

The Bible is not a lot of stories about people trying to find God; it is one story about God seeking us. The search began in Genesis after the Fall, and it will last until the last moment of time as we know it – and then a new story will begin. God is waiting to return to give everyone a chance to be saved, but one day Jesus is coming back to set all things right and all things new again.

The Covenant story did not end at the cross and Empty Tomb. This is a restoration project, and the project is not yet complete. Time on earth is so brief compared to eternity.

This world is a “foretaste of glory divine.” But don't think this is all there is. A friend took John Woods to eat at Char. The friend ordered four appetizers so John could try some different American things – like fried green tomatoes. John really enjoyed the appetizers. Then he had a meal and he had dessert. He was really full. When we got home he said, “If I had known what was still to come I wouldn't have hoovered up all the appetizers.” Don't get lost in the appetizers. This world is not all there is. There is much more to come.

What is it going to be like in heaven? Today let's think about heaven in light of what God planned originally. What has God always wanted?

1. God created a physical world.

God is Spirit, but He created a physical reality. We are spiritual and physical. God made our bodies. God made our earth, our universe. Jesus had a body when He came. He had a body after resurrection. Jesus has a body now. Our new bodies will be different than these bodies, but we will have a body.

I Corinthians 15:42-44 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Heaven is a real place. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. We will finally get to live life as it was meant to be lived. This is your future if you are a Christian.

I Corinthians 15:54-57 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What will the new body be like? Will we have more than five senses, or will our senses be heightened? What would a sunset look like if you could see the entire spectrum of light? What would the song of the angels sound like if we could hear a greater spectrum of notes?

Revelation 21 describes a new heaven and a new earth. How beautiful will it be? The most beautiful place you have seen is marred by sin. The Bible says creation groans (and we do, too.)

What does it mean that we are groaning? It means things are not yet right – we are groaning, we are longing for something more. I like the way Eugene Peterson translated in *The Message*:

Romans 8:18-23 *The Message*

18-21 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

22-23 All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance.

When we see what is happening around us, we get discouraged. When we look ahead to the November elections, we get discouraged. I say we are not looking far enough ahead. Let's look out into the future and see heaven. Sometimes we fall in love with this world and this life. We should be looking beyond this life to the next. When it gets bad here, it makes us long for heaven that much more! Let's think about what it will be like when we get to heaven!

2. God created man in His image

God is unlimited. We have limits. We are fallen, imperfect. We are scared and insecure. We get depressed, apathetic, angry. We are lonely. We are broken. What will it be like to be well – physically, mentally, emotionally?

We can and do experience growth on earth, but we are all marred by sin. Imagine what it will be like to be totally whole, and free from sin. We will finally be what we were created to be.

I believe we will know each other. On the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples knew it was Moses and Elijah with Jesus, and they had not met either of them before.

Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Will we know one another when we get to heaven?" He said, "We won't know each other until we get to heaven."

I Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

We may have to have a new body to withstand the glory of seeing Jesus face to face. Moses couldn't see the face of God because it would kill him. How are we going to be able to stand it in heaven? We will have a glorified body. I think it will require glorified body to withstand the awesome power of being in the presences of Almighty God.

3. God created Adam to rule over creation – (under God's authority)

I think we will have work to do in heaven. God created Adam to work – before the Fall.

Genesis 1:27-28 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and

multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Revelation 22:3-5 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Will there be work in heaven? Adam had work to do before the fall. Work is now cursed. But work was a part of God’s original plan. Work was originally intended to be fulfilling, not frustrating. Do you know the satisfaction of making something you enjoy making and see the finished project? What if you could do what you loved the most without any of the frustrations associated with it? What if you could work with people who were perfect? I’m not sure what it means, but we will reign with God. This implies some type of work.

Heaven will be more than sitting in church for all eternity. But worship in heaven will be amazing. Can you imagine what it will be like to have perfect worship? Worship is supposed to be focused on God, but on earth the worship is too often focused on people, or people get in the way. We get distracted by so many things; or the devil comes to disrupt our thoughts. What will it be like to worship without the hindrance of sin, without the distraction of Satan, and in the direct presence of God?

4. God has always wanted an abiding relationship with us.

God invites us into belonging with Him. God did not make us robots. God enjoyed perfect fellowship within the Trinity in eternity past. God created us so we could be a part of that fellowship. God wanted it for us and we sinned and betrayed the relationship. God wants it for us so much that He came and died to restore our relationship with Him so we could enjoy eternity with Him.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The word “with” means a very close intimacy – eye to eye; nose to nose; knee to knee. God wants that kind of relationship with us.

Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’

Will we have a new name – a special name that only God calls us? I heard about a young man from India that was named for one of their gods. When he came to faith in Christ, he changed his name. Do you have a special name for your husband or wife that you only use with them? You will have a personal, intimate, one-on-one relationship with God.

What will it be like to experience delight in God’s presence? What are the things that bring you the greatest joy?

Is it the beach, mountains, babies, Spring, food, music, when someone loves you back?

Why do these things delight us? If it is good, it bears the mark of the One Who made it. Creation reflects the glory of God. If just a fragment of His glory makes us feel good, then what will it be like to be at the Source of all that is good?

The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

C.S. Lewis said, "I find in myself a longing for something that I cannot find here which tells me that I must be designed for another place."

God has been working throughout history to restore what was lost in the Fall. We have not yet experienced life as God intended. Heaven is going to be better than we can imagine.

The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean.

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then he cried: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it is sometimes looked a little like this.

The cross makes entrance to heaven possible. This is why eternity is not too long to praise Him.

The end of the Chronicles of Narnia:

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

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. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 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, 4 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."
*5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.*