April 19/20, 2008 *Life after Death Series*

Is Heaven on Earth?

1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8, Revelation 21

Pastor Bryan Clark

There is no doubt both in and out of the church people think about life after death – they think about Heaven. But it's also true both in and out of the church there is a lot of confusion about this topic of Heaven. If you are visiting with us this morning, you've caught us about half way through a series on life after death, and I do believe two weeks ago I stirred up the pot a bit. It's been an interesting couple of weeks – a lot of people reading their Bibles, a lot of people asking questions, some people challenging some of the things I shared – which is fine. I'm fine with that. That's how we learn and grow together. I would never imagine that I've got it all right. But it is interesting the ideas that we get in our head about Heaven that often we simply cannot support biblically.

One of the advantages of ongoing discussion is you get a sense of maybe what wasn't clear, what needs to be explained a little more, so I want to go back just for a couple of minutes to two weeks ago to "60 Seconds After I Die" and clarify a couple of things. One of the comments I've heard from a number of people is "*this is all new*". And I want you to understand that while it may be new to you, it's not new. I would say after 2,000 years of scholarship, my goal as a preacher is to never preach anything that's new. I may word it a little bit differently, I may apply it a little bit differently in our modern context, but if I'm coming up with something new, you can take it to the bank it's probably in error.

Everything that I shared has been believed by biblical scholars for hundreds and hundreds of years, so while it may be new to you, that doesn't make it new. One of the questions has to do with the whole idea of once somebody dies in this time period and goes to this intermediary Heaven – I used the terminology in Heaven "interceding" and I think that was probably a poor use of terminology on my part because those of you who were raised Catholic hear something different in that. Catholics define that terminology differently than what I would mean. I'm simply using the term "intercession" as a synonym for prayer. The Bible uses it that way and that's what I mean – nothing more than that. I'm not in any way implying that you should pray to the saints who have died. I'm not in any way suggesting you should pray to Mary. I would absolutely reject that idea, and I'm not saying they in any way mediate for you. There's only one mediator between God and man and that's the Man Christ Jesus.

I'm simply saying that why would prayer be less in Heaven than it is on earth? When you're there in the presence of Jesus – and we know for a fact that all the attention in Heaven right now is on this cosmic battle on earth where God is building His kingdom. You read through the Bible and you know that Jesus' heart as the head of the church is for His kingdom on earth. That's His attention. He has a number of roles He's fulfilling for that. That's the responsibility of the angels. You read through Revelation, that's the focus of the attention. So what biblical evidence would we have that when we go and rest in the presence of Jesus that somehow we're disconnected from everything that's on the heart of God and just kind of float in a state of bliss? We often like to refer to ***no tears and no sorrow***, but that's Revelation 21 – that's the New Heaven and the New Earth. There is no suggestion that that is the state in this intermediate Heaven.

When you die and go into the presence of Jesus and this intermediate Heaven, God continues to value the same things He's always valued which includes things like relationships. You don't go to

Heaven and suddenly not know the people who were on earth and not care about that and disconnect from everything that God had as a value on this earth. If I were to die tomorrow and go to the presence of Jesus, I would be aware that I have three daughters on this earth; I have a wife on this earth, that Lincoln Berean is on this earth, and that would matter. And because that's the attention of the Heavens, that would be the attention of the saints. And until this cosmic battle is concluded, that is the focus of the attention of Heaven and it's hard to imagine that wouldn't be our focus. And if I have three daughters on this earth and that matters to me, then I'm going to talk to God about that and that is very simply put "prayer".

The second thing related to that is there is some debate about what is the level of awareness. I think it's very high as I shared two weeks ago, but by that I don't mean that when you get to Heaven you take on the attributes of God – that you somehow are omniscient and know everything that's going on every place in the world. You're simply aware the way I'm aware today. I am aware of what's happening in India; I am aware of what's happening in China; I am aware – by and large – of what's happening with my daughters; I am aware of what's happening with my wife. I don't know every moment of every day, but I'm aware and on that basis I take that before God and I pray that God's will be done. So it would be the same type of awareness until eventually the battle is won and the New Heaven and the New Earth comes into play.

