



Did God Make Heaven and Hell Humanity's Destiny? (Part I)

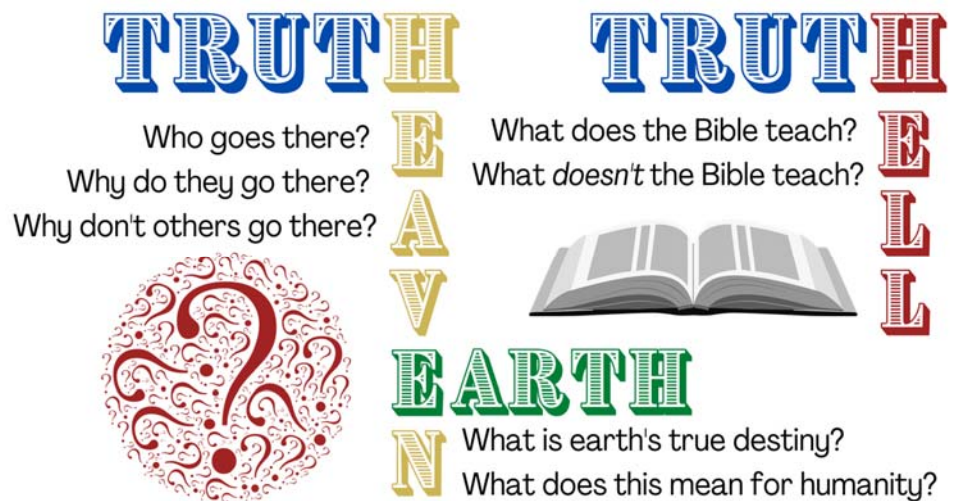
Matthew 6:10: (NASB) *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*



The general consensus in Christianity is that there are two paths - two destinies that await humanity. First, there is the heavenly bliss of being with Jesus. After all, Jesus himself said he was preparing a place for his followers in heaven, and he also said he would bring us there. Second, there is the fiery, torturous eternal existence of hell. This is reserved for everyone else who did not follow Jesus. While this "two-destiny" approach may sound simple, it does not stand the test of scrutiny. For starters, the fact is that the vast majority of

humanity has not known or accepted the name of Jesus. Does this mean that God's careful creation of humanity "in His image" was a resounding failure? And what about planet earth? If it is doomed for a fiery end, then why did Jesus tell us to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth? These are just the beginning of some big questions, so let's see if we can find big, biblical answers.

Many Christians envision the afterlife as a binary concept of either heaven or hell. There are several factors we need to put in place to reveal God's ultimate plan for all humanity.



Let's begin with the earth. The Apostle Peter paints a dramatic picture of the earth's destiny.

He begins by fast forwarding to conditions of the last days:

2 Peter 3:3-4: (NASB) *³Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.*

Ancient prophecies being mocked by self-centered people. This sounds familiar, as we are now *in the last days*.



Peter next reviews an ancient judgment that reminds us of God's ultimate control:

2 Peter 3:5-8: (NASB) ⁵*For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.*

What was destroyed? The previous heavens and earth.

We suggest this is a symbolic destruction. The heavens represent the spiritual and governmental ways of the world that existed before the Flood, and the earth represents humanity's social order.

This tells us the "world" that was destroyed consisted of the heavens and the earth. The King James Version of verse 6 calls this *the world that was*. *The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*. We know the actual ball of earth and the sky were not literally destroyed.

Next comes the destiny of the present heavens and earth:

⁷*But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*

The day of judgment is not a single 24-hour day. Like the Flood, will weed out unrighteousness.



The present heavens and earth, meaning this present evil world we live in now is *reserved for fire* - that sounds pretty scary - there is fire and destruction, and it sounds like it will last a really long time! What does this mean?

This verse has a lot of symbolism which we will prove as we continue. It says this day of judgment *is like a thousand years* - it is not a day of reprimand and destruction. It is a *day of judgment* - a day of trial. The Greek word for judgment, *krisis*, actually means "trial." While this might sound scary, a more detailed study shows it is a necessary time of repentance and learning. Judgment is ultimately for the purpose of reconciling man back to God. Man will have the opportunity to learn righteousness (many for the very first time), make amends and move forward in the kingdom.

