Heaven
A TUMI Intensive Course
Purpose: To give students a Biblical understanding of what heaven is like, what the nature and reality of eternity means for us, and what the implications of those truths mean for us now. They will be able to list and explain what the common misconceptions and heresies are about heaven and the Biblical rebuttals to those perspectives. They will be able to explain from Scripture what the New Heaven and New Earth will entail, and will be able to refer to and quote many references from Scripture that illuminate heaven for us. Lastly, they will have a new filter through which to read Scripture that allows them to see and hope for the eternity that is spoken of throughout the Word of God. They will be able to, as Randy Alcorn says it, “have a Biblical basis for envisioning the eternal Heaven.”

Format: A two-hour intensive class will be held which will utilize group discussion, movie clips, Scripture reading, didactive teaching, and a Q&A session.

Resources:
Heaven by Randy Alcorn
Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions by Randy Alcorn
Heaven Study Guide by Randy Alcorn
Heaven: My Father’s House by Anne Graham Lotz
Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis
The Last Battle by C.S. Lewis
The Great Divorce by C.S. Lewis
Heaven: Your Real Home by Joni Eareckson Tada
Heaven: The Heart’s Deepest Longing by Peter Kreeft

2-credit option
Exegetical Paper
Ministry Project
Memory Verses
Read Heaven by Randy Alcorn
Reading Responses from each chapter of the above text.

Grading: Attendance and Participation 30%, Exegetical Project 25%, Ministry Project 15%, Memory Verses 15%, Reading Responses 15%.

Exegetical Paper: Students will put into practice everything the class has equipped them for by choosing a passage of Scripture from the list below and completely exegeting it. They will demonstrate the Three-Step Model of Bible Interpretation and write a paper of at least five pages explaining the original context, the universal principles, and the applications of these principles in their current context.

Possible Exegetical Passages
Isaiah 65:17-19
Revelation 21:1-5
Revelation 21:9-27
Revelation 22:1-6
**Ministry Project:** This project is intended to reproduce on at least a partial level with someone else what you learned from this class. You are to share what you learned from this project, utilizing your exegetical project as an aid, with someone or some group. This may be with your spouse, disciple, Sunday School class, church, small group, or family. Be creative! The written portion of the ministry project should include:

- What you shared
- Who you shared with, where, and why
- The reaction and questions of the person/people you shared with
- What you learned from this sharing experience

**Memory Verses (5 points each):**
Isaiah 65:17-19
Revelation 21:1-5
Revelation 22:1-6

**Course Schedule:**
Hour One: Introduction, Media Clips, Common Ideas on Heaven, Post-It Note Questions, Course Workbook
Hour Two: Course Workbook, Q&A Session
Introduction

“I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.” C.S. Lewis

How often do you think of Heaven? When you do think of it, what images come to your mind? What feelings do you have about Heaven? What perspectives and ideas have you heard about Heaven that you believe? What do you imagine you will look like? What will you do? Who will you see? What do you base your beliefs about Heaven on?

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that “God has set eternity in our hearts.” What does this mean? That human beings naturally long for eternity, something beyond this life, something permanent, a final home. We long for immortality, and for God. We were never meant to be solely satisfied with the temporary existence we have on this version of earth. This deep longing in our collective heart as a people is reflected in our stories, in our songs, in our movies, and in our imaginations. Even those who claim to have no faith at all would, if pressed, probably admit to believing in something after this life. How many times after someone has died have you heard the phrase, “Well, they are in a better place now.”? Yet for all of our longing, we have no way of knowing what actually lies “in the great beyond”. And so humanity has feared death. We have conjured up as many different versions of heaven, hell, the afterlife, and ways to get there as there are people groups. Much of it is uninform. Some of it comes as deception on the part of Satan. A lot is wishful thinking. We have only one source of knowing, truly knowing, what heaven is like, and that is in God’s Holy Word. He has given us many clues and revelations about this destination, but we have missed a lot of it and misinterpreted most of the rest. Not only have we done a poor job of grasping the true reality of heaven, we have done little to dispel the lies about heaven that have propagated themselves through our culture. A lot we even believe!

Here are but a few examples:

From The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain:
“She went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn’t think much of it…I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.”

Isaac Asimov, famous science fiction writer:
“For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.”

From “Only the Good Die Young” by Billy Joel:
“They say there’s a heaven for those who will wait
Some say it’s better but I say it ain’t
I’d rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints
the sinners are much more fun…”

From “Heaven” by Talking Heads:
“Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.
Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.

There is a party, everyone is there.
Everyone will leave at exactly the same time.
It’s hard to imagine that nothing at all
could be so exciting, and so much fun.
Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.

When this kiss is over it will start again.
It will not be any different, it will be exactly the same.
It's hard to imagine that nothing at all could be so exciting, could be so much fun.

Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.
Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.

