

Heaven: Life Is Short. Forever Is Long.

A Devotional to Help Us Think About Heaven This Summer

Part 2 — Created for Glory

Theme:

Creation, Eden, resurrection, and embodied eternity.

This section establishes that heaven is not escape from creation but restoration of creation.

Day 6 — Created for Heaven

Genesis 1:1

"Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of."—Jonathan Edwards

God created us for heaven.

The Bible begins with heaven.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

The Bible speaks of heaven in three ways—as the sky above us, the vast expanse of space, and the dwelling place where God uniquely manifests his presence. What is important to remember is that God alone is eternal and uncreated. Everything else—including heaven itself—owes its existence to Him.¹

Sometimes people imagine heaven as existing forever alongside God, but Scripture teaches that God is in a category all by himself. Our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created all things—visible and invisible, heaven and earth—for his glory.

Of Christ, Paul writes, "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

That means heaven is not an afterthought. Heaven's not Plan B. It's always been the plan.

Here's at least one reality this pushes us towards. Life on earth is meant to help us dream of heaven. Just imagine you are Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden walking with God. How could it get any better? They walked with God untouched by sin, suffering, or death. Yet, they were made for more. They were made for heaven. Eden gave them a glimpse of the Heaven that awaited.

Maurice Roberts says, "The Garden of Eden was an earthly symbol of heaven."²

So, Eden came locked and loaded with anticipation of something more—Heaven. God created a place for his people to dwell with him in greater intimacy in "a new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17).

This is why Heaven is not primarily an escape from a creation riddled with sin, suffering, and death. The biblical story is far better than escape. Heaven is the restoration and completion of God's good creation.

¹ Maurice Roberts, *Happiness of Heaven*, 12. Maurice Roberts says, "Heaven did not precede creation, and it was not created afterwards." He appeals to Hebrews 4:3, "For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, 'As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,' although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.'" He argues Hell was created in the beginning as well. So, what works were finished from the foundation of the world? Rest and wrath.

² *Ibid.*, 21-22.

The Westminster Catechism captures this beautifully: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

Notice that last word: “forever.”

God did not create humans merely to survive 70 or 80 years on earth; he created us to enjoy eternal communion with God himself. God promises to dwell with his people in his place forever.

That explains why every person carries deep longings that nothing in this world can fully satisfy.

People hunger for permanence in a world where everything fades.

They long for joy untouched by sorrow.

They crave love untouched by betrayal.

They ache for beauty untouched by decay.

Ecclesiastes says God has “put eternity into man’s heart” (Eccl 3:11).

Deep down, human beings know they were made for more than 70 or 80 brief years beneath the curse of sin and death.

John Piper famously says:

“God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”

That’s the very heart of heaven.

Heaven is not mainly about clouds, gold streets, or even reunion with loved ones.

The heart of heaven is full enjoyment of God Himself.

Sin disrupted humanity’s fellowship with God.

The fall introduced death, separation, suffering, shame, and curse into creation.

But God never abandoned His original purpose.

The entire story of Scripture moves toward restoration.

From Eden to the New Jerusalem, God’s plan has always been to dwell with His people forever.

Every longing for permanence, every desire for perfect joy, and every ache for a world made right reminds us that we were created for something this world cannot provide.

You were created to know God.

You were created to enjoy God forever.

You were created for heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the Bible begin by mentioning both heaven and earth?
2. What does it mean that humanity was created to “enjoy God forever”?
3. Why do earthly experiences never fully satisfy human longing?
4. How does heaven complete the story begun in Genesis?
5. Why is God Himself the center of eternal joy?

Day 7 — Heaven is Wonderfully Real

Genesis 1:26-27

"Wherever the inhabitants of that blessed world shall turn their eyes, they shall see nothing but dignity, beauty, and glory."—Jonathan Edwards

Sometimes I wonder if we get more of our images about heaven from cartoons like Tom and Jerry or TV shows like the Good Place. Many imagine heaven as vague and ghostlike.

Clouds.

Harps.

Floating spirits drifting endlessly somewhere far away.

Even Christians sometimes unconsciously think eternity means escaping physical existence forever.

