

Prophecy 103 (The Not Boring Heaven)

Isaiah 2, 25, 27, 45, 60, 65, 66

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/prophecy-103-the-not-boring-heaven/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

[Opening song: "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" by Bob Dylan]

Sometimes I feel like I'm "knock, knock, knockin' on heavens door..." but I'm a little stressed about what it is that's on the other side. So, let's pray.

Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to preach Your Word, God. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Message

It's happened several times in the last few years, and it's really surprised me. In an email or a conversation in one form or another, someone will say something like, *"Peter, I think you're right about God reconciling all things to himself making peace by the blood of the cross; in other words, I think everyone will ultimately be saved... That's great and all, but to be honest, I guess I'm struggling with that idea, because, well—won't it be just insanely boring?"*

First time I heard that, I thought, *"OK, that's just weird."* Second time, I wondered, *"Have we been misrepresenting heaven?"* Recently I realized, *"Gosh, that's what I once thought but no longer think, ...and why is that?"*

In the fall of 1976, my sophomore year in high school, the movie version of *The Late Great Planet Earth* was released. *The Omen* had just been released. Everybody was talking about "the End Times." And I remember hoping, and even praying, *"Jesus, I love you and all, but please, don't come back until after I get my driver's license... and have sex—and you know I'm waiting till marriage— and so that will take some time."*

I wanted my driver's license because I wanted adventure; I wanted to go places, and I figured that in Heaven there was no place to go because you were already there... And of course everything was ridiculously safe in Heaven, which I find to be *insanely boring*. I wanted sex—because I just did. I wasn't sure why, but from Sunday school and one particular Bible verse about marriage, I figured that if I missed it here, I missed it forever.

So, I get it—why would anyone want to go to heaven?

I Googled images of heaven:



There were a whole lot of images like this. ...Why would I want to go to this?



Cumulonimbus clouds are really cool, but after a 1000 years of this, I'd be begging Jesus, "Couldn't we just go hang out at 7-11 in Cleveland?"



This classical version is a little better.

But I think this Far Side cartoon sums it up best:

[Image: Far Side cartoon of a man sitting on clouds with a harp (heaven) saying, “Wish I’d brought a magazine.”]

“Wish I’d brought a magazine.”

My favorite episode of South Park was about Satan trying to figure out how to torture Saddam Hussein in Hell—the problem was that he really liked it there. So, Satan makes a deal with God and sends Saddam to Heaven to live with the Mormons, who spend eternity making things out of egg cartons and yarn, while singing songs about how lying hurts our hearts.

[Image: still from South Park episode described above.]

See, Heaven can sound like hell:

- It sounds so boring: If “eternal” means “forever without end,” how could it not be boring? Even Disney World gets boring after 10 times on Goofy’s Rollercoaster. And if “eternal” means “timeless,” how could you ever go anywhere or do anything?—That’s boring!
- Heaven sounds so boring and ethereal, intangible... so unreal. Boring, ethereal, and creepy—I mean by that, strange, foreign, and unfamiliar.
- Boring, ethereal, unfamiliar, and embarrassing—if everything is exposed to the light and shouted from the rooftops—embarrassing! Imagine how much shame we’ll each feel, and how repressed we’ll all be...
- And well, that sums up my fears about Heaven: boring, ethereal, unfamiliar, embarrassing, and so thoroughly repressed.

But now, let’s read Isaiah—Jesus quoted Isaiah more than any of the other prophets in the Old Testament. So, when Jesus talks about “the Kingdom of Heaven,” he’s obviously thinking Isaiah. So, let’s read a smattering of Isaiah, and I’ll reference a few of the other Prophets as well.

For several weeks, we’ve been preaching from the Prophets and talking a bit about why we don’t seem to believe them. So anyway, just sit back for a spell and listen:

[Image: on screen is slide of Isaiah 2:1-2, 4b (ESV)]

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it...

v.4) and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; [and their assault rifles into power tools]; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

[Image: on screen shows slide of Isaiah 25: 6-8]

⁶ On this mountain [That’s the Holy Mountain—Eden, Moriah, Zion, and Jerusalem] the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged

wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

[Image: on screen shows slide of Isaiah 27:12-13]

¹² In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel. ¹³ And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

[Image: on screen slide shows Isaiah 45:22-23]

²² “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. ²³ By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’

[Image: on screen slide shows Isaiah 60:4—5, 11, 19-20,]

⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.

⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you...

¹¹ Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession...