"The Far Side" by Gary Larson:

Think also about the ideas presented from “What Dreams May Come”, “The Invention of Lying”, “The Five People You Meet In Heaven”....

What other movies, songs, television shows, cartoons, books, and artworks can you think of that have portrayed Heaven? What ideas have you taken from them? What still affects your thinking and outlook on the subject? What lingering perspectives from culture inform or cloud your mind on this subject?
Biblical Foundation for Heaven

The Bible is not silent on the topic of heaven. In fact, it gives us many examples, analogies, and direct revelations of truths about it. Consider some of the following passages and write out some ideas they give us on the nature of heaven:

I Thessalonians 4:13-17

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Revelation 6:9-11

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Revelation 21

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Revelation 22

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Isaiah 65:17-19

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Two Foundational Truths

I. _____________________________________________________________________-Job 19:26

A. We are physical and spiritual beings.
   1. Genesis 2:7-
   2. James 2:26-

B. God is concerned with the stewardship of our bodies.
   1. I Thessalonians 5:23-
   2. II Corinthians 7:1-
   3. I Corinthians 6:19-20-

C. Jesus was resurrected with a physical body.
   1. John 21:1-14-
   2. Luke 24:36-44-

II. _____________________________________________________________________

A. Scripture teaches the reality of new Heavens and a new Earth.
   1. Isaiah 65:17-
   2. Isaiah 66:22-
   3. II Peter 3:13-

B. The term “new” indicates a transformed version of something we already recognize—not an altogether different thing.
   1. Matthew 19:28-
   2. Acts 3:21-
   3. Romans 8:23-
   4. I Corinthians 15:35-58-
   5. Examples-new car, new person, software upgrade

C. Creation itself will be renewed.
   1. Colossians 1:16-23-
   2. Romans 8:18-23-
Heresies, Lies, and Misconceptions

Christoplatonism

*What it teaches:* simply put, that ____________, and ____________.
This view, which comes from Plato, states that material things, including the human body and earth, are evil, and immaterial things like the soul and heaven are good.

*How it skews a proper understanding of Heaven:* It would lead us to reject ____________, and would instead have us see Heaven as a spiritual place only, in a disembodied state. It would also like to have us believe that thinking of heaven in any sort of physical terms is unspiritual or lowly.

*What the Bible says:* In the Creation account in Genesis 1, throughout all of the stages of making things, the elements of the material world, God called them ________. Upon making humans, God called them ________________.

Naturalism

*What it teaches:* that the world can only be understood in scientific terms, without need or room for spiritual or supernatural explanations. Basically, if it cannot be ____________, it does not exist. In a sense, this is the opposite of Christoplatonism, in that the material world is not only uplifted, it is the only thing considered real.

*How it skews a proper understanding of Heaven:* Naturalism would allow for ____________. It would limit our existence to the lifespan we have here on this planet, and then cessation of existence. There is no God, no afterlife, no immortality, and certainly no New Heavens and New Earth that would exist in eternity.

*What the Bible says:* Hebrews 11:1-3 & 6 state the case clearly, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that ____________ was not made out of things __________. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek Him.”

Indeed, Scripture is entirely filled with the spiritual world overlapping with the material one.

Ignorance

*What it says:* We’ve never been to heaven! How can we know anything about it? There is no insider information. There are no trial periods. What happens after death truly is what has been called, “________________.” Why bother thinking about it or studying it when you just cannot know until you get there?

*How it skews a proper understanding of Heaven:* This view takes away ________, it makes our perspective shallow and short-sighted, and it robs us of the joy of discovering through God’s revealed Word to us all the treasures he placed in the Word about Heaven.

*What the Bible says:* The Bible is quite explicit in many texts on both the reality of Heaven and its particulars. Revelation 21 & 22, Isaiah 65, and numerous verses throughout a variety of genres of Biblical literature give us really good clues as to the activities of heaven, our
resurrection bodies, our future relationship with God, and other vital truths we will be discussing soon.

Apathy

*What it says:* Who cares? Living this life is enough to think about. Why bother having your head in the clouds when there is so much here to worry about! What does it matter anyway? Will it really affect how you live this current life? Don’t be so __________ that you’re of no __________. I don’t really care what heaven has in store for me, I just want to keep my head down and do what I know I should do today.

*How it skews a proper understanding of Heaven:* This view has similar results to that of ignorance, but is perhaps more offensive to the Lord, because it blatantly and purposely ignores and/or snubs the __________. It undercuts many of the motivations we might have to more fully and knowledgeably serve the Lord and live our life. It also wrongly assumes that knowledge and revelation of Heaven are irrelevant, contradicting God Himself because He clearly deemed them relevant enough to include in His Word.

