

# Heaven | Week 1/3 | Kevin Fitzgerald

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[ 0 : 00 ] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Good to see you. For you younger folks, you don't realize that we have a long history with the folks here.

Go back with Mark Manella, back to selling cars back in the 70s. Hello, Mark. The Kleppel family, we're good friends. My sister, my brother-in-law go here, Kurt and Michelle.

I did camps, I don't know how long, how many years, I know 10 years in a row at Dayspring with you guys, with your day camps. So I feel like I'm at home here, which is a good thing, right?

So let me just say a little bit about this three-week series. I'm going to try to talk fast because there's a lot. It just keeps growing and growing. I had to select what I wanted to talk about.

So we're going to have two parts tonight. We're going to go for about, I don't know, 35, 40 minutes. And then as Americans, we've got to stop and eat, right? Then we'll come back.

[ 1 : 07 ] I'm a guest here, so how long do you want to have your snack break to be? You're a guest here, too. 15 minutes, all right.

I don't like to call people back to the session. It's like herding cats. So I'm just going to start. If you want to bring your... No, you don't bring your food in here, right? So tonight and the next two nights, we're going to talk about where we're going to end up.

And we're going to talk about a lot of things. Obviously, we're not going to be able to cover everything. You're probably going to have some questions when you leave. If we have enough time, maybe we can have a Q&A.; And so tonight, we're just going to get started.

And next week, we're going to continue. We've got a lot of stuff to talk about. God bless you. I hope you get something out of here. So are we ready to go? We've already prayed.

We're ready to go. So I've entitled the series, Final Destiny, The Believer's Amazing Life Beyond the Grave.

[ 2 : 16 ] So I'd like to start with a question. I won't embarrass you. You don't have to raise your hand. When you hear about heaven, what comes to your mind?

Don't say anything. Just a hypothetical question. What comes to mind? If you were like me growing up, you probably thought about some mystical place out in outer space somewhere that was kind of cloudy.

I don't know if you watch the Super Bowl. When the teams come out, they've got those fog machines. And you're up to fogs up to your ankles. And people are walking around in white robes. And if you touch them, your hand goes straight through them.

And of course, in heaven, you've got to have angels, right? We do believe that's biblical. And of course, God is there. Is that kind of what you think about as your final destiny?

For years, that's what I thought. And so when Christians die, let's say I keel over and have a heart attack here. No mourning?

[ 3 : 20 ] Wow. There's going to be a hard crowd here. Let's say I die. Again? Again? Enough with the joke. Where are you going to go?

Are you going to go to this kind of otherworldly place up in the sky? That's a good question. Here's a better question. What are we going to do when we get there?

And what is the typical answer that we think about? We're going to be sitting around strumming harps, right? And not only that, every once in a while, we're going to get up off the harps and go into the throne room, and all the redeemed of all the ages are going to worship God.

Is that what you kind of got in your mind as far as where you're going to go in your final destiny? Or is our final destiny going to be a physical place populated by people in resurrected physical bodies?

Or what's in your mind? Is it back to that? Is it going to be that spiritual place populated by people in disembodied spirits and not in physical bodies?

[ 4 : 31 ] What do you think of? Is that kind of that cloudy place up in the sky? We're going to look at that. Many Christians imagine eternity as this cloudy, vague, non-philic.

You know, we don't really know where it is, what we're going to do, what's it going to be like. Is it a place populated by disembodied spirits? The perspective of many, and I've taught this around the country a little bit, and after a while, many people come up and they say, I never gave much thought.

I always thought it was, you know, our final destiny is simply a transfer from down here in this historical place to an otherworldly place.

God's going to be there. I hope, you know, my friends are going to be there. And Jesus will be there. And angels will be there. Have you given any thought to what we're going to do beyond that? And notice I use the word final. I'll talk about that in a minute. Our final destiny. Let me give you a hint. I like it when teachers ask questions.

[ 5 : 43 ] It gets my rusty brain going. Let's go back to the garden. If Adam and Eve hadn't sinned, where would they have spent eternity?

Have you given much thought to that? I don't know if the Bible actually gives us an answer, but think about it. We were created with lungs to breathe air, and a digestion system to eat food, and touch, and eyes to look at color, taste buds to taste.

Where would Adam and Eve have spent eternity if they hadn't sinned? Think about this. Think about this theologically.

The only reason anyone goes to this throne room, this third heaven, up in the third heaven, is it because of sin? Wasn't the original plan of God, which we're going to look at in a minute here, to stay on the earth?

Man was created to dwell in a physical environment. Next week, we're going to look at how inroads into Christianity has given us the idea that physical matter is bad.

[ 7 : 03 ] You know, we're like souls trapped in a body, and our goal is to get out of this physical place. The world's going to burn, and we're going to go up and be in heaven. We're going to talk about that, though, next week.

So I mentioned the third heaven. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul, the apostle Paul says, I was caught up into the third heaven. Let's look at some context here. There's our lovely planet Earth. The blue around it, we would say that would be the first heaven.

That's where the birds fly. Then the second heaven is that darker area we call outer space. But Paul was caught up into paradise, and he says, up into the third heaven.

And I'm going to go with, it seems like the Bible teaches that that's where God is seated on his throne. Of course, we believe God is everywhere present, but he is especially present on his throne with his son sitting next to him.

What would you think if I told you that we're not going to spend eternity up somewhere beyond the stars in this third heaven that we hear so much about?

[ 8 : 12 ] What we're going to look at is a careful study of Scripture will show that there's simply, now this might shock you, don't stone me, just bear with me. There's simply no role for heaven, as we know it up in the sky, there's no role for heaven in the final destiny of the redeemed.