Randy Alcorn calls this Christoplotonism—a word he invited to describe how some Christianize Plato by viewing the visible material world as bad and the invisible spiritual world as good. Here, heaven looks like a disembodied spiritual existence. It's difficult to set our mind on things above if you can't sense them (Colossians 1:2).

But the Bible presents a much richer and more beautiful vision.

After creating all things "good" in Genesis 1, he culminated his creative work by creating man and woman.

Genesis says:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" (Genesis 1:26)

"Image" and "likeness" have been shown to speak of a king or priests relationship of worship to God (likeness), and reflective glory with relationship to others (image). God created us for upward and outward relationship.

He created us—body and soul—as the pinnacle of his good creation. Only after God creates man and woman does he declare that creation is "very good" (Genesis 1:31)

Human beings were created embodied.

God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and placed him in a real world filled with rivers, trees, work, beauty, relationships, food, and fellowship with God.

Creation was not a mistake.

The physical world was God's good design.

That matters because redemption restores what sin corrupted.

Many Christians unknowingly absorb the idea that spiritual things matter while physical things are unimportant. But Scripture consistently teaches that God intends not to discard creation, but to renew it.

Maurice Roberts writes:

“Adam was not created to live forever in Eden, but to pass from Eden to heaven.”

In other words, Eden itself pointed beyond itself.

The garden was the beginning of humanity’s story, not the final destination.

God always intended His people to enjoy perfected fellowship with Him forever.

That is why the future hope of Christians is bodily resurrection.

Jesus did not rise from the grave as a disembodied spirit. He rose physically.

The empty tomb declares that matter matters to God.

The future new creation will not be less real than the present world.

It will be more real.

No curse.

No decay.

No disease.

No death.

No exhaustion.

No broken relationships.

Everything sad will come untrue.

Sometimes Christians fear heaven might eventually become boring because people struggle imagining endless joy.

But boredom belongs to fallen existence.

The presence of infinite beauty, perfect love, resurrected bodies, restored creation, and unhindered fellowship with God will never grow stale.

Every good earthly experience now is only a faint preview.

Meals with friends.

Beautiful mountains.

Laughter.

Music.

Sunsets.

Marriage.

All of them whisper hints of the greater world still coming.

It's almost too much to imagine. Every time I have a bite of chocolate I sneeze. Gia actually will give me a piece of chocolate and then say, "Wait for it," and tries to count down to my sneeze. That sneeze always reminds me of better chocolate in a better world where I experience the sneeze-less joy of heavenly chocolate.

One day believers will not float forever in an imaginary spiritual existence.

They will live resurrected lives in a restored creation where heaven and earth unite forever under the reign of Christ.

Heaven is not less real than this world.

It is wonderfully more real.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do many people imagine heaven as vague or ghostlike?
2. What does Genesis teach about humanity being embodied creatures?
3. Why does Jesus' resurrection matter for understanding heaven?
4. How does the new creation differ from common cultural ideas about eternity?
5. What earthly joys seem to point toward the greater joy of heaven?

Day 8 — The Empty Tomb Means Your Body Matters

1 Corinthians 15:20

"The resurrection means bodies matter."—Randy Alcorn

A couple of years ago, a doctor told me that a disk in my neck was causing my arm to go numb. It's frustrating and limiting. But every ache, weakness, and doctor's visit reminds me of something the Bible already teaches: this body is not what it was created to be.

Bodies break down.

You feel it every year a little more. Knees ache. Energy fades. Hair turns gray. Doctors monitor numbers that once never crossed your mind. Funerals remind us how fragile life really is.

Because life in a fallen world is filled with weakness, many people quietly assume the body itself is the problem. Some even imagine heaven as permanent escape from physical existence—as though eternity means floating forever as disembodied spirits.

But the resurrection of Jesus tells an entirely different story.

Paul does something fascinating in 1 Corinthians 15; he imagines an alternative history. What if Jesus was not raised from the dead? Preaching is empty. Faithful is futile. Sin still reigns. And, Christian hope is DOA—Dead On Arrival. Then he drops this gem:

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

Did you catch that.

“But in fact.”

Jesus really has been raised bodily from the dead. The tomb was empty. Hundreds saw the risen Christ. He ate with His disciples, walked with them, spoke with them, and invited Thomas to touch His wounds.

That matters because Jesus did not come merely to rescue souls from creation. He came to redeem creation itself.