*What the Bible says:* I Corinthians 15:19 brashly states, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” Earlier in the same book, Paul stresses how important it is for him to not be disqualified for the prize. It was clearly something he had his eyes set on. The work of ministry was not a distraction to him from his goal of being with Christ for eternity. He more explicitly says in Philippians 1:21-24, “For to me, to live is ______ and to die is ______. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”

Heaven Will Be Boring

*What it says:* Heaven is one unending, monotonous worship service, or sitting in the clouds strumming a harp, or worse, __________. We will not laugh, everything will be unchanging, we will know everything, there will be no adventure, or food, or drink, or play. None of the pleasures of this life will be allowed (how dare we want them!) ______ is at the root of this one. He does not want us to desire Heaven, or believe in it, or to have an inkling of what it will be like. He knows that if we had a proper idea of Heaven, we would be dangerous indeed.

*How it skews a proper understanding of Heaven:* This is fairly self-evident, but if we think all of the above about Heaven, who would want to go there? It might be a better alternative than Hell, but it certainly does not draw us in, or motivate us. This is a spit in the face of God’s creativity, joy, generosity, love, and even very nature and character: To believe the above is to deny or be ignorant of God’s amazing power, love, goodness, creativity, joy, and humor.

*What the Bible says:* It directly contradicts Paul’s statements already quoted above in I Corinthians 9 and 15, as well as the astoundingly compelling and beautiful images painted for us in Isaiah and Revelation. Indeed, even a cursory read through the Bible with an eye for describing God’s character and personality would tell one that God is the source of all that is good, and pleasurable, amazing, and fun. A supporting, underlying assumption is that ______ and exciting and ______. Satan’s first lie to Adam and Eve was that sin would bring fulfillment. Alcorn describes it this way, “Sin doesn’t make life interesting; it makes life empty. Sin doesn’t create adventure; it blunts it. Sin doesn’t expand life; it shrinks it. Sin’s ______ inevitably leads to ______. When there’s fulfillment, when there’s beauty, when we see God as He truly is—an endless reservoir of fascination—boredom becomes impossible.” Psalm 16:11 forms a nice conclusion for us, “You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.”
The chart below comes from Alcorn’s book, *Heaven*. It summarizes some of what we have covered here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT WE ASSUME ABOUT HEAVEN</th>
<th>WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HEAVEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Earth</td>
<td>New Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar, Otherworldly</td>
<td>Familiar, Earthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disembodied</td>
<td>Resurrected (Embodied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>Home [all the comforts of home with all the innovations of an infinitely creative God]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retaining the good; finding the best ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving favorite things behind</td>
<td>Time and space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time and space</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Both old and new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither old (like Eden) nor new and earthly, just strange and unknown</td>
<td>A God to worship and serve; a universe to rule; purposeful work to accomplish; friends to enjoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing to do; floating on the clouds</td>
<td>An eternity of learning and discovering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No learning or discovery, instant and complete knowledge</td>
<td>Fascinating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Continuous fulfillment of desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of desire</td>
<td>Presence of the wonderful (everything we desire and nothing we don’t)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of the terrible (but presence of little we desire)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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*Which side do you land on as you read through the different lists? How many of your views agreed with the left, and how many with the right?*
New Heaven, New Earth, and the New Jerusalem

The following diagram is what many theologians view as a viable Biblical description of the life and future of Christ-followers.

The first stage we know about. We are in it.

The second stage is surmised from the fact that Christ is in Heaven now, and He has a resurrection body, “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” I Corinthians 15:20  
Many passages throughout the New Testament lay witness to this fact that Christ is in Heaven right now, seated at God’s right hand. We also have Jesus’ own testimony to the thief on the cross that, “Today you will be with me __________.”

The last stage we understand through all of the passages that speak on the New Heavens, New Earth, and New Jerusalem. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says, “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the _____________ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord ______. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down
out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more _____ or ______ or ______ or _____, for the old order of things has passed away.’” Revelation 21:1-4

This passage gives us a nice summary of the future order of things. Heaven, as we know it now, will be no longer. The same is true of Earth, and naturally then, of Jerusalem. There will be no need for a division anymore. God will be with us. The New Heavens seems to indicate in the original Greek the _______, or universe. The New Earth will be exactly that, but now with a perfect, glorious new city, the likes of which are physically staggering [and currently impossible], and God will be with us, as back in the Garden of Eden when He walked with Adam and Eve.
Great Expectations

Based upon the foundational truths we established above, and in stark contrast to the lies, heresies, and misconceptions we just countered, the following are some expectations we can have regarding our eternal existence with the Lord. Some of these, keep in mind, are directly stated in Scripture, and many of them are inferred from the text if we utilize our imagination and take what we know about God and His creation to its logical end. The idea of continuity between the life we knew on Earth and the New Earth is the underlying assumption to all of these. If it is not sinful, and does not violate any of the things we know won’t be in Heaven, such as disease, sickness, suffering, tears, pain, or death, then we can safely assume it at least might be a possibility for it to exist in the New Earth. This assumption, combined with the clues from the verses given, gives us a reasonable foundation for our thoughts.