You may be going there, but that is not your final resting place. No, indeed. Rather, what we find, and the problem is, a lot of this is at the end of the Bible.

You know, we Americans, we are good at starting books, but we're not good at what? Finishing them. Well, in the last couple chapters of Revelation is where we get a lot of this stuff.

Rather, God is going to redeem and renew the earth, whereupon we're going to spend eternity in physical resurrected bodies, not walking around in clouds, but actually down here on a renewed earth.

Now, sometimes we're reticent to teach this because the Jehovah Witnesses have a version of this, and we don't want to, but really, we're going to see from the Bible that this is where our final resting place is.

[ 9 : 31 ] Let me give you an illustration. So, if we're not going to spend eternity up into the third heaven, what role does heaven play for the dead in Christ? For example, if I die, all right, you're getting it.

I believe, and we'll talk about this, I think, next week or the week after, we're going to go to that third heaven. But let's say that you're a business person, a man or woman that travels for your job, and so the week comes and your job is to fly from L.A. to Boston.

But there's no, you know how it works, right? There's no straight route, so you've got to stop over in Chicago, and it's snowing. So you land in Chicago, and you spend five hours there, and you get on a plane, and you finally go to your destiny, right?

Well, that's kind of what the Bible teaches. Physical death, you know, when we close our eyes in death, on our way to Christ's kingdom on earth, there's not a direct flight.

There's a layover in what theologians, some theologians, call the intermediate state. And the reason they call it the intermediate state is because it's not our eternal home.

[10:48] I know there's a song that we sing, This world is not my home. Eh, it's kind of true and not true. This current world isn't our home. But there is a world coming on that's going to be recreated on this earth, which we'll talk about next week.

You see, you and I, my friends, were designed in physical bodies to live in physical, in a physical place. Our bodies are made up of 60% water and about 40% dust.

Really, we're like mud puddles, you know? Lungs to breathe, things like that. The biblical worldview that we're going to see in these three weeks presents the believer's final destiny not somewhere in outer space, but on a new earth, in a new body, enjoying food, animals, cultures, friends, banquets, physical stuff.

I don't know about you, but I like to eat. I was eyeing the dessert out there. Did anybody see? Can you imagine how good that tastes now? Wait till we get taste buds that aren't affected by sin and food that hasn't been affected by sin.

Didn't God say that some will come from the east and west and sit down and have a banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and there's the wedding feast? Well, I'm getting ahead of myself with next week's stuff.

[12:19] So let's look at this. From the beginning, God has always wanted to be with people on earth. He's not one of these guys that winds up the earth, all right, it's going, and then he leaves.

God, I know this blows our minds, but he actually desires fellowship with us more than we do with him now that we're in our fallen state. Listen to this.

In Genesis 3, verse 8, Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze. Imagine this. Honey, is it time for our walk with God? Theologians tell us that the tenses in this Hebrew verse give the idea that this was not a one-time thing.

Can you imagine going out for a walk with God? I don't know about you, but I've got a list that's like a roll of toilet paper long with questions that I have for God.

And I'm looking forward, I believe, in the new earth, just like God today. Think about it. He can hear the prayers of all his people around the world in different languages.

[13:24] Not a problem. It's not above his pay grade, right? I figure he's going to be able to take a walk with me and you too at the same time. I don't know how. Now, this idea that God, you know, be up in heaven and man is alienated down here on earth was never his plan.

It was never his plan. Now, we're going to find out why that happened, but God desires to be with people. And so in the creation account, we're going to see that you and I were wired to rule the earth.

Now, you might not think that about yourself, but we're going to see that God created man and woman, men and women, to reign and to rule on the earth.

It's as if God put man on the earth and he says, now listen, you're going to represent me here. You are my vice regents and I've got a job for you.

A lot of times we think that work is the curse. No, work made the curse worse, or work worse, but we were created to rule on the earth.

[14:33] And I'm going to tell you in a little while, this is one of the main themes of this course. Now, in Genesis 1, verse 26, it's kind of like a theme statement for man. You know, you go to a business, what do they call that?

A mission statement, a mission statement. Here's our mission statement. Then God said, let us make man in our image according to our likeness. They will what? Rule. The fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth.

In other words, God handed Adam and Eve the scepter, and he said, look, I've taken this garden, I've arranged it, here's what I want you to do. I want you to administrate the earth for me. Take this cultivated little garden and take it around the world.

Have lots of babies. Be fruitful. Multiply. That's our favorite verse in the Bible. Right, men? In other words, don't just grow grapes, make wine.

Don't just grow olives, make olive oil. Make instruments. Get metal out of the ground. Make harps. Make music. Compose. Make cultures.

[15:42] Build cities. The whole earth. And God's plan for Adam and Eve was to take this beauty, this cultivated earth, because I don't believe the whole earth was cultivated, and says, now get going.

You guys are my representatives. Isn't that nice? He's not this despot that rules all by himself. He likes to share. The New Testament, we're going to study this later, talks about co-reigning with Christ.

Can you imagine that? So, vice regents go out, they get the plan, and you know what happens, right?

I don't have to tell you the fall story, but their rebellion and sin brought alienation between them and God. Now, if I was God, I would have wrung my hands and said, look, you made your bed, and I'll sleep in it, but that's not how our God works.

Yes, this was serious. He cursed the earth, but he didn't cancel his human project, nor the idea that someday man would rule the earth.

[16:52] So, what happened? Adam and Eve have the scepter, Eve eats, Adam eats, they fall, and then the rulers became the rule.

