

Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy* comments on how many Christians have regrets about "what might have been (p. 440)." Alcorn thinks a proper perspective about eternity is the remedy.

How Can Anticipating New Opportunities Change Us?

We are not past our prime. The earth and planets and stars and galaxies are not past their prime. They are a dying phoenix that will rise again into something far greater—something that will never die.

Plus Ultra—there is more beyond. If we know Jesus, you and I, we who will never pass our peaks will be there to behold an endless revelation of natural wonders that display God's glory ... with nothing to block our view.

HEAVEN

44. Will We Design Crafts, Technology, And New Modes Of Travel?

What Will We Do In The New Universe?

God is going to provide for us a renewed natural universe and a new city with the best of human culture from the old Earth.

- Where will civilization go from there?
- Alcorn thinks we'll have a dual calling:
 - To develop a Christ-pleasing culture.
 - To rule the world/universe to God's glory.

He reminds us that the Bible never condemns culture itself. And it does not distinguish between what is "natural" and what is "artificial."

Does God Value Craftsmanship?

The first person described in Scripture as "filled with the Spirit" wasn't a prophet or priest, he was a craftsman. And Scripture describes individuals God called as skilled craftsmen.

- Exodus 31:6
- Exodus 35:35

Alcorn believes that this tells us something about God, ourselves, and the culture of the New Earth.

- Those who think spirituality is ethereal and invisible—unrelated to our physical skills, creativity, and cultural development—don't understand Scripture.
- God's instructions and His delight in the gifts He imparts to people to accomplish these tasks make clear what we should expect in Heaven.
 - Greater works of craftsmanship,
 - Unhindered by sin and death.

He reminds us that Jesus Himself was a carpenter—a creator.

When we die, we won't leave behind our creativity, but only what hinders our ability to honor God by what we create.

Will There Be Trade And Business?

Alcorn thinks we will see trade and business in Heaven but not for the same reasons we engage in them now.

- We engage in business on the present Earth primarily to satisfy "needs."
- We may see business replaced by a social structure of creating, giving, and receiving.
 - An artist might create a work and give it away simply to give someone delight.
 - We experience joy on Earth when we use our abilities to help and please others.

We work for Him on the Present Earth and we will work for Him in Heaven.

Will There Be Technology And Machinery?

It is a narrow view of both God and humans to imagine that God can be glorified and pleased only by a trumpet but not a desk, computer, or baseball bat.

- Will there be new inventions? Refinement of old inventions? Why not?
- The God who gave people creativity and skills won't take them back. Will He?

Something in the human constitution loves to create, tweak, experiment, and play with machinery. This isn't a modern development; it was true of ancient people as well. It's inherent in exercising dominion over creation.

What Will Travel Be Like?

Many people have asked Alcorn how our resurrected bodies will travel on the New Earth.

- Might we be able to go somewhere simply by thinking or willing it?
- Will we be directed from place to place by the Spirit (Acts 8:25-40)?
- Since we will rule over a vast universe may we be transported instantly?

We don't know. What we do know is that the New Jerusalem will have streets and gates suggesting conventional modes of transportation.

Remember, the New Earth isn't a return to Eden in the sense of abandoning culture, including inventions, transportation, and technology.

Will We Travel And Explore Space?

Alcorn answers this question in the light of his understanding of Scripture on two points:

- God will resurrect nations and cultures, and we'll be able to visit them on the New Earth. Similarly,
- God will resurrect galaxies, stars, planets, and moons, and we'll be able to visit the "new heavens."

He thinks people explore because God made us with the yearning to explore and the creativity to make the yearning a reality.

Will We Find New Beings On Other Worlds?

When we travel in the new universe, will we find new beings on other worlds? No Scripture passage proves that God will or will not create new races of intelligent beings, either on Earth or on other planets spread across the new universe.

Considering that His higher glory and praise come not from inanimate objects such as stars and planets, but from intelligent beings such as humans and angels, it's no great stretch to suppose He might create other intelligent beings.

Will We Travel In Time?

Because God is not limited in time as we presently are:

- He may choose to show us past events as if they were presently happening.
- We may have the chance to see the lives of our ancestors lived out on Earth.
- We may see what would have happened had prayers been answered differently.
- Perhaps we will see the ripple effects of our faithfulness and obedience.

Surely God is capable of sending resurrected people back in time or of pulling back the curtain of time and allowing us to see the past. Would it glorify Him for us to better understand the past? Obviously.

Read the quote by C.S. Lewis on page 451.

Will God Do More Than We Imagine?

If these ideas seem to be unimaginable, Alcorn would urge us to consider Ephesians 3:20.

HEAVEN

45. Reorienting Ourselves To Heaven As Our Home

Made For Someplace Else?

Our instincts tell us that this fallen world isn't our home—we were made for someplace better. Alcorn cites C.S. Lewis and Donald Bloech to get the point across.

- “I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death...I must make it the main object of life ...” C.S. Lewis
- “Our greatest affliction is not anxiety, or even guilt, but rather homesickness—a nostalgia or ineradicable yearning to be at home with God.” Donald Bloech

To anticipate Heaven, Alcorn says, we need to understand the meaning of home.