Peter now reminds us of God's desire for life and his judgment upon sin:

2 Peter 3:9-13: (NASB) ⁹*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing ("not minded") for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*



Not wishing for any to perish - the word *wishing* is a poor translation. It means "not minded," or "not of the mind." God did not have in His mind for any to perish. Instead, He wanted an opportunity for repentance. In order for the repentance to happen, the present social order needs to be removed. That is where this picture of the intense heat and the "destruction" of the earth comes in. It is the destruction of the social order because that is where the problem stems. It must be removed in order to be replaced with something productive. It is NOT in God's mind to torment and torture.

We believe this to be symbolic heat and burning, showing the complete destruction of the way the world is run by the social and false religious systems of this present world. We know the destruction is symbolic because we already have scriptural precedent that tells us the first heavens and earth, the *world that was*, was "destroyed." Now *the world that is* will also be "destroyed."

The day of judgment is a time of learning and repentance. Understanding this takes the fear out of serving God - He is not condemning the majority of mankind to eternal torment. The day of judgment is hopeful for humanity.



What should this mean for those who follow Jesus:

¹¹Since all these things are to be **destroyed** <3089> in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³But according to His promise we are looking for **new** <2357> heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.



There cannot be righteousness dwelling in an abandoned, burned-out property.



Destroyed: Strongs #3089 *luo*; a primary verb; to "loosen"

King James Version translates this as: break (up), destroy, dissolve, (un-) loose, melt, put off

When something is destroyed or loosened, it is pulled off; it is pulled away from its moorings and it is not recoverable. This is what happens to the present social order - the present evil world. It is put out of commission.

New: Strongs #2537 *kainos*; new (especially in freshness)

It is a renewed earth, *not* a brand-new earth, just like the renewed earth and social order after the great Flood.

How can we be sure the earth will not be literally destroyed? Is there other scriptural proof?

One of the amazing things about the Bible is that throughout all of its books it verifies the truths that it teaches. There is great power and confirmation that one writer living in a specific time agrees with other writers living at different times and places. Let's look at seven different Old Testament Bible writers who all agree on the future destiny of the earth.



Zephaniah starts out seeming to prove the earth WILL be destroyed:

Zephaniah 3:8-11: (NASB) ⁸Therefore wait for Me, declares the LORD, for the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal.

The book of Zephaniah has both literal and prophetic warnings that happened in the Old Testament. There was a judgment against the nation of Judah back then, but this gathering of all nations and the pouring out of indignations on them was never literally fulfilled - so it is yet future. This refers to a coming global day of judgment.



What happens as a result of this fiery devouring? Does the earth become crispy and useless? Did the fire burn it out and take all of the goodness and all of the life right out of it?

Let's look at the next verse for the answer:

⁹For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

If the earth was burned, where are these people who still have lips calling on the name of the Lord? This is a conversion of the nations who have been gathered to serve God. Are they in heaven?

Where is this purification taking place AFTER the earth is devoured by God's anger?

¹⁰From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, will bring My offerings.

¹¹In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain.

The answer: it is on earth! It talks about *from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia* - there is no Ethiopia in heaven. The idea is, even though Zephaniah says *the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal*, we also have the assurance that earth was not to be destroyed. Zephaniah gives us a dramatic view of earth's destiny.

Let's go through several other Old Testament writers and look at what they say about the destiny of earth. Does the earth abide forever or is the earth meant for destruction? We have two very dramatically different potential end results. What do the Scriptures say?



Moses gives us the earliest view of God's clear intentions for the earth. This statement takes place right after the flood:

Genesis 8:20-22: (NASB) ²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. ²²While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Technically it says *WHILE the earth remains*, so there is a thought of repetition and continuance, but also conditional - as long as the earth is still here. On its own, this text does not prove the earth remains forever, but that is why a topical Bible study is important to bring in supporting Scriptures.

This verse does prove that God said, *I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done*. Peter described the worldwide destruction of heaven and earth that had taken place and God promises not to do that again. If we say the earth is going to be burned up with fire, God would be contradicting Himself, and we know He cannot. We have the affirmative statement that He will *never again destroy every living thing*.

Now we have a specific statement by Solomon defining God's plan of perpetuity for earth:

Ecclesiastes 1:3-4: (NASB) ³What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun? ⁴A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains **forever** <5769>.