¹⁹ The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. [Wow! What’s your “glory” now? The fact that you’re a snappy dresser? “Your God will be your Glory.”] ²⁰ Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

[Image: on screen slide show Isaiah 65: 17]

¹⁷ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered [“mentioned”] or come into mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, [Now that’s wild—there will be babies—and y’all know where babies come from.] or an old man who does not fill out his days, [And that’s wild—there will be old men filling out their days.] Next verse: for the young man shall die a hundred years old, [And that’s weird, he just said “die...” and yet, he already told us death will be no more... which reminds me of what Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” There’s a dying that is also living... as if you could lose your life and find it all in one moment.] Next verse:

and the sinner... [That's weird too, for no one will sin, and old things (like your sins) will not be remembered—maybe it means “*not remembered in the same way...*”

Zephaniah prophesies: “*On that day... I will turn their shame into praise.*”ⁱⁱ]

and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed (or “considered accursed” NRSV, “lightly esteemed” YLT). I think he's saying that even old sinners will live way past a hundred...

Next verse:

²¹ They (*those old sinners*) shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

[So, they're not “going nowhere and doing nothing.”]

²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³ They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, [See? They're having babies!], **for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them.**

²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They (wolves, lions, and old sinners) shall not hurt or destroy (that's sin) in all my holy mountain,” says the Lord.

[Image: on screen slide shows Isaiah 66:10-11, 23-24 (NRSV)]

¹⁰ Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her— ¹¹ that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom.

[I'm pretty sure that I never read that in tenth grade... because that sounds *not boring...* and entirely *not repressed*.] Now the end of Isaiah:

²³ From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD. ²⁴ And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me [that's everyone, except the Messiah, who chooses to be with them, according to Isaiah]; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

As we preached last time, this only makes sense if it means *all people* will look on the corpses of all people in the valley of Gehenna...

And praise God in Christ Jesus that he has delivered us from our old bodies of sin and death, and transformed us into his city, his temple, his body of endless delight...

Wow! Now that was just a smattering of Isaiah, and we don't have time for all the others, but they prophesy the same vision. And I hope you see that's it's *not boring, ethereal, unfamiliar*—maybe *embarrassing* in some sense—but certainly *not repressed*...

And check this out: I was told by conservative evangelical professors in seminary that there really is no doctrine of an afterlife in the Old Testament... Why would they say such a ridiculous thing?ⁱⁱⁱ

Well, I want to quickly point out three reasons we don't believe the prophets, seven ideas to help us believe the prophets, and then remind you why it matters.

Three reasons we don't believe the prophets:

[Image: slide on screen shows the following reasons listed below.]

#1. Zionism.

—This is the belief that there will be, or is, a new earthly Jerusalem, built in a newly constituted nation state of Israel. For most of Christian history, the church has taught that the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven and manifest a radically different reality from the reality we now experience in this fallen world.

Of course, the Old Testament, including The Prophets, is all about a journey to a promised land that seemed to be a nation state named "Israel" and a very earthly city, named "Jerusalem." And yet, God made this promise to people that died in the desert long ago and people who never fully occupied the land, and to people who were exiled after that physical Jerusalem was destroyed several times over.

But The Prophets prophesy that God will keep his promises—and that the problem isn't that God has overpromised and failed to deliver. The problem is that we have not yet believed, and not yet entered the land of which God spoke... And so God will give us his own spirit, his own heart--a new heart, and cause us to enter that land by Grace through Faith.

Now this was all tragically confused in the 20th century by horrific crimes perpetrated against the Jews, the politics of this world, and the founding of a nation state named "Israel" in 1948. Think what you will of that nation, but that nation state named "Israel" is not simply Israel... If anything, it's Judah and Benjamin, which are two tribes from the twelve tribes that formed the united nation of Israel.

The ten tribes have been dispersed within the gene pool of humanity for the past 2700 years... and the promise is given to them, and even us. The Gates of the New Jerusalem are always open, and all the nations of the world come and worship God there.

Modern Zionists often claim that The Prophets are talking about the Jerusalem in which the United States now has an embassy. But I've been there, and it's not true that no one hurts or destroys there, that the gates are always open there, and that the Messiah is exalted there—It's actually just about the opposite. There's violence, division, and the Messiah is officially rejected by the state government there. She's not the New Jerusalem, but looks just like the Old Jerusalem who crucifies her groom and stones the prophets.

When we confuse the Old with the New, we have to assume that the prophets were just spouting *banal*, *vacuous*, and *boring* bits of poetry when they talked about the New Jerusalem, that is, Heaven.

#2. We don't believe because of Zionism... and Modernism.

In the twentieth century, we were all taught that the only *real* things were things that we could comprehend according to our common perception of *space* and *time*, for space and time are constant. We've called that science. But in the twenty-first century, science is now teaching us that the modernism, particularly materialism, is arrogant, stupid, and now profoundly unscientific.

Of course, philosophers knew this all along, and so did the ancients; they knew that there are realities that don't submit to our comprehension, and in the words of Einstein, they knew that "The distinction between past, present, and future is a stubbornly persistent illusion."

Well, modernism gave rise to some really bizarre forms of millennialism in the twentieth century in the U.S. and Great Britain. And so, we grew up with books like *The Late Great Planet Earth*, movies like "*The Omen*," and all these unbiblical maps of the End Times—Maps which are deeply tempting to Zionists, for they hope to somehow participate in the 1000-year reign of Jesus from the modern city of Jerusalem, where we now have an embassy...