I think one of the reasons we have a lot of confusion is because we've failed to distinguish between this intermediate Heaven and the final New Heaven and New Earth. That's what a lot of people are thinking when they're thinking about Heaven. They are referring to what's described in the end of Revelation but fail to realize that doesn't come until the New Heaven and the New Earth and right now it's an intermediate stage and it's different. There's a war going on. The battle is still on and that is the focus of the Heavens and it's the focus of Jesus for sure.

This morning what we want to talk about is what N.T. Rice calls "life after life after death". In other words, what is the New Heaven and the New Earth – that eternal state – after this intermediate state? And we'll talk about it this morning and next week again. What I'd like to do this morning is just try to lay the ground work – kind of the big picture theology – and then next week get into more of the details and the questions I think people probably have. So with that in mind, I invite you to turn with us to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. We started on Easter Sunday trying to make the case for the literal, physical bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That's critically important to our theology of life after death because it's on the basis of Jesus' bodily resurrection that we believe there is life after death. He's the first fruit; He's the pledge; He's the promise; He's in a sense a prototype of what is to come for us. And then Paul makes the case in 1 Corinthians 15 that we too will be literally, physically, bodily resurrected from the dead.

Now our tendency when we talk about defining Heaven is we often try to define Heaven oftentimes more from the movies than from the Scriptures and then in the midst of that discussion we talk about whether we will or will not have a body. I would suggest to you that's completely backwards. The discussion of the New Testament is as a biblical fact we will have a resurrected body and then we begin to build our theology around that. If that's true, then we begin from there to understand the ramifications of that. As one writer said, the theology of a literal, physical body in Heaven is not like an option on a car. It's not like, "Let's see, will I have a CD player or a sunroof," rather it's the very engine itself. If your theology is that you will not have a body in the New Heaven and Earth, then you've misunderstood the resurrection of Jesus and you really began from there to formulate a very faulty view of Heaven. So that's where we start. I want to pick it up in verse 40 of 1 Corinthians 15:

> **There are also Heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the Heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam** [*that's referring to Jesus*] **became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from Heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the Heavenly, so also are those who are Heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the Heavenly.** (1Cor. 40-49; *NASB)

The argument Paul's trying to make here after having established the physical, literal resurrection of Jesus and promising that Jesus is the first fruit – the promise, the pledge – of a literal, physical, bodily resurrection from the dead is that just as there is a physical body on this earth, there will be a literal body in the world to come. So he's comparing a Heavenly body with an earthly body. He says one is perishable; one is imperishable. One is corruptible; one is incorruptible. One is natural; one is spiritual. Now this is where we get into a little bit of trouble. Some of your translations say, "One is physical, one is spiritual." That's a very poor translation because that's not the intent of the Greek at all. It's not making a comparison between that which is physical and that which is spirit.

Actually, those two words are adjectives, and I don't want to get into a big discussion with the Greek language, but the suffix at the end of these adjectives would indicate they're not describing the substance of the body but the energy of the body. In other words, what is it that brings them to life? The body on earth is brought to life by the natural, therefore it's subject to decay; therefore it breaks down; therefore it groans; therefore it's perishable and that comes first. But the energy that energizes the Heavenly body is the Spirit of God – the same Spirit that resurrected Jesus from the dead. It is the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead which is the Spirit then that will empower our Heavenly body, not a disembodied spirit floating around but a body empowered by the Spirit of God that will be imperishable; that will be incorruptible; that will be made for that which is eternal. So in 1 Corinthians 15, he clearly establishes the idea of a literal, physical body in Heaven. He goes on and talks about when it will be changed and the ramifications of that and I want to talk about that two weeks from now when we close up the series.