Forever: Strongs #5769 *owlam*; or *olam*; properly, concealed, i.e., the vanishing point; generally, time out of mind (past or future), i.e. (practically) eternity

The idea of the vanishing point is a great definition. When we look at the horizon for miles, at some point it looks like the world ends but there is still more horizon. It is beyond the vanishing point. The next verse is going to add on to <5769>. Solomon says the earth abides or remains forever, over and beyond the vanishing point.



David brings unmistakable emphasis to the perpetuity of the earth:

Psalms 104:5: (NASB) *He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever* <5769 and *ever* <5703>.

Ever: Strongs #5703 *`ad*; duration, in the sense of advance or perpetuity

This builds on the Ecclesiastes text. It is a perpetual, self-fulfilling movement forward that does not ever stop. If we throw something in outer space it will just keep going because there is nothing to stop it; there is no gravity. That is the sense of the earth. It is being described as a planet of perpetuity.

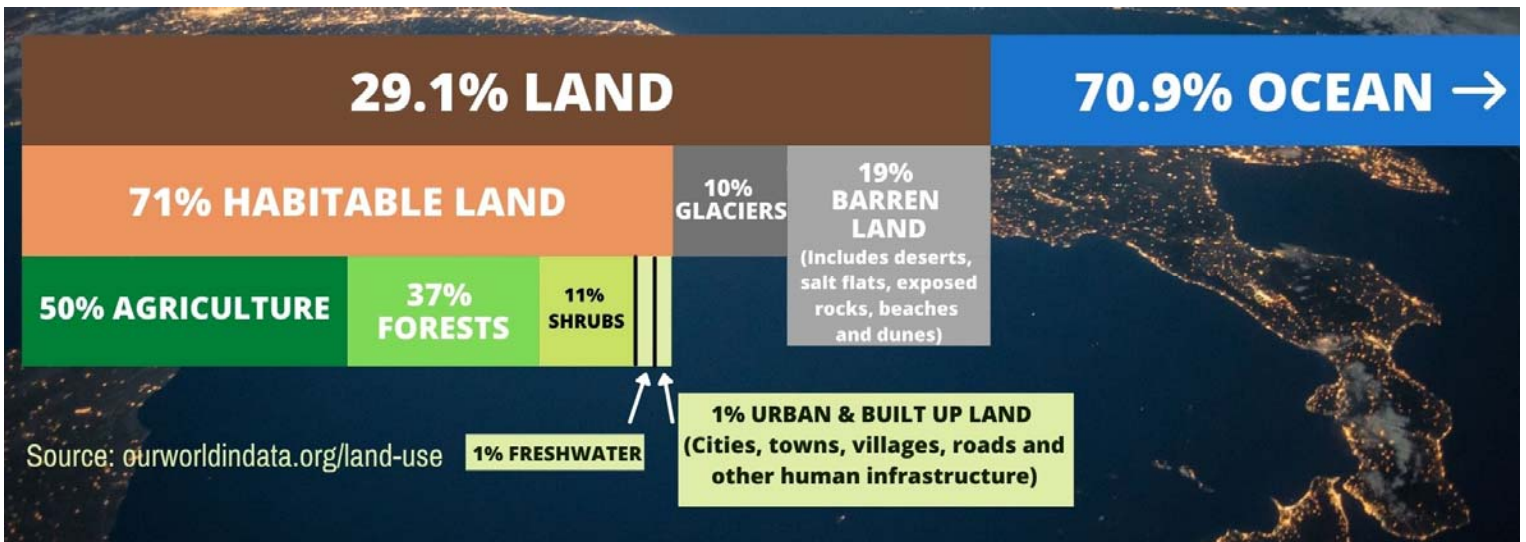
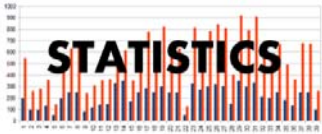
The Bible unequivocally tells us the earth is not burned up.