And of course, Modernists can't really believe The Prophets, for in The Prophets, *all the nations of the world* come and worship in Jerusalem. And obviously, *all the nations of the world* just won't fit in Jerusalem... at least not in our minds, in our concept of the New Jerusalem. Now, "saints" do reign with Jesus, but according to the New Testament, it's happening even now. And we must always remember that "with the Lord, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day."^{iv}

#3. We don't believe because of Zionism, Modernism,... and Individualism.

The Prophets talk about saving *peoples, tribes, and nations*, as if we were all connected... even in one body: the body of one man—one Adam. And they talk about "a day" that sounds just like the Seventh Day of Creation, when everything is good, and it is finished, so everyone praises God together for his judgment.

His judgment separates old hearts from a new heart, old corpses from a new body. Like Isaiah says, we will be threshed and gleaned one by one. We will be judged *as individuals* and put back together as one body—one worshipping body on that day on the Holy Mountain.

Those are just three reasons we don't believe; but now let me remind you of seven ideas that might help you to believe.

[Image: Slide on screen showing the following list.]

#1. Eternity.^v

In the Greek, it's this troublesome adjective "*aionios*." *Aion* is a noun that quite literally means "age." *Aionios* is the adjective for which we have no English equivalent, so it's often translated "eternity" and sometimes "forever," but it really means neither.

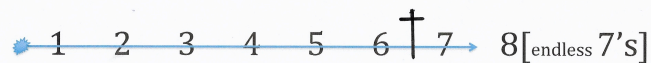
I think it means "of the age" and it usually refers to "God's Age" or "the age to come," or in The Prophets: "the day of the Lord" or just "that day."



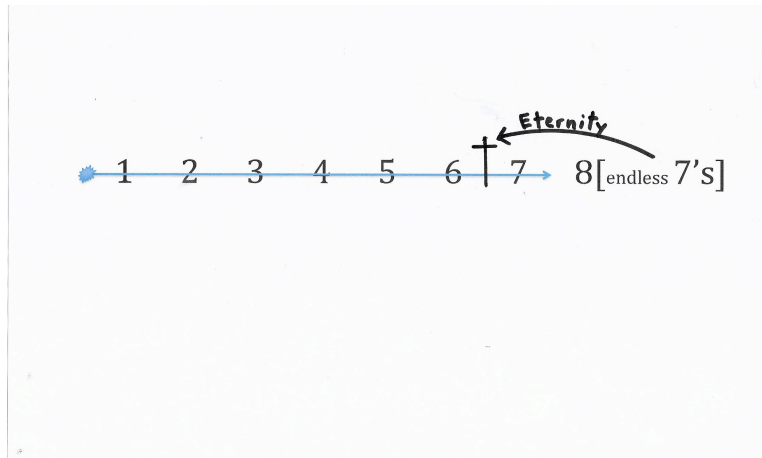
As we've preached a hundred times, Scripture seems to view time something like this timeline. There are at least six ages that are the six days of Creation, followed by a Seventh Day that is the Lord's Sabbath and the Lord's Day, and our promised rest. That day, in Genesis and the Prophets, is "a unique day" (to use the words of Zechariah^{vi}), for it has no beginning or end... Indeed it *is* the end. Sometimes in Hebrew thought, it's represented as an Eighth Day, which is an endless Seventh Day, which is actually not *end-less* so much as *end-full*—full of the End.



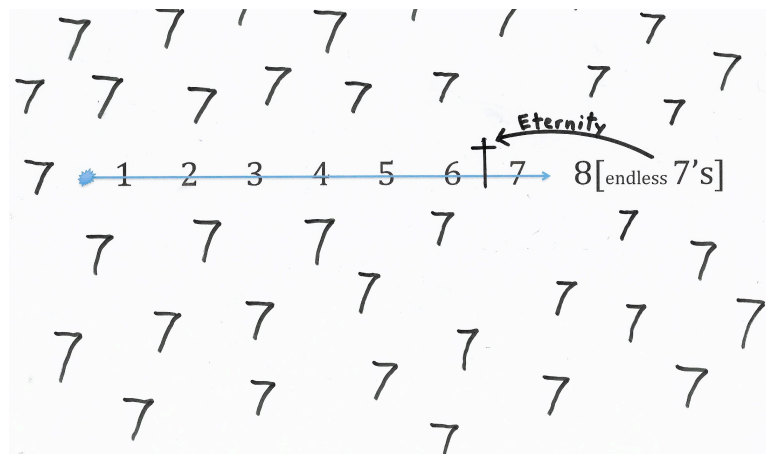
The New Testament teaches that we have come to "the end of the ages" when we come to Christ^{vii}, who is the End and the Lord of the Sabbath—God's Seventh Day.