One of the challenges of trying to talk about this topic is we have to jump to several passages. I don't like doing that. I rarely do it. It's painful to do it this morning. But we really have to do it in order to get this understood, so I invite you to turn back to Romans chapter 8. I want to show you a consistency in the language of the New Testament on this topic and then understanding of the greater picture of what is to come. In Romans 8 verse 10 Paul says:

> **If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.** (Romans 8:10-11)

There is a promise that if you trust in Jesus as Savior, you have the Spirit of God within you, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and while your physical body is still an earthly body – so

it groans and it decays and it's wearing out – your spirit is very much alive and there is a promise that one day that same Spirit will breathe life into your mortal body and it will be changed and it will become a changed literal, physical, eternal body. That's the promise. So right now we're citizens of Heaven still living out our salvation in this earthly body subject to change at the resurrection. But there's more to it than that. Go down to verse 18:

> **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.** (vs. 18-25)

Again the language is very similar to Corinthians – that right now we have been radically changed by the power of Jesus, but we're still living out this Heavenly life in an earthly body. Therefore it groans; it labors; it decays; it breaks down. And we eagerly anticipate the day when Jesus comes back and we will be changed to a Heavenly body that will never again be subject to aches and pains and decay and breakdowns. But the text goes beyond that and says actually, we're a first fruit in that what we've received from the Spirit of God is going to be experienced by all of creation. Paul personified creation by saying even creation groans because it's been subjected to the reality of sin and because of sin in the world, creation groans and it breaks down and it's not what God intended it to be. But all creation eagerly anticipates that great day when we will be changed and our bodies will be redeemed, because at that point creation will be released back to what God intended it to be and it will be redeemed.

It's very important to understand that in Genesis chapter 1 and 2 when God created the Heavens and the earth, God said, "This is good." And God created men and women in the Garden of Eden to walk in intimacy with Him and God said, "This is good." Now, this many years later, God has not changed His mind. God is not saying, "You know, really when I think back that was a bad plan. I'm going to scrap it and start over." A lot of people have this idea that God is going to annihilate the earth and Heaven is going to be something totally dissimilar. But what sense does that make? The reality is that what God created in Genesis 1 and 2, He liked it and He said, "This is good," and He said, "This is what I always wanted." He hasn't changed His mind. He didn't make a mistake. When we begin to believe that this earth is annihilated and we end up in some strange, mysterious Heaven that we can't even understand, in essence what we're saying is in some ways Satan won. Satan made such a mess of this world through sin that God had to scrap it and start over. But that's not good theology. The Bible is very clear that God redeems what He has made back to Himself that ultimately God wins. And he doesn't scrap it, He redeems it.

You remember last fall when we were in Colossians chapter 1 – in that magnificent chapter where it talks about the preeminence and the sufficiency of Christ and it's because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ He has redeemed all things unto Himself, both things in Heaven and things on earth. What that's saying is God isn't going to scrap it; God's going to redeem it. God's

going to bring it all back to what He intended in the first place and at the end of the day, God wins because God has dealt with the sin problem once and forever. It's very important to understand that. If we have this idea that eventually this is so bad it's all going to be scrapped and: *I just can't wait to get out of here* we create what we call an escapism mindset. If that's the case, then who cares? Who cares what we do to the environment? Who cares what we do on this earth at all? I've just got my ticket to Heaven and I can't wait to get out of here. And that's the way a lot of Christians live. But we've misunderstood the theology of Heaven. It isn't an escapism. It's rather an understanding that as citizens of Heaven, we are busy now about God's kingdom because at the end of the day God is going to redeem all creation back and in some mysterious way we can't describe, what we do today will matter in the kingdom to come.