Isn't that true? We know the Genesis story. We don't have to take time tonight. And so, this beautiful world that God created, on the sixth day, he stepped back, and it says, God saw all that he had made, and it was, I like the Christian standard version, it says, it was excellent.

Of course, whatever God makes is going to be excellent, right? Beauty, no water bottles in the ocean, no contamination, no poison ivy, no pollution, no disharmony amongst married people, Adam and Eve, right?

It was beautiful. But as soon as they rebelled against God, something changed. Do you struggle? Do you cry yourself to sleep at night? Do you suffer from depression? Do you have ailments? Here's why. We were made for another world. This world that we're living in was not the original blueprint. That's why we struggle so much.

[18:00] Look, we have wars, we have death now, we have deterioration. How many married people end destroying their union? That's because the leader of the dark forces, he overtook a kingdom that didn't belong to him.

It's as if Adam dropped the scepter when he ate the fruit. And before the scepter hit the ground, Adam, I'm sorry, Satan grabbed the scepter. And now, the world is being ruled by a fallen angel. His dominion is over a counterfeit kingdom. It wasn't meant for him. But he hates God, and of course he's going to hate anything that belongs to God. And now the Bible describes him as the ruler of this world.

He's a real being. It describes him as the God of this age. It calls him the prince and the power of the air. So we have a problem.

What happened to our rule? Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden. They're still working the ground, but it's different.

[19:12] But this is important to know. God did not give up on his plan for people to rule the earth. Yes, it's like Satan threw a big old monkey wrench in it.

You know what happens when you throw a monkey wrench in things? They don't work that well. But what we're going to see in just a minute, we're going to just take a flyby over all of Scripture. We're going to see that all of human history, all of biblical history, is pointing to an event in the future. And that is Christ's coming physical reign on a physical, renewed earth with resurrected people. His earthly kingdom is still the Father's great plan for earth, populated by human beings. But here's that problem. The world is currently being ruled under a fallen angel.

But then, have you ever noticed that little verse in Hebrews 2 tucked in there? I really like this verse. I'm reading along and Hebrews 2 is talking about this coming earthly kingdom, right? He says, For he, God, has not subjected to angels the world to come that we're talking about.

[ 20 : 27 ] Wait a minute. We're talking about this world, this kingdom world to come, but it was never God's plan that an angel rule in that age, much less a fallen angel.

So something has to take place. Right now, the world is currently being ruled by an angel, but God says, you know, that wasn't my ultimate plan.

It was never my plan that the angel ruled now, or much less in that world we're talking about. Can you imagine at the fall, you know, God up in heaven with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They're watching Adam and Eve, and all of a sudden God goes, oh! And he turns to the Son and he says, oh, shucks. Satan ruined our plan A. I know what we'll do.

We'll just go to plan B. We'll get everybody up here to paradise in this third world. Do you think that God is going to yield one millimeter to the devil?

[ 21 : 33 ] It's like every square inch of this universe, God cries out, mine, mine. And he's got a plan to get it back, get the scepter out of Satan's hand, put it back in the human hands, and renew this earth.

Scriptures teach that God is not going to give up his great plan A. Today, much of Christianity has this idea. Anywhere you read in the Bible, it's you go to heaven when you die.

You go to heaven when you die. Now, that's important. We're going to talk about that at the end tonight. But that is not the main theme of the Bible. The main theme of the Bible is God is going to come and he's got a plan to put things back in order.

He's not going to surrender an inch to the enemy. Let me give you an illustration. Let's say that you own a train company and you own 20 trains and one day you're at lunch because you don't work, right?

You've got people working and a foreman calls you and he says, Boss, boss, we had a derailment. Can you imagine you as the boss saying, Hey, Joe, Joe, don't worry about it. We've got 19 other trains. Just let that one go.

[ 22 : 51 ] No. If you're a good boss, you know what you're going to do? You're going to have a plan to send a crew out there and salvage the wreck. You're going to see about getting the train back on the track and get things going.

At least, I think that's what you would do. I know what I do. Well, there was a derailment back in the Garden of Eden and God didn't go, I've got 19 other trains. Just let it go. No. He's got a plan to put the train back on the track.

I borrowed this from Answers in Genesis. The seven seas of history. So, up in the top there, creation, God creates everything good. He's like, he gives us the universe on a silver platter. Alright? We're no Democrats back. I'm just kidding. Just kidding. But then, there was corruption. Right? Catastrophe.

Man expands. God says, you know what? I've had it. Getting rid of all of you except eight people. They come off. We're going to see in a little while he restates what he told Adam and Eve.

[ 23 : 58 ] Be fruitful. Multiply. Get out there. Get on with it. And then we have the Tower of Babel where they just kind of raise their hand to God and say, you know what? Thanks, but we've got our own plan. So, he...

That's why I had to learn, spend nine months speaking Spanish. But then, then he sends Christ who goes to the cross and look down there. We're... We're...

Our goal is not somewhere in outer space. It's God putting the train back on the track for the original plan A to have man rule in resurrected physical bodies on a renewed earth.

So, my little friend here has a question. But where did all this new earth teaching come from? I thought we Christians would just end up in heaven forever and the earth is going to be destroyed. I call it out of here theology. Get your ticket stamped for heaven and we're out of here. This world can go to hell in a handbasket. It's all going to burn. Have you ever heard that? No, that's not what the Bible teaches.

[ 25 : 03 ] So, let's go to the garden and let's take our little flyby. I don't know about you, but I'm getting really hot. You mind if I take this off? Whew! Much better. Now, have you ever heard somebody say, I don't like reading the Old Testament.

