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Kingdom

God Reigns

Thirteen points every follower of Jesus should know. A study by Pastor Andy Cisneros.

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Kingdom: *God Reigns*

We all die.

Too many people naively try to convince themselves that if they simply don't think about death then things will be fine. They are living both foolishly and dangerously.

Our world does not know what to do with death. When people begin to die, we put them in retirement homes, care centers, and hospitals. We tuck them away out of sight, fill them with medications, and try to make death seem not so deadly. When someone does die, we put them in a box so that we do not have to stare death in the face, and if the box is open, we see the deceased with makeup and nice clothes so they appear not so dead. When the deceased is finally buried, it is usually in a memorial garden with flowers and fountains to maintain the illusion that death is not really an enemy, as Paul says (1Cor.15:26). Not knowing what to say, the living who remain say things they really don't have any evidence for, such as "They are in a better place now," or they passed as if they have left this world into another. Do you know what will happen to you after you die?

Are you ready for the day of your death and what follows at Christ's return?

Whom will you trust to help prepare you for death and beyond?

Naturalists

Will you believe the naturalists, who say that you are only a body without a soul and that once you die there is nothing more? If so, you will need to squeeze as much joy as possible out of this life, and if it is filled with pain and regret, then you are simply a loser. Not surprisingly, naturalists find it psychologically devastating to accept the logical conclusion of their own beliefs. They try to live on forever through the memory of others, their offspring, or their efforts to change the world in some way that their mark on it remains after their death.

Universalists

Will you believe the universalists, who say that in the end everyone goes to heaven no matter what they have done in this life? Does it seem fair to you that rapists, pedophiles, murderers, thieves, and the worst human beings could live their entire life harming others without ever changing and be rewarded eternally? Because we are God's image bearers and have a conscience with a longing for justice, the universalists' cheery claim that sociopaths who rape women and molest children, along with Hitler and a lengthy line of other sadistic dictators from Genghis Khan to Stalin who devoted their lives to evil and cruelty, get to live forever with their victims sounds like anything but a win-win scenario.

Catholics

Will you believe the Catholics' claim that purgatory is a place or state in which those who died in the grace of God atone for their unforgiven sins by being punished before being admitted to heaven? God said He made us "alive together with him [Jesus], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross." Do you really think he would go back on His word and make us burn in the lake of fire for thousands of years so we could be with Him?

Reincarnation

Will you believe the reincarnationists' claim that after you die you will come back repeatedly until you have paid off your karmic debt? If so, you are trapped in a cycle of rebirth where the only hope is that after millions of attempts, you finally get it right and escape into the eternal oneness, often called Nirvana, which is the end of all personhood. A lot of Americans follow their personally devised versions of paganism, Tibetan Buddhism, Kabala, and gnosticism. They reject most of the disciplines and beliefs of the original religions in favor of some sort of naive dream that they are doing it right and that in their next life they will be ascended masters of the universe. Reincarnation cannot solve the sin problem for the simple reason that even if you could live multiple lives, you would not be paying off your old sin as fast as you would be adding on new sin, and you would thus return as a lower life form every time, which means when you die you have nothing to look forward to forever.

What Happens When We Die?

God created humans as thinking, feeling, moral persons made expressly in God's image. Death is not normal or natural, but an enemy, the consequence of sin. Death is the tearing apart of the breath of life, the end of relationship with loved ones. The body goes to the grave and the Bible is clear that there will one day be a bodily resurrection for everyone to either eternal life with God or eternal condemnation apart from him in the lake of fire.

Christianity differs from all religions in that Christians believe our eternal status depends on our relationship with God's son Jesus. We really believe that *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* It may not be politically correct, but our lives are shaped by the reality that *"whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."*

Scripture teaches that we sleep between our death and our resurrection on judgment day. The actions of those responsible to God will be remembered by Him (Mal. 3:16; Rev. 20:12; Heb. 6:10), there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that we have any consciousness when we are dead. Here are some verses to look at concerning this.

- *"(Man's) spirit departs, he returns to dust; in that very day (moment) his plans perish"* (Ps. 146:4).

- *"The dead know nothing...their love, their hatred, and their envy is now perished" (Ecc. 9:5,6). There is no "wisdom in the grave*" (Ecc. 9:10) - no thinking and therefore no consciousness.
- Job says that on death, he would be "as though he had not been" (Job 10:18-19); he saw death as unconsciousness and total lack of existence same as before we were born.
- God *"remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes...it is gone, and its place remembers it no more*" (Ps. 103:14-16).

Death is unconsciousness, even for the righteous. This is demonstrated by the repeated pleas of God's servants to allow their lives to be lengthened, because they knew that after death they would be unable to praise and glorify God, seeing that death was a state of unconsciousness. Hezekiah (Is. 38:17-19) and David (Ps. 6:4,5; 30:9; 39:13; 115:17) are good examples of this. Death is repeatedly referred to as a sleep or rest, both for the righteous and the wicked (Job 3:11, 13, 17; Dan. 12:13).

Man's desperate efforts to soften the finality of death have led him to believe that he has an 'immortal soul'. Jesus, who has come back from death was emphatically clear that a day of judgment is coming when everyone will rise from their graves and stand before him for eternal sentencing to either worship in his kingdom or to be thrown in the lake of fire (John 5:21-30). This is when we have life again. At the final judgment, all (even you) will stand before Jesus. Jesus followers whose names are written in the Book of Life will be with him forever. *"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*

The kingdom of God is the rule of God over all creatures and things (Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:3). The kingdom of God is also salvation entered into at the new birth (John 3:5-7), and is synonymous with the "kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of God embraces all created intelligence, both in heaven and earth that are subject to the Lord and are in fellowship with him. The kingdom of God is, universal in that it includes created angels and men. It is eternal, as God is eternal. The kingdom of God is the result of God's mission to rescue and renew His creation that has been broken by sin. The kingdom of God is about Jesus our king establishing his rule and reign over all creation, defeating the human and angelic evil powers, bringing order and justice to all.