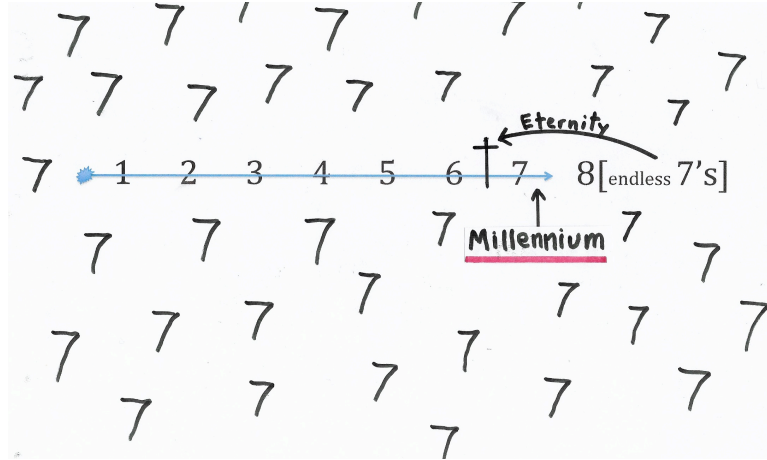
It was the end of the sixth day of the week, the Sixth Day of Creation, around the sixth hour of the day that, hanging on a tree in the garden on the holy mountain, Jesus lifted his head and cried, “It is finished,” and delivered up his Spirit. On that tree he gave us his Life—his Eternal Life—which is the life of the age to come.



And you see, that Life is not like life in this age; that Life does not come to an end, for it is *the End*, and it is *the Beginning* all at once. Christ’s life is not bound by chronological time... Actually, chronological time is contained within the life of Christ.

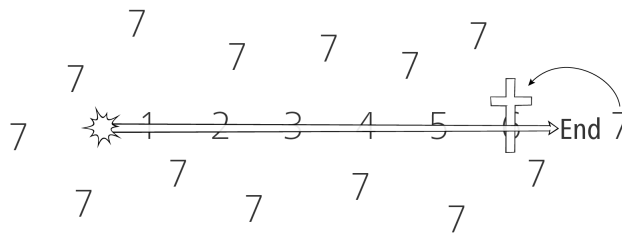


“In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” writes Paul. “He is before all things and in him all things hold together.”

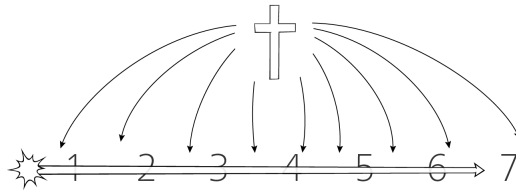


I think, and most of the church has taught, that the thousand-year reign in Revelation 20 refers to you right now: You have a temporal body, which contains the Eternal Life of Christ. There is a power in you that you are only beginning to perceive. He has begun to fill you, and he will fill all things with himself.

But listen: the Millennium is not my point right now.



My point is that “Eternity” is not timeless; it contains all time. And “eternity” is not time without end; it’s all of time filled with the End who is also the Beginning.



In other words, everything old is constantly new in eternity. And so, it's logically impossible for you to get bored in Heaven.

"Children always say, 'Do it again'; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead," writes GK Chesterton, "For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, 'Do it again' to the sun; and every evening, 'Do it again' to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately but has never gotten tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we."^{viii}

Jesus is younger than we, for he is the Beginning and the End. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am."^{ix} And this is the crazy thing—"We will be like him," writes John.^x

He is "the firstborn of all creation," "firstborn from the dead," "firstborn of many brethren."^{xi} That's us.

Well, I don't know if we'll simply do the same things over again, but I'm pretty sure we'll do the same things over again in a new way. In the words of Isaiah, we'll build houses, plant vineyards, bear children, have sex maybe, and maybe even drive cars... but in a new way (no speed limits is my suggestion!)

- So, eternity is not endless time... which is infinitely boring.
- And eternity is not timeless time... as if we did nothing and went nowhere.
- Eternity is not *time-less*, but more like *time-full*.
- We'll have time, but time won't have us. We will no longer be slaves of time.

This is why you dream about going *Back to the Future* but get confused by the space-time paradox: You've got eternity in your heart, yet you're stuck in a mortal body with a temporal brain, addicted to sin.

It's why you think, "*Dang! Knowing now what I didn't know then, I sure wish I had those years to live over again.*"

Well, maybe you do.

For years, Susan and I prayed with a friend who had been horrifically abused in a satanic cult. She had lost five children in very tragic ways, (as Isaiah put appeared to have been born for “calamity,” Isaiah 65:23). And now sometimes, she believed that she would be forever alone.

In prayer, Jesus would take her back to events in the past and transform their meaning, for he is the Plot to every story, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life in every moment, even though at first you don’t see him there.