Scripture is cited when possible. Proof-texting, eisegesis, or taking Scripture out of context is not meant to be done here, so as you read through each point and its accompanying Bible reference, please keep in mind and interpret for yourself, based on the type of literature and its original context, whether or not it supports what is being claimed.

__________:  God will ransom people from every tongue, language, people, and nation. In the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, speaking of the final judgment and end times, Jesus makes a special point of mentioning that the Gospel will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations before the end will come. If it is so important to God for representatives from all of these groups to be saved before He comes again for the final judgment, does it not make sense that these distinctions will continue to exist in the New Earth? Otherwise, why bother? We are, together, representative of the beauty, creativity, and diversity of our Lord. If He would somehow reduce every living person in the New Earth to a single culture or people group, so that we are stripped of our cultural distinctives and identity, would we still be us? Is not this background an essential part of who we are and how we think of ourselves? Was not Jesus still a Jewish man when He resurrected (albeit one perfected and glorified)? Was He not recognizable, at least eventually?

“And they sang a new song: `You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.'” Revelation 5:9-10 [italics mine]

“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Revelation 21:22-27 [italics mine]

_______:  One of the questions I have always had is, why would God create galaxies so far away that human beings will never even know they exist, let alone travel to them? My question, of course, is fairly earth-and humanity-centric. I assume that we are the only intelligent beings created after God’s image. I do not know this to be true. Also, I think one of the answers to this is simply because God is a Creator. It is who He is. He creates because it brings Him joy. It is always about His glory, not about us. That said, I think perhaps one of the reasons for this is to give us an idea of how immense and powerful He is. The virtual infinity of His Creation gives us perspective. When He creates the New Heavens and the New Earth, does it not also make sense that they will be as large, if not larger and more immense than the old versions? And if so, would not one of the reasons He makes it so large is so we could discover it, and so
worship Him in doing so? One of the primary limitations that keeps us as a people from ever discovering the outer bounds of our universe is time. We just do not have the longevity in our own beings or our materials to make such a journey. Those limitations would be removed in eternity. Psalm 19 explicitly states the case for the astronomical bodies being agents of God’s glory. There is no reason to expect they will be less so in the New Heavens and New Earth.

How we will travel is another question. Christ’s resurrected body had abilities that seemingly went beyond what he could do before. He seemed to disappear and reappear. He materialized in a locked room with the disciples. Philip was "snatched away" by the Spirit after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch [and he wasn’t even glorified yet!]. Might these be examples of what we are capable of in our new bodies? We will still have bodies though, so we know that everything we are capable of doing now, we will do then. Walking, running, and leaping will be possible. I can only hope flying is an option.

Many misunderstand the idea of work and believe it was a result of the Fall. However, a more careful reading of the Genesis account will show that God ordained it for humans to work the ground and take care of it before they sinned. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Genesis 2:15

Part of the curse was that work would be more difficult, less fruitful, and less enjoyable. God said to Adam in Genesis 3:17-19, “‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Besides, we are hardwired for work. Fulfilling work, work which makes us come alive, which drives us, which accomplishes something, which provides a valuable service—this is the kind of work we are talking about. Haven’t you experienced a time when what you were working on was so engrossing and fun that you scarcely noticed the hours consumed by it? You look up at the clock, thinking only a half hour or so has passed, and it has been four hours!

Since we will be serving Christ by ruling and reigning on the earth, as co-heirs with Him, does this not intimate work? It is impossible to reign and serve through complete inactivity! Revelation 5, quoted above as well, states our future job as rulers over his creation here on the New Earth. Revelation 22:1-3 indicates the same, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.”

God alone is omniscient. There is no evidence Scripturally that we will be omniscient upon our own resurrection. Lucifer, who was God’s most glorious creation, was not omniscient, and when he aspired to the position of God, was cast down. When Paul stated in I Corinthians 13 that in eternity we shall “know fully”, the Greek equivalent to that indicates this to be more like “to really know” or “to know extensively,” without any error or misconceptions in our knowledge. Had Paul wanted to indicate we would know everything, he could have used the phrase “ta panta”.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:6-7  Paul talks about the coming ages, plural, indicating a progression in time, and when he says that God will show us the
incomparable riches of his grace (whatever that all might entail), it indicates a revelation. All of this intimates learning and discovering.

Since God Himself also never changes, and He is a Creator by nature, can you imagine Him ceasing creating new things? And unless we can read His mind, which Scripture (and our experience) clearly says we cannot, we will always be discovering new joys around every corner! He will always have surprises for us, and we will never be done exploring all that He has made, because it will never stop being made. If you love learning, the New Heaven and the New Earth are for you!

