

## ALL THINGS NEW

Title: Part 1 – “The Life You've Always Wanted”

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Well happy and blessed New Year! Before we get any further would you help me welcome everyone joining us online or on our app later in the week! We think you're part of our church family and we want you to know we are FOR you. If there's any way we can pray for you or walk alongside you, please let us know.

In fact, we recently had someone reach out and tell us this:

[READ COMMENT]

How cool is that? SO, a huge shout out to everyone who records, edits, uploads, manages and posts on various platforms so that as many people as possible can take their next steps with God!

Well, to start this New Year we are beginning a brand-new collection of messages—more on that in a minute—but I want to set up a little of where we are going by creating some tension. I know how much you guys love this. BUT we just spent the past month or honestly 6 to 8 weeks building up to the first coming of Christ. I know Christmas has become so much more than that, but at its core, as Christ-Followers that's what we celebrate at Christmas. The first advent, Christ coming near. So, we just spent weeks thinking about that, and we do that every year, BUT here is my question:

**How many times have you thought about Christ's return this week?**

The second advent. How much time did you spend thinking about that? We spent weeks every year reminding ourselves daily that Jesus came as a baby in a manger, but how much time do we spend reminding ourselves of His return on a white horse with angel armies?

I can feel the tension in the room because the answer for most is zero! Right? Maybe we see some headline of some disaster or war breaking out and we think, “Is this the end, are we living in the end times?” But then we quickly move on to something else. Something tamer like a baby in a manger.

BUT here is what's crazy when you open the Bible and read it. The Scriptures assume that every serious friend of Jesus is thinking about His second coming a lot! Every serious disciple of Jesus in the first century had rearranged their hopes, their expectations, and their understanding of their life around the return of Jesus. Here is Paul in Colossians 3:

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the **REALITIES OF HEAVEN**, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. <sup>2</sup> Think about the things of **HEAVEN**, not the things of earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

So, Paul's making this assumption about what the believer is kind of reoriented around. They're reoriented around the Kingdom of God, the return of Christ. Now look at 1 Corinthians 1:

<sup>7</sup> Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you **EAGERLY WAIT FOR THE RETURN** of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

Do you hear the assumption in his writing? He assumes they are eagerly awaiting it. SO, now let's hear Jesus's perspective on it. He says about His second coming: (Luke 12)

<sup>35</sup> "Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, <sup>36</sup> as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks. <sup>37</sup> The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! <sup>38</sup> He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready. <sup>39</sup> "Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would not permit his house to be broken into. <sup>40</sup> You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected."

So again, just lovingly, we are all friends here, how much time in the past seven days has had anything to do with the second advent, the second coming of Christ? I'm not trying to create this tension to make us feel bad, but to simply highlight that something's wrong. Something gets in the way. Scripture says we should orient our lives around this, but we don't. WHY?

That's what I hope to resolve over the next few weeks. BUT part of the reason why we don't do this because the second coming of Jesus is disruptive. In fact, we don't often—if ever verbalize this—but thinking about the return of Jesus to many feels like a loss. Because it's like, "Well, wait a second, I really wanted to finish my degree... I wanted to get married... I wanted to have sex... I wanted to have kids... I wanted to take that trip to Italy or Hawaii... I wanted to buy a cabin and write books and have my grandchildren

playing outside.” Right? There is this pushback against the return of Jesus because it feels like a disruption to our current plans.

BUT also, and tied into that, is we have this warped view of what the second coming and heaven is really going to be like. It’s all vague clouds and harps and eternal church services. OR it’s to the other extreme because someone told us we are going to see colors and animals and things we can’t imagine like it’s some kind of sci-fi novel.

BUT here is what is going to drive or be our guiding light over the next few weeks.

**If you can't imagine heaven, then it cannot produce hope in you.**

If it's inconceivable, it cannot be redemptive. It can't inspire you. It doesn't create longing in you. Does that make sense? When you think about heaven, if you can't imagine it, then it cannot produce hope in you. Apologies to MercyMe, right?

But that is what we are going to hopefully be clearing up in this collection of messages. Over the next few weeks, we're going to explore what the Bible actually teaches about our future—and I think it's going to blow your mind, in a good way!

And now that the longest message introduction ever is over. If you've got a Bible or can pull up the Bible app on your phone, I want you to head to the very end to Revelation chapter 21. Revelation 21, verses 1 through 5. The Apostle John recounts his vision of the return of Christ and describes it this way:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” <sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making **ALL THINGS NEW.**”

And that is exactly what we are calling this collection of messages, **“ All Things New.”**

My prayer over our time off was that God would use this to change everything for you! That it would give you hope that you didn't even know was missing. A hope that's both big enough to satisfy the deepest longings of your heart and concrete enough that you can actually wrap your mind around it. Because it's way better than you think!