Isaiah adds an unmistakable reason for God's clearly-stated plan for the perpetuity of the earth:

Isaiah 45:18: (NASB) *For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

In one sense, we could say it has never been thoroughly inhabited. Only 29.1 percent of the earth is land; the rest is ocean. Of that, only about 71 percent is habitable. The rest - which is about 27 million square miles - is glaciers and barren land like deserts, beaches and exposed rocks. Of the inhabited land, one percent is built-up urban areas including cities, towns, villages, roads and other human infrastructure. There is a lot of room around here that needs to be rebalanced, but it is not thoroughly inhabitable.



The LORD formed the world to be inhabited. **Does this mean it is inhabited by human beings forever?**

We are going through different books of the Old Testament so we can see plainly that the Bible as a unit is teaching us something incredible that most of us miss.

Ezekiel reinforces the perpetuity of the earth and its connection to the future of Israel:

Ezekiel 37:24-28: (NASB) *²⁴My servant David (this is a picture of Christ - Jesus was born from the house of David) will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. ²⁵They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. ²⁷My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ²⁸And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.*



They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob - unmistakably this is planet earth. For how long? It says their sons and their sons' sons forever... it will be an everlasting covenant (promise) with them. God will set His sanctuary in their midst forever. This is a clear picture - earth, Israel, God's promise, God's sanctuary - all there forever! Incidentally, it says, and the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, so now there are other people in this picture forever on earth.

Finally, Daniel, while interpreting a dream, reveals God's everlasting plans for ALL humanity on earth:

Daniel 2:34-35: (NASB) ³⁴You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

In this symbolic dream, the stone destroys the statue, grinds it to dust, the wind blows it away and the stone becomes a great mountain and *fills the earth*.

Daniel 2:44-45: (NASB) ⁴⁴In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.



King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream but forgot it. Daniel had to tell him what the dream was, and then what it represented. It was a dead-on prediction of the defeat of world powers in the correct order represented by different body parts of a giant statue of a man: Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece and Rome. Eventually the stone cut without hands strikes the statue down and starts to fill the whole earth; that stone being God's kingdom, a holy government. God's administration is controlling the earth. God has it the way He designed it from the start.

**Episode 806:
Why Was Daniel
So Special? (Part I)**

**Episode 786
Why Do Historians
Hate Daniel So Much?**

No matter how we look at this, there are many Scriptures that focus on various aspects of the everlasting nature of earth and the intentions behind it.

DEFINING THE DESTINY of planet Earth



THE BIBLE IS EMPHATIC THAT THE EARTH WILL ALWAYS PLAY A ROLE IN GOD'S PLAN AS A HOME FOR HUMANITY. THIS SIMPLE TRUTH CALLS MANY CHRISTIAN CONCLUSIONS INTO QUESTION.

The details and the variety of sources about earth's future are convincing. God's word is so inspiring!

With the earth established as a future domain for humanity, should our view of heaven change?

We define heaven as the spiritual realm outside of our earthly understanding in which God and His holy angels dwell. While this realm is unfathomable to our simple human minds, we are given a lot to go on in terms of understanding how it fits in with the future of a select few who follow Christ.



Until Jesus came, there was never a promise or expectation of a heavenly reward. This represents millions of people who never heard his name.

We are not minimizing heaven, but do not forget the earth! Not only does the earth abide forever; it has an eternal purpose for humanity.

Important aspects of heaven that are revealed throughout the New Testament:



OPPORTUNITY

Jesus introduced the concept of heavenly glory, though his disciples were not able to grasp it:

Matthew 5:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Your reward in heaven is great - without having an expectation of a heavenly reward, we wonder if those disciples listening to the Sermon on the Mount were confused about what Jesus meant.



PLACE

Before his crucifixion, Jesus made sure his followers knew they were going to have a specific place with him in heaven:

John 14:1-3: (NASB) ¹*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.* ²*In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.* ³*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

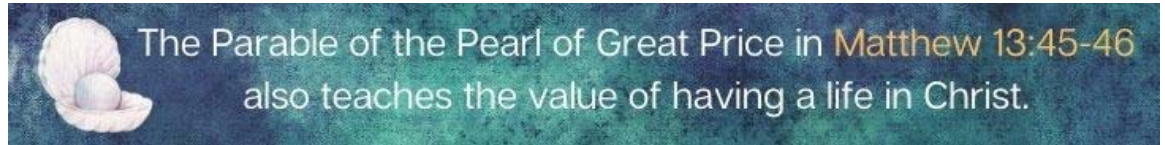
We all want to know what heaven is like. Here we are told it is being "renovated" or a new section is being built just for the faithful followers of Jesus! It does not give us a lot of information to satisfy our curiosity, but we do know that Jesus will be there. Something new and unique is being prepared.