Unfortunately, there are many views of the kingdom that misrepresent the glories of God's eternal kingdom.

Cartoons-The kingdom is not like the cartoon shows where they show heaven as a white cloud upon which we will sit wearing diapers and playing harps with wings far too small to carry us anywhere.

Liberalism-The kingdom is not the naïve dream of liberalism that with more education and time sin and its effects will be so eradicated from the earth that utopia will dawn.

Oprah-The kingdom is not the deceptive dream of Christless spirituality where all learn to nurture the spark of divinity within themselves and live out their true good self in harmony.

Political party-The kingdom is not the political dream that if we simply get the right leaders in office and defeat all the bad guys good will rule the earth.

The kingdom is both a journey and a destination, both a rescue operation in this broken world and a perfect outcome in the new earth to come, both already started and not yet finished. This distinction is incredibly important. When the already-ness of the kingdom is overly stressed, the result is an over-realized eschatology. In this case, the presence and power of sin are not fully accounted for, and there is a naive belief that life should be enjoyed with health and wealth, as if the kingdom has already been fully unveiled, and a sort of simplistic optimism sets in. When the not-yet-ness of the kingdom is overly stressed, the result is an under realized eschatology. In this case, sin seems to be at least as powerful as the gospel and there is little hope or enthusiasm for evangelism, church planting, or opposing injustice in the world, and a sort of hopeless fatalism sets in.

God does not want us to be naïve, as if the kingdom is fully here. And God does not want us to be hopeless, as if the kingdom has not yet begun. The kingdom has come and is coming. God will work His rescue not by obliterating earth but by restoring it. He will use humans, who are part of the problem as well as part of the solution, to bless, redeem, and restore. In all this we are not observers but participants helping with the redemption, each playing the role God has assigned for us to play in making the invisible kingdom visible.

God created the heavens and the earth, making space-time, material and immaterial, very good. He created man, male and female, to rule God's good creation as image bearers of God, reflecting His character in their dominion. He planted a garden to be a place where God could live together with people.

But Eve, followed by Adam, listened to the enemy, and they decided to make their own choices against God's loving command. Sin and shame brought spiritual death and they hid from the LORD. Physical death destroyed the unity of the living person. The ground was devastated and cursed because of human sin. Relationship was ruined. Everything and everyone that God made good was infected, polluted, and corrupted.

Still, God did not leave us on our own or reject us. Rather, he came and called Adam and Eve as they hid in their shame. In the middle of cursing the Serpent, God promised an offspring who would crush the Serpent's head, the first promise of the coming Messiah. God made skins to cover their nakedness, a picture of what the Messiah would do in covering our sin and shame.

God inaugurated his kingdom rescue mission by calling Abraham, blessing him, and making him the father of an offspring and a nation through whom all the sin-ruined families would be blessed. Again, God works through a man, Abraham, who is part of the problem as well as part of the solution. God promised that Abraham would also enjoy a plot of land that had previously been the Garden of Eden as a place from which the nations would be blessed.

But things did not go well. Abraham, and then his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, increasingly failed to be faithful to the covenant call. The kingdom family found themselves exiled in the kingdom of Egypt. In an ironic twist, the rescuers needed to be rescued. So God in His faithfulness brought them back to ensure the continuation of His kingdom mission. As a response, Exodus 15 gives the triumph of God over the pagan power of the defeated king, the gods of Egypt, and the dark forces behind the kingdom.

At Mount Sinai, God's people were once again reminded of their kingdom role among the nations. God called them His *"treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* As such, they existed to bring His glory to the whole earth. But despite God's gift of a beautiful land, they longed to return to Egypt; they preferred slavery to freedom and a pagan earthly kingdom to His perfect kingdom. Despite God's command, the people turned back to the defeated gods and continually preferred a kingdom of darkness.

The glory of God's kingdom comes briefly in the rule of David and in the promise of the Messiah's coming as the kingdom king (2Samuel 7:1-17; Psalms 89). David's very serious sin ruins the glorious reign, (2Samuel 11-12) and conflict rules through the rest of his time on the throne. In the following years, the twin sins of idolatry and injustice dominate in the land. The whole nation goes into exile in Babylon until God rescues them.

Upon their rescue from Babylon, God tells Israel they will see the return of the Lord to Zion. This is not just a vision for redeemed Jerusalem but for all nations because *"all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."* Instead of seeing a king in splendid robes of glory, though, they will see the battered and mangled body of a servant who bears pain and torture, who is wounded for our transgressions, who takes the chastisement for our sins, and who died for our sins only to rise again and make the many righteous.

The kingdom hope is revealed repeatedly in the Old Testament as a universal hope through Israel and the Messiah. The psalmist paints a mysterious vision of a coming king who will break the nations with a rod of iron and make them the Lord's heritage. The psalmist promises that the king will cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" as they pierce his hands and feet. Because of this messiah king, not only Israel but all the nations were promised inclusion in worshiping God alone, for the Lord rules over the nations as the King of kings (Psalm 22). He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath. He is to be feared and praised above all gods.

The Old Testament kingdom hope is that God will work His rescue mission in and through Israel to all nations. God's Messiah will bring righteousness where there is injustice, beauty where there is devastation, peace where there is conflict, unity where there is division, forgiveness where there is sin, healing where there is sickness, and worship where there is idolatry. He will defeat the evil powers, reverse the curse of the fall, give fullness of life in place of death, and restore harmony to all creation.

