

You Prepare the Earth

2026-08-02 – Psalm 65



Is your view of salvation too small? We can often reduce God's redemptive work to individual forgiveness. This is the mountain peak of the Christian gospel. This is the endpoint of all of Christ's work. But Psalm 65 views atonement as only the starting point to something far grander and more comprehensive. Atonement is not the end goal. Atonement prepares the way for the restoration of creation. Our hope is not just forgiveness of sins, but the new heavens and the new earth. As the famous hymn "Joy to the World" reads: "No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found." Christ has come not only to make atonement for our sins, but to make his blessings flow to the cursed ground we stand upon. Creation is not just a stage for redemption; creation is a participant in redemption. Just as David praised God for his abundant provision on earth as the result of God's atonement in the temple, we can also look forward to God's final restoration of earth based on Christ's atoning death on the cross.

Call to Worship & Opening

"Thanks. Good morning, church. It's good to be together in the house of the Lord. Amen. Amen. Let's all stand for the call to worship from Psalm chapter 9. Laura, if you can please put the scripture up on the screen here. For the choir director; on Muth-labben—that means the death of the son. A Psalm of David. **'I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. When my enemies turned back, they stumbled and perished before You. For You have maintained my just cause; You have sat on the throne judging righteously. You have rebuked the nations; You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever. The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins, and You have uprooted the cities; the very memory of them has perished. But the Lord abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, and He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.'** (Psalm 9:1–10) Amen. This is the word of the Lord."

Welcoming Remarks & Pastoral Prayer

Grace and peace from God our Father, from Jesus Christ our risen, ruling, one day soon returning Lord, the only Savior, brothers and sisters in Christ, and good morning friends. It is so good to be with you on this Lord's Day as we sing praises to our Lord and as we are renewed by the word of Christ. My name is Brandon Myers. I have the great joy to serve as one of the under-shepherd elders of Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church and the senior pastor of that local church. And this summer, if you're here as a guest with us, we're so glad that you're here.

You're in the middle of a wonderful and God's providence summer trial where we are joining together this summer, Cornerstone Church and Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church, to worship the Lord, and it has been an incredible blessing. We sincerely praise God for it and have been so encouraged by it. So praise the Lord for this, and we thank the Lord for the good work it is doing. Please continue to pray. Every Wednesday we are calling you to fast and pray intentionally if you are able to for these conversations, particularly with the brother pastor-elders. And today, let me just encourage you, brother and sister saints of Cornerstone and of Christ the King, to intentionally and proactively meet some people, reintroduce yourself to some people, and view it as, in the providence of Almighty God, something that He has set before you before the foundation of the world—the good work that you would walk in that and bless the brother and sister in Christ. God has loved us with an incredible love, and so we love out of that love, and let us welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us to the glory of God. So do that today; do that with a zeal and do that with a gusto, knowing that God has been so gracious. The world is so discouraging, full of sin, full of backstabbing, full of bitterness. But here under the lordship of Jesus, as we look to the inerrant and sufficient word of God together, we have a brotherhood and a sisterhood that will last for an eternity. This is a forever-family kind of opportunity. So let us bless the Lord and praise one another with songs, hymns, and spiritual songs to the glory of our great God.

Let us before the Lord now have a word of prayer.

Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, God, You are holy, holy, holy. Your glory and honor are matchless. Your wisdom is unsurpassed. You and Your ways are too wonderful for weak sinners like us in this fallen, sin-sick, Christ-rejecting world. We do not marvel as consistently at You as we ought to. We have all like sheep gone astray to our own rebellious ways. Yet You uphold us. You uphold all things by the word of Your power. You keep us alive because You want to. We exist at Your pleasure because You desire to bring us through the night. We are here today. This is humbling, and we tremble before You. It would be a terrifying thing, Lord, for You are the God whom so many times we rebel against and we trifle against. And God, we ask for forgiveness for these great and high-handed sins today.

God, You are the judge, You are the creator, the author of all life, the one who we will give an account to for every idle word. And so, Father, we confess and believe that You are the God who rules and governs all things and upholds all things by the word and work of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. You're the sovereign sustainer. You uphold our lives, and so we confess that we are great sinners, and yet we praise You and thank You that You are a greater Savior who has forgiven us for our sins, who has cleansed us from all unrighteousness. And God, we praise You for the reconciliation and the work of the gospel, the good news that we can be forgiven, that we can be set free and have eternal life and eternal hope through Christ alone. Help us remember that in Christ we were bought with a price, made to glorify You. Strengthen us to fight the fight of faith, to press on and persevere. Make us not grow weary in

doing good, knowing that as Your word tells us in Galatians 6, 'in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.' (Galatians 6:9) Fill us with Your Spirit.