COMPARATIVE VALUE

What waits for the faithful followers of Jesus is an eternal existence far beyond any human experience:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: (NASB) ¹⁶*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.* ¹⁷*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,* ¹⁸*while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*



Temporal vs. eternal - What we see here on earth is not what is in heaven. The trials of this life are producing in us *an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. These things which are not seen are eternal.*

Trauma does not feel like *momentary, light affliction*, but our life here is but a flicker in time compared to the glory and magnificence of heaven.



INHERITANCE

Jesus' disciples will share glory with Jesus:

Romans 8:17-22: (NASB) ¹⁷*and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.* 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.*

If indeed we suffer with him...we may also be glorified with him - this is huge!



MISSION

The call of heaven has everything to do with blessing the sin-sick world, who long for deliverance:

¹⁹*For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.* ²⁰*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope* ²¹*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.* ²²*For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*



Two groups are described - one is being freed from slavery and the other is helping facilitate the release of the slaves. *The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God - the followers of Christ are the children of God and the creation is the "everybody else."*

Part of the mission of those who go to heaven (the followers of Christ) is the reconciliation of mankind (the creation) back to God. Heaven is not a place of inactivity. Heaven is working to fulfill the plan of the Almighty God.



CLOSENESS TO GOD

If the disciples of Jesus will be with him and he is at the right hand of God, they are in the most sacred position imaginable:

Colossians 3:1-4: (NASB) ¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Heaven is no small matter! This is a massive privilege being offered through God's grace. There is nothing we can do to earn this - it is through the grace of God and the role Jesus plays in our justification.



THE GLORIOUS FINALITY OF HEAVEN

Heaven will mean everlasting life:

Revelation 2:10: (NASB) *...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

A "crowning" accomplishment of someone is their greatest success.



TYPE OF HEAVENLY NATURE

Not just life but life of the divine nature:

2 Peter 1:3-4: (NASB) ³seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The divine nature is immortality. It means life perpetuates itself from within. No external source is needed to sustain life. A divine being is indestructible and death-proof. God does not arbitrarily give this divine nature. See also Romans 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 15:53,54. This is the same plane of existence as God and Christ, and is being offered to the true followers of Jesus - only a tiny fraction of mankind.



These are not just “good” people; they have sacrificed their will and life to become crystalized in Christlikeness so that once they are released from this human condition, they will not flinch away from anything in relation to God’s will. The test has to be to penetrate our very core. God must know that we are eternally loyal.

This privilege is so high that He cannot take the chance of someone becoming a Satan. Satan was faithful and glorified God but something happened when he decided he wanted to be *like the Most High* in [Isaiah 14:14](#). Satan was and is very powerful. Great power will find the worst in you. Can you imagine if Satan had the divine nature, if he was immortal and could not be killed?



This *upward call or high calling to be partakers of the divine nature* is NOT to become an angel. There is no Scripture that even hints that man dies and turns into an angel, sitting on a cloud with a harp, protecting their loved ones from on high. This is a MUCH higher plane of existence than the angels.

[1 Corinthians 6:3](#) tells us that one of the responsibilities of this divine class will be to judge the angels. The word for *judge* in this text uses the Greek word *krino*, meaning “to rule or govern,” so they will have some authority over the angels. It is the highest position in the universe.



DEFINING THE DESTINATION of heaven



THE HEAVENLY REALM IS NO SMALL MATTER.
JESUS EMPHATICALLY TAUGHT US THAT
ITS POWER AND GLORY AND STATION
ARE BEING PREPARED FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

The Bible gives us just a tiny glimpse of the magnificence of heaven.

Exactly who is going to heaven?
Is such glory and power being offered to anyone who loves Jesus?

This does not have to be a hard question to answer. Let’s think for a moment about Satan having once been a mighty, God-serving spiritual being and how his pride brought him down. Do we think for one moment that God would offer such power to millions who were not first thoroughly tested?

Would God offer deathlessness to us just because we like Him? No, of course not. This would be a dangerous practice. Getting into heaven and being offered immortality requires serious consideration on God’s part and serious dedication on the believer’s part.