Turn over to Acts chapter 1. We're familiar with the passage in verse 11 that talks about the ascension of Jesus. Often times we emphasize the ascension of Jesus, but we fail to realize what the text says is, "Yes, He's leaving, but He's coming back." Acts 1:11:

> **They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into Heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into Heaven."**

When you read through the New Testament, you find a very consistent message that they are eagerly anticipating the return of Christ. Rather than this idea that: *I can't wait to get out of here,* there's more of a mindset of: *I can't wait till He comes and brings Heaven to earth and brings in what God has always wanted.* That's the consistent language that's used. Flip over to Acts chapter 3. In a message by Peter – pick it up in verse 19:

> **"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom Heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.** (Acts 3:19-20)

You can hear the consistency of the language here where, yes Jesus ascended, but it's a temporary ascension. He is coming back and He's restoring all things unto Himself. He's going to redeem not only His people but all of creation back as He intended it to be. There are passages in the New Testament such as 2 Peter chapter 3 that do talk in very catastrophic terms about this earth. It will say something like, "This earth will be burned." Some translations say "burned up" which is an unfortunate translation. It will be burned, it will be judged, it will be rid of its sin. It also says in that passage that the earth will be destroyed. You say, "Okay, there. That's it – it's going to be destroyed." But right before that it says, **"Just as God destroyed the earth in the time of Noah."** So we've defined our term. It doesn't mean annihilation. It means that God is going to wipe out the old and He's going to bring in the new. Mark Mathewson and I were chatting about some of these passages this week and he made the observation that if the earth is going to be annihilated – if it's going to be burned up – then what is the creation eagerly anticipating in Romans chapter 8? Is the creation eagerly anticipating being annihilated? Of course not. The context is it's eagerly anticipating redemption where it too will be set free from the effects of sin. Go to Philippians chapter 3 – again a fairly familiar passage – chapter 3 verse 20. Paul says:

> **For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.** (Philippians 3:20-21)

Now, notice he says that though we're citizens of Heaven, what we're eagerly anticipating is not *going there*. What we're eagerly anticipating is Him *coming here* – eagerly awaiting Christ to come back. Now, in chapter 1, Paul does say that he's torn because he has a longing to go and be in the presence of Jesus but he also wants to stay and get the work done. Paul knows his theology. He understands if he is executed, then in the intermediate period he would go into the presence of Jesus. But his consistent theology is we are longing for the day when Jesus comes back and redeems all of creation unto Himself, He changes us from an earthy body to a Heavenly body and ushers in the New Heaven and the New Earth – that which everybody longs for today.

When he says here that we are citizens of Heaven but we're still living out our citizenship in these earthly, mortal bodies, what he's saying is the moment we trusted Christ as Savior, the Spirit of God made us alive and we are now citizens of Heaven just as Philippi as a Roman colony were citizens of Rome. But being citizens of Rome didn't mean they were supposed to move to Rome. It meant that they were supposed to bring Rome to Philippi. And it's the understanding that we're citizens of Heaven and because of that we are to be bringing in the value system – the kingdom of God on earth. We are giving people a glimpse; we're giving people a foreshadowing of the redemption to come. As citizens of Heaven, we're not supposed to just sit here with our ticket to Heaven waiting for the evacuation. We've got work to do. We need to be busy about building for the kingdom. That's the focus and attention of God at this time. And so yes, we're citizens of Heaven but still living out our citizenship on this earth through this earthy body beginning to build that which will last forever.

Think about this with me: You go back to John chapter 20 – the chapter that deals with the resurrection of Jesus. Twice in that chapter John emphasizes "on the first day of the week." Now we make a mistake, in my opinion, by using that to try to identify that Sunday is the New Covenant Sabbath. I think that's bad theology. I think everyday is the New Covenant Sabbath – that we rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. That's not the point at all. The point John is making is this: that on Friday the payment for sin was made and Jesus said, "It is finished." Saturday was the day of rest and Sunday was the first day of the new creation – the first day of the New Covenant beginning to usher in the New Heaven and the New Earth through the person of Jesus.

There's a reason why Jesus was mistaken for the gardener. There's an imagery in that that takes us all the way back to Genesis chapter 2 – God in the garden, the picture of original creation. Now there's a picture in John 20 of Jesus ushering in the first day of the new creation. And from that moment on, He has been busy about building His kingdom that will in some mysterious way continue on into the New Heaven and the New Earth. As citizens of Heaven, we're busy about that work now, today.