What Is Home Like?

Have you ever been on a trip that turned out badly? What did you want more than anything? To go home.

- Home is about comfort.
- Home is a place we want to be.
- Home is our reference point.

This is what Heaven should do for us.

- It should keep us going; it's our eternal home.
- It is the welcome refuge that awaits and calls our name.

Home is _____.

Fill in the blank

Our true home in Heaven will have all of the good things about our earthly home and none of the bad.

The world says, “You can't go home again.” But this absolutely doesn't apply to our home in Heaven.

When it comes to our eternal home, we often fail to think biblically in two ways:

- We imagine we won't be fully human and our ultimate home won't be physical and earthly.
- We imagine that this world as it is now, under the Curse, is going to be our ultimate home.

Home as a name for Heaven isn't simply a metaphor. It describes an actual place:

- A place promised by our bridegroom.
- A place we'll share with loved ones.
- A place of fond familiarity, comfort and refuge.
- A place of marvelous smells, tastes, and fine foods.

- A place of conversation, contemplation, and interaction.
- A place of unprecedented freedom and adventure.

Going To The Party

One by one, occasionally a few of us at a time, we'll disappear from this world.

- Those we leave behind will grieve that their loved ones have left home.
- In reality, their believing loved ones aren't leaving home, they're going home.
- They'll be home before us. We'll be arriving at the party a little later.

Laughter and rejoicing—a party awaits us. Don't you want to join it?

To be in resurrected bodies on a resurrected Earth, enjoying a resurrected culture with the resurrected Jesus—now that will be the ultimate party.

Alcorn says the day he dies will be the best day he has ever lived.

Longing For Resurrection

As Christians, we're linked to Heaven in ways too deep to comprehend. Desire is a signpost pointing to Heaven.

- Longing for better health, is longing for the New Earth.
- Longing for romance, is longing for the love of Jesus.
- Desire for intimacy, is desire for intimacy with Jesus.
- Every thirst for beauty, is actually a thirst for Christ.
- Every taste of joy, is a foretaste of Heavenly joy.

This is why we need to spend our lives cultivating our love for Heaven. We need to study the Scripture, read books, attend Bible studies and so on to focus on Heaven.

Life on Earth matters, not because it's the only life we have, but precisely because it isn't.

- Informed by the doctrines of creation, redemption, resurrection, and the New Earth, our present lives take on greater importance, infusing us with purpose.
- Understanding Heaven doesn't just tell us what to do, but why. What God tells us about the future enables us to understand the past and serve Him in the present.

We need to see Heaven for what it is: the realm we're created for. If we do, we'll embrace it with contagious joy, excitement, and anticipation.

Heaven Our Source Of Optimism

The only proper foundation for optimism is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Any other foundation is sand, not rock. It will not bear the weight of eternity.

- No Christian should be a pessimist. Knowing that our suffering will be relieved doesn't make it easy, but it does make it bearable.
- The apostles didn't enjoy suffering, but they rejoiced in the midst of it, because they trusted god's sovereign plan and looked forward to Christ's return.

Christ's future glory, in which we will participate, is the reason for our present rejoicing while suffering. Meditating on Heaven is a great pain reliever.

The biblical doctrine of Heaven is about the future. But,

- It offers tremendous benefits here and now.
- If we grasp it, it will shift our center of gravity.
- It will radically change our perspective on life.

Reepicheep's Quest

Reepicheep, the valiant mouse of C.S. Lewis' *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, is steadfastly set on a greater adventure than others. He has one destination in mind—Asland's country.

We can identify with Reepicheep's glorious quest, because the spell of Heaven has also been on us all our lives, as well, even if we have sometimes confused it with lesser desires.

Through The Doorway

Make sure of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Be certain that you are trusting Him alone to save you—not anyone or anything else, and certainly not any good works you have done.

When Jesus' millennial reign is accomplished (whether it is a non-literal present reign or a literal thousand year reign), we'll join Him in ruling the New Earth, free of sin and the Curse.

C.S. Lewis wrote a woman who feared her own death was imminent, "What is there to be afraid of?" ... "Your sins are confessed." ... "There are better things ahead than any we leave behind."

HEAVEN

46. Anticipating The Great Adventure

Dad, How Do You Feel?

Alcorn relates the story of a man who asked his father who was on his deathbed, “Dad, how do you feel?” His father replied that he felt like a kid on Christmas Eve. Christmas is coming! We live between:

- The first Christmas. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
- The second Christmas. Jesus is coming to Earth.

In this last chapter, Alcorn challenges us to Heaven-influenced living and prepares us for the adventure that awaits us on death’s other side.

Chapter One Of The Great Story

Read the quote from C.S. Lewis in *The Last Battle* on page 466.

The Bible isn’t a fairy tale. Nowhere in Scripture do we see sentimental, wishful thinking. What we do see is:

- Mankind’s devastating separation from God.
- The hard, agonizing work of Christ’s redemption.
- The tangible nature of His resurrection.
- The promise of coming judgment.
- The restoration of God’s ideal universe.
- The fulfillment of God’s plan for the ages.
 - Resurrected people living with
 - God on a resurrected Earth.