A follower of Christ who wishes to get to heaven cannot just meet the minimum standards that allow millions to have memberships in most denominations of Christianity. These standards are far below the Master's standards. When given the choice of only heaven or hell, our loving natures want to put everyone we know and like - all the "good people" - in heaven, regardless of how dedicated to Christ and whether or not they have led a sacrificial life.

This has come about because we have oversimplified a very profound subject. If there is no other choice at death but to send someone to heaven or hell, we are left with confusion and despair.



Where DO we put Aunt Mabel who was so caring, kind and supportive of her charities but did not believe in God and Jesus? The profoundness of the Scriptures telling us "the earth abideth forever" and that it will house humanity forever is a marvelous truth!

Important aspects of how those who go to heaven are required to live their lives:



How do we get to heaven?

WHAT DOES THE CALL LOOK LIKE?

The only way to receive an offer of discipleship is ***to be called by God and to accept that call:***

John 6:44: (NASB) *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*



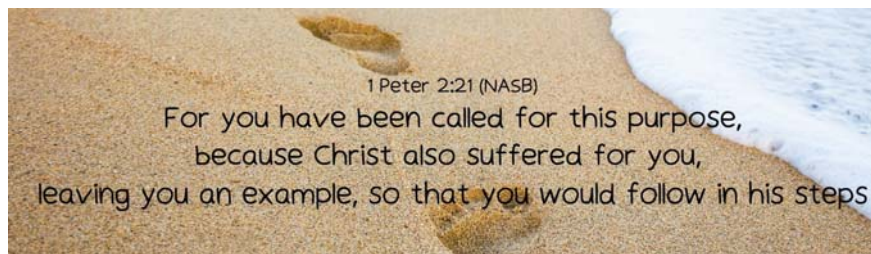
Remember we talked about all the millions of people who died before Christ, who never even heard his name? There are billions of people living since the time of Jesus who have heard of him, but whom the Father has never called. There is no scriptural loophole to get them into heaven - this includes many we would call "good" people. Where do they go? We talked earlier about the earth abiding forever and people being on that earth for a reason! Plus, we are only using a small fraction of the earth for the current residents. These people will have a home on this earth. **We will address this further in Part II.**

The path to follow Jesus is a difficult and rarely traveled path:

Matthew 7:13-14: (NASB) *¹³Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*



There is *a narrow gate and a narrow way that leads to life, only a few find it. Then there is a broad way that leads to destruction (not eternal torture). We will address this further in Part II.* But the point here is that following Jesus is a difficult road. How do we know? We have only to look at the life of Jesus. It was not easy, and to be a “footstep follower” of Jesus means we are walking right behind him, doing what he did. He lived a difficult life of sacrifice.



Following Jesus means walking in his footsteps. This means we must be willing to be selfless:

Luke 9:23-24: (NASB) ²³And he was saying to them all, *If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it.*

We are to “die daily” for Christ (1 Corinthians 15:31). Are we willing to give up our lives, to lose *ourselves* in doing the will of God? Because it is so difficult, we need to consider the following:

It is expected that we think through such a decision with great care:

Luke 14:27-28: (NASB) ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

This calling goes beyond just loving Jesus or accepting him as your personal savior. It is the difference between being a *fan* of Jesus and being a *disciple* of Jesus.



It is wonderful to love Jesus and accept him as our personal savior. But to go further, to be a true disciple, we need to accept the necessity of giving up *everything* for the sake of Christ. Are we willing to walk in his footsteps and live our lives with the selfless mindset he exhibited? To do the will of God *always* instead of our own despite whatever trial or tribulation might come? THIS is the difference between a fan and a disciple.

We talked about what going to heaven encompasses, how massive this reward is and the great importance of the responsibilities of those who seek and accept it. *God does not give such a reward lightly.* That is why the Scriptures give us all these things to understand the extent of true discipleship.



WHAT ARE THE DAILY EXPERIENCES OF THOSE CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS, WHO RECEIVE A HEAVENLY REWARD?