Surely when we consider testifying to Your goodness, Your glory, Your gospel, it seems often overwhelming and easy to give into cowardice or timidity; but forgive us, Lord, for this cowardice and timidity, for You have not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. You've justified us in the heavenly kingdom, and with the apostle Paul, we say and declare, 'What can man do to us?' So please fortify our faith, our hearts, and our minds through Your word; sanctify us, God, through Your word. Help us to encourage and bless one another. We pray that tonight as we gather for the hymn sing, that the faith in Jesus across the Chicagoland area would grow and deepen.

Lord, we pray that our hearts would not be given over to despair. We see so much evil and sin and death in our world—so much evil that remains in our own hearts. And so protect us, God, from discouragement. We ask and plead with You, God, to protect us. Protect us from despair and depression and lift our hearts up to behold the Lord Jesus Christ. God, we grieve and hate the horrific murder-suicide we heard of in the last few weeks in Michigan, so horrific and evil, and pray Your great comfort upon all who grieve and are devastated. God, we look around the world and see so much carnage, worldliness, sin, and we cry out to You and say together, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' God, we ask that You would help us to walk in step with Your Spirit, to look to Your word, to look away from what we see around us and look up to Jesus Christ—not inward where we find sin indwelling, not outward in the world where we find fleeting pleasure, but upward where we see Jesus Christ seated, who will one day return and put all things right and make all things new.

God, we do pray and entrust to You this weekend's end-abortion opportunity with Jeff Durbin and Senator Neal Anderson. Thank You for these men. And we do pray, Lord, that the state of Illinois would be the first one to provide equal protection for precious preborn girls and boys in the womb. We thank You, Lord, for the fact that Your people are at work through the word, trusting in You, crying out to You. We thank You for the ministry and the work of Love Life and Brother Joseph and Brother Juan. Bless Love Life Ministry, God, and may this upcoming Saturday's prayer and praise walk be something that is used mightily to the praise of Your glory. Lord, turn that murder mill, that busiest abortion clinic in the city of Chicago, into a place of worship, into a place of life-giving blessing for the city. You can do this, God, and we pray that You would do it through the gospel. Transform hearts and lives, we pray.

God, we entrust You brothers and sisters in Christ suffering in chains around the nations. Strengthen and comfort brothers and sisters in Nigeria, North Korea, China, and elsewhere, God. We cry out to You and look to You as the God who will one day put all things right, who upholds all things. To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sermon: You Prepare the Earth

Scripture Reading

Good morning. We are continuing our way through the Book of Psalms as we are in our 'Summer in the Psalms' series. And I would invite you to stand, with Bible in hand, to Psalm chapter 65 for this morning—Psalm 65. And I'd encourage you to keep that Bible open to follow along in the text and to see the truth there for yourself. I'll be reading from the NASB 95 translation. Hear now the word of the living God.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A Song. There will be silence before You and praise in Zion, O God, and to You the vow will be performed. O You who hear prayer, to You all men come. Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You forgive them. How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You to dwell in Your courts! We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple. By awesome deeds You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation, You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea; who establishes the mountains by His strength, being girded with might; who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples. They who dwell in the ends of the earth stand in awe of Your signs; You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy. You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; the stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth. You water its furrows abundantly, You settle its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless its growth. You have crowned the year with Your bounty, and Your paths drip with fatness. The pastures of the wilderness drip, and the hills gird themselves with rejoicing. The meadows are clothed with flocks and the valleys are covered with grain; they shout for joy, yes, they sing. (Psalm 65:1–13)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Join me now in a word of prayer.

My gracious God, would You come to this thanksgiving hymn, this song of great joy. And I pray, Father, that You would impart to us fresh joy—that, Father, in the midst of a cursed world that is full of shootings, as Pastor Brandon prayed, and abortion and the slaughter of innocent little babies in the womb and natural disasters, God, I do pray that this Psalm would lift up our spirits and that we would see and know that You are the God who's created the world and You are the God who will inaugurate and bring forth the new heavens and the new earth. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

What is the hope for the suffering you face in this fallen, cursed world? What is your hope? If you're part of or you're aware of, just last week there were tornadoes that came through the Chicagoland area. I just got a text from a friend yesterday afternoon saying he's going up to Appleton, Wisconsin, and he's going there to help clean up the wreckage left behind from those tornadoes that destroyed many homes. I just saw this clip: a HeartCry missionary in Caracas, Venezuela, and he's serving there in the midst of where dead bodies still lie under the rubble after two earthquakes left 18,000 homeless and 5,000 dead. We can think of last year in Texas, that flash flood that only in a span of two hours swept away 25 little girls and two teen camp counselors and one camp director. We live in a cursed world.