As I was saying before, most of us, if we're honest, have this vague idea of heaven that involves floating on clouds, playing harps, maybe wearing white robes, singing worship songs for a billion years. And if that's your picture of eternity, can I just be real with you? That sounds SO boring to me. I mean, I love worship, BUT I also love hiking in the mountains, eating cheeseburgers, laughing with my family, building things, creating things, I love the beauty of earth! BUT the "traditional"—even though it's not—but the 20th century picture of heaven seems like I'm required to give up all that for some ghostly spiritual existence.

But what if I told you that's not what the Bible teaches at all? What if the Bible promises something radically different? What if the life you've always wanted—the paradise that humanity lost way back in Genesis—is actually the future God is preparing for you? Today I want to preach a message I'm calling:

### **The Life You've Always Wanted.**

Let me ask you another question, and I want you to really think about it: Have you ever noticed that every good thing in life comes to an end?

That vacation you saved up for all year, it ends, and you're back at work. That perfect meal at your favorite restaurant, you finish it, and then you're looking at the bill. That moment when your kids are little and they actually want to hug you, it doesn't last, they grow up and suddenly you're not cool anymore. That season when your body felt strong and healthy, it fades, you hit your 40's and everything changes! Even the best relationships in our lives are shadowed by this knowledge that one day they're going to end.

And it's not just personal stuff. If you're paying attention to the world around us, it feels like everything beautiful is being destroyed. "They paved paradise" and what... "put up a parking lot!"

SO, here's the question that haunts us if we are honest: Is all of this—all the beauty, all the love and laughter, all the work, all the striving, all the creating—is it all just temporary? Are we just rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic? Is the best we can hope for to escape this world as it burns for some non-physical spiritual realm where we exist in the ether forever?

Because here's the problem with that picture. I don't want less of what makes life good, I want MORE of it! Amen? I want the beauty without the fading. I want the joy without the ending. I want the love without the loss. I want the relationships without the goodbye.

And here's what I'm going to show you today. That's exactly what God promises. Not LESS of what makes life good, MORE of it! Not escape FROM Earth, but the RESTORATION of Earth. Not less physical, MORE physical, but without the sin and suffering and sadness brought on by death!

The life you've always wanted is the life you're going to get AND the Bible calls it **the New Earth**. So, grab a pen and write this down. The first takeaway I have for you today is this:

**We long for paradise because we were made for paradise.**

Let me take you back to our main text in Revelation 21, in verse 5, future Jesus says this to John in his vision:

**“Behold, I am making all things NEW.”**

In English, that might not jump out at you. New is just new. But when you understand what John is writing in the original language it changes everything. The word for “new” here is **{KY-NOS}** (καινός) kainos. And kainos doesn't mean brand new, never existed before. Kainos means renewed, restored, made like new again. It's the difference between buying a new house and renovating the house you already own. It's the difference between scraping your 97 Camry and restoring a 1969 Camaro!

In other words, Jesus isn't saying, “I'm scrapping everything and making something completely different.” Instead, He's saying, “I'm taking what I made, the Earth, our bodies, this physical creation that I called ‘very good’ and I'm RESTORING it, RENEWING it, making it everything it was always meant to be.”

AND here's why this matters: Every longing in your soul for the beauty of a perfect moment that doesn't come to an end isn't naive. It's prophetic! Turn back to the beginning of your Bible now to Genesis 1. This is where it all begins:

**<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness... <sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...” <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was VERY good.**

God creates a PHYSICAL world with PHYSICAL bodies and PHYSICAL pleasures—food, beauty, relationships, work, creativity, and He calls it “VERY good.” Not “tolerable until we get to the real spiritual stuff.” VERY good!

Then Genesis 2 gives us more detail. God plants a garden, a literal, physical, beautiful garden. He gives Adam work to do, meaningful, creative work. He creates marriage, a physical, intimate relationship. He provides food, delicious, nourishing food. And it's all described as paradise!

But then Genesis 3 happens. Sin enters the picture. Everything gets corrupted. And humanity is exiled from the garden. BUT here's the thing: Sin doesn't make creation bad. It makes it BROKEN! There's a massive difference. Amen? Your car breaking down doesn't mean cars are bad, it means this car needs to be fixed. Your marriage going through a rough patch doesn't mean marriage is bad, it means this marriage needs restoration.

My point is, God's plan has never been to scrap what He made. His plan—since the fall—has always been to RESTORE what was broken.

That's why you have these longings for a perfect world. That's why you experience moments of beauty or joy or love and think, "This is what life is supposed to be like!" That's why you look at the brokenness around you and feel this ache in your chest that says, "This isn't right. This isn't how it's supposed to be."

