

# Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church

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## Pastor's Bible Study

# If God Is Good

A Bible Study Series  
Based on the book  
"If God Is Good" by Randy Alcorn

## Part XXI

April 24, 2012

## The Two Eternal Solutions to the Problem of Evil: Heaven and Hell

### Heaven: Eternal Grace to Unworthy but Grateful Children (part 2)

- ◎ **Heaven: Eternal Grace to Unworthy but Grateful Children**
  - **The assurance of heaven's compensation for our present life should give us an eternal perspective.**
    - Failing to grasp God's promises concerning the world to come sets us up for both discouragement and sin..
    - We tell ourselves, *If I don't experience an intimate friendship now, I never will. Or, If I can't afford to travel to that beautiful place now, I never will.*
    - We feel desperate to get what we *think* we want.
- ◎ **Heaven: Eternal Grace to Unworthy but Grateful Children**
  - But if we understand both the negative truth that God will judge all sin and the positive truth that we'll actually live in a new universe full of new opportunities,

then we can forgo certain pleasures and experiences *now*, knowing we can enjoy far greater ones *later*.

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- Jesus sees nothing wrong in looking forward to rewards—he assures those caring for the poor.
  - **Luke 14:13–14 (ESV) — 13** But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, **14** and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”
- But we should look for that reward from God in the next life rather than from people in this one. Jesus said we will enjoy forever in Heaven the treasures we lay up now.
  - **Matthew 6:19–20 (NLT) — 19** “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.

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- **Deep in our hearts we don’t desire a disembodied existence in a spiritual realm; we desire an embodied life on a righteous Earth—which is *exactly* what God promises.**
  - “A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have,” Jesus told his fearful disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:39).
  - Yet countless Christians imagine themselves as ghosts, disembodied spirits, in the eternal Heaven.
  - The magnificent, cosmos-shaking victory of Christ’s resurrection—by definition a physical triumph over physical death in a physical world—somehow escapes them.

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- **Philippians 3:20–21 (HCSB) — 20** but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. **21** He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.
- As Jesus rose again and lived in a physical body on Earth, so we too, in bodies like his, will rise again to live on a renewed Earth.

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- **1 John 3:2 (HCSB) — 2** Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.
- **Revelation 21:1–3 (HCSB) — 1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea no longer existed. **2** I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. **3** Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look! God’s dwelling is with humanity, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

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- On the cross Christ paid the qualitatively eternal punishment for our sins, because he, due to his redemptive work, is forever scarred in his resurrection body, we will forever be without scars in ours.
- Our bodily resurrection will return us to an earthly life, this time freed from sin and the Curse.
- The wonders of our resurrected bodies and our future lives on the New Earth await us. But as enjoy them, day after day, surely we’ll look back to this life with profound gratitude for how God used everything, even evil and suffering, to prepare us for our eternal home.

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- **You may not feel satisfied with your current body or mind, but your resurrection upgrade will never disappoint you.**
  - Many of us look forward to Heaven more now than we did when our bodies (or minds) functioned better. Inside your body, even a broken or failing one, lies the blueprint for your resurrected body.
  - Joni Eareckson Tada says, “I still can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness – powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who is cerebral palsied, brain-injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.”

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- Many disabled believers have heard others say about the resurrection “You must look forward to walking and running.” true enough, but one handicapped Christian made a particularly revealing comment: “What I look forward to most is kneeling.”
- Our resurrected bodies will fulfill their highest function as we glorify God in our bodies, worshiping him without hindrance, fatigue, or distraction.

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- **We’re not past our peaks, the best is yet to come.**
  - Many people look to cosmetic surgeries and other techniques to renovate crumbling bodies. We try to hold on to youthfulness with a death-grip, but all in vain.
  - The great hymn writer Fanny J. Crosby wrote the lines: “His glory we shall see, when our eyes behold the city and the one who died for me,” do all for *His glory no matter what the circumstances, and He will lift you up. Mrs. Crosby never saw anything past infancy as she was blind her entire life, but she’d tell people not to feel sorry for her blindness, because the first face she’d ever see would be Christ’s. Fanny Crosby was miraculously healed – she received her sight in a dramatic moment in 1915....The moment she passed on to eternity.*

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- **The New Earth will be an everlasting, righteous kingdom, which will compensate for all the evils of fallen kingdoms preceding it.**
  - Daniel gives a prophetic revelation of four earthly kingdoms, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, that will one day give way to an eternal, fifth kingdom.
    - ☉ **Daniel 7:13–14 (HCSB) — 13** I continued watching in the night visions, and I saw One like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before Him. **14** He was given authority to rule, and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

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- Because the four pagan kingdoms dominated the Earth, the passage implies that this fifth kingdom—God’s eternal kingdom—will also dominate Earth.

