



CROSSRAIL PLACE

VIA ADAMS PLAZA BRIDGE

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**INTRODUCTION:  
A CRISIS OF HOPE**



## **I N T R O D U C T I O N**

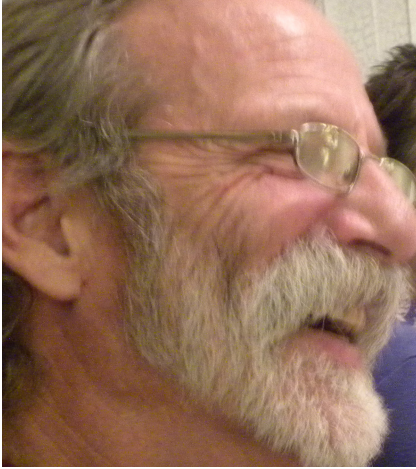
Negative fifty-two degrees. I'll never forget it.

I was in Wisconsin, in the month of January. My brother lives there, and even though I come from Colorado, which has its own fair share of frigid days and negative temperatures, this was a different level entirely.

We stopped at a coffee shop, hoping to warm our hands and take some warmth back with us. It didn't work. My fancy vanilla breve cooled all the way down to "I forgot I had coffee until after the kids took a nap" temperature within a minute of stepping back outside. If I had thrown it into the air I'm sure it would have instantly frozen into little brown snowflakes.

Right now, you're probably picturing driving snow, blizzard conditions, heavily-overcast sky... and you'd be right, most other days. But on this day, January 18th, 2018, there wasn't a single cloud in the sky. There was only a slight breeze. The sun was shining clearly — almost a little too brightly — on the streets of Madison. If you'd have taken a photo, it would have looked downright pleasant; like T-Shirt weather!

*But things aren't always what they seem.*



My family came out on this trip for one reason - we had just received news that my father had less than a month to live.

And so for me, the weather was appropriate. *Things aren't always what they seem.*

At that time, it had seemed to me that Christmas, only a few weeks earlier, was a time of great hope and joy as it usually is for our family.

It seemed as though my dad was happy and healthy and well, having

moved out to Wisconsin to live with my brother's family and help them build their new house.

I remember seeing his electric blue eyes that Christmas, his salt and pepper beard, his gold-framed reading glasses. The kind he would look over the top of to gaze directly into your eyes when he had something serious to say. I remember the vivid joy in his eyes as he watched his grandchildren opening presents he'd bought for them. I remember him peeling the wrapping paper off of a bag of dried peppers and throwing his head back with a laugh. He loves spicy food. All was joy and gratitude and laughter.

*He died a month and a half later.*

Now, those things would all be gone. Slipping through my fingers like so much fine sand.

The frigid day