Many of the Jews had lost sight of this universal hope. They were expecting God to send a king who would lead a military uprising to free them from Roman rule. They wrongly believed that they would then be vindicated so they could enjoy the exclusive blessings of being God's people.

When Jesus taught, he repeated the prophets' calls for repentance of sin and turning back to God. For the selfish and proudly religious looking to be blessed and affirmed, Jesus' message of humble repentance was not enticing. In Jesus' first coming, the seeds of the kingdom were scattered, but the soil in the hearts of many was not good, and they did not respond to Jesus in faith. When Jesus told his disciples that he would be killed, they refused to believe it, preferring a messiah who would conquer their enemies so they could sit on thrones beside him.

Jesus' kingdom message is not a new teaching but a continuation of the same themes God has continually revealed to His people throughout the Old Testament. Jesus' kingdom message is not that he was merely a good moral example for us to follow; rather, we are utterly unable to follow his sinless life apart from new life in him. Jesus' kingdom message is not just about how to enter the Kingdom of God. And Jesus' kingdom message is not primarily about how to have a personal relationship with Jesus in which we enjoy him privately, as if the rule of his kingdom was intended to be over only our hearts and not all of creation.

The kingdom message is all encompassing and does not exclude any of God's message for His people. Spiritual death, the ruptured relationship with God, can be healed through Jesus death alone (Col.2; 13). The internal destruction sin has brought to our hearts can be renewed through the power of his resurrected life. The real enemy conquered by his victory is not political but sin and the god of this world, Satan himself, along with the spiritual forces of darkness. Jesus formed a new movement, the church, a redeemed people from every nationality and ethnicity, who will come into the unity of the Spirit to participate in God's rescue mission to the whole world (Matthew 28:16-20;Acts 1:5-8).

Jesus' resurrection prefigures our resurrection (1 Cor.15:12-57). In Jesus' death and resurrection not only is the price of our sin paid, and our life after death secured, but the eternal life of God has truly come to this cursed earth; with the coming of the King, God's kingdom has come into this world (John 3:16;2Corinthians 4:10-11). Because of King Jesus there will be life again after a period of death.

The reality of the full unveiling of Jesus' kingdom is both history altering and mind-bending. Jesus' people will enjoy full life in Resurrection, delighting in an Edenic world where there is no sin, no curse, no death, and subsequently no tears. Life will be as it was when God last said all was "very good." We will see the face of Jesus and rule with him in a perfect city on the new earth. This is God's coming kingdom, and by faith its citizens, Christians, long for it.

No one can ignore the reality of wars, disease, tyranny, violence, abuse, poverty, death, injustice, and famine. Evil persists despite all the efforts of all leaders of all nations from all history. We can't solve the problem, because we are the problem. Our hope isn't in self, nation, culture, people, leaders, or politics. It

is in God and His love, the only possible source for true and unending justice, kindness, love, unity, compassion, and health. His kingdom is our only hope.

Believers join Jesus and God's people in the hopeful quest of the kingdom. We commit to our King's rescue mission seeking to bring redemption and renewal to everyone. We form churches that are outposts of the coming kingdom, shining forth as kingdom light in cultural darkness. We long for and trust in the day when, as Romans 8:21–23 says:

Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Indeed, creation comes from God, belongs to God, and will be restored by God in His kingdom. In that restored Eden state, the cry for justice, the longing for beauty, the eagerness for true fellowship, and the longing for true spiritual life with God will be fulfilled. In this way, the Bible is a story told in beginning-middle-beginning format. The opening book of the Bible, Genesis, begins with two chapters of creation, followed by a chapter of judgment for sin. Likewise, the closing book of the Bible, Revelation, ends with two chapters of new creation preceded by final judgment for sin.

Who is the King?

As we examine the kingdom, we must establish who the king is, because a kingdom is the extent of the rule of a king. It was prophesied in Genesis 49:10 that Jesus would rule with a king's scepter. In John 12:14–15 we read of the humble King Jesus riding a donkey. When his enemies pressed a crown of thorns into his head, they were in fact revealing the truth. Additionally, Pilate's mocking notice hung above Jesus as he was crucified; it read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Following his resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus is revealed throughout Revelation to be seated upon a throne, ruling and reigning as sovereign Lord over all creation. The revelation of Jesus seated upon his throne appears no less than forty-five times in Revelation. Truth and judgment come from this throne placing the throne of Jesus Christ at the center of creation and history, John is radically displacing humanity from the position it normally occupies; the goal of redemption and kingdom is to orient and begin to move all worship toward God.

In Revelation 17:14 we read of Jesus crushing all enemies and other kings and kingdoms, saying, "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

One day King Jesus will wear white and mount his white horse. He will lead his army to wage war against evildoers. Revelation 19:15 says, “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”

This Jesus is a warrior. He inspires those who follow him to defend and protect the widow, orphan, elderly, and vulnerable from the bullies, murderers, thieves, pimps, rapists, and evildoers. Those who love King Jesus hate all that dishonors him and are motivated to see all evil come to an end. They are hoping for a front-row seat to the second feast of Revelation 19, where evildoers will have their flesh feasted upon by flocks of carrion birds.

Until the end, God’s people are to wait patiently and serve diligently. In this life we are to suffer courageously and serve humbly like Jesus did during his ministry, trusting that all will be made right in due time.