So rather than an escapism, *I can't wait to get out of here*, we understand we've got work to do and we need to be busy about the kingdom and investing ourselves in things that somehow in some way will last forever in the world to come. One more passage – Revelation chapter 21 – next week we'll look at Revelation 21 and 22 in much more detail, but I want you to pay careful attention to the imagery that is used in Revelation 21:

> **Then I saw a new Heaven and a new earth; for the first Heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."** (Rev 21: 1-4)

Now, that verse about no crying, no pain – it's hard to even imagine such a world – but that is the New Heaven and the New Earth. That shows up in Revelation chapter 21. It is not a description of the intermediate Heaven. As long as there is a war going on and as long as the beloved saints of God are engaged in the war, it's not a time for bliss, it's a time for victory, and I think that will reflect the Heavens just as much as it reflects life on earth. But then in Revelation 21, Jesus ushers in the New Heaven and the New Earth. You say, "Well doesn't it say here that the old will pass away? See, there it's annihilated." No it's not. What it says is, "It will pass away and it will become new." Does that sound a little bit familiar? 2 Corinthians 5:17: ***Therefore in Christ you have become a new creation. Old things have passed away. All things have become new.*** Exact same Greek words.

We are today a picture of the world to come – that God has taken away the old and He has made us new. We've been born again. We're new creations in Christ. The old has passed away, we have become new – citizens of Heaven right now beginning the work on the kingdom on earth until Jesus brings in the New Heaven and the New Earth. The language here of God coming down and dwelling with His people and His people dwelling with Him is very Genesis 1 and 2. As a matter of fact, Revelation 21 and 22 correspond very closely with Genesis 1 and 2. It's taking us back to the fact that that's what God always wanted. He hasn't changed His mind. God has always wanted for us what is pictured in Genesis 1 and 2. And God will one day redeem all creation and bring it back to what God always intended. He will take away the effects of sin and He will usher in His new creation which tells us that Heaven will be more similar than dissimilar; it will be this world as God intended – perfected. You get more of a glimpse of Heaven in Genesis 2 than you get in the movies. I will assure you of that.

So let's put the whole thing together and see if we can make some sense of this. In Genesis chapter 1 and 2, you have what God has always wanted – that He would create this paradise, He would create men and women in His image made for relationship with one another and with Himself, and we would have meaningful work as we steward and take care of the garden. But because of sin entering into the picture, in essence, Heaven and earth were separated. And of course, that's the problem throughout the Scriptures. You get into the New Testament, though, and the bridge between Heaven and earth was crossed in the person of Jesus Christ. That's why Ephesians 1:10 says Heaven and earth was summed up together in the person of Christ, that Jesus as God Himself came to this earth and became flesh bringing Heaven and earth together again. Through His death on the cross, Jesus paid the price of sin. Therefore, on that grand Sunday, He ushered in the beginning of the New Covenant – the beginning of the New Creation – that would make it possible for Heaven and earth to dwell together again. That's why Jesus said, **"When you pray, pray 'Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed by they name, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."** We're bringing the kingdom together as God always intended.

When we trust Jesus as Savior, we have been made radically alive and filled with the Spirit of God that resurrected Jesus from the dead, but currently we live out our new-found life in Christ in this mortal body eagerly anticipating the day when our body will be changed to that which is imperishable. That's the promise – when we will be made like Him. We shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him. Until that day, we understand that we're citizens of Heaven living out that life here on earth, therefore instead of a desire to escape and say, "Who cares about this world," we are busy about the work of this kingdom – of the kingdom of God – understanding one day He is going to usher in the new kingdom, and there's some correlation from this world to that world that matters to God, so it should matter to us.