I put this section right after learning, because it naturally follows that if there will be learning, there will be discovery, and if there will be discovery, there will be invention. Since we will still have bodies, and we will not be omniscient or omnipotent, we will still strive to do things better and faster. Don’t you imagine the wheel would have been invented whether or not sin entered the world? And tools? God gave us ingenuity to do such works. In and of ourselves we do not have many natural defenses. But we do have our minds! And no creature on earth has done more to augment his natural abilities with tools than humans! An interesting observation made by Alcorn is that the first time anyone in the Bible is mentioned to have been filled with the Spirit of God, it’s not with a priest or a prophet, but rather a craftsman. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.’” Exodus 31:1-5 Sinlessness, or a glorified body, or perfection does not mean omnipotence. We may be fully complete and whole, but we still may develop, improve, and augment our God-given abilities just as we do here on Earth.

In a similar vein as the argument for craftsmanship and technology, art, too, would simply be continuity with that of what we do here on Earth, albeit without anything that degrades, blasphemes, or misrepresents truth and righteousness. We are made in God’s image, and as He is a Creator, so we are made to create. If you are an artist here on Earth, will you not be an even greater artist on the New Earth? This will of course be true with every endeavor and role you have. If you loved building things, you will love it and be even better at it than before [and you will have unlimited time with which to develop your skill]. If you were a writer, you will be even more prolific and skilled. Since people will not be omniscient, will they not enjoy learning, reading, and sharing what they have learned with others? Could God answer any and every question instantaneously anytime we wanted? Sure. But I also believe that relationship is important, and we enjoy sharing our expertise and learning and discovery with others, and this is one way we can enjoy one another’s distinctive skills and gifts. God designed us to need both each other and Him.

What of the art and literature that existed on the present Earth? Will we still have access to it? Will we remember it? Will we desire to read it? If it glorified God and represented truth, why not?

I had a friend named Mauricio with an unusual and cruel disease. It was called McCune-Albright Syndrome, named after its discoverers. This disease caused his bones to never stop growing. As a result, his skull and spine were deformed, and the bones in his chest cavity eventually disrupted the very workings of his organs. Mauricio knew the Lord, but he eventually succumbed to the disease after a very painful battle in his last six months here. Mauricio had a beautiful spirit, made only better by the Holy Spirit’s transformation. He was, by this world’s standards, difficult to look at. What will Mauricio’s glorified body look like? I think of this often. Will it be what he would have looked like had he not been born with the disease? Will he be recognizable? Will he look the same, but without any of the pain or
complications? Our standards of beauty most certainly will change in eternity. Most cultures even here on earth, and from time period to time period, have radically different standards for what is attractive and what is not.

When Jesus rose from the dead, in his glorified body, his scars remained. Might this be an exception to the rule? Might his resurrected body be different than what it will be in the New Heaven and New Earth? Perhaps we will retain our own “scars” if they are significant to who we are and glorify God.

What we do know is that we will still be us and we will be recognizable. Whatever our perfected bodies look like, we will have no self-image issues. We will not be unhealthy. We will not be ashamed or embarrassed or displeased with the gifts of our body that God gave us. This is enough for me.

What about our ages? Will we be the age when we died? Will we be resurrected at the age of our physical peak? Will we all be renewed as 25 year olds? What about children who died? Will they remain children for eternity? Will they actually grow until they reach adulthood? Perhaps their parents, if they were believers, will have the joy of seeing them grow up. Perhaps we will all appear to each other as we remember each other on Earth. Whatever the case, we will perfectly convey to each other our true identity. We will not all be the same, for God is much too creative for that!

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Here there is much evidence of what is to come. Jesus, for one, ate on several occasions after his resurrection, and that is what is recorded. For all we know, he ate just as regularly after his resurrection as before his death. At the Last Supper, Jesus says that He will not eat of the sacramental elements again until they come to fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. The Parable of the Great Banquet was told after a man declared in exuberance, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus, upon hearing this, did not correct him [as he so often did when men declared or asked things in ignorance or opposition to the truth], but instead told a story fleshing out the very statement the man made!

We see another reference in Revelation 19:9, "Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' “ And he added, "These are the true words of God." Now I am quite sure this has symbolic meaning, as does much of Revelation, but just because it is symbolic does not rule out that it might also have a literal element as well. Especially in light of the continuity principle, and that we will have physical bodies.

Revelation 7 has a phrase from one of the Elders to John where he says, “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.” Given all the other evidence though, would not a more complete understanding of this be not that there would be no food or drink, but rather that we will not ever be in want of anything?