- Clearly this cannot refer to the Millennium, because a thousand-year kingdom does not last forever.
- The kingdom with the everlasting dominion does not occupy a *different* realm, but the *same* realm—Earth.
- Christ will not merely destroy the earth where fallen kings once ruled; rather, he will rule over that same earth, after it is resurrected and transformed.

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- At Daniel’s request, an angel provides an interpretation of his vision: “The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth” (v. 17). Then the angel makes an extraordinary statement: “But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (v. 18). This statement makes clear both the kingdom’s location (Earth) and its duration (eternal).
- The ongoing succession of Earth’s unrighteous rulers should make us hunger for the day when our righteous God will rule, not just in Heaven but on Earth. At stake is whether God’s will shall be done on Earth. The answer is that it *will be done on Earth, for all eternity*, under the reign of Christ and redeemed mankind, his servant kings.

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- **To resolve the problem of evil, humans must enjoy full continuity of their personal identities.**
  - Randy Alcorn writes: When I came to Christ as a high school student, I became a new person, yet I was still the same person I’d always been. My mother saw a lot of changes, but she still recognized me. She still said, “Good morning, Randy,” not “Who are you?” I was still Randy Alcorn, though a substantially transformed Randy Alcorn. This same Randy will undergo another change at death, and yet another change at the resurrection of the dead. But through all the changes *I will still be who I was and who I am*. There will be continuity from this life to the next. I will be able to say with Job, “In my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another” ([Job 19:26-27](#)).
  - Despite the radical changes that occur through salvation, death, and resurrection, we remain the unique beings whom God created. This called “redemptive continuity.”

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- If we don’t grasp redemptive continuity, we cannot understand the nature of our resurrection. “There must be continuity,” writes Anthony Hoekema, “for otherwise

there would be little point in speaking about a resurrection at all. The calling into existence of a completely new set of people totally different from the present inhabitants of the earth would not be a resurrection.”

- Continuity is evident in passages that discuss resurrection, including [1 Corinthians 15:53](#): “For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” It is *this* (the perishable and mortal) which puts on that (the imperishable and immortal).
- Likewise, it is *we*, the very same people who walk this earth, who will walk the New Earth. “And so *we* will be with the Lord forever” ([1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)).

#### ☉ **Heaven: Eternal Grace to Unworthy but Grateful Children**

- **Heaven will fulfill our greatest dreams and surpass our highest expectations.**
  - Philip Yancey writes, “In any discussion of disappointment with God, heaven is the last word, the most important word of all.”
- Beams of heaven as I go, through the wilderness below, guide my feet in peaceful ways, turn my midnights into days. When in the darkness I would grope, faith always sees a star of hope, and soon from all life's grief and danger I shall be free someday.
- 2. Oftentimes my sky is clear, joy abounds without a tear; though a day so bright begun, clouds may hide tomorrow's sun. There'll be a day that's always bright, a day that never yields to night, and in its light the streets of glory I shall behold someday.
- 3. Harder yet may be the fight; right may often yield to might; wickedness a while may reign; Satan's cause may seem to gain. There is a God that rules above, with hand of power and heart of love; if I am right, he'll fight my battle, I shall have peace someday.
- 4. Burdens now may crush me down, disappointments all around; troubles speak in mournful sigh, sorrow through a tear-stained eye. There is a world where pleasure reigns, no mourning soul shall roam its plains, and to that land of peace and glory I shall want to go someday.
- Refrain: I do not know how long 'twill be, nor what the future holds for me, but this I know: if Jesus leads me, I shall get home someday.