On this particular night, my friend was in agony, mourning the loss of her children, the fact she’d never raise them, and the fact that she was single. But Jesus had appeared to her in this vision... he had over and over again, and sometimes he’d appear holding her children, her babies...

On this night, a thought occurred to me. I said, “Hey, your children died decades ago... just ask Jesus, ‘Why are my children still young?’”

She did. It was silent. Then I heard her gasp in wonder. She said, “I just heard him say, ‘They’re waiting for you to raise them.’”

On the throne, the Lord says, “Look, I make all things new.”^{xii} Wouldn’t that include all your wasted moments... and all your deepest longings which you imagined would never be filled?

I then said, “Now ask him if you’re single.”

She did. Was silent. And then looked at me with the biggest grin on her face and said, “I’m not single.” And that’s the Truth. She is the Bride of Christ, the Truth, who is also a man—100% man.

Now, you may say, “Hey c’mon; that’s nuts. And you can’t go back in time.”
Why not?

Physicists now say that the math works in both directions, and the only way we know that time is moving in one direction and not the other is The Second Law of Thermodynamics which states that in a closed system, everything moves towards greater entropy, that is chaos or death.

When Adam took the life of the Good from the tree in the garden, he became a closed system and began to die. But on the Holy Mountain, death is no more, for the life of the Good gives us himself on the tree in the garden, and we begin to live.

Maybe we can go back like we can read a book a second time, having understood the plot and so comprehend deeper and deeper meaning.

In the words of T.S. Elliot, maybe we really can “arrive at the place we started and know it for the first time.”

Seven Ideas to Help You Believe the Prophets:
(particularly in regard to the not boring heaven)

1. *Eternity*
2. *Reality*

Now, I know this all seems so unreal, but it's actually most real—that's #2 Reality.

- We think that love is just an ethereal idea, when Love is more solid than concrete—God is love and real Love is God.
- We think the way, the truth, and the life are fleeting concepts, when in fact He is the foundation of reality.
- We think a miracle is an anomaly, but it's a moment of waking reality in a dream that's become a nightmare.

Now, please don't let this worry you, and you don't have to believe me. But I've witnessed the evil one manifesting in the body of a dear friend who was struggling with a horrid event in her past. I've witnessed the evil one cursing God, cursing me, and threatening to destroy us all, and yet nailed to my couch by a piece of communion bread and a few drops of wine.

If I were you, I'd think I was insane, but for a moment, I think I witnessed the sanity of God, the Logic of God, the power of Christ. It wasn't an anomaly in reality; it was reality invading the anomaly that is this fallen world.

And it wasn't bread from Safeway or the wine from Topsy's that pinned the evil one to my couch.^{xiii} It was the furious love of Jesus for my friend manifest in bread from Safeway and wine from Topsy's Liquor Store. It was the presence of the Kingdom that is always at hand; even better, it was the presence of the King—his body and blood.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he walked through walls—not because he was an illusion, and the walls were real, but because he is reality, and all our walls are just an illusion.

- #1. Eternity
- #2. Reality
- #3. Familiarity

"The disciples asked the master to speak to them of death," writes Anthony Demello. "What will it be like?" they asked. "It will be as if a veil is ripped apart and you will say in wonder, 'so it was you all along?'"^{xiv}

He's the Truth you desire in every statement, the Life you seek in every moment, the Love you crave in every encounter—your every encounter.

Remember that Jesus repeatedly said, “He who seeks to save his soul (his psyche) will lose it, but he who loses his soul (his psyche) for my sake will find it.”

It’s your psyche that you lose, and your psyche you find, filled with truth, life, and love—that is Jesus. That’s heaven.

And so, far from being unfamiliar... it is your home, the home you’ve been homesick for all of your life—at last you will be at home in your self.

Before my dad died, he had this ongoing waking vision of heaven—my dad, the Presbyterian Pastor, who had never experienced such things. He’d tell me about his walks in these beautiful Pennsylvania woods in this vision.

For Dad, that was heaven... but I remember thinking, *God, I don’t want Pennsylvania; I want the Bahamas...*

I want to drive a Jeep Wrangler, top down, sixty miles an hour, over bumpy dirt roads, blasting Lynyrd Skynyrd “Freebird,” with my 60-year old bride and her 60-year old heart, but with her 18- year old libido, in her 21- year old body, and nothing but a string bikini... I want to drive that Jeep to an isolated beach, where we’ll have a picnic of roasted chicken, warm bread, and red wine; we’ll have communion, and that day will last a thousand years...” That’s my heaven.

And I think I’ll get that heaven, and Susan will get her heaven, which has something to do with Christmas, hugging each other by a fire, and drinking hot chocolate—which to me, right now, sounds totally boring.

How her heaven won’t diminish my heaven, and my heaven won’t diminish her heaven is something that my brain can’t comprehend right now. But if we’re each to be filled with eternal Life, and immortal Light, and space-time is somehow relative to Light and Logos, then these apparent contradictory realities may not be only a possibility, but a necessity.