In those moments you're not crazy. You're not naive. You're not being idealistic. You're experiencing what I call "Echoes of Eden." You're remembering what we lost, and your soul is anticipating what we'll regain!

I think a lot of people get confused by what C.S. Lewis meant when he said:

"If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

But here's what most people miss about that quote: Lewis wasn't talking about escaping this world for some ethereal heaven. In his other writings, especially *The Last Battle* & *The Four Loves*, Lewis makes clear he meant a PHYSICAL, RENEWED Earth. As he said elsewhere, "Christianity thoroughly approves of the body" and believes we'll have physical bodies as "an essential part of our happiness" forever. What good is a renewed body if it is not for a renewed world!

I mean just look around. Why are we obsessed with nostalgia? Vinyl records. Film cameras. Shows set in simpler times. The "cottagecore" aesthetic—people posting pictures of gardens and homemade bread and rural life. We're not just being sentimental. We're experiencing the echoes of Eden! We keep creating these visions of paradise

because we're wired for paradise. Even secular culture can't shake this longing for a perfect world.

BUT that longing isn't random. It's not a cosmic accident. It's actually evidence that a perfect world existed, and evidence that a perfect world is coming. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says:

[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart.

That's a poetic way of saying God has hardwired into every human soul a longing for something this broken world can't provide. We have memories we can't quite access and hopes we can't quite articulate. We're homesick for a place we've never been—or more accurately for a place we WERE in!

SO, we long for paradise because we were made for paradise. Touch your neighbor and tell them: “You're not crazy... you were made for paradise.” Here's the second takeaway:

**Jesus came to restore, not replace.**

Now let me show you something that's going to blow your mind if you've never seen it before. Go back to Revelation 21, this time let's focus on verse 2 & 3:

<sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, **COMING DOWN** out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God **IS WITH MAN**.”

Did you catch the direction of movement? Heaven comes DOWN to Earth. Not us going UP to heaven. The Holy City comes DOWN out of heaven from God.

This is the opposite of what most of us were taught! We were taught that Earth is temporary, that heaven is “up there,” and that when we die we leave this world behind forever. But that's not what the Bible actually teaches! The Bible teaches that heaven and earth will be merged, that God's presence will fill this renewed creation, that we will live forever on a New Earth in resurrected bodies.

AND in case you think I am making this up, let's go straight to Jesus in Matthew 19. The context is things are beginning to get tough for the disciples. Jesus starts out as a rock star with huge crowds, but now they are getting kicked out of synagogues, the Jewish leaders are threatening violence, and they are wondering about just how much following Jesus is going to cost them. So, Jesus tells them this:

<sup>28</sup> “Truly I tell you, at the **RENEWAL** of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne... <sup>29</sup> everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

Notice at the “renewal.” Jesus is talking to His disciples about the future, and He uses this word **{pal-in-juh-NEE-zee-uh}** palingenesia and it literally means “genesis again” or “birth again” or “new creation.” In other words, Jesus is promising a new genesis. Not a totally different creation, but THIS creation being reborn. Like how you're still you after you're born again spiritually... same person, new nature.

So, according to Jesus, God's plan isn't to destroy Earth and replace it with something completely different. God's plan is to RESTORE Earth, to return it to the way He originally designed it before sin corrupted everything. Are you with me? This is why Paul comes along in Romans 8 and says:

<sup>19</sup> For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. <sup>20</sup> Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, <sup>21</sup> the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.

Creation didn't choose to be broken. It was subjected to frustration by God's judgment on sin. But creation is waiting—with EAGER anticipation—for the day when it will be freed from death and decay!

Here imagine with me that you buy a beautiful old house. Like the ones that you find along Bayshore in South Tampa. Amazing architecture. Solid bones. Perfect location. But it's been neglected. The paint is peeling. The floors are deteriorating. There's water damage. The landscaping is a jungle. So, you have two options, option one: tear it down and build something completely different, some modern mansion. Option two: restore it! Strip it down to the studs. Repair everything broken. Replace everything damaged. Clean everything dirty. Then bring it back to its original glory but this time with materials that will never fade, crack or rot!

In that little illustration, which option honors the original builder? Which option respects the craftsmanship? Which one makes sense if you actually loved what the house was meant to be? Are you with me? God's not tearing down His creation. He's doing the ultimate home makeover. And we get to live in it forever!



Randy Alcorn, who wrote an incredible book on this topic simply called “Heaven,” we actually have a few at Next Steps, but he says it this way:

“God never gives up on what He creates. He doesn't scrap His creation; He redeems it. The same God who created this world is determined to see it renewed and restored.”

Church, this changes everything! This means your love for your family isn't wasted! This means your work matters! This means caring for creation isn't naive tree-hugging—it's honoring what God made and is going to renew! This means the relationships you're building, the beauty you're creating, the justice you're fighting for, none of it is in vain!