Randy Alcorn warns Christians about what he calls “Christoplatonism,” the subtle belief that spiritual things matter while physical things do not. But the Bible begins with God creating the world and calling it good.

Sin corrupted creation, but God never abandoned His plan.

The resurrection means bodies matter to God. Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep or died. Jesus' bodily resurrection empowers and anticipates the bodily resurrection of every Christian.

This truth should inspire discipline over our bodies today, and a hopeful excitement over the glorified bodies we will receive on the last day.

That means what believers do with their bodies matters now. Holiness matters. Sexual purity matters. Caring for the weak matters. Physical suffering matters. Even simple acts of service done in the body, like a cup of water, matter eternally.

Many Christians feel frustrated by physical limitations. Some battle chronic illness. Others live with disabilities, cancer, exhaustion, anxiety, or deep bodily weakness.

The resurrection does not minimize those struggles. It promises they will not last forever.

One day every believer in Christ will stand fully alive in a glorified body untouched by decay, disease, shame, or death.

Joni Erickson Tada has spent most of her adult life as a quadriplegic. She once described watching hundreds of Christians kneel in prayer while she remained seated in her wheelchair. That experience shaped her anticipation of heaven. She writes, "In heaven I'll have the chance then to jump and dance and walk and run, but the first thing I'm going to do with my resurrected legs is to fall down on grateful, glorified knees..."³

That's resurrection hope.

Not escape from the body, but a brand new glorified body.

The empty tomb means your future is not permanent frailty—weakness, disease, disability, ADHD, aging, or death.

Your future is resurrection.

Because Jesus lives, one day you will too.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do people often think heaven means escape from physical existence?
2. What does Jesus' bodily resurrection teach about creation?
3. How should Christians view their bodies differently?
4. Why is bodily resurrection essential to Christian hope?
5. How does resurrection comfort suffering believers?

³ <https://joniandfriends.org/4-minute-radio-program/kneeling>

Day 9 — The Last Adam and the End of Death

1 Corinthians 15:22-26

"The death of Christ was the death of death."—a paraphrase of John Owen⁴

Our culture is filled with optimism about problems AI can solve. Some futurists imagine a day when humanity overcomes aging, suffering and perhaps even death itself.

Google hired computer scientist Ray Kurzweil as their leading futurist. He said, "...eventually human consciousness and technology would merge to form a new era of human existence." Others dream of transcending our biological limitations. The 1998 Transhumanist Declaration, signed by many technological elites, said one day we will overcome "aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet earth."⁵

Yet every obituary still reads Genesis 5.

He was born.

He died.

She was born.

She died.

Every cemetery tells the same story.

Every hospital room tells the same story.

Every obituary tells the same story.

Every family photograph eventually tells the same story.

Death reigns everywhere.

No family escapes it. No amount of money, power, medicine, intelligence, or success can ultimately stop it. Every funeral reminds us that something is deeply wrong with the world.

The Bible explains why.

⁴ This quote actually paraphrases John Owen's thoughts from the Death of Death. He actually writes, "He underwent death, that we might be delivered from death." See John Owen, the Death of Death in the Death of Christ, 270. Retrieved at <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/deathofdeath.i.ix.vii.html>.

⁵ Samuel James, Digital Liturgies, 42.

Paul traces humanity's story through two representative men: Adam and Christ.

He writes: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Adam was humanity's covenant representative. When he sinned, death entered the world like poison spreading throughout creation.

That is why death feels both universal and unnatural. Death was not meant to be. It invaded the world through sin.

People often say death is simply "part of life," but Scripture never describes death as a friend. Paul calls death an enemy.

Every disease, funeral, and graveside service testifies that creation is broken.

But the good news of Christianity is not merely that Jesus helps people cope with death. The good news is that Jesus came to destroy death itself.

Paul says Jesus isn't just a better Adam but the last Adam—the head of a new humanity. Adam's family inherits death. Christ's family inherits resurrection life.

Adam reached for a forbidden tree and brought death into the world. Christ went willingly to a cursed tree and brought life into the world.

Where Adam failed, Christ obeyed perfectly. Where Adam brought condemnation, Christ brings justification. Where Adam spread death, Christ secures resurrection life.