Oh, man. I like Jesus. He's a lot nicer than that other guy in the Old Testament that's killing people and sending floods. I like Jesus. I like grace. Well, you know, grace is right here in the garden. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and what does God do? He shows up. He shows up in the garden. Here's that verse. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord walking in the

garden.

He shows up. He calls them. He doesn't say, you made your nest, I'm going with another group of people, you're done, you're history, you're toast. He shows up.

What else? Well, in spite of Satan's attempt to ruin God's plan for humanity, God proceeds with his plan after the flood. He wipes out the earth except for eight people.

[ 26 : 08 ] Those eight people get off the ark and God says to them, God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Wait, haven't we heard that somewhere else?

We did, way back in the garden. You know what this is saying? He hasn't scrapped the human project. You get out there and do what Adam and Eve were supposed to do.

Be fruitful, be multiply, and multiply. I'm not done with you. He also says to Noah and his family, understand that I am establishing my covenant with you. What?

He's not done with us? There's not going to be another flood? There's mercy? There's grace? Grace? We've heard this before. And your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you.

Birds, life. Here we go. It's like, he's like he's repeating it. And then life goes on and there's another cycle of rebellion against God, the Tower of Babel.

[ 27 : 05 ] He confounds the language, but he shows up again. He takes this pagan and he dusts him off and he calls him Abraham and he says, listen, I'm going to make you into a great nation.

I will bless you. Isn't that amazing? We rebel against God. It just keeps coming back. Keeps coming back. I'm not done with you humans. I'm going to bless you.

I'm going to make your name great and you will be a blessing. I love that word. I will bless those who bless you. I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.

That's a big, big blessing. I like that last part. And we can kind of fudge our theology back in there. What God is saying is, to your seed, I'm going to send the Messiah and he's going to bring worldwide blessing.

So, Satan throws another monkey wrench in. The nation goes down to Egypt. 400 plus years. They come out. They get out. They cross the Red Sea and Moses is up, you know, getting messages from God, right?

[ 28 : 15 ] Listen to what he says to Moses. Israel is down below. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now, if you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my, you will be my own possession out of all peoples, although the whole earth is mine and you will be, now listen to what he's saying here.

You're going to be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation. Now, to save time, let me explain something to you. God takes this puny little nation, lifts them up, dust them, polishes them off and says, you're my kingdom of priests.

We're going together. You're going to be my witness to the world. So that when the world comes and sees the temple, the tabernacle and how you order your life, you see that was, in the Old Testament, it was a come and see system.

Ours is a go and tell. Theirs was a come and see. God chose them to bring blessing to the rest of us. In the Old Testament, God is not anti-Gentile.

He's created this nation to reach the Gentiles. And guess what happens? God shows up. They finish the tabernacle and who comes? It's not man going up.

[ 29 : 28 ] It's God coming down. And then years later, when Solomon finally built the temple, guess who shows up again? God shows up. Now, I love this. We don't have time tonight, but in the middle of this prayer, Solomon gives this big prayer, Lord, do this, do that, bless us.

And then he says, oh, and bless the Gentiles. He says, love them as much as you love us. You see, they were to be witnesses.

God wasn't done with the world. Over and over, he's bringing blessing. And then the big event, right? He sends his son, God in the flesh.

He shows up again, that first, whatever you want to call it, the Christmas. And Jesus came to put an end. Yes, he came to save us.

But you know what? Our salvation isn't the main thrust of the Bible. It's a big thrust. There's a lot of things going on when Jesus died on the cross. Jesus came from heaven to restore God's original

plan to have man rule the world.

[ 30 : 36 ] This is phase one of God's rescue mission to get God in human flesh. The role of Christmas in the Bible's big picture.

It was never God's plan that the world now or in the future be ruled by an angel. And so that first Christmas, Jesus came, do you remember what John said? To what?

Destroy. Remember back in the garden, the monkey reins? Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.

Yes, there was a lot of things going on when Jesus died. Yes, he was dying for our sins. Praise God, right? Thank God. But there was much more going on. He was on a rescue mission to put the train back on the track.

The kingdom plan to come. We've seen this from Answers in Genesis. He delivers us a perfect world. We rebel. And his plan isn't, ah, it's all going to burn.

[ 31 : 36 ] Come up here, plan B. No, it's a restored earth, a new heaven and a new earth that is coming. That is the end result. In the future, Jesus is coming back to earth to be with people.

Now here's the difference. When he came in the garden, he left. When he showed up in the tabernacle, he went back. When he showed up in the temple, he left. When he came at Bethlehem, he went back. This time, and this is amazing, when he comes this time, he's not leaving.

He's not leaving. He's going to be with us forever. And so, in the future, man will once again rule, plan on earth, and God will come down and live with his people.

Now this is not new. You remember when Jesus was praying and his disciples, oh Lord, teach us not to pray. You remember that prayer, right? Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. What is that next part? Your kingdom come, your will be done, where? Not up in outer space. Down here.

[ 32 : 45 ] There is a coming kingdom to earth. And you were created to rule on this earth, which I can't wait to our second part to talk to you.

You ever heard the, yes, the dumb question. You've heard joy to the world, Isaac Watts. He wrote this. I don't think he meant to write it as a Christmas song, but one of the lines goes, no more let sin and sorrows grow, nor thorns impress the ground.

He comes to make his blessings flow, and I love this line. Those blessings are going to flow as far as the curse is found.

In other words, didn't the curse affect the entire universe? Not just people. We're going to look in a minute at a verse. God's redemptive work extends to the farthest boundaries of the curse as far as the earth.

Why do stars burn up? Why do stars fall? Why are there black holes? You see, the curse, why is there space junk out there? Oh, are we there already?