Maybe you think of something more personal. What happens when a loved one dies in an accident, or you see dementia take away a once vibrant and capacious mind? In fact, just last year I had a professor, and he had to cancel class—it was November 11th. And he thought he had pneumonia, and he discovered

just two weeks later that it wasn't pneumonia, it was lung cancer. And he died December 22nd. And my wife and I and my daughter, we attended his funeral January 17th, 2026. So what do we do? What is your hope in this cursed, death-filled world?

The great discovery of Psalm 65 is that the hope for this fallen world is not necessarily more medicine or more technology. It's not an ecological or environmental stewardship per se. It's not in some human contrivance for the world. It is surprisingly in the atonement and forgiveness of sins. The reversal of the curse turns on the hinge of Christ's atoning work. What we learn in this psalm is that atonement, the gospel, involves much more than your individual spiritual salvation. That Christ died not simply to forgive you of your sins; Christ died to give you the new heavens and the new earth. That's the **main point for this morning: Christ died not just to forgive individuals, but to restore all creation**. And that's what we're going to look at this morning in three main points: **Exegesis**, we'll do some Biblical Theology, and then some points of Application. So you can follow along with me there.

Point 1: Exegesis

Here's the first point: Exegesis, which is to look at the text here. I want you to have in mind here three basic divisions of Psalm 65—practically every biblical scholar divides it in these three ways; it's not controversial. Verses 1 to 4, have it there in your minds, is God's atoning work in the temple. Verses 5 to 8 is God's sovereign rule over all the ends of the earth. And verses 9 to 13 is God's abundant provision in harvest time. So the question is not so much how to divide the psalm. The puzzling question is, how do we understand the relation? How do we unite this psalm? Is there some unifying principle here? What does blood at the temple have to do with rain in the field? Is David giving us three unrelated snapshots of God's character, or is there this logical development in David's mind?

So what we're going to do is—I don't normally do this in the Psalms, but we're going to start at the end, the last section. And I do that because I do think that is the main point of the psalm, and we can't really understand the first two halves of it, the first two parts of it, until we understand this last part. So we're going to start here. This is strange, but in the last section, verses 9 to 13, look at that in your text. Here is the first point: **The land is restored from drought to rich fertility**. Now, most of us do not have an agricultural background. We live in the Midwest, and oftentimes it's well-watered, or it's even over-watered at times. But in the land of Canaan, that place is dry and barren, and oftentimes it has no fertility. And we live in our supermarket Instacart culture; we don't understand that if there's no rain, there is no food. If there's no rain, it's death—there is famine. And many biblical scholars suspect that behind this psalm was a time of drought.

So this last stanza is saying that David is rejoicing because God restores the land from its drought and famine and brings this lush provision. So look at that, verse 9: **'You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; the stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.'** (Psalm 65:9) David is conveying super-abundance, lavishness. God is providing more than just their bare necessities. In verse 10, he says, **'You water its furrows abundantly, You settle its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless its growth.'** (Psalm 65:10) God's irrigation system is this inexhaustible reservoir, and He pours a deluge upon every crevice, every crack, every cleft. We're meant to feel the splash of showers. We're meant to feel the dew underneath our feet. We're meant to see this dirt become this muddy terrain. And what happens? Well, there is this incredible harvest of plenty that results. Verse

11, he says, **'You have crowned the year with Your bounty, and Your paths drip with fatness.'** (Psalm 65:11) The imagery is God in His wagon, traveling through the land. And He has this cart so full of grain and produce, and wherever it goes, it drops cornucopias of crops—the paths drip with fatness.

And then he closes here with a picture of a flourishing environment. Verses 12 to 13, verse 12: **'The pastures of the wilderness drip...'** (Psalm 65:12) He doesn't say the pastures of the forest, or the pastures of the meadows, or the pastures of the Everglades. He says the pastures of the *wilderness*—that place which is arid, that place which is lifeless, that place is now transformed into this lush and fertile garden. And he says there in verses 12 to 13, **'...and the hills gird themselves with rejoicing. The meadows are clothed with flocks and the valleys are covered with grain; they shout for joy, yes, they sing.'** (Psalm 65:12–13) It's as if the hills and the valleys have been depressed; they have been stripped bare. But once God visits them, He decks the field with dancing grass, He colors the bronze hillside with happy flowers, He clothes the meadows with leaping goats. The barren and naked land is dressed with this festive garment. The picture is a promised land soaked in the blessings of God. This is a microcosm of the curse reversed. This is a microcosm of Eden restored.