Who Are the Saints

A saint is anyone who is a follower of Christ. It will be those who are in the Kingdom with Jesus. Some misunderstandings are for example in Roman Catholic theology. In this theology the saints are in heaven. In the Bible, the saints are on earth. In Roman Catholic teaching, a person does not become a saint unless he/she is “beatified” or “canonized” by the Pope or prominent bishop. In the Bible, everyone who has received Jesus Christ by faith is a saint. In Roman Catholic practice, the saints are revered, prayed to, and in some instances, worshipped. In the Bible, saints are called to revere, worship, and pray to God alone. The word “saint” comes from the Greek word *hagios*, which means “consecrated to God, holy, sacred, pious. "The idea of the word “saints” is a group of people set apart for the Lord and His kingdom. There are three references referring to godly character of saints: "that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints …" (Romans 16:2). "For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

Therefore, scripturally speaking, the “saints” are the body of Christ, Christians, the church. All Christians are considered saints. All Christian are saints—and at the same time are called to be saints. First Corinthians 1:2 states it clearly: “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy…” The words “sanctified” and “holy” come from the same Greek root as the word that is commonly translated “saints.” Christians are saints by virtue of their connection with Jesus Christ. Christians are called to be saints, to increasingly allow their daily life to more closely match their position in Christ. This is the biblical description and calling of the saints. If you are a saint you will be in the Kingdom of God.

Judgment Seat of Christ

Christians will not be judged at the end of this life in the same way that non-Christians will be. The Bible teaches this truth often. In John 5:24, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” In Romans 8:1, Paul also says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Simply stated, in Christ all sin is forgiven. Christians are members of the family of God now and forever.

Christians will be judged at the end of this life in a way that is different from the judgment of non-Christians. This life, and what we do and do not do with it, matters greatly. The Holy Spirit has given every Christian time, talents, and gifts that they are to manage well for the kingdom. The Christian’s judgment is a day of assessment when *“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”* (2 Corinthians 5:10). This theme of accountability and reward runs all through Scripture as a continual reminder not to waste our life but rather manage it in the context of eternity.

To illustrate this concept, Jesus tells a kingdom story in which he gives believers ten minas, a large amount of money, and commands them to do business with it. This pictures the ministry resources believers have from God and their service for Jesus. The servant who brings ten more minas receives authority over ten cities in the kingdom, while the servant who brings five minas receives authority over five. The last servant, who hides his mina from fear of the master, signifies someone who does not have a grace relationship with Jesus. The point of Jesus’ story is that if we are truly Christians and know the love of our Master, we should faithfully invest our lives in the service of his kingdom. The quality of work we do will be revealed and tested in the end, and only work that survives Jesus’ evaluation will be worthy of a reward. Our day of testing can be a day of great rejoicing when we hear Jesus declare, “Well done,” if we are faithful stewards in this life.

Some Christians will be hurt by the lack of reward given to them for the life they lived. In 1 Corinthians 3:15 Paul says, “If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” The Bible is clear that there are eternal consequences for believers doing both good and evil. The idea of different levels of rewards upsets many. They feel offended that Jesus doesn’t give everyone a gold star, as if everyone should automatically get an “A” on their report card, but to do so would be unjust and would encourage Christians to waste their lives.

This doctrine is not salvation by works or some sort of legalism. Those who love Jesus will strive to be like him. Because we are God’s workmanship, created for good works, we should do them. We should “make every effort” to be faithful to our calling, as the Bible often exhorts.

We are children of God with the full right of inheritance. Participation in the kingdom is already ours, not because of the good we have done, but because of God's gracious inclusion of us in his kingdom. However, having been so graced, we should respond by being trustworthy. Part of the reason God sanctifies us throughout life after we are born again is to help prepare us for the kingdom we are to live in forever. Bit by bit, we learn and grow in faithfulness with the small kingdom works he has entrusted to us. We know that God is a Father whose love for and devotion to His children is purely by grace and will never change. Still, as a good Father he also gives chores and responsibilities to each of His children to help them mature and grow so that He can entrust to them increasingly important things; He rewards the children who are faithful in ways that He does not reward the children who are unfaithful.

What do these rewards look like and what do they involve? Because the biblical descriptions of rewards (e.g., money, crowns) are likely figurative, it is hard to be sure what is meant. Most importantly, rewards are greater opportunity and responsibility in the kingdom. We will be able to fulfill our original purpose to rule God's creation in partnership with Him. Paul hints that a reward will be seeing the full impact we have had on other people. Perhaps our deepened relations with them will be a reward. For all believers, a rich reward will be our capacity to know and experience God Himself. Whatever the reward, the important idea is that life matters and God is watching.

The Millennium

Millennium means 'thousand years'. People in the Kingdom will still be having babies (Isa. 65:23) dying (Isa. 65:20), disputes that Jesus will settle (Isa. 2:4), and will still need to work the ground in order to survive, even though this will be much easier than today. This all seems a far cry from the promises that the righteous will receive eternal life, and a nature like God's, being made equal to the angels, who do not marry or reproduce (Luke 20:35, 36) The answer lies in the fact that the first part of the Kingdom of God will last for a 1,000 years - a 'Millennium' (see Rev. 20:2-7). During this Millennium there will be two groups of people on earth:

1 The saints (means called out one) those of us who have followed Christ in this life, who will have been given eternal life at the Resurrection.