[ 34 : 01 ] I'm just getting started. You want me to keep going? No, you want your coffee break, right? All right. Coffee break. I told you I'd only speak for 35 minutes.

You're dismissed. I call out of here theology permeated the New Testament and to our day and age. Where we have this idea that being human is a bad thing. We just got to get out of here. It's all going to burn. Let's go to heaven. Have you ever heard that? Like, for centuries, Christians have believed that marital intimacy was a bad thing.

You only do it to have kids and then you don't, no touch. Bad. Really? We forget that God gave us a whole book of the Old Testament called the Song of Solomon. We're going to get to that.

So, Jesus is teaching. Have you ever been reading in Matthew and you come to that passage where Peter goes, hey, we've left everything and followed you, so what will there be for us?

[ 35 : 03 ] In other words, what reward will there be in your coming kingdom? Sometimes, I don't know about you, but I read the Bible a little too fast and I go back and I say, well, I never saw that. Have you ever seen this phrase, Jesus said to them, truly I tell you, in the renewal of all things.

What is that? I thought, man, I got my ticket stamp and I'm waiting for the rapture, I'm out of here.

What are you talking about the renewal of all things? Have you ever noticed that?

When the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, when's that going to be? We know he's sitting on a throne next to the Father, but I don't think that's what it's referring to. Talking about his earthly throne.

The renewal of all things. Let's move on to Acts 3. Peter's preaching, he's in the temple, right after the day of the Pentecost, and he's giving it to him good.

Therefore, repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out, the season of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as Messiah.

[ 36 : 14 ] Now watch this. Heaven must receive him. Now we know in Acts chapter 1, heaven received him, right? Heaven must receive him until the time of the restoration of all things.

This doesn't go with the I'm out of here theology. What is the restoration of all things? Which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning.

In other words, this is nothing new. This is nothing new. Well, what were the, what did the prophets say? Well, we could have two weeks on that, so I've only whittled it down to two verses.

When did the prophets speak about this renewal? Well, listen to what Isaiah 65 says. For I will create a new heaven and a new earth.

Sorry, too much gooey butter cake. Maybe you're not bringing it next week. The past events will not be remembered or come to mind.

[ 37 : 19 ] This idea of we're not just going to go to heaven and we're going to live in this white, cloudy, foggy place. Isaiah prophesied, and then John picked this up in Revelation 21.

A new heaven and a new earth. I love what Habakkuk says, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory as the water covers the sea. In other words, there's coming a time when everybody on the planet will know the Lord.

Those of you that go to Fenton know that this is one of my favorite songs. I kindly call this the Fitzgerald National Anthem because it talks about how we were just so lost and God's grace came. The wonderful grace of Jesus. But listen to this one line. This author nailed it. Redemption. Broader than the scope of my transgressions.

In other words, it's not just about humans. It's not just about me. greater than all my sin and shame. Yes, we are going to be resurrected.

[ 38 : 25 ] We are going to be redeemed. But not just people. It's going to be far greater than just me and my sin and my redemption. So let's continue on our flyby over the New Testament.

Now I know you've all read Ephesians 1 but listen to this again with fresh eyes. Have you ever noticed this? He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure that He purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time to bring everything together in Christ.

What does that mean? What does that mean? That doesn't sound like out of here theology. Both things in heaven and things on earth.

Notice He didn't say the things under the earth. It's the things in heaven and the things on earth. There's coming this day of renewal. He repeats it in Colossians. Colossians 1, 19 and 20.

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him. Don't you love that verse? Watch this. And through Him, through Christ, to reconcile not just people, everything to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

[ 39 : 39 ] Notice He didn't say under the earth. By making peace through the blood, through His blood shed on the cross. Now, here's one of our main passages.

I call this double delivery. God is not only going to redeem people, but He wants back everything that the devil took and He's getting it back.

Listen to this passage. This is a very important passage in Romans 8. I don't want us to miss this. Paul is going on and he says, For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed.

In other words, creation is waiting for our redemption, our new bodies. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it.

Now, listen to this. In the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children.

[ 40 : 40 ] You see, creation is going to be redeemed and renewed with us. It's not all going to burn. Well, in a sense, we're going to learn this next week. Okay? Driving a Prius is not going to save the world.

Okay? It's all going to burn. But you know what? It's going to be renewed. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together.

I don't know about you, but when I go to bed and I get up and I get out and I get out of a chair, I groan. I'm getting old. I'm waiting for my new body. And Paul personifies creation.

He says, creation groans. It's waiting. The whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. Not only that, but we ourselves who have the spirit as the first fruits, we also groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

I don't know what you suffer with and what pills you're taking and whether you cry yourself to sleep or you suffer from depression. The curse is only temporary. It's all going to be renewed.

[ 41 : 43 ] Bodies, trees, the whole earth. Randy Alcorn in his wonderful book called Heaven says this, earth won't be put out of its misery. A lot of us used to think that.

It's all going to burn. Let's go up to the foggy place. Earth won't be put out of its misery. It will be infused with a greater life than it has ever known. At last, listen to these words, becoming all that God meant it to be.

God isn't done with what I call the human project. Next week we're going to have a segment on 2 Peter 3 but I'm going to tease you with this. Three times in chapter 3 it talks about the earth burning up.

Yes, there's going to be global warming. Not the kind we hear on TV. Because of that day, the heavens will be dissolved with fire and the elements will melt with heat. Okay, it is going to burn. But based on his promise, we wait for, where did he get his theology? He must have knew about Isaiah. Based on his promise, we wait for new heaven and a new earth where righteousness will dwell.

[ 42 : 57 ] No more sin. No more sinners. Listen, what is your mind about your future destiny? Is it somewhere in outer space?