So then the question is, why does God turn this barren land into this fertile, fruitful, lavish garden? Why does God do that? So we go back to the beginning of the psalm here, verses 1 to 4. Here's the second point of exegesis: **The land is restored because of the atonement.** Look at verses 1 to 4. The psalm begins with confident expectation that God will answer prayer—and most likely a prayer for the rain. He says here in verse 1: **'There will be silence before You and praise in Zion, O God, and to You the vow will be performed. O You who hear prayer, to You all men come.'** (Psalm 65:1–2) Then in verse 3, we have this sudden shift in thought. He says in verse 3, **'Iniquities prevailed against me; as for our transgressions, You forgive them.'** (Psalm 65:3) Now, I'm a bit upset here at the NASB 95, because behind that word 'forgive' is a Hebrew word, *kippurim*, and that is actually a technical word that means 'to make atonement.' The ESV translates it that way, and the New King James Version translates it that way as well: 'to make atonement.' And in all the Psalter, all the Psalms, that word only shows up three times. In chapter 65, verse 3 is the very first time that word shows up. The idea here is not just forgiveness in this general idea; the idea is the bloody sacrifice of the spotless lamb in the temple.

And after that atonement, the relationship with God is restored. The alienations and distance between God and the people is no longer there. Look at verse 4. He says, **'How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You to dwell in Your courts! We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple.'** (Psalm 65:4) So the relationship is restored.

So then here's the question, right? Why does atonement and reconciliation—why does that precede the fertile land, the blessing of the land? Why does it work that way? Again, why does David link blood in the temple with rain in the field? How do we understand this? Well, we have to understand that at that time in redemptive history, God had a very special and unique relationship with the people of Israel and their land. Israel was meant to be a picture, a miniature of the new heavens and the new earth. They were meant to replicate Eden on earth. They were meant to be this comprehensive picture of righteousness and prosperity. Because of that, if they failed to live up to God's holy standard of righteousness, if they failed to obey God, God would punish them and the land would suffer because of that. All right? So if they obeyed God, there would be rain, fertility on the soil. If they disobeyed God, there would be drought and

famine. Rain was almost the barometer of their spiritual condition. Their material blessings, their material prosperity, signified their spiritual condition.

Like, listen to Deuteronomy chapter 11, verses 16 to 17 and see this link here. It says, **‘Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them, or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit, and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.’** (Deuteronomy 11:16–17) So then why does David then begin with atonement? We begin to understand this. Because if God dealt with them according to a strict works principle, David knows they would deserve nothing but drought and famine. David knows that of course they have not obeyed God perfectly. So without God’s forgiving grace, without a wrath-bearing sacrifice, David knew that drought and famine would be at their doorstep. So what do they need? They need an atonement.

So listen to 2 Chronicles chapter 7, verses 13 to 14 and see this link: **‘If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain... and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.’** (2 Chronicles 7:13–14) Their land will not be healed unless their sins were forgiven. Atonement was needed not only to forgive their sins; atonement was needed to heal the land. This is why David begins with atonement. It’s not just a random starting point. It’s the very hinge, the theological spine of this entire psalm. Without atonement, there is no harvest.

Okay, so then what do we do with that? Isn’t that just Moses or the people of Israel and the Mosaic covenant? What does that have to do with us here? Here is the third point of exegesis: **The land is restored with hopes of a universal restoration.** So in between—you got it in your mind, right?—first section and the third section, sandwiched right there in between, listen to what David says. He says, **‘By awesome deeds You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation, You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea...’** (Psalm 65:5) David is saying the God of Israel is not confined to Israel. He is the God of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea. All of mankind and creation are within view. God didn’t simply create Israel; God created the world.

Look at verses 6 and 7. This is what he’s saying: **‘...who establishes the mountains by His strength, being girded with might, who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples.’** (Psalm 65:6–7) David highlights the fact that God doesn’t just govern Israel; He governs the universe. So then he closes in the section in verse 8, focusing on the universal scope of God’s reign. He says, verse 8: **‘They who dwell in the ends of the earth stand in awe of Your signs; You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.’** (Psalm 65:8) The dawn—all creation to the east—and the sunset—all creation to the west—all creation is embraced.

So we understand this, right? The first section is locally there in Zion in the temple. The last section ends with an abundant provision in the land of Canaan. But the second section explodes outward to include all of creation—meaning the farthest pulsar at the edge of the universe that no man can see, the creature at the bottom at the base of the Mariana Trench yet to be discovered, every creek, every hill, every king, every peasant, under every pebble, over every peak. As Abraham Kuyper once famously said, ‘There is not a square inch in the whole of creation over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, “Mine!”’ This psalm is not just about local rainfall in the Middle East. We would do a disservice to this text if we

kept our imagination stuck to the hills of Zion. It's meant to push our minds to the ultimate hope: the restoration of every valley, of every ridge, of every hill. It's meant to point us to the new heavens and the new earth. Listen to one writer, Andrew Bonar. He said,

"Who does not seem in reading this majestic song to hear the very melody that issues from the happy people of that new earth?"