Paul wrote, “Hope does not disappoint us.”^{xv}

I think he meant all hope: Pennsylvania, the Bahamas, and hot chocolate.

“Hope will not disappoint us,” and we will one day see that we can actually only hope in the Good, for evil is ultimately nothing but lies and illusion—it’s ontologically non-subsistent.

Well, once my hopes have been purified by Eternal Fire, and all my dreams have been filled with Truth, Faith, Love, and Life, I’m pretty sure...

My dad will get *Pennsylvania*, I’ll get *the beach*, Susan will get *hot chocolate*, and we’ll all get *each other*. And Jesus the Great Bridegroom will continually rejoice in us, his Bride—as a young man rejoices over a young woman (Isaiah 62:5).^{xvi}

Seven Ideas to Help You Believe the Prophets:
(particularly in regard to the not boring heaven)

1. Eternity
2. Reality
3. Familiarity
4. Communion

#4. Heaven is Communion.

And now, I know I'm making you nervous, but just hear me out.

In heaven, I will not only live "my life," I will live Jesus's life, and he will live my life, and I think we will all rejoice in living each other's lives. This is what we do every time we read a book or share a story at a party, but in heaven the communion will be infinitely rich, and no one will be insecure about or possessive of their life (their psyche).

We have a hard time even imagining this, for we can't imagine life without insecurity, possessiveness, and sin.

Well, Heaven does not appear to be a very private place—*everything whispered in private will be spoken from the rooftops*—but no one will sin.^{xvii} Jesus did say there will be no giving or taking in marriage^{xviii}, but I doubt that's because no one is married, but rather because we will all be married to Jesus, and thus to one another, and no one will want a divorce.

I'm saying that I think we'll share our *psyches* with God and with each other, which means that our relationships will be like those within the God head: many persons and one substance—that is, Love.

In John 17, Jesus even prays that this would be the case—that we would *be one, just as he and his father are one*.^{xix}

And now, I get really excited about this, until I think about other folks impinging on my romantic secluded beach picnic in the Bahamas with Susan... But I know it can't turn into anything evil, and I'm sure that in heaven everyone respects the wishes of everyone else, and I'm sure my concern has something to do with the way I now experience shame.

Seven Ideas to Help You Believe the Prophets:
(particularly in regard to the not boring heaven)

1. Eternity
2. Reality
3. Familiarity
4. Communion
5. Shame surrendered to Grace

#5. Heaven is Shame surrendered to Grace.^{xx}

This confuses us, but the Prophets prophesy an amazing transformation of Shame.^{xxi} Ezekiel prophesies that when God atones for all the sins of Jerusalem, she will be ashamed of how she treated Samaria and Sodom and will then console them as beloved daughters.^{xxii}

Through Zephaniah, God declares, “I will turn their shame into praise.”^{xxiii} Heaven is those “old sinners” in Isaiah, delighting in God’s Grace.

Paul wrote, “Where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more.” And you see: that’s the Holy Mountain where we took the life of Christ. That’s the evil that exposed our shame. We each took the life of Christ, but Christ forgives his life to each of us. That’s the Good that covers our shame and makes all things new: That’s Grace.

Seven Ideas to Help You Believe the Prophets:
(particularly in regard to the not boring heaven)

1. Eternity
2. Reality
3. Familiarity
4. Communion
5. Shame surrendered to Grace
6. “The Infinite Game” (The Great Dance)

And that’s “the Infinite Game” which we preached about last time. #6

We don’t Love to win Heaven and then stop playing the game. We Love to keep loving, for that’s “the infinite game” that is Heaven.

“The Wolf will lie down with the Lamb,” said Isaiah. Life is not the survival of the fittest—that’s the finite game; that’s death. Life is the sacrifice of the fittest—that’s *the infinite game*, Eternal Life.

In Heaven, the first will be last and the last will be first...

The exalted will be humbled, and the humbled will be exalted... so that in turn, those exalted may rejoice in being humbled, just as Jesus rejoiced in humbling himself for each of us and rejoiced when the Father exalted him high above all things.

Each will sacrifice for all and all will be happy.
Each will lose his life and find it in the very body of Christ.

Heaven is the dance of life in which all are continually first and last, humbled and exalted, all for the sake of each, which is the Joy of all.^{xxiv}

Seven Ideas to Help You Believe the Prophets:
(particularly in regard to the not boring heaven)

1. Eternity
2. Reality
3. Familiarity
4. Communion
5. Shame surrendered to Grace
6. "The Infinite Game" (The Great Dance)
7. Absolute Freedom

And #7: Absolute Freedom. And this, I think, is terrifying.

To imagine that you create yourself, save yourself, and justify yourself with something you might call "free will," is the very heart of original sin. To imagine that you can make yourself God is evil. But, what if God imagined that He could make you, Himself, somehow... like his body, or maybe his own son or daughter... like his image?