A disciple of Jesus always focuses on *sacrificing their own will* for God's will:

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.* ²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*



This is an invitation, not a command, or else it would not be a sacrifice. The Lord's people are not *commanded* to present their bodies a *living and holy sacrifice*, or walk in the footsteps of Jesus or *take up their cross daily and follow him*. They are *urged* to do so. Voluntary service to God is a privilege and an opportunity. It is only by grace this option is available.

If we are called, it is our Father's will that we accept His grace, and His will *is good and acceptable and perfect*. We may be invited to this life, but we do not have to accept it. Though it is a great privilege, if we accept, we agree to follow we agree to follow the guidelines laid out for us. We want to live our lives according to the privilege of sacrifice. Romans 12:1-2 talks about transforming ourselves *by the renewing of our mind* through the holy spirit (God's power and influence) working within us.



Check out our CQ Kids video:
HOW DO CHRISTIANS RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?
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A disciple of Jesus is not exempt from sin, but they do need to ask forgiveness for their sins:

1 John 2:1-2: (NASB) ¹*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;* ²*and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

Even the most faithful Christians are still sinful human beings. They are able, however, to bring their sins to the throne of grace through Jesus, since he is the satisfaction for those sins. We must recognize our sins and be deeply repentant. It is not enough to say, *I am sorry*. We must live repentant lives for those sins, seeking to undo their damage if at all possible. This is required.

Jesus' role for the believer is an advocate.



An advocate is someone who sits with you on your side and pleads your case before a judge.



For a disciple of Jesus, the most important goal in life is their faithfulness:
 Philippians 3:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.* ¹³*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

The prize of the upward call of God in the King James Version reads the prize of the high calling. If Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered, as we are told in Hebrews 5:8, we should also.

Tricia asks: If we have to give up everything to follow Christ, should we not work, have a home or a family?

No, we know from Colossians 3:17 (and others) that whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are representatives of Jesus and the Father. We offer our livelihood to God; this is our service and our sacrifice. We use whatever we have to serve Him and His cause.

Our homes are in His service, our children are taught His ways and His plans. The New Testament is full of those individuals who supported others like the Apostle Paul, who gave up all to serve spreading the gospel message.

The call for each of us is unique. The Apostle Paul was called to be an apostle. He stayed in the homes of other Christians. His work, like his life, was financed by other Christians who worked in the world in order to do that. Even Paul worked sporadically to support himself with tent making. Each disciple is a steward, a caretaker of this life and all we have given to God.

We have this high calling - this goal of being faithful in our lives, and we are to use whatever the Father has given us to accomplish this.

A disciple of Jesus will be tried and tested to show their fidelity to Christ:

1 Peter 4:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;* ¹³*but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation.* ¹⁴*If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*



The whole world is not on trial for eternal life at this time. It is only those who have been called of God and are running for that prize of the high calling. The rest of humanity are not "lost" if they do not accept Jesus now in this lifetime. This is where so many Christians become confused about what happens to all those people who are "good" but not "good enough" to be part of this very difficult high calling. We will address this in more detail next week in Part II.



What does it take to get to heaven? A lot! It takes everything we have. The fiery ordeal in the text above is for our purification. Fire can destroy, but it is also used to burn off the impurities in precious metals. We are being purified by our difficult experiences.



A disciple of Jesus understands their training now is for a higher purpose later:

2 Corinthians 5:18-20: (WEY) ¹⁸And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has appointed us to serve in the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹We are to tell how God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not charging men's transgressions to their account, and that He has entrusted to us the Message of this reconciliation. ²⁰...we, on Christ's behalf, beseech men to be reconciled to God.

God has a plan to reconcile the world, not just Christians, but the entire world to Himself. All those who are not on trial in the present time will eventually need to be reconciled to God. Faithful Christians are being trained now for that higher purpose, for that future ministry.

A disciple of Jesus is focused on the future, both for themselves and for the world they will serve:

1 Peter 2:12: (NASB) *Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

What is the *day of visitation*? It is the day of judgment, the time that period begins the process of ALL THINGS being made right with God. A disciple of Jesus is focused on this future. The example the disciples of Jesus give now with their sacrificial lives will be evident in that *day of visitation*. Those who despise these faithful ones now will realize that they have been a good reflection of the will of God. Such lives will be an example of *good deeds*.

Notice that these Gentiles, or people who are not godly in their lives now, are glorifying God in this verse. People in a burning hell of torment are not glorifying God. There must be someplace else God has in store for them rather than condemning them to hell.