Do you hear that? The melody of the new earth in this text.

Point 2: Biblical Theology

So then how do we understand this for us today? I had to do some theological moves here. So here's a second point: **Biblical Theology**. How do we understand this? Here is the first thing: **The parched land points to a cursed cosmos**. (Gen 3:17) Why are there droughts? Why are there earthquakes that cause iron beams to crush the skulls of men? Why are there flash floods that sweep away little girls into the dark? Why are there massive hurricanes and titanic tsunamis that destroy nations? Why are there microscopic cancer cells that show up without any explanation? Why is there death? You can imagine a universe that doesn't have death. Nothing about creation necessitates death. So why do we live in this death-filled world?

Genesis 3:17 explains it: **'Cursed is the ground because of you...'** (Genesis 3:17) **'...for dust you are, and to dust shall you return.'** (Genesis 3:19) Death and suffering are not the inevitable byproduct of creation. There was a time when there was no death and no suffering. Death and suffering are the punishment of God against sin. The drought is a picture of the greater curse of the ground.

So then what is the solution to the drought? What is the solution to a cursed world? The solution is the same for both, isn't it? It's the atonement. So here's a second biblical theological point: **The temple atonement points to Christ's atonement**. Why did Christ die on the cross? Listen to Colossians chapter 1, verse 20. Paul writes, **'For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.'** (Colossians 1:19–20) The idea is not that Christ will save all people. This is not a proof text for universalism, that false doctrine. Paul says rather Christ's death has secured the restoration of all creation. He says all things, not all people, will be reconciled to Him. All things will have peace, whether things in heaven or things on earth. As Doug Moo writes, he says

Colossians 1:20 teaches 'not cosmic salvation or even cosmic redemption, but cosmic restoration or renewal... God's work in Christ has in view a reclamation of the entire universe, tainted as it is by human sin.'

So do you understand? Just as the bloody sacrifice in the temple was the first domino to fall to bring about restoration, Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross—that was the catalyst of the chain reaction that would trigger not just forgiveness of sins, but the restoration of creation. Creation is not just a stage of

redemption; creation is a participant of redemption. Christ died not just to reconcile you to God; Christ died to restore creation and to reverse the curse.

So here's the third point of biblical theology: **The harvest time points to all of creation restored.** Listen to Revelation chapter 22, the very end of the Bible here, and notice the agricultural imagery. It says, verses 1 to 3: **'Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse...'** (Revelation 22:1–3) Because of Christ's atonement, there is a day coming when the drought of the universe will be no more, when the heavenly rains will fall upon this cursed land, when the springtime of the new heavens and the new earth will arrive.

Old age, and blocked arteries, and dementia, and miscarriages, and car accidents, and disabled children, indwelling sin, heartache, depression, EF1 tornadoes, 7.5 earthquakes, thorns that infest the ground—the curse will be reversed. Christ will wipe away every tear from your eyes. There will no longer be any death. There will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain. This is the whole meaning of that great hymn, *Joy to the World*. Now we normally associate this with Christmas time, which is not bad by itself. Of course that's true, but that is not talking about Christ's first coming and His incarnation; it's talking about Christ's return when He makes all things right. And what does that hymn say? It says, 'No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.' Christ and His blessings do not just flow into your heart; it flows into all the earth, reversing all the curse and making this world a blessing, a fertile, lush garden.

Point 3: Application

So then what do we do with this fact? How do we understand this in relation to our sin? Here is a point of application—two points. First, **do you place your hope in the new heavens and the new earth?** In this world of suffering and decay, where do you place your hope? Is it what this life can provide you? This is how the world thinks. The world cannot fathom that this present life is an inconclusive experience, that there's more. This world cannot comprehend the astonishing reality that this life is preparing us for another. This world cannot understand that this life is not our home and that there is a final resting place for us. They view this world as a self-contained system of life. There is no God, there is no eternity, there is no new creation—there is just this life. All their plans, all their calculations, all their ambitions are restricted to this life only.

So instead of placing their hope in the new heavens and the new earth, where do they place their hope? They place it in the 20 years they have in retirement. Or they place it in the next medical procedure. Or they place it in that smarmy politician that promises you a better life in this world. But then what happens when the MRI comes back? What happens when there's still suffering? There is a 48-year-old billionaire tech entrepreneur—his name is Bryan Johnson. And he spends millions of dollars each year, and he has a team of over 30 doctors monitoring his body every single day. He follows a strict vegan diet, and he has this extensive pill regimen. He follows precise workout schedules. He is up to date with the most advanced medical technology. He's doing everything he can to accomplish one goal, which is: don't die. And just last

month, he wrote this on a social media account: 'I have an autoimmune disease. My stomach is eating itself.' He has every possible resource in this life, and yet that does not sustain him.