_____________: Psalm 16 is a powerfully encouraging Psalm not only for this life, but also for the life to come. In the beginning of it David testifies that apart from God, he has no good thing. Conversely, all good things are ours with God! Matthew 7 affirms this in the idea that God loves to give good gifts to His children. James follows it up with the declaration that “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Since this is so, and since God indeed does not change, He will always give us good and perfect gifts! In Psalm 16’s conclusion, David proclaims, “You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.” One of life’s greatest joys and pleasures
is playing. It’s all children want to do. He ingrains play in our instincts. Toys are children’s favorite gifts. When parents want to reward a child, what else do they give but a toy? As a natural extension of play, there are sports. Again, we will have physical bodies, made for movement. Those of us who love sports will continue to love sports. We will not only play these sports, but we will enjoy them even more, and be even better at them. Will we compete? If so, will people lose? So long as there is no sin involved, which there won’t be, there is no indication logically or Scripturally that competition is in and of itself wrong. Nor is losing necessarily part of the Curse. How many times, even on this Earth, have you lost a competition but thoroughly enjoyed playing the game? If that is possible here, how much more so then and there! The Apostle Paul was a sports fan, if his writings are any indication. On eight occasions he referred to boxers and/or runners in his exhortations. I think Paul will be the first in line at the track to race in the New Jerusalem.

______: This comes after the play and sports topic for a reason. It can be tempting to run away in our minds with the ideas of endless play and food and discovery, and forget that the TRUE object of our desire is, has been, and forever will be God. He created all of those other things that we run after; and in our sinfulness, get distracted by and allow to take His place. Indeed, in post-Christian America, and in much of the world, do our stadiums not take the place for most as their current and favorite place of worship? We sometimes worship the gift over the Giver. This is not to say that the gifts are bad though. Eric Liddell, immortalized in the movie, “Chariots of Fire”, was a strong and outspoken follower of Jesus in the early 1900’s. He eventually became a missionary to China. He also happened to be a world-class runner. He is famously quoted as having said, “He made me fast, and when I run I feel God’s pleasure. To give up running would be to hold Him in contempt.” The point of this is that worship can be manifested in innumerable ways. We wrongly restrict worship to singing songs or praying or verbally testifying about or to God our love and adoration. These are legitimate and powerful ways to do so. However, we also worship through delighting in God and in His gifts to us. Eric Liddell worshipped through his running. C.S. Lewis worshipped through writing. David Robinson through playing basketball. The Westminster Catechism says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” John Piper, one of America’s most prominent evangelical leaders, tweaks this by saying, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.” Does it not bring great joy to a parent when their child(ren) thoroughly enjoys a gift the parent gave them? We worship by enjoying God. We enjoy God through who He is, what He has done, and what He gives us.

The New Heavens and New Earth are not about us or our pleasure. It has always and will always be about the glory of God. But the two are not at odds, nor are they mutually exclusive. Our greatest pleasure will be enjoying God, and His as well. Everything we do at all times will revolve in some way or another around God, for it is all from Him and for Him. All of our activity will be worship. We will not get distracted, we will not forget, and we will not ignore the fact that God is the source of all the good and all the pleasure that is ours.

______: Music has always played a central piece in Scripture. The longest book of the Bible is a series of songs. Singing has been a mainstay for worshippers since we inhabited this planet. Revelation is rife with evidence of music, and songs, and singers, and instruments. In fact, in Revelation 18:22a, the converse of this strengthens our conviction that there will be music in eternity. In the curse and judgment pronounced upon Babylon, it is said, “The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again.” If one of the few aspects mentioned in a description of torment and punishment is that there will be no music, does it not stand to reason that there must be music in Heaven? (The clause about the workman not being found also confirms our previous ideas about the glory and pleasure that God will ordain in the New Earth through creativity, technology, art, and invention.)
Both Isaiah 11 and 65 refer to the peaceful co-existence of the animals together in God’s coming Kingdom. This could be purely symbolic, but since the rest of those chapters are so practical and physical and real, it seems to indicate that not only will there be animals, they will exist together in a new order of relationship with one another. If God took such pains to preserve the animals for the earth during the Great Flood, is there any reason to think that their importance will lessen on the New Earth? If God knows the animals cause such joy and pleasure for us, and because some people take some of their deepest fulfillment from their interaction with animals, why would there not be animals in Heaven? Especially since they were called, “good” in the first Creation, and were present before sin came into the world.

Perhaps the strongest argument comes from Paul in Romans 8 when he says that Creation itself is longing for liberation from its bondage to decay. If creation, which would include all creation, not just geological elements or vegetation, will be liberated and renewed, this means there will be animals included in the renewal. They won’t be renewed to their own existence, or temporarily, for what would be the point in that? They will be renewed into a Creation that we recognize, per the continuity principle.

What about our pets? There are many well-respected Christians who have advocated for and believed in the possibility of our pets being in Heaven. Will they be resurrected? Not in the sense that we will be, with all of the spiritual implications. But would it violate Scripture to think God might recreate them, in order to bring us great joy? C.S. Lewis’ take on it was that the greatest elements of our pet’s character qualities might somehow live on in the immortality of their masters.