Peter says, no, it's this. This should be. I'm going to tell you why this is important in a little while. So, some of us have been breaking bread for like 40 years or more, right?

And one of our main verses or passages we like is Revelation chapter 5. We like to read about that scene, the throne room of heaven, God's on the throne, the lamb is there, the four living creatures, the 24 elders.

Have you ever noticed this phrase? We've heard this over and over. And they sang a new song, the four living creatures. End the 24th.

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seal because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every, and I love this, every tribe, every language and people and nation.

[ 43 : 59 ] You have made them a kingdom of priests. Wait a minute, where have we heard that before? Israel, right? We're now a kingdom of priests. But did you ever notice the last part?

See, there's a scene up in heaven and we close our Bibles when we're breaking bread, we stay in heaven. But look what it says. And they will rain up in the foggy place where there's, no, where does it say they're going to rain?

They're going to rain on the earth. You keep reading in Revelation, listen to this. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God who had not worshipped the beast and his image.

Tribulation, right? And who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands, they came to life. Remember I told you, you were created and designed by the great engineer to rule.

Here it is, it's all through the Bible. Reigning, we're going to reign with Christ and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Get to the end of the Bible.

[ 45 : 02 ] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection, the second death has no power over them, but they are priests of God. Here it is again. Priests of God and of Christ and they will what? They're not going to hang around on clouds strumming harps.

Now I believe there's going to be worship in heaven, but on the new earth, I'm accustomed to say in heaven, right? There's going to be a lot more going on. We're going to reign with him on a recreated earth.

Revelation 22, the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city, the city that descends. Next week's study. And his servants will serve him. It's not just praise meetings.

They will reign, not only for a thousand years. You ever wonder what you're going to do in heaven? Well, no, you're going to be down here on earth, reigning forever and ever.

A little bit later, probably next week, we'll talk about what we're going to be doing. But this is, for me, the main passage. Listen to this. John gets the, excuse me, Revelation 21.

[ 46 : 08 ] Look what he sees. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. Why? Well, that first one, global warming, right? For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more.

You ever wonder about that? You know, the sea is kind of like the liver of the planet. We throw everything in the sea, right? It's like a big liver. Well, there won't be any sin. We don't need a liver to clean out. I don't know, that's my theory.

I also saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. I love this last part. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, I want you to notice this next phrase.

It seems in reverse. God's dwelling is with humanity. Now, if I was writing the Bible, I would have that flip-flop.

I mean, that's what we've been taught, right? Man's humanity is with God. Have you ever noticed that? It's reversed.

[ 47 : 13 ] God's coming here. He showed up in the garden, the temple, the tabernacle, in the stable, but he left. This time he's coming and look what it says.

They will be his people. people. He will live with them. Can you, I don't know about you, but that blows my mind. All my early life I thought, I'm trying to go to heaven.

I'm going to live with God up in that foggy place. And here he says, no, you don't understand. He's coming to us. He's going to live with us. Deity comes to us. We see this through the Bible.

It blows my mind. Why would God want to hang out with us? For God so loved the world. They will be his people and God himself. Did you ever notice that little phrase himself?

Why does that need to be in there? He just said God will be with them, but it says he himself will be with them and will be their God.

[ 48 : 08 ] Doesn't that seem flip-flop? Shouldn't it read, oh, in the end, you know, God turns off the lights, he turns on the fog machine, he takes us all out of heaven, and we go to be with God. But no, he comes, descending in this new city, and wait till you hear what's coming down the pipeline for us.

I talked about this song written by Mr. Babcock here. You ever notice this line? By the way, I'm going to take you through a bunch of hymns next week.

We'll see how much Platonism and Gnosticism has affected our singing. Jesus, this is good, Jesus who died shall be satisfied, and earth and heaven will be one.

Did you ever think about that when you sang that song? Heaven's coming down to earth to merge, to be one. Ultimately, heaven and earth will be united, where believers will live in physical resurrected bodies forever.

That's what we should be thinking about. And many are surprised to learn that heaven and the intermediate state are not the main focus of the Bible. It's not believe in Jesus and go to heaven.

[ 49 : 27 ] It's believe in Jesus and live now for the kingdom that's coming, which I'll talk about in just a second. You know how the Bible closes? Read the end of the book.

It closes with God on earth, man on earth, man on earth and physical bodies on a renewed creation. Unbelievable.

Now, why do I get so excited about this? I'm going to wrap this up. Whenever I teach the Bible, I like to have a big idea. Usually I only have one slide, but I have four or five.

The reason I like it is like, what did the speaker speak on? I don't know. There's like six sermonettes there. I want you to have a big idea. Like when you're going home in the car, what did he say?

This is it. This is the big idea for the whole series. God created man to rule the world. He didn't give up on the human project. We forfeited that rulership and the usurper is now ruling in the place we should be ruling in.

[ 50 : 38 ] But God never abandoned his plan for humans to rule the earth. He intervened. He came. Can you imagine that? He left heaven. God sent heaven's greatest treasure, his son.

Can you imagine the angels scratching their heads with their wings? What is going on here? Jesus came and he intervened to destroy the works of the devil to put an end to angel rule.

Now here it is. Here it is. Why is this important? Why is it important that we understand this version of what's coming for us and not the smoky fog place up in the sky?

Because someday resurrected humans will rule the new earth and here it is. And how we live now will determine not our entrance, that's free, that's a free gift, but how we live now will determine our status and enjoyment in that coming kingdom.

That's what we're going to hammer on in the weeks to come. I made a little chart here. It's called contrasting beliefs about eternity. On this side we have what we imagine about eternity.