Is that your hope—what this world can provide you? For those who place our hope in the new heavens and the new earth, the experience of disease and disability, the frustrations of noble aspirations and desires, the suddenness of death—they are no longer the worst evils. There will be a day when their bodies will be resurrected. There's a day when the harvest time will come. Listen to how Harry Blamires—he's someone who is considered the protégé of C.S. Lewis—this is how he described the difference between the 'this world' secular mindset and the eternal mindset of the Christian. He said,

'When you contemplate the spectacle of a girl almost wholly paralyzed as a result of a car accident, say, and condemned to a life of near total immobility, speechlessness, blindness, ... you will see the tragedy either as a last word in that poor creature's knowledge and taste of being, or as something which is to be swept away beyond death in a new, richer, fuller life.'

My plea to you is not to hope in this world. What will you do, what will happen to you if you have the bottom knocked out of your earthly life? What do you do? You'll have nothing to stand on. But for the Christian who knows that there is a new, richer, fuller life, he can say, 'Though I am struck down, I am not destroyed.' Do you hope in the new heavens and the new earth?

And here is the last point of application: **Do you view creation as a theater of God's glory?** Now if David was a secularist or a deist and he saw the rain and the fertile ground, he would just say, 'Well, this is just a natural process of the water cycle,' and he would move on. This is how many Christians view the world: Creation is just a natural, self-contained system. God is the watchmaker who winds the clock and then he steps back. Nothing about creation is connected to God; everything just continues on normally as they do. And they fail to see, like David, that creation points to the glory of God.

Now to be clear, I'm not asking, 'Do you view creation as divine?' Now today Hinduism views creation as divine. Even some Eastern Orthodox theologians say that not only humanity, but creation bears the image of God. Even secular materialists have this quasi-divine view of the material world. There's one atheist astronomer named Carl Sagan—listen to how he speaks in these religious terms. He says, *'The universe is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be. Our feeblest contemplations of the cosmos stir us... We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.'* So I'm not saying here to be like that and to worship creation. We should never divinize or worship creation.

Neither do I ask, 'Do you view creation apart from Scripture?' Some people have this idea that you can deduce right knowledge of God without God's Word, and exclusively by nature and reason alone. But according to Paul in Romans 1, he does say you do gain knowledge of God, but because of sin, fallen man always twists that knowledge. Fallen man cannot have a right knowledge, true saving knowledge of God without the holy inspired word. This is why John Calvin says we need—he calls it 'the spectacles of Scripture.' You need regenerate eyes looking through the eyeglasses of Scripture in order to have the right view, right perspective of creation. And that's important because I remember taking one of these quizzes—it was like many, many years ago—it was called, I don't know if you've heard of it, the 'Sacred Pathways' quiz. And it gave 9 pathways to connect with God. And it gave this impression that you can

draw near to God based on your preferences and your personality. So you had the enthusiast—the person who connects with God through celebration and dancing. You had the activist—the person who connects with God through fighting injustices. And then you had the naturalist—the person who connects with God through nature. And really, this quiz props up this unbiblical idea that you can draw near to God however you want based on your preferences. The fact is, you don't find God through whatever preference you'd like; you find God in the Bible. So I'm not calling people to become the naturalist, just go into the wild and empty their minds and experience creation in that way—you need to go to the Scripture first. You need to know clearly who God is, the true God, first, and then with that knowledge, and then with the eyeglasses of Scripture, then you go to creation, and then you see sparks of divine glory.

So to rephrase the question: With the spectacles of Scripture, do you view creation as a theater of God's glory? Do you contemplate the beauties of the season, the warmth of the sun? Do you think about the majesty of the lakes? This summer, have your eyes been enchanted by God's glory in creation? There is a danger in our society and even among Christians of losing the sense of God's glory in creation. Andrew Fellows—he's someone who is an apologist in Cambridge—and he calls this *'the chronic loss of spiritual reality,'* that we all carry the supernatural knowledge in our heads, but when we look around to the world, we function as secularists. Creation feels stale, it feels lifeless, it feels flat—nothing glows with divine glory. We live in this disenchanted world. We no longer see creation in connection with the Creator.