Would that be evil?

No, I think that would be Grace.

Only God is absolutely free... but what if you learned that God desired to reign and rule over reality from a throne in the depths of your soul? And, like Jesus reveals to the Church in Laodicea, it seems that he—God the Father and God the son—would like you to sit there with them and reign with them.

For freedom Christ has set us free... and I'm convinced that we have no idea of how free he intends us to be...

But now, if you're scared, if you're worried about something I said— if you think you might not like heaven,—please remember that we're like infants in a womb trying to describe life outside the womb with Mom and Dad.

So, about much of this, I could be quite wrong. But about this one thing, I don't think it's possible for me to be wrong. And that is that there is no way that you could stand before the throne and say, *"Dang, I'm disappointed in the Kingdom of Heaven... looks boring."*

And now, why does it all matter?

Well, because you're "knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door."

If the door opens and you don't like what's on the other side, the only place to run and hide is hell. Hell is for people who don't want to go to Heaven.^{xxv} You understand? Hell is on the timeline—You can hide there for a time, but why would you want to go there at all?

But if you have faith that Heaven is your home, it will utterly transform the way you live now—Satan knows that...

He knows that..

- If you think there's no finish line, you'll stop running.
- If you think there's no victory, you'll stop fighting.
- If you think there's no banquet, you'll become addicted to the appetizers.
- If you think there's no home for you, the journey won't be an adventure; it will be a nightmare of wandering in the wilderness.
- If you think there's no destination, you're already in hell.
- If you think there's no music, you won't be doing any dancing.

But if you hope, this world will lose its grip on you. And you will begin to change this world. You'll begin to reign and rule with Jesus right now. *You* are the New Jerusalem coming down. And you... will not be boring.

Mel was a Viet Nam vet in his early 20's and dying of cancer. Deeply depressed, he decided to enroll in a class at Union Seminary about caring for the dying, but as he enrolled, he saw another class about the Book of the Revelation, taught by the controversial professor Daniel Berrigan... and he decided to give it a shot.

The first day of class, Berrigan began as he usually did, but Mel didn't know that it was the way Berrigan usually began—he simply entered the room and then sat in contemplative silence for a time. It made Mel terribly uneasy, and when Berrigan's eyes came to rest on Mel, Mel grew visibly nervous.

Berrigan said, "What's the matter?"

Mel, who at this point was a pale and pitiful figure, pondered all sorts of snide answers, but then he just blurted it out, "I'm dying! I'm dying! I'm dying of cancer!"

Without skipping a beat, without hesitation, sorrow, or pity, Berrigan responded, "That must be very exciting."^{xxvi}

The statement changed Mel's life; he began to live it—his life. It turns out the cancer went away, but that's not why he lived—he lived because he was no longer afraid to die.

Well, this is the door. [Peter motions to the cross.]
And it's anything but boring on the other side.

Communion

And so that night on the Holy Mountain, just before we all took his life on the tree, He took bread and broke it, saying this is my body given to you.
And he took the cup, saying this is the covenant in my blood.

His life is in the blood; he gives it to you...
And you will see, it's not boring.

Benediction

"...the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved." -Romans 8:20-24

Have hope.
Believe the Gospel.

Endnotes

ⁱ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" – John 11:25-26

ⁱⁱ Zephaniah 3:16-19

ⁱⁱⁱ The Bible is not a book for children and
The Bible is not a book for grown-ups (for "grown-ups" are most of all childish)
The Bible is a book for grown-ups that have become children for they've fallen in love with Jesus—the Word of God.

^{iv} Revelation 20:6, Psalms 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8, 1 Peter 2:9 <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/dont-miss-the-millennium/>

^v Time does not exist, Barth concludes, apart from eternity's embrace. Eternity embraces time on all sides, preceding, accompanying, and fulfilling it. To say that God is eternal means that God is "the One who is and rules before time, in time, and again after time, the One who is not conditioned by time, but conditions it absolutely in his freedom" (II/1, p. 619). . . . God's eternity is so to speak the companion of time, or rather it is itself accompanied by time in such a way that in this occurrence time acquires its hidden center, and therefore both backwards and forwards its significance, its content, its source and its goal, but also continually its significant present. Because, in this occurrence, eternity assumes the form of a

temporal present, all time, without ceasing to be time, is no more empty time, or without eternity. It has become new. This means that in and with this present, eternity creates in time real past and real future, distinguishes between them, and is itself the bridge and way from the one to the other. Jesus Christ is the way." (II/1, p. 627)

The real future that eternity creates in time is the future of eternal life in communion with God. The real past, in turn, is the past of sin and death as abolished in the cross of Christ. This old reality of sin and death is "continually opposed" by the new reality of eternal life, even as the new reality "comes breaking in triumphantly" again and again (II/1, p. 628). Jesus Christ stands between the old reality and the new. "In him the equilibrium between them has been upset and ended. He is the way from the one to the other and the way is irreversible. He is the turning" (II/1, p. 628).