[ 51 : 55 ] The other side is what we actually find when we study the Bible. But we imagine heaven is boring. Can you imagine, okay, anybody have 15 year old children or have your dinner?

Oh man, you guys are going to love heaven. We're going to have 24-7 praise meetings. We're going to be sitting around on harps or clouds strumming harps. You can just see their eyes rolling back.

Not another meeting place. We take the motivation to live now off the table. We give them this boring, foggy, detail-less idea of what's waiting.

But what we're going to see in the weeks to come is, no, it's amazing. It's amazing. Ethereal bodies, you know, when we went to Springfield, Illinois, they had a hologram.

It was like, hey, there's Abraham Lincoln. No, it's really just, it's a hologram. No, physical resurrected bodies. Non-Earth, cloudy, foggy, white.

[ 52 : 57 ] No, new earth. Alien, different, I don't know. It's going to be, no, there's going to be continuity. Yes, this earth is going to burn, but we're going to see mountains and rivers and cities.

We're going to be, you know, we're going to know who we are. We're going to know who our friends are. Well-known continuity. Heaven, out of time and space, somewhere out and out of space. No. Here, we're just passing through, but we're coming back. Not continuous worship, although I'm sure there's going to be worship, and we're going to love it. But imagine this, to your 15-year-old son, we're going to discover.

We're going to explore. We're going to learn. Who knows? God might put you in charge of the horses or the moon. I don't know. Whatever, whatever you like to do. Satan wants us to believe that heaven is a boring place.

Satan wants us, as evangelicals around the world, to think that all we're going to do is sit around on clouds and go to praise meetings. You know why Satan likes this version?

[ 54 : 06 ] It's boring. It doesn't motivate us to live for the Lord. Beloved, we are becoming today what we're going to be in the kingdom.

we are in training time for reigning time. For example, when a U.S. president comes into office, he's got hundreds of hundreds of very important positions to put his people in.

Do you think he's going to take a dusty old lazy guy, dust them off, and put them in as the Secretary of State? No, he's going to choose somebody that was loyal, that worked hard for him. God's like that.

It's not inevitable that every Christian will live the Christian life. Many of them walk away. Many of them are carnal. Many of them get caught up in sin.

Ah, you know what they say? Kevin, I'll just be glad to be there. As long as I'm there, I'll be happy. You know what I say? Here's my response. That's how you think with a mind affected by sin. But when you're there with your clear thinking mind, that's not what you're going to think.

[ 55 : 19 ] You're going to think differently. This version of heaven, well, you know, hey, we're going to see everybody. The smoke's coming out. There's clouds. Everything's white, and it's boring.

We've got to get rid of that version. That's not a biblical version. Now, we're going to talk about that next week. This is a passion of mine.

The Bible teaches that how we live now will determine our status, not our entrance. I'm going to talk about your entrance right now.

Wouldn't it be sad not to know this? Some people say, oh, we're all going to be the same. It's going to be like American T-ball. No matter how lousy you are, everybody gets a trophy. That's not how heaven is.

Heaven, the Bible talks about great in the kingdom, least in the kingdom. If you are wasting your life, if you have bought into the world system, you need to know how you live now is determining your status in the coming kingdom forever.

[ 56 : 27 ] This is why this version, this false version of heaven needs to be gone. We need to teach how we live now will affect how we're going to reign then.

That's the topic for next week. So here's my last question. It would be a tragedy to study all about eternity and end up separated from Christ in the lake of fire, wouldn't it?

So what I want to do is take the last five or ten minutes and explain as clear as I can how we can know that when we close our eyes and death here, we're on our journey with Christ to that eternal

kingdom.

What we have to understand is Jesus Christ is the only being in human history that can bring man to God and provide him with eternal life. That's why they call him the Savior, right?

Now I'm sure that the Dalai Lama is a really nice guy, but he cannot get anybody into the kingdom. And we all love Billy Graham, right? But he can point us, but he's just a pointer. I guess imagine him with his Bible and he's preaching, preaching Jesus, but he can't save anybody.

[ 57 : 46 ] Nobody in Iran, what do they call these guys? I keep forgetting, the Ayatollahs. They can't save anybody. No Pope, no priest can save anybody or get you into the kingdom.

Why? Listen to what the Bible says. There is salvation in no one else, only Jesus. For there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.

Jesus is the Savior. Can you imagine him coming from heaven all that way, going to the cross and dying, and we say, I got this. Don't worry about it.

It's critical that we understand that no amount of good behavior, no amount of good deeds will ever get us into that kingdom. The truth is that God did all the doing, so the work is done.

Listen to this verse. Today's version goes like this. The one who behaves in the Son has eternal life. It doesn't say that, does it? We behave badly. We're promise breakers.

[ 58 : 47 ] That's why this verse says the one who believes in the Son has eternal life. But the one who rejects the Son will not see life. It's not American T-ball.

Instead, the wrath of God remains on him. I love this cartoon. I'm having an artist draw this for this new track I'm writing. Notice Jesus is in the cartoon and he's offering this gal eternal life.

He says, I can give you eternal life. And notice what's in her hands. She looks back with a big old smile on her face and she goes, thanks, but I got this. I don't need you. Look at my life.

Look at me. I go to church. I was baptized. I do all these things. The reason I like this is because that was me. That was me for 20 years. I thought, thanks God, I got this.

You just go back to heaven. I'm going to work hard. Look at me. I go to church. I do this. There's one important area where doing good is deadly. It's downright deadly and it ends in catastrophe 100% of the time.