Listen to how G.K. Chesterton tried to describe the re-enchantment that we need when we see creation. He says, *'Shall I tell you the secret of the whole world? It is that we have only known the back of the world. We see everything from behind and it looks brutal. That is not a tree, but the back of a tree. That is not a cloud, but the back of the cloud. Can you not see that everything is stooping and hiding a face? If we could only get round in front.'* He is saying that there is a face, there is a Person behind the tree, behind the cloud—that all of creation is God bending down. And if only we could get around to the front and see the glorious face of God! If David saw the Smokies, he would say, 'God is girded with might.' If David saw the roaring of the Pacific Ocean, he would say, 'God will still the seas one day.' If David saw the torrential rains of the Midwest, he would say, 'The stream of God is full of water.' Do you let creation point you to God's glory?

Jesus Christ looked at the pain of childbirth and He said that points to the end of the age. Jesus Christ took a mustard seed and said, 'This is what faith is like.' Jesus Christ looked at the ravens and the lilies and said, 'This is a picture of how the Father takes care of you.' Do you let creation point you, invigorate your glory—the glory of God—and cause worship in you? My dear friends, let the faithfulness of the sunrise tell you that God's mercies are new every morning. Let the snowy blanket of winter remind you that my sins are washed whiter than snow. Let the honey from the honeycomb remind you that God's word is sweet and satisfying. Let the laborious ant say to you, 'Our God is no sluggard, and neither should you be either.' Let the well-watered ground, let the vastness of the Milky Way and all that is around you make you wonder, 'Who am I that God takes thought of me?' Do you see the riches of nature that point to new creation, to the new heavens and the new earth?

Listen to Charles Spurgeon. I love this. He says,

'Does not all nature round me praise God? If I were silent, I should be an exception to the universe. Doth not the thunder praise Him as it rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not the mountains praise Him where the woods upon their summits wave in adoration? Doth not the lightning write His name in letters of fire? Hath not the whole earth a voice?'

Do you have ears to hear the voice of God in creation? Do you have eyes to see the theater of God's glory? Do you see God in creation?

So then, again, place your hope in the new heavens and the new earth, and view the present creation as a theater of God's glory. And just like the seed that is buried and then grows in glory, so too will you die, and you will be resurrected in glory in the new heavens and the new earth. Please join me now in a word of prayer.

O gracious God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I do pray that we would not place our hope in this life only. But that, dear God, we would look forward to that day where Christ will return and the thorns that infest the ground would be turned into Eden. I pray, Father, that we would see all of this creation as pointing to You and Your glory—that, God, it would invigorate us, that we would go into the lakes, into the mountains, into the fields and say, 'God is great; this is my Father's world.' So we pray, Father, that You would make us those who worship You not only in the temple, not only in the church, but even, God, in creation. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Communion & Closing

The Lord's Supper

Well, at this time it is our great joy to join together in the covenant meal of the Lord's Supper. Now the first question is always, what is the Lord's Supper? What are we doing here? Well, the bread and the cup, they are signs and seals. They don't have some intrinsic magical power. They are meant to point us; they are signposts that point you beyond itself. So in particular, I'd say look at least in five different directions: Look backward—the bread and wine or cup are reminders that show forth Christ's sacrifice, because we're slow to receive the truth of the gospel. We're often overwhelmed by despair over our sin and our flesh. So what does Christ do? He gives us a tangible reminder of His sacrifice for us, that you are truly forgiven and truly clothed with His righteousness. So look backward. But also look inward—this is a time to resolve to new and fresh obedience. This is not just a memorial; this is spiritual nourishment, it's life-giving strength. So look inward, resolve to follow Christ, commit to His cause, and seek greater holiness. But then look outward—this isn't just an individual thing between you and God. First Corinthians 10:17 says, **'...since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.'** (1 Corinthians 10:17) So we aren't just pledging ourselves to Christ; we are in a way pledging ourselves to the church, the body. So look outward and remember that you do this in a community of believers. And then look upward—this is not a funeral. We don't worship a dead Messiah. Christ is living, and He's ruling in heaven right now. In the Lord's Supper, by faith through the Spirit, Christ is spiritually present with us. And then the fifth thing: Look forward. Look forward! When Jesus Christ instituted the Passover in Luke, He described it as a foretaste of things to come. He said, **'I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.'** (Luke 22:18) Jesus is saying that the Lord's Supper that we partake of now is connected to eating and drinking in the future fulfillment of the kingdom of God. The bread and

cup are symbols of the marriage supper of the Lamb of God. So look forward and know that Christ will reverse the curse and you will dine with the Almighty in the new heavens and the new earth. So the Lord's Supper is this multi-directional sign that is meant to encourage us in the faith.