- George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, p. 205, 207

vi On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.

On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.

And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one. -Zechariah 14:6-9

vii 1 Corinthians 10:11, Hebrews 9:26

viii G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (New York: Bantam, 1990), p. 6

ix John 8:58

x 1 John 3:1-3

xi Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15,18

xii Revelation 21

xiv Writings selected by William Dych, S.J., *Anthony DeMello* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 102

xv Romans 5:5

xvi You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. -Isaiah 62:4-5

xvii Luke 12:3

xviii Matthew 22:30

xix John 17:22-23

xx All times are eternally present to God. Is it not at least possible that along some one line of His multi-dimensional eternity He sees you forever in the nursery pulling the wings off a fly, forever in toadying, lying, and lusting as a schoolboy, forever in that moment of cowardice or insolence as a subaltern? It may be that salvation consists not in the canceling of these eternal moments but in the perfected humility that bears the shame forever, rejoicing in the occasion which it furnished to God's compassion and glad that it should be common knowledge to the universe. Perhaps in that eternal moment St. Peter—he will forgive me if I am wrong—forever denies his Master. If so, it would indeed be true that the joys of Heaven are, for most of us in our present condition, "an acquired taste"—and certain ways of life may render the taste impossible of acquisition. Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a public place.

- C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

xxi Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy. - Isaiah 61:7

"For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers. And there you shall

remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. – Ezekiel 21: 40-43

xxii Ezekiel 16:53-63

xxiii Zephaniah 3:19

xxiv “The Great Dance does not wait to be perfect until the peoples of the Low Worlds are gathered into it. We speak not of when it will begin. It has begun from before always. There was no time when we did not rejoice before His face as now. The dance which we dance is at the centre and for the dance all things were made. Blessed be He!”

Another said, “Never did He make two things the same; never did He utter one word twice. After earths, not better earths but beasts; after beasts, not better beasts but spirits. After a falling, not recovery but a new creation. Out of the new creation, not a third but the mode of change itself is changed for ever. Blessed be He!”

And another said, “It is loaded with justice as a tree bows down with fruit. All is righteousness and there is no equality. Not as when stones lie side by side, but as when stones support and are supported in an arch, such is His order; rule and obedience, begetting and bearing, heat glancing down, life growing up. Blessed be He!”

One said, “They who add years to years in lumpish aggregation, or miles to miles and galaxies to galaxies, shall not come near His greatness. The day of the fields of Arbol will fade and the days of Deep Heaven itself are numbered. Not thus is He great. He dwells (all of Him dwells) within the seed of the smallest flower and is not cramped: Deep Heaven is inside Him who is inside the seed and does not distend Him. Blessed be He!”

“The edge of each nature borders on that whereof it contains no shadow or similitude. Of many points one line; of many lines one shape; of many shapes one solid body; of many senses and thoughts one person; of three persons, Himself. As is the circle to the sphere, so are the ancient worlds that needed no redemption to that world wherein He was born and died. As is a point to a line, so is that world to the far-off fruits of its redeeming. Blessed be He!”

“Yet the circle is not less round than the sphere, and the sphere is the home and fatherland of circles. Infinite multitudes of circles lie enclosed in every sphere, and if they spoke they would say, For us were spheres created. Let no mouth open to gainsay them. Blessed be He!”

“The peoples of the ancient worlds who never sinned, for whom He never came down, are the peoples for whose sake the Low Worlds were made. For though the healing what was wounded and the straightening what was bent is a new dimension of glory, yet the straight was not made that it might be bent nor the whole that it might be wounded. The ancient peoples are at the centre. Blessed be He!”

“All which is not itself the Great Dance was made in order that He might come down into it. In the Fallen World He prepared for Himself a body and was united with the Dust and made it glorious for ever. This is the end and final cause of all creating, and the sin whereby it came is called Fortunate and the world where this was enacted is the centre of worlds. Blessed be He!” -- C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*

xxv *Opsias de genomenes*. Heaven is Miller Time. Heaven is the party in the streaming sunlight of the world's final afternoon. Heaven is when all the rednecks, and all the wood-butchers, and all the plumbers who never showed up - all the losers who never got anything right and all the winners who just gave up on winning - simply waltz up to the bar of judgment with full pay envelopes and get down to the serious drinking that makes the new creation go round. It is a bash that has happened, that insists upon happening, and that is happening now - and by the sweetness of its cassation, it drowns out all the party poopers in the world.

Heaven is, in short, fun. And if you don't like that, Buster (*hetaire*), you can just go to...well, you'll just have to use your imagination.

You'll need it: this is the only bar in town.

-- Robert Farrar Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment*, p. 397

xxvi Tony Campolo, *Everything You've Heard is Wrong*, p. 150.