2 Those who did not know God or the Gospel at the time of Christ's return and the descendants they will have during the thousand years. When Christ comes, two men will be in the field, one will be taken, and the other left (Luke 17:36); those who are "left" will be in this second group. Having received God's nature at the judgment seat, the saints will be unable to die or produce children. The people experiencing these things in the Kingdom must apply to the second group - those who are alive at the time of Christ's return and born during the Millennium. The reward of the righteous is to be "kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). Kings have to reign over somebody; those people who were ignorant of the Gospel at the time of the second coming will therefore be left alive, to be reigned over. Through being "in Christ" we will share his reward - which is to be the king of the world: "He that overcomes...to him will I

give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron...even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26, 27). Knowledge of God's ways will not spread immediately Christ is declared King in Jerusalem; the people will travel to Jerusalem in order to find more knowledge about God (Isa. 2:2, 3). Recall, too, how the mountain of Dan. 2:35, 44 (representing the Kingdom of God) gradually spreads over the earth. It will be the duty of the saints to spread the knowledge of God and therefore His Kingdom. When Israel was the kingdom of God previously, the duty of the priests was to teach the knowledge of God (Mal. 2:5-7). They were placed in various towns for that purpose throughout Israel. For the re-establishment of the Kingdom,

Great White Throne Judgment

Part of the ending of world history as we've known it since the time of creation would be that final act of judgment that Revelation 20 calls the great white throne judgment at which time all who have ever lived and have rejected that redemptive offer of Jesus Christ for salvation full and free will come before God, come before the judge and be judged on the words that they did, the deeds of the flesh and all will be found short of the glory of God. And not having the righteousness that one's required to live forever in the presence of God and two can only be obtained through saving faith in Jesus Christ. It's the only way to get in the kingdom is through Christ by faith, receiving the gift of God. A part from that all who rejected whether actively or passively through all of time will be judged and will join the anti Christ, the false prophet and Satan forever and ever and ever in the lake of fire removed from the glory of God.

God’s rescue mission to sinful creation is to transform the entire cosmos into a glorious community where all beings fulfill God’s perfect purpose and enjoy relationship with Him, worship Him, and serve Him in ways completely consistent with who He is.

Judgment is God assessing the response to His call to reconciliation to Himself through Jesus Christ. The issue is simple: have people accepted or rejected His invitation, His command to join Him? The new creation can be new only if everyone in it loves God and obeys Him. There can be no sin or sinners. They must be separated out.

A day is coming when God will judge the living and the dead through the Son(Acts 17:31). When the Son of Man comes to sit on his throne, all will stand before him for judgment. From the beginning of creation to the end, the Bible makes it clear that the basis of God’s judgment is our deeds.

Jesus made this clear, saying in John 3:36, *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”* Jesus’ death atoned God’s wrath against sin (Romans 3:25;Hebrews 2:17). Those who refuse this gift have the double penalty of wrath for their sins and for rejecting God’s Son. Jesus himself taught this in John 3:18, saying, *“Whoever believes in*

him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." Unlike Jesus' words to the sheep, to the goats on his left he will say, *"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."*

Defining the Kingdom of God

Kingdom on earth

It is God's purpose to reward His people with eternal life at the return of Christ. This eternal life will be spent on earth; God's repeated promises concerning this never imply that the faithful will go to heaven. Only Jesus went to Heaven, and He promised His followers that although they could not go there (Jn. 13:33), He would come back to earth and eternally be with them here (Jn. 14:3). Our salvation and eternal life will be experienced in a bodily form (Rom. 8:11, 23), and this salvation will be the Kingdom of God, to be literally and physically established upon this earth. "The Gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God" (Matt. 4:23) was preached to Abraham in the form of God's promises concerning eternal life on earth (Gal. 3:8). The "kingdom of God" is therefore the time after Christ's return when these promises will be fulfilled. While God is ultimately the King of His entire creation even now, He has given man freewill to rule the world and his own life as he wishes. That means at this time the world is built or made up of "the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17).

When Christ's return, *"the kingdoms of this world (will) become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*" (Rev. 11:15). Then God's will and desires will be completely and openly performed on this earth. Jesus' command for us to pray: *"Your kingdom come (that) Your will be done on earth, as it is (now) in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10). Because of this, the "kingdom of God" is a phrase interchangeable with "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11). "Heaven" is often put for 'God' (Matthew 21:25; Luke 15:18; John. 3:27). As God's will is completely obeyed by the angels in heaven (Ps. 103:19-21), so it will be in the future kingdom of God, when the earth will only be inhabited by the righteous, who will then be "they are like the angels" (Luke 20:36).

Heaven on Earth

Heaven is not where believers spend eternity. Contrary to the popular misconception, we do not spend eternity off in space somewhere separated from our body and the rest of God's physical creation. When Jesus returns to the earth those who are alive in Christ will meet him in the air and return with him to establish his Kingdom on earth.

God creates the heavens in Genesis 1:1 and the new heavens in Revelation 21:1. These heavens are the place where the sun, the moon, and the stars are; they are also the place where the birds fly. These created heavens are not the dwelling place of God.

There is another heaven that is the divine throne room; this is the place where Jesus currently dwells at the right hand of God with God and the angels. This is also called the third heaven (2Corinthians 12:2). To show the multiple meanings of the word heaven, it is helpful to remember that Jesus will come from heaven (2Thess.1:7) and will appear in heaven when he returns.

Most people use the word heaven to refer to a condition or place of great happiness, delight, or pleasure where people go when they die. For this reason, heaven is described in funeral eulogies as the place where the dearly departed will enjoy to a fuller extent the same pleasures they knew during their earthly life (playing golf or throwing touchdowns).

According to the Bible, our eternal home will be on the new earth, a time-space place, where we will live forever. We will always live as human persons, with resurrected physical bodies perfectly suited for this perfect place. This is the Garden of Eden project come to completion.

New Jerusalem

Jesus said I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2). Jesus will bring what he has been preparing with him. The New Jerusalem, which is also called the Tabernacle of God, the Holy City, the City of God, is literally heaven on earth. It is referred to in the Bible in several places (Hebrews 11:10; 12:22–24; and 13:14; Galatians 4:26), but it is most fully described in Revelation 21.

In Revelation 21, all of the ages have come and gone. The Tribulation has passed (Revelation 6—18). The battle of Armageddon has been fought and won by Jesus (Revelation 19:17–21). Satan has been chained for the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (Revelation 20:1–3). A new temple has been established in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40—48). The final rebellion against God has been defeated, and Satan has received his punishment, the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7–10.) The Great White Throne Judgment has taken place, and mankind has been judged (Revelation 20:11–15).