The second question is, who then should partake of the Lord's Supper? Well, to be clear, on the one hand, we don't want to treat the Lord's Supper legalistically, all right? The Lord's Supper is not for super Christians; it is not a reward for good behavior. The Lord's Supper is not a congratulations on a job well done. It is for weak, dependent, needy Christians. It is for those who see themselves as the least. It is for those who even doubt their salvation and need assurance of faith. So don't think of this as a legalistic thing. But we don't also want to treat the Lord's Supper unworthily. There is a danger that the Bible warns us of partaking in an unworthy manner. What does that mean? Well, it means it's not for unbelievers. It makes no sense for someone who rejects or does not understand the death of Christ to partake of something that symbolizes Christ's death on the cross—it would be an empty sign for that individual. Neither is it for the unbaptized—you cannot sit down at the family table until you first are received into that family, and baptism is how you publicly identify as part of the family. And neither is it for free-floating churchgoers with no commitment to a biblical local church. Again, 1 Corinthians 10:17 says, **'...since there is one bread, we who are many are one body...'** (1 Corinthians 10:17) This is a communal meal. There ought to be a commitment to the body of Christ, and this is clarified through church membership. How do we know who's a member, who's not? Well, church membership. So it's for those who are members in good standing of a local church. Now, it doesn't mean you have to be a member of Christ the King or Cornerstone, but a sound biblical church, or for those who are in a moment of transition and they're seeking to become a member of a biblical church. So if you're not a believer, if you're not yet baptized, or you have not yet taken church membership seriously, we ask you to refrain from partaking and to observe what you see in front of you. And again, the point is not to elevate yourselves above others. The point is not to make you think that you've earned the Lord's Supper. You don't live the Christian life in order to gain the Lord's Supper; you gain the Lord's Supper in order to live the Christian life. It is a means of grace; it's meant to nourish your faith.

So then, as a sign that we are unified—not in ethnicity, not in age, not in shared hobbies, but unified in the truth of the Gospel—let us recite together the Apostles' Creed. This is not meant to be a replacement of the Bible; it is simply the basic doctrines of gospel truth in summary form. It differentiates Christianity from all other religions. So let us do this; let us recite together with one voice in unity the words of the Apostles' Creed. Christian, what do you believe?

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from where He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

By this time, the deacons will come forward and begin to distribute those elements. And before that, Elder Don will pray for the Lord's Supper. And I encourage you to hold on to those elements and we'll partake together once you hear the words of institution.

Communion Prayer

As we go before the Lord in prayer, let's bow our heads, please.

Our dear Heavenly Father, we come before You with grateful hearts as we gather around this communion table. As Your Word reminds us in 1 Corinthians 11, we do this in remembrance of our precious Savior, Jesus. We thank You for the incredible gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and for the love that led Him to the cross for each one of us. Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your body that was broken and Your blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins, just as You declared at the Last Supper that the cup is the new covenant in Your blood. And we thank You that You willingly gave Your life so that we might have life, and death could not hold You; as Scripture declares, You rose again on the third day and through Your resurrection You have given us hope of eternal life. Father God, we are especially thankful for this table of grace. Your word tells us in Ephesians that it is by grace we have been saved, not by works so that no one can boast. We know that we do not come because we are worthy, but because You are gracious. And at this table, remember that our salvation is not something we earn, but it's a gift freely given through Jesus Christ. As we take the bread and the cup, help us to slow down and remember the depth of Your love. And as Psalm 139 invites us, search our hearts, O God, and know us today. May we examine our hearts, receive Your forgiveness, and be renewed in our faith and gratitude. Lord, we thank You for the cross, we thank You for the empty tomb, and we thank You for the privilege of gathering together as Your people around this table of grace. In the precious and holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Words of Institution & Dismissal

First Corinthians 11, verses 23 to 25: **'For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."**

In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23–25)

Please join me now in a word of prayer.

Gracious and holy God, we thank You that while we make our pilgrimage to the promised land, You have not left us without manna from heaven and the water from the rock. But God, You nourish us with the gospel of Jesus Christ. So we pray that through this appointed means of grace, You would give exactly what is needed to strengthen each of our faiths here—that when we walk out these doors and back into the world, that we would lift up our drooping hands and strengthen our weak knees and run this race with endurance, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. Amen.

As we close, let's all stand together and sing the great hymn of faith, *Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me*.

Praise God for the singing of His word. Amen.

Just a reminder that after the 10:30 service, we are having a fellowship meal. So we invite you to stay and continue the fellowship there. But go with this word, this benediction from Revelation chapter 22, verses 1 to 3: **'And the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.'** (Revelation 22:1–3) Amen.

Index of Scripture References

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2. **Galatians 6:9** (Pastoral Prayer)
3. **Psalm 65:1–13** (Scripture Reading & Main Text)
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19. **Colossians 1:19–20** (Point 2: Biblical Theology)
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22. **1 Corinthians 10:17** (Communion / Lord's Supper)
23. **Luke 22:18** (Communion / Lord's Supper)
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28. **Revelation 22:1–3** (Benediction)