Jesus came to restore, not replace. And that takes us to this next takeaway:

**Nothing precious will be lost.**

Let me show you one of the most overlooked verses in all of Scripture. Head back to Revelation 21, but this time look at verses 24 through 26:

<sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it... <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the NATIONS will be brought into it.

It says the glory and honor of the nations. Nations are human cultures. They're civilizations with art and music and literature and cuisine and architecture and scientific discoveries. And John is saying all that gets brought into the New Creation! That means everything good, true, and beautiful that humans have ever created—purified of sin—will be preserved in the New Earth!

Think about the greatest music ever written: Bach. Beethoven. Miles Davis. Louis Armstrong. Aretha Franklin. The Beatles. U2. The greatest art: Michelangelo's sculptures. Rembrandt's paintings. The Sistine Chapel. The greatest literature: Shakespeare. Tolkien. J.K. Rowling. The greatest discoveries: Relativity. DNA. Quantum mechanics. ALL of it—purified of sin—all there in the New Earth!

BUT it's not just the famous stuff. It's the meal your grandmother made that was so good it brought tears to your eyes. It's the song you wrote that nobody else heard but it was your heart on paper. It's the tree your great-grandfather planted. It's the business you built with integrity. It's the student you tutored who went on to do amazing things.

Nothing good is wasted! Nothing beautiful is lost! Everything that reflected God's glory—even imperfectly—will be purified and preserved! 1 Corinthians 15:58 says:

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Your work isn't meaningless! Your creativity isn't just killing time! Your relationships aren't temporary! This transforms how we view our lives RIGHT NOW!

Your **WORK** even if it seems mundane matters eternally! You're not just earning a paycheck. You're creating value that will somehow be preserved forever. Your **RELATIONSHIPS** are not just for now; they're for forever. The friend you lost, the parent, the child, the spouse, those relationships are all healed and go on! Even your **SUFFERING**, the pain you've experienced, will be redeemed! Revelation 21:4 says God will wipe away EVERY tear. Not just forget about them—actively wipe them away, which means He acknowledges them, validates them, and then heals them completely.

John Eldredge puts it like this: "The life you've always wanted is the life you're going to get. Not some abstract spiritual existence, but the paradise Adam and Eve knew—only better. Everything you love about being human, everything good and true and beautiful—it will be there. Only without the sin, the sorrow, the suffering."

One more and we will have to pick this up next week:

**This hope changes how we live now.**

If you really believe what I've been saying, if you really believe God is renewing this Earth, not destroying it, it should change EVERYTHING about how you live today. Peter writes about it this way in 2 Peter 3:

<sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Peter asks the question: What kind of people should we be? And his answer isn't "check out and wait for the end." His answer is live better NOW because you know what's coming THEN!

What do I mean? What about this:

- The earth matters! We're not escaping a disposable Earth. We're preparing for a renewed one. I'm not saying become radical environmentalist. But I AM saying we should be a good steward of creation because God loves what He made and we're going to live here forever in its restored form.
- Justice matters! We're not waiting for God to fix everything later. We're partnering with His renewal NOW. Every act of mercy, every stand for justice, every moment of compassion is a preview of the world to come.
- Cultural matters! When we create art, write compelling stories, make beautiful music, we're creating echoes of Eden that will be purified and preserved.
- Work matters! You're not just earning a living. You're creating value that will be incorporated into the New Creation. So do your work with excellence, knowing it counts forever.
- Relationships matter! You're not just passing time. You're building eternal connections. So, love your spouse well, invest in your kids—they're not projects to complete, they're people you'll know forever!

Come on, God is making ALL things new—which means EVERYTHING you do that's good and true and beautiful will be purified and preserved! SO, live like you believe your future is a renewed Earth! Live like you believe nothing good is wasted! Live like you believe the best is yet to come!

Because here's the truth: The most passionate, world-changing Christians aren't those who believe Earth is disposable! They're those who believe Earth is being redeemed! They work harder, love deeper, create better, not despite their eternal hope, but BECAUSE of it!

The Puritans believed this, that's why they built universities! That's why they wrote constitutions! That's why they created great art! They knew it mattered eternally! They didn't check out, they invested their lives because they believed the best was yet to come, and they were bringing it forward into the present!

See the life you've always wanted isn't wishful thinking. It's not naive optimism. It's not escapist fantasy. It's Biblical promise. You were made for paradise. Jesus came to restore it. Nothing precious will be lost. And this hope changes everything.

The life you've always wanted is the life you're going to get. And it's time to start living in light of that reality.

Because the truth is Jesus is not focused on Christmas. He's not. Jesus is utterly fixated on His return. That's what has His attention. That's what He has joy over. That's what He is about. And he invites us to be about it as well.

Let's pray.