In Revelation 21:1 God does a complete make-over of heaven and earth (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:12–13). The new heaven and new earth are what some call the “eternal state” and will be *“where righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:13). After the re-creation, God reveals the New Jerusalem. John sees a glimpse of it in his vision: *“The Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband”* (Revelation 21:2). This is the city that Abraham looked for in faith (Hebrews 11:10). It is the place where God will dwell with His people forever (Revelation 21:3). Inhabitants of this city will have all tears wiped away (Revelation 21:4). John records that the city is nearly 1,400 miles long, and it is as wide and as high as it is long—a perfect cube (Revelation 21:15–17). The city will also be dazzling in every way. It is lighted by the glory of God (verse 23). Its twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve apostles, are “decorated with every kind of precious stone” (verse 19). It has twelve gates, each a single pearl, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (verses 12 and 21). The street will be made of pure gold (verse 21).

The curse of the old earth will be gone (Revelation 22:3). In the city are the tree of life "*for the healing of the nations*" and the river of life (verses 1–2). It is the place that Paul spoke of: "*In the coming ages (God) might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:6). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate fulfillment of all God's promises. The New Jerusalem is God's goodness made present. The Father and the Lamb are there (Revelation 21:22). Angels are at the gates (verse 12). But the city will be filled with God's redeemed people. The New Jerusalem is the righteous counter to the evil Babylon (Revelation 17), destroyed by God's judgment (Revelation 18). The wicked had their city, and God has His. If you are a believer you are a citizen of the New Jerusalem. *"God raised (you) up with Christ and seated (you) with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:6). You have "*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade"* (1 Peter 1:4).

WHAT IS HELL? (Lake of Fire)

Jesus talks about hell more than does anyone else in all of Scripture. Jesus' words come in the context of the rest of Scripture, which says that God *"desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1Timothy 2:4). Furthermore, he *"is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*(2Peter 3:9).

Despite God's love for and patience with sinners, it is a horrible mistake to dismiss the Bible's teachings on hell. Richard Niebuhr characterized the ongoing attempt of liberal Christians to deny hell as "a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." Jesus said more about hell than about any other topic. Amazingly, 13 percent of his sayings are about hell and judgment; more than half of his parables relate to hell or what is called the lake of fire.

The Bible does not give us a detailed exposition of hell, but there are many descriptions of the fate of its inhabitants in that place of eternal punishment. They include (1) fire; (2) darkness; (3) punishment; (4) exclusion from God's presence; (5) restlessness; (6) second death; and (7) weeping and gnashing of teeth.

There is a long discussion among Christians regarding how literally to take these descriptions. I tend to see this as metaphorical figures trying to describe the indescribable. I don't decrease the severity but only the specificity of the descriptions.

The Bible's portrait of hell is nothing like the mocking cartoon caricatures drawn by Matt Groening or Gary Larson. Hell is not a fun place where sinners get to live out their sinful pleasures, as if Satan rules over hell and sin can be pursued without consequence. This view of Satan ruling in hell comes not from Scripture but from Puritan John Milton's Paradise Lost, which has the Devil arrogantly declaring, "Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n." But Satan will not reign there. Hell is a place of finished and complete destruction that God prepared for the Devil and his angels. It is where the beast and the false prophet and those who worship them will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger,

and he will be destroyed with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. Daniel says that some of the dead will be resurrected "to shame and everlasting contempt."(Daniel 12:2). Jesus says, *"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these will go away into eternal punishment."* Paul tells us:

God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9). The Bible teaches that hell is the grave, where all men go at death.

As a word, the original Hebrew word 'sheol', translated 'hell', means 'a covered place'. 'Hell' is the english version of 'sheol'; so when we read of 'hell' we are not reading a word which has been fully translated. There are many examples where the original word 'sheol' is translated 'grave'. Some modern Bible versions rarely use the word 'hell', translating it more often as 'grave'. A few examples of where this word 'sheol' is translated 'grave' should give us a better understanding of how we should look at the word hell.

- *"Let the wicked...be silent in the grave*" (sheol Ps. 31:17) - they will not be screaming in agony.
- *"God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave"* (sheol Ps. 49:15) - i.e. David's soul or body would be raised from the grave, or 'hell'.

The belief that hell is a place of punishment for the wicked from which they cannot escape just cannot be squared with this; a righteous man can go to hell (the grave) and come out again. Hos. 13:14 confirms this: "I will ransom them (God's people) from the power of the grave (sheol); I will redeem them from death". This is quoted in 1 Cor. 15:55 and applied to the resurrection at Christ's return. In the vision of the second resurrection, "Death and Hades (Greek for 'hell') delivered up the dead who were in them" (Rev. 20:13). Note the parallel between death, i.e. the grave, and Hades (Ps. 6:5).

Hannah's words in 1 Sam. 2:6 are very clear: "The Lord kills and makes alive (through resurrection); he brings down to the grave (sheol), and brings up".

Seeing that 'hell' is the grave, it is to be expected that the righteous will be saved from it through their resurrection to eternal life. It is quite possible to enter 'hell', or the grave, and later to leave it through resurrection. Our greatest example is Jesus, whose "soul was not left in Hades (hell), nor did his flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:31) because he was raised (the parallel between Christ's 'soul' and his 'flesh' or body. That his body "was not left in Hades" implies that it was there for a period, i.e. the three days in which his body was in the grave). That Christ went to 'hell' should be proof enough that it is not just a place where the wicked go.

Both good and bad people go to 'hell' (the grave). Jesus "made his grave with the wicked" (Is. 53:9). There are other examples of righteous men going to hell (grave). Jacob said that he would "go down into the grave (hell)...mourning" for his son Joseph (Gen. 37:35).