You have this beautiful picture of Jesus Christ on the basis of His work on the cross bringing Heaven and earth together as a bride made ready for the bridegroom. That's the imagery of Christ and the church and, lo and behold, it shows up in Revelation 21 that that is the picture of all creation. It's all going to be redeemed back as God intended and the Heaven and the earth is going to come together as a bride and a husband and God's plan will ultimately be fulfilled. All the wars, all pain, all suffering, all struggling, all crying will be a thing of the past and God will take us back to what He always wanted in Genesis 1 and 2 – that He would dwell with us, that Heaven and earth would come together and we would walk with God in the garden.

Will we have a literal, physical body? Yes. Will we know one another and have relationships? Yes. Will we have meaningful work and recreation in the garden? Yes. More similar than dissimilar to the world that we have known, only perfected in every way. Mitch Albom has an interesting book called The Five People You Meet in Heaven. It's an interesting read; it's very well written, but it couldn't be more far off. The reality is one day when we get to Heaven it will not be an attempt to make us feel good about our lives on earth. The focus of attention will not be on us at all. It will be on the resurrected, glorified Savior in all of His glory who brought Heaven and earth together that we might again walk hand in hand with our Savior in the garden with all the values that God has valued on this earth perfected in the New Heaven and the New Earth forever. It's more glorious than we can even begin to imagine.

Our Father, we are grateful this morning that You in Your grace and Your mercy sent Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin that we might be redeemed – not annihilated – but redeemed, that old things are passed away and all things have become new just as you have promised for all creation, Lord, that one day it will all be redeemed, brought back to the perfect state you intended. Lord, it's hard for us now to imagine walking hand in hand with the people that we love, with the people down through the ages that You have redeemed in the presence of the Savior who died for us. Lord, help us to understand it to the degree that rather than longing to escape, it motivates us to be busy about the kingdom understanding somehow, in some way, what we do today will matter then. Lord, this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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April 19/20, 2008

Study Questions

Life after Death Series

Is Heaven on Earth?

I Corinthians 15, Romans 8, Revelation 21

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. Review what you've learned about life after death so far in this series. What adjustments have you made in your thinking about this subject?

2. How significant is the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus to our concept of Heaven? Why?

3. Many Christians hold strong views of Heaven that simply cannot be sustained from the Scriptures. Can you identify what some of those might be?

Bible Study

1. Read I Corinthians 15:39-58. A misguided theology of Heaven begins with a false premise that although we are physically here we will be a disembodied spirit after death. This view is far more Gnostic in its orientation than biblical. Is the contrast Paul makes in I Corinthians 15 between body and spirit or natural (corruptible) versus spiritual (Heavenly or incorruptible)? Does the text affirm we will be disembodied spirits or have resurrected bodies? How does that compare with 15:20-23?

2. Read Romans 8:10-11. How do these verses correlate to I Cor. 15?

3. Read Romans 8:18-25. What is all creation eagerly anticipating? What do you think this means?

4. Read II Peter 3:10-13. At first glance this text may seem to conflict with the Romans 8 idea of creation being redeemed. However, words like burned and destroyed don't have to mean annihilated. Notice in 3:6 Peter refers to the earth being destroyed by the flood of Noah. Clearly the world wasn't annihilated by the flood. Fire often refers to judgment as in I Corinthians 3:12-15. If the earth will someday be annihilated, what is it eagerly anticipating in Romans 8?

5. Read Acts 1:11, 3:21, Phil. 3:20-21. Is the focus on us going to Heaven or on "Heaven" coming to earth? What's the difference between a theology of escapism and a theology of redemption as it relates to how we live our lives today?

6. Read Rev. 21:1-4. Compare the language with 2 Cor. 5:17. Notice also the bride and bridegroom language. Compare that with Eph. 1:10. In what way was Jesus the model for the new Heaven and new earth?

Application

1. One of the most exciting applications of a right view of Heaven is in understanding our work today done in Jesus name is not in vain (see I Cor. 15:58). An annihilation view of the earth produces an escapism mind-set, why bother? A redemption view understands that in some mysterious way what we do today as citizens of Heaven on earth will carry over to that which will last forever. What does that mean to you?

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