**DEFINING THE DISCIPLINE OF THOSE
called to heaven**



**SIMPLY LOVING JESUS AND GOING TO CHURCH
WILL NOT GET ANYONE TO HEAVEN.
BEING CALLED AND BEGOTTEN BY GOD'S SPIRIT,
HAVING DEDICATION, SACRIFICE, SELFLESSNESS, FAITH,
PERSEVERANCE AND LOVE GET US TO HEAVEN.
THIS IS NOT AN EASY PATH TO FOLLOW.**



Bible truth observations:

- The earth not only abides forever, but it will also house the masses of humanity during that forever.
- Heaven is being prepared for the disciples of Jesus, and their position there will be one of GREAT power and glory.
- Those who go to heaven are few and far between, as it takes effort, sacrifice and faithfulness.



We continue on our next episode with Part II, answering these important questions and more:



If the earth will house humanity, what happens to hell?

Is hell a legitimate biblical teaching?

How would all those people who do not go to heaven have a right to live on earth?

Does this not contradict the whole idea of being saved?

There is so much to God's plan!

***So, did God make heaven and hell humanity's destiny?
For Jonathan, Rick and Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***



Join us next week for our podcast on April 26, 2021
Ep. 1175: Did God Make Heaven and Hell
Humanity's Destiny? (Part II)

Bonus Material and Study Questions

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.
— *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

More on the path of sacrifice:

- When and where did it start?

Isaiah 53:3-5: (ASV) ³He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Luke 6:22-23: (NRSV) ²²Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.



- Why is it necessary?

1 Corinthians 15:20-22: (NRSV) ²⁰*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²²for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.*

1 Timothy 2:5-6: (KJV) ⁵*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; ⁶Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

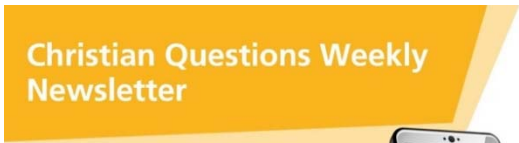
Colossians 1:18-20: (NRSV) ¹⁸*He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

1 Peter 2:9-12: (NRSV) ⁹*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. ¹²Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.*

- Where does it lead us to after this life?

Acts 3:19-21: (NRSV) ¹⁹*Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, ²⁰so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, ²¹who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets.*

Hebrews 9:24-28: (NRSV) ²⁴*For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*



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Ep. 1174: Did God Make Heaven and Hell Humanity's Destiny? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1174-heaven-or-hell/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What is earth's destiny, according to the Apostle Peter? What does this mean for the world of mankind? What does it mean for the followers of Jesus? (See 2 Peter 3:3-13)
2. How do we know the earth will not literally be destroyed?
(See 2 Peter 3:5-8, Genesis 8:20-22, Psalm 104:5, Ecclesiastes 1:3-4, Zephaniah 3:8-11)
3. Why is it important in God's plan for the earth to exist forever? In Nebuchadnezzar's image, what is the final kingdom here on earth?
(See Isaiah 45:18, Ezekiel 37:24-28, Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45)
4. How did Jesus introduce the concept of a heavenly reward to his disciples? How does Paul speak of the value of this reward? (See Matthew 5:11-12, John 14:1-3, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
5. What will the disciples of Jesus share with him? What will their mission be? Do you think this mission would be fulfilling for these footstep followers? (See Romans 8:17-22)
6. What are the heavenly rewards for faithful Christians?
(See Romans 8:17-18, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 2 Peter 1:3-4, Revelation 2:10)
7. Who is granted a place in heaven after they die? How do we know this? Why is important that they be vetted so strongly? (See Isaiah 14:14, Luke 6:22-23, 2 Peter 1:3-4)
8. What does the call to follow Jesus look like? Are we commanded to accept this call? Why?
(See Matthew 7:13-14, Luke 9:23-24, John 6:44)
9. After accepting the call, what is required to receive a heavenly reward? Do we need to give away everything we have and live on charity in order to follow Jesus? Justify your answer:
(See Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Philippians 3:12-14, 1 Peter 2:12, 4:12-14, 1 John 2:1-2)
10. Are you striving to receive a reward in heaven? If so, what are you doing to obtain the prize?