As an interesting side note, it is entirely conceivable that animals might also talk in the New Earth. They are described as doing so in Revelation on several instances, but that could be explained away as purely symbolic. The living creatures that give glory, honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, as described in Revelation 4, are rightly translated to be animals. If we take the description of the 24 elders who fall down around the throne in that same passage as the 12 tribes of Israel (symbolic of all those who lived before Christ’s incarnation who believed) and the 12 apostles (symbolic of all those who those lived after Christ’s incarnation who believed), could not the creatures in that chapter be symbolic of all of the animals? Also, in the account in Genesis 3 of the serpent tempting Eve, we read that it talks to her. It does not indicate that this surprises Eve. It also describes the serpent as being more crafty than the other animals, suggesting there were other crafty animals. Satan, and demons, can talk through people now, but not animals, because we can talk but animals can’t. Alcorn poses that, “the fact that he [Satan] spoke through an animal in Eden suggests that the animal had the capacity to speak.” When Balaam’s donkey spoke, did God put those words into its mouth, or did He temporarily give the ability to the donkey to verbalize what it was feeling and perceiving? If we are perfected, and enhanced, and glorified, and our senses and abilities are heightened, might the animals be also?

Eternity is what we have been talking about this whole time. Eternity indicates to some an existence outside of time. To others it means an unlimited amount of time in which to exist. Which is true? What can we expect when it comes to the existence or awareness of time in the New Heaven and New Earth?

Consider the following:

Ephesians 2:6-7—“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Indicates a progression of time/ages.
Revelation 7:15—“Therefore, `they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.’”
Indicates, while symbolic of forever, a measurement of time.

From Revelation 22:2—“...On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.”
Indicates seasons and months.

Isaiah 66:22-23—``As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the LORD, `so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,' says the LORD.”
Indicates a continuity of weeks, the sun, and the moon.

Revelation 8:1—“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”
Again, while this may be symbolic, why the specificity of this amount of time? Indicates concrete, discrete time amounts.

And, as referred to above, music will exist. Music is based on meter, rhythm, tempo, and rests. This is not possible without time. Time existed before the Fall. There is nothing inherently restrictive or evil about the existence of time. The only frustrating aspect of time for us now is the limited nature of it. Then, we will have all we want. John Newton, in his hymn “Amazing Grace”, says it best:

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise,
Than when we’d first begun.”

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This is the heart of the matter. We were created for relationship. Relationship with God. Relationships with people. The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as our self. This is done in the context of relationship. Before the Fall, God recognized our need as humans to be with others. He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Sin did not make us in need of relationship. God created us for this before sin ever came about.

Since we have already established the fact that we will be recognizable, it stands also that we will know each other, and we will remember each other in context of how we knew each other. Will our parents still be recognized as having been our parents? Of course! Will our spouses be recognizable as having been our spouse? Why not? Does that relationship context exist in the same way? No. But the identity and memory does. We will even know those whom we have not met, at least in some way. Peter, though never being told, and never knowing who they were for himself, still recognized Moses and Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration as they conversed with Jesus. I think that in some way, we too will know each other, even as we enjoy the process of getting to know each other more.

What about those relationships with people here on Earth that caused us pain and sorrow and tremendous wounds? What will our relationship with them be like? We know there will be no sorrow or suffering in Heaven. Does this mean our memories will be wiped? Not likely. For without our memories, are we still truly ourselves? Instead, might those relationships be perfected, healed, and forgiven? Might we be able to all the more enjoy and appreciate the great gift that is Heaven when we can see the stark difference that life is as opposed to how it
was? In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus was comforted as he went to Abraham’s side. How can one be comforted if one does not remember why or how they were in need of it?

What about sex? [I know you were thinking about it.] We know there will not be marriage in Heaven, at least not to each other. We are told that we will be the Bride of Christ. This indicates a perfect intimacy with God. Paul says in I Corinthians 13 that we shall be “fully known” on that Day. We also know that God created sex to exist within the confines of a marriage relationship with our one spouse. Since there will be no marriage like that, we can assume there will not be sexual intercourse between humans in Heaven. However, this need not sadden us. What is it about sex that drives us to it? Is it not in its essence about intimacy and pleasure? As for the intimacy, we will have perfected intimacy with God and others with the joy of perpetual discovery and increased intimacy over time. As for the pleasure, we can be sure that we will absolutely not be missing anything. God will not hold out on us. If every other thing that we know and enjoy now will be even better in eternity, would there not be the possibility of some physical pleasure even greater than that that we know of sex? If sex is the highest physical pleasure God created on Earth, why would He not create its superior in the New Earth? C.S. Lewis has a humorous and insightful take on this in his book, Miracles, when asked the very same question:

“I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer “No,” he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don’t bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate; he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for it.”