This means Christianity is not mainly moral advice or self-improvement. Humanity does not merely need encouragement. Humanity needs rescue.

We can't save ourselves from death through medicine or technology. We need Jesus to end our ancient foe.

Paul says, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:26)

Notice death's destruction is future and certain.

Right now, Christians still grieve. We bury people we love. Hospitals still fill with suffering people. Bodies still weaken.

But the resurrection of Jesus guarantees death's reign is temporary.

The empty tomb was the beginning of death's defeat.

Death still fights, but it no longer rules. It is a defeated enemy awaiting its final destruction.

At the cross, death received its death sentence. At the resurrection, its defeat was announced. At Christ's return, its execution will be complete.

One day Christ will fully finish what He started. Graves will open. Bodies will rise. Creation will be restored.

The last enemy will fall.

The cemetery gates will not stand forever.

Death will die.

And Jesus will reign.

For believers, that means death never gets the last word.

Jesus does.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul compare Adam and Jesus?
2. Why does death feel both universal and unnatural?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is the "last Adam"?
4. Why is death described as an enemy rather than a friend?
5. How does Christ's resurrection give hope at funerals and gravesides?

Day 10 — In the Blink of an Eye

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

“The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.”—C.S. Lewis⁶

Have you ever cried during a cartoon?

Up gets me every time. Carl and Ellie dream, plan, laugh, and grow old together. In just a few minutes, we watch their entire life unfold. Then suddenly, Ellie is gone.

One moment they’re planning adventures. The next moment Carl is alone.

Life can change in an instant.

A phone call in the middle of the night. A diagnosis from a doctor. An accident on an ordinary afternoon. One moment life feels stable; the next moment everything changes.

The Bible repeatedly reminds Christians to get ready, because Jesus is coming.

Paul tells us one future moment will change everything forever for believers.

He writes: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

The phrase “twinkling of an eye” refers to something faster than human perception. Paul’s point is simple: when Christ returns, resurrection transformation will happen in an instant.

One moment believers live in weakness, mortality, temptation, and suffering.

The next moment they will stand glorified in the presence of Christ.

One moment a believer is taking a final breath.

The next moment he is breathing new creation air.

One moment she’s battling temptation.

The next moment she’s perfectly holy.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 520. At the end of the Last Battle, Narnia has come to its end. The characters pass through what appears to be death and discover true Narnia—the eternal reality of which the old Narnia was only a shadow. He’s pointing to the Christian hope of the new creation and eternal life.

One moment tears fill our eyes.

The next moment God has wiped them dry forever.

One moment we are saying goodbye at a graveside.

The next moment we are reunited in Christ's presence.

Paul says our present "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God. He does not mean bodies are bad. He means fallen humanity in its present condition is unfit for eternal glory.

Something greater is coming.

And it could happen sooner than we think.

Every believer in Christ will be transformed completely and immediately.

That means no more chronic pain.

No more disease.

No more anxiety.

No more exhaustion.

No more indwelling sin.

No more battle against temptation.

The rise of Christianity makes no sense apart from the reality of the empty tomb. As New Testament scholar N.T. Wright observes, the ancient world had stories about spirits, immortality, and people being taken to heaven, but not about someone who was truly dead being raised bodily to immortal life.

Jesus truly rose.

And because He rose, Christians possess certain hope that they too will one day rise transformed.

Sometimes believers become discouraged by how slowly sanctification seems to move. We fight the same sins, weaknesses, fears, and frustrations year after year. Negative changes often feel frequent and fast. Positive changes often feel infrequent and slow.

Yet one day the struggle will end forever.

Not gradually.

Instantly.

The believer struggling today with weakness and discouragement will one day stand fully perfected before Christ.

The Christian who has spent a lifetime fighting sin will finally become what he or she has always longed to be.

That future is not symbolic.

It is not imaginary.

It is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Himself.

The next great event in your life may not be retirement, graduation, a wedding, or another birthday.

It may be the return of Christ.

The next face you see may be His.

And when he comes, everything will change—in the blink of an eye.

Discussion Questions

1. What part of glorification most encourages you?
2. Why is resurrection transformation necessary?
3. How does this passage reshape fear about aging and death?
4. Why is Christian hope different from wishful thinking?
5. How should believers live knowing Christ could return at any moment?