[ 59 : 51 ] What is that? Because 99.9% of the time we should be good, right? But there's one area where it's deadly and it's trying to earn heaven or eternity based on our good works and our good behavior.

Let me explain. When doing good is deadly, think about when you grow up. We learn early on from our parents that our behavior and performance is always being, good girl, Joey, you did the dishes, you did your homework, and we get this all our lives from the classroom to the boardroom.

And so we live our lives, we try to be good, we try to do good works, and we try to follow the golden rule. Now, keep doing that, okay?

Keep doing it. But you've got to understand that being good doesn't get you into the kingdom. Doing good works doesn't get you into the kingdom. Following the golden rule doesn't get you into the kingdom.

don't roll the cosmic dice on where you're going to spend eternity. I love this picture. It kind of pictures a lot of people around the world.

[ 61 : 01 ] They don't know about the freeness of eternal life, so they're on this quest. Oh, I know I'm a sinner, but I'm going to try to do more good works, and I'm going to tip the scales.

Hopefully, when I, I hope I'm going to heaven. That's why I say don't roll the cosmic dice. God says we can know now. I love this verse. Listen to this. Being saved, that would be being saved from the lake of fire, being saved is a gift.

If a person could earn it by being good, then it wouldn't be free, but it is. It's given to those who do not work for it.

Isn't that the coolest verse you've ever seen? If you are in this philosophy where you're trying to earn your way to heaven, listen to this verse one more time. Being saved is a gift.

I don't know about you, but do you pray for Christmas gifts that people give you? Hold on, hold on, thank you for that new watch, but here's a 50. Being saved is a free gift. If a person could earn it by being good, then it wouldn't be free.

[ 62 : 12 ] I love this part, but it is. Right? It's given to those who don't work for it. You may think you're going to go to church and God's looking down.

This is what I thought for 20 years. Every time I went into the church, I kind of gave a glance up to the heaven and God was there with a big nob. Okay, Kev, 10 more points. Keep going, buddy. I thought I was earning my way to heaven.

Oh, man, I got baptized and you may get baptized later in life. Let me tell you, the only thing that baptism does for you is to get you wet if you're using it to get to heaven. Oh, but my grandma, my great grandma, I'm in a long line.

No, God doesn't have grandchildren. He only has children. And then the main one, here God, take my works. A lot of people spend a lot of time in prayer. Now, these are not bad things, but you have to understand, none of these activities merit.

You see, why would Jesus come to be the Savior if we could do it on our own? Well, those things can't say. Of all the world religions, biblical Christianity is unique in that it calls on people to receive eternal life as a free gift apart from performance are good works.

[ 63 : 26 ] Listen to this verse. Paul is writing to the Ephesians who are now Christians and he says, God saved you by his grace when you behaved. Is that what it says?

When you believe. You can't take credit for this. Why? It's a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we've done, so none of us can boast about it.

Can you imagine in heaven this big book? I gave more money than you. I did more good works than you. This verse shuts that down. None of us can boast. We can only boast in what Jesus did for us. Why is it that God won't accept man's participation in seeking to obtain eternal life? It's because there at the cross Jesus absorbed the wrath and the punishment that you and I deserve.

Because Jesus Christ did all the work to purchase our entrance into eternity once and for all. He died in the sinner's place receiving the punishment that we deserve.

[ 64 : 38 ] Listen to what the Bible says. When we were utterly helpless, now I just want to stop there. Let this sink into your nervous system. We are helpless to pull ourselves up to get to God.

That's why God sent him here. We're utterly helpless. Christ came at the right time and died for sinners. Isn't that amazing?

I like to say it this way. Jesus did all the doing so the work is done. As a matter of fact, one of the last things that Jesus said on the cross is it is finished. The work to get sinners to heaven is a done deal.

That's why it's free. He did it all. Now, to be clear, God is not against us performing good deeds or seeking to be good people. the deadly part is only when we try to gain eternal life based on our deeds or performance.

I'll close with this. In 1864, a man named James Proctor wrote a hymn titled It Is Finished. The words of the hymn describe the danger of trying to gain eternity based on performance or good works.

[ 65 : 54 ] Listen to the words. Doing is a deadly thing. Doing ends in death.

Lay your deadly doing down down at Jesus' feet. Stand in Him and Him alone gloriously complete. Many of us are going through life with our arms filled thinking that what we do and who we are or that's going to get us in. Listen to the words of Brother Proctor here.

Lay your deadly doing down. Look to Jesus. He came from heaven as the Savior. He went to the cross. He died for us. He returned and He offers anybody the free gift of eternal life based on faith alone and His offer of that eternal life.

You're here tonight and if your hands are full take the advice of Holy Scripture. It's deadly. It ends in the lake of fire.

[ 67 : 04 ] I know it's counterintuitive. Aren't we supposed to be good? Yeah, once we lay our deadly doing down and we become Christians, then we start working on our status in heaven. But our entrance is not a participatory thing.

Jesus did it all. Lay your deadly doing down. Down at Jesus' feet. Now, next week, wow, we're going to continue our study talking about how this earth is going to be destroyed.

We're going to talk about reward in the kingdom, why we should be living now for then and dozens of other things. But right now we're going to close in prayer because a miracle is going to happen.

Have you ever seen a miracle? I am going to close one minute before time, which I don't think I've ever done in my whole life. It's a miracle. Let's pray. Lord, thank you that you came to die for us.

But Lord, thank you that redemption is not just for humans, but for the whole earth, for animals, and cultures, and nations, and planets. Lord, help us to understand the gravity of how we live our

Christian lives, how it affects our status in the coming kingdom.  
[ 68 : 23 ] Prepare us for next week's study, we pray in Christ's name. God.