It is one of God's principles that the punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23; 8:13; James 1:15). Sin results in total destruction, not eternal torment (Mt. 21:41; 22:7; Mk. 12:9; James 4:12), as surely as people were destroyed by the Flood (Lk. 17:27,29), and as the Israelites died in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10). On both these occasions the sinners died rather than being eternally tormented. It is not probable that the wicked are punished with an eternity of conscious torment and suffering.

We have also seen that God does not impute sin - or count it to our record - if we are ignorant of His word (Rom. 5:13). Those in this position will remain dead. Those who have known God's requirements will be raised and judged at Christ's return. If wicked, the punishment they receive will be death, because this is the judgment for sin. After coming before the Great white throne judgment, they will be punished and then die again, to stay dead for ever. This will be "the second death", spoken of in Rev. 2:11; 20:6. These people will have died once, a death of total unconsciousness. They will be raised and judged at Christ's return, and then punished with a second death, which, like their first death, will be total unconsciousness. This will last forever.

It is in this sense that the punishment for sin is 'everlasting', in that there will be no end to their death. To remain dead for ever is an everlasting punishment. An example of the Bible using this kind of expression is found in Dt. 11:4. This describes God's destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea as an eternal, on-going destruction in that this actual army never again troubled Israel: *"He made the waters of the Red sea overcome them... the Lord has destroyed them to this day".*

One of the parables about Christ's return and the judgment speaks of the wicked being 'slain' in his presence (Luke. 19:27). This hardly fits into the idea that the wicked exist forever in a conscious state, constantly receiving torture. This would be a somewhat unreasonable punishment - eternal torture for deeds of 70 years. God has no pleasure in punishing wicked people; it is therefore to be expected that He will not inflict punishment on them for eternity (Ez. 18:23,32; 33:11;2 Pet. 3:9).

Many often associate 'hell' with the idea of fire and torment. This is in sharp contrast to Bible teaching about hell (the grave). "Like sheep they are laid in the grave (hell); death shall feed on them" (Ps. 49:14) implies that the grave is a place of peaceful oblivion. Despite Christ's soul, or body, being in hell for three days, it did not suffer corruption (Acts 2:31). This would have been impossible if hell were a place of fire. Ez. 32:26-30 gives a picture of the mighty warriors of the nations around, lying in their graves: *"the mighty who have fallen (in battle)...who have gone down to hell with their weapons of war; they have laid their swords under their heads...they shall lie...with those who go down to the Pit".*

The record of Jonah's experiences also contradicts this. Having been swallowed alive by a huge fish, "Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God from the fish's belly. And he said: 'I cried...to the Lord...out of the belly of Sheol (hell) I cried" (Jonah 2:1,2). This parallels "the belly of Sheol" with that of the fish. The fish's belly was truly a 'covered place', which is the fundamental meaning of the word 'sheol'. Obviously, it was not a place of fire, and Jonah came out of "the belly of Sheol" when the fish vomited him out. This pointed forward to the resurrection of Christ from 'hell' (the grave) - see Mt. 12:40.

Fire

However, the Bible does frequently use the image of eternal fire in order to represent God's anger with sin, which will result in the total destruction of the sinner in the grave. Sodom was punished with "eternal fire" (Jude v. 7), which means it was totally destroyed due to the wickedness of the inhabitants. Today that city is in ruins, submerged beneath the waters of the Dead Sea; in no way is it now on fire, which is necessary if we are to understand 'eternal fire' literally. Likewise Jerusalem was threatened with the eternal fire of God's anger, due to the sins of Israel: *"Then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched"* (Jer. 17:27). Jerusalem being the prophesied capital of the future Kingdom (Is. 2:2-4; Ps. 48:2), God did not mean us to read this literally. The houses of the great men in Jerusalem were burnt down with fire (2 Kings 25:9), but that fire did not continue eternally. Fire represents the anger/punishment of God against sin, but His anger is not eternal (Jer. 3:12). Fire turns what it burns to dust; and we know that the ultimate wages of sin is death, a turning back to dust. This perhaps is why fire is used as a figure for punishment for sin.

Similarly, God punished the land of Idumea with fire that would *"not be quenched night and day; its smoke shall ascend for ever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste...the owl and the raven shall dwell in it...thorns shall come up in its palaces"* (Is. 34:9-15). Seeing that animals and plants were to exist in the ruined land of Idumea, the language of eternal fire must refer to God's anger and His total destruction of the place, rather than being taken literally.

The Hebrew and Greek phrases which are translated "for ever" mean strictly, "for the age". Sometimes this refers to literal infinity, for example the age of the kingdom, but not always. Is. 32:14,15 is an example: "The forts and towers will become lairs for ever...until the spirit is poured upon us". This is one way of understanding the 'eternity' of 'eternal fire'.

Time and again God's anger with the sins of Jerusalem and Israel is compared to fire: *"My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place - (Jerusalem)...it will burn, and not be quenched"* (Jer. 7:20; other examples include Lam. 4:11 and 2 Kings 22:17).

Fire is also associated with God's judgment of sin, especially at the return of Christ: *"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up"* (Mal. 4:1). A fire does however burn things up forever. It should be noted that "Hades" is "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14). This indicates that Hades is not the same as "the lake of fire"; this represents complete destruction. In the symbolic manner of the book of Revelation, we are being told that the grave is to be totally destroyed, because at the end of the Millennium there will be no more death.