Then, we will live happily ever after.

The prospect of seeing God eclipsed all of Job’s heartaches (Job 19:26-27). Surely it can eclipse yours and mine.

What Can Death Do To Us?

Death is merely the doorway to eternal life. The adventure is what comes after death—being in the presence of Christ.

- Death is painful, and it is the enemy.
- But for those who know Jesus Christ: it is
 - The final pain,
 - The last enemy.

Death’s destruction is foretold in various places in the Scripture. That it will be overcome is also:

- 1 Corinthians 15:54-55
- Romans 8:35, 38-39

Read Richard Baxter quote on page 468.

Not only will death not separate us from Christ—it will usher us into His presence. If we believe this:

- We won't cling desperately to life, but
- We'll stretch out our arms in anticipation.

Don't let a day go by without anticipating the new world that Christ is preparing for us. Hebrews 11:16

- God loves the Heaven-bound.
- He is proud of the Heaven-minded.

A Word To The Depressed

The fact that Heaven will be so wonderful shouldn't tempt us to take short cuts to get there. If you are depressed:

- You may imagine your life has no purpose.
- But you couldn't be more wrong, it does.

Our lives on Earth are a training camp to ready us for Heaven.

Ask yourself what you can do to write the best ending to this volume of your life's story—one that will continue in the new universe.

- Use the time you have left on Earth wisely.
- Then look forward to meeting Jesus in Heaven.

Questions In The Light Of Heaven

We'll have eternity to celebrate great victories on the old Earth, but we have only this brief window of opportunity to win those victories.

What will last for eternity? Galatians 6:7-8

- Not material things.
- Only our service for Him.

Setting our minds on Heaven is a discipline that we need to learn. How can we be Heaven-minded?

- By studying about Heaven.
- By reflecting on our mortality.
- By knowing there are but two destinations:
 - Heaven
 - Hell
- By reminding ourselves the world is not our home.

- By connecting daily choices now to eternity.
- By realizing that we have an Audience of One.
- By thinking about the New Earth.
 - Where we will serve God.
 - Where we will be near God.
 - Where we will experience joy.

Incentives For Righteous Living

Knowing this present world will end and be resurrected into new heavens and a New Earth should profoundly affect our daily behavior.

- It should motivate us to live spotless lives here and now.
- We should desire Christ-centered righteous living right now.

A Life That Gets Us Ready

Thinking of Heaven should lead to the pursuit of holiness. It should affect:

- Activities
- Ambitions
- Recreation
- Friendships
- Pursuits
- Expenditures

Heaven should be our North Star. It should cause us to be:

- Goal-oriented
- Thankful

C.S. Lewis quote from *Perelandra*, page 472.

All Things Made New

The most ordinary moment on the New Earth will be greater than the most perfect moments in this life.

We were all made for a person and a place.

- Jesus is the person.
- Heaven is the place.

Jesus will be the center of all things, and joy will be the air we breathe.

Just when we think, “It doesn’t get any better than this”—it will!

**HEAVEN: DISCUSSION AND STUDY NOTES
FOR THE BOOK BY RANDY ALCORN**

**By
Joseph McRae Mellichamp**

Dr. Joseph McRae Mellichamp is Emeritus Professor of Management Science in the Manderson Graduate School of Business at the University of Alabama where he served as a faculty member from 1969 to 1994. Dr. Mellichamp received the Ph.D. in Engineering Management from Clemson University and the Bachelor of Industrial Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. He also was a Visiting Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dr. Mellichamp has published refereed articles in such journals as *The Harvard Business Review*, *Management Science*, *Decision Sciences*, *Expert Systems*, *Interfaces*, *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, *The Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing*, *Simulation*, and *IEEE Networks*. He was principal investigator for contract research projects totaling over \$1.25 million and served as a consultant for AT&T, General Motors, N.A.S.A. (The Space Shuttle Program), and the U.S. Army (The Star Wars Program).

Dr. Mellichamp founded the Christian Faculty Fellowship at the University of Alabama and directed the group for twenty years. In addition, Mellichamp and his wife Peggy (Huckaby) were part time staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ from 1972 to 1994 during which time they helped to found Faculty Commons (Christian Leadership Ministries) which now networks thousands of Christian professors and staff on hundreds of university campuses in the U.S. and abroad.

Retiring from the University of Alabama in 1994, Mellichamp and his wife worked with Faculty Commons full time until 2010 and have spoken both professionally and from a ministry perspective to faculty, faculty wives, and student groups on nearly 200 campuses in the U.S. and a dozen foreign countries.

Mellichamp has written a number of books including, *Discussion and Study Guide for the Book by C.S. Lewis*, *The Man in the Mirror: Discussion and Application Guide for the Book by Patrick Morley*, *The Call: Discussion and Study Guide for the Book by Os Guinness*, *The Bible vs. Science? Or Not!*, *Go Fast, Turn Left: Simple Instructions for Following Jesus* as well as Discussion and Study Guides for all four Gospels, *Acts* and *The Revelation*. All of Mellichamp's books are available from Amazon.com and many bookstores.