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: We long to go home. God knows it. He set eternity in our hearts, as mentioned at the very beginning of this text. In John 14 we have a wonderful promise of hope from Jesus. Verses 1-4: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

The King James Version of this passage uses mansions instead of rooms, but in most other versions the intended meaning seems to indicate more of a place within one dwelling. We will have our place, but we will live in community. Considering how God loves us and knows us, He will know perfectly what each one of us would most desire in our place. For an excellent treatment on the future dwellings that God has for us, and what our Father’s House will be like, I suggest reading Heaven: My Father’s House, by Anne Graham Lotz.
Implications

So get excited about eternity! It is not wrong to long for Heaven. It is not wrong to say so. It does not conflict with a longing for God. In fact, Hebrews 11:16 says it even better, “Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” Because I cannot better summarize what Alcorn says about this, I will quote him in length here:

“Any bride in love with her husband wants to be with him more than anything. But if he goes away to build a beautiful place for her, won’t she get excited about it? Won’t she think and talk about that place? Of course. Moreover, he wants her to! If he tells her, ‘I’m going to prepare a place for you,’ he’s implying, ‘I want you to look forward to it.’ Her love and longing for the place he’s preparing—where she will live with him—is inseparable from her love and longing for her husband. Some erroneously assume that the wonders, beauties, adventures, and marvelous relationships of Heaven must somehow be in competition with the one who has created them. God has no fear that we’ll get too excited about Heaven. After all, the wonders of Heaven aren’t our idea, they’re His. There’s no dichotomy between anticipating the joys of Heaven and finding our joy in Christ. It’s all part of the same package. The wonders of the new heavens and New Earth will be a primary means by which God reveals Himself and His love to us.”

Job 14, amongst other passages, laments the shortness of man’s existence here on Earth. We are like the water vapor that comes from a mist bottle. Here for but a moment, and then gone. With so little time, and so much to do and explore and create and discover and accomplish, even the greatest among us, the most celebrated, scratched the surface of what was possible. We are not made to fully see and do everything. It would be an exercise in frustration to attempt it. But if we really do believe all of this, that there is New Heavens and a New Earth and a New Jerusalem, and everything is as God says it is, and if we trust Him that He is good and that He has good gifts awaiting us, and if we really do understand in our hearts that indeed He “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,” then that changes our entire outlook here.

We need not rush about to and fro, afraid we will miss something from this world, selfishly pursuing our own desires and goals, and furiously crossing off experiences from our bucket list. We need not fear regrets of lost dreams, or times past we’ll never get back, or good friends we’ve lost track of. We need not be dismayed at our bodies losing their abilities, or about memories that are not quite so sharp anymore. Everything we ever want to do will be there for us. In Eternity. Better versions of what we now know. Forever.

Once we realize this truth, it is very freeing for us. It focuses us in on the task before us. Do not believe the lies that Satan, the world, and our own flesh tells us that the time for our fulfillment is now. That we must fulfill our dreams and gratify our needs now, for we may not get another chance. Those are distractions. The time is short, that is true. But not so that we can spend it on ourselves. We must rescue those being led away to death. We must hold back those staggering toward slaughter. Proverbs 24:11 exhorts us so. This truth releases us from self-pursuit and the slavery of a shortsighted, hedonistic lifestyle. We are freed for service to our Lord and His Kingdom with no possibility of regret. Did you give up the chance at marriage and kids in order to serve as a missionary? Did you lose the promotion because you would not adhere to some of the shady dealings the boss was pushing you toward? Did you give up your dream of recognition and acclaim in the arts because you decided to raise a family? Did you move away from your hometown and all your friends to obey a call to some ministry? Did you spend your nest egg to help fulfill the dream of a young disciple of yours to start a business? Did you give up a chance at the vacation-of-a-lifetime to take care of a sick
parent? None of that is lost. All of the relationships, dreams, jobs, vacations, travel, and adventure are all waiting for you.

We have hope for a better future. More than hope. We have faith—the reassurance of God’s promises to us. If you have not meditated on your future with Him, or it’s been awhile, you might find your perspective distracted or shortsighted. You may be sullied by the world. You may be completely wrapped up in the race to win, or acquire, or achieve, or be recognized. May this class and this information refocus your sights, lift up your vision, re-up your resolve, and renew your strength.

I will finish this workbook with the following poem written by a missionary named C.T. Studd. I would only clarify on one point. The only life that will be past is the old one on the old Earth. Praise God that on that blessed day when all of Creation is renewed, including our bodies, it will go on forever, it will never be past, and it will always seem brand new.

Only One Life

Two little lines I heard one day, Traveling along life’s busy way,
Bringing conviction to my heart, And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one, Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in ‘that day’ my Lord to meet, And stand before His Judgment seat;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice, Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave, And to God’s holy will to cleave;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Only one life, a few brief years, Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its clays I must fulfill, living for self or in His will;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore, When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way, Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep, In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e’er the strife, Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn, And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone, Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one, Now let me say, “Thy will be done”;
And when at last I’ll hear the call, I know I’ll say ’twas worth it all’;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.

poem written by C.T. Studd – missionary