Gehenna

Perhaps the clearest depiction of hell in Scripture is the frequent mention of hell as “Gehenna.” The name refers to an area outside of the city of Jerusalem where idolatry and sin, including child sacrifice, were practiced. Gehenna was a place so despised and cursed by God’s people that they turned it into the city dump where feces, refuse, and the dead bodies of criminals were stacked. Jesus spoke of Gehenna as the hellish final home of the wicked. Since Gehenna is described as a fiery abyss, clearly it is also the lake of fire to which all the godless will ultimately be eternally sentenced, together with Satan, demons, and unrepentant sinners. So when the Bible speaks of hell as a place where the fire is not quenched and the worm does not die, the original hearers would easily have remembered Gehenna, where this reality was right outside of their city.

Our attitude toward hell should be the same as the Father’s, who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but begs them to turn from their evil ways. Jesus joins the Father’s compassionate yearning as he weeps over Jerusalem. Paul also has *“great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”* Again the point has to be driven home that what was thrown onto those fires did not remain there forever - the bodies decomposed into dust. “Our God (will be) a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29) at the Day of Judgment; the fire of His anger with sin will consume sinners to destruction rather than leave them in a state of only being singed by it and still surviving. At the time of God’s previous judgments of His people Israel at the hand of the Babylonians, Gehenna was filled with dead bodies of the sinners among God’s people (Jer. 7:32,33). Jesus brought together all these Old Testament ideas in his use of the word ‘Gehenna’. He often said that those who were rejected at the judgment seat at

His return would go “to hell (i.e. Gehenna), into the fire that shall never be quenched ... where their worm does not die” (Mk. 9:43, 44). Gehenna would have conjured up in the Jewish mind the ideas of rejection and destruction of the body, and we have seen that eternal fire is an idiom representing the anger of God against sin, and the eternal destruction of sinners through death. The reference to “where their worm does not die” is evidently part of this same idiom for total destruction. The fact that Gehenna was the location of previous punishments of the wicked amongst God’s people, further shows the aptness of Christ’s use of this figure of Gehenna.

Eternal Kingdom Set

When God made man He deemed Him “very good” which means full of potential. One difference that we have from the garden and the Kingdom is we will be set in our perfection. In the Garden man could still sin but in the Kingdom we will be made perfect and set in God’s ways with no turning back. Entering the Kingdom of God at Christ's return is the end result of our entire Christian endeavor in this life (Matt. 25:34; Acts 14:22); it is absolutely vital to have a correct understanding of it. It is a major theme of God’s

revelation; “all the counsel (will) of God” is paralleled with “the kingdom of God” (Acts 20:25, 27). All that it stands for, and our being in it, is all God’s will. Philip's preaching of "Christ" is defined as teaching "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:5, 12). Scripture reminds us how "the kingdom of God" was the main burden of Paul's preaching (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). It is therefore of absolute importance that we fully understand the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, seeing that it forms a vital part of the Gospel message. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22); it is the light at the end of the tunnel of this life, and the motivation to make the sacrifices which the true Christian life involves.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, wanted to know the world's future (see Dan. 2). He was given a vision of a great statue, composed of different metals. Daniel interpreted the head of gold as representing the king of Babylon (Dan. 2:38). After him there was to come a succession of major empires in the area around Israel, to be concluded by a situation in which "as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken" (Dan. 2:42).

The present balance of power in the world is split between many nations, some strong and some weak. Daniel then saw a little stone hit the image on the feet, destroying it, and itself growing into a great mountain which filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34,35). This stone represented Jesus (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8). The "mountain" which He will create all over the earth represents the eternal Kingdom of God, which will be established at his second coming. This prophecy is in itself proof that the kingdom will be on earth, not in heaven.

That the kingdom will only be fully established upon Jesus return is a theme of other passages. Paul speaks of Jesus judging the living and dead "at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). Micah 4:1 picks up Daniel's idea of God's kingdom being like a huge mountain: "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established"; there then follows a description of what this kingdom will be like on the earth (Mic. 4:1-4). God will give Jesus the throne of David in Jerusalem: "He shall reign...for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33). This means that at a certain point Jesus begins to reign on David's throne, and his kingdom begins. This will be at Christ's return. "Of his kingdom there shall be no end" connects with Dan. 2:44: "The God of heaven (shall) set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: (it) shall not be left to other people". Rev. 11:15 uses similar language in describing how that at the second coming, *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he will reign forever and ever".* Again, there must be a specific time when Christ's kingdom and reign begins on earth; this will be at His return.

God our King

At the end of the thousand year millennial reign we will finally see everything set and perfect. Jesus will have completed his work. When that time comes at the end of the 1000 years Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to God. *“But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His*

coming, then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."

1Cor.15:23-25

This is the moment that we have all been waiting for. That glorious moment when God will once again walk on earth just as He did in the garden (Genesis 3:8) however that looks. It will be amazing to finally have God, our Father live with us.

- *"The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders--with great glory." Isaiah 24:23*
- *"I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it."* Revelation 21:22-24
- *"The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted."* Isa. 30:26
- *"The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end*." Isaiah 60:19-20

There is a deep and painful sense in which we are away from the LORD—we do not see as we will one day see. "Blessed are the pure in heart," Jesus said, "for they shall see God." It's a promise. Something greater is coming for all of us in our relation with God.

How many times have we heard a little child say what we all feel, "But daddy, I can't see him"? That is a real heart cry that we should never lose. Revelation 22:4 gives the answer to it: "*They shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads*."

When God makes all things new, He will make us spiritually and morally as pure as flawless crystal, He will give us a body like the body of His glory, He will renovate all creation to take all futility and evil and pain out of it, and finally He will come to us and let us see His face. And so forever and ever we will live with pure hearts and glorious bodies on a new earth in the presence and the glory of our heavenly Father. Amen.

JOURNAL

Notes & Reflections

What stood out to you in this study? Write down questions, verses to look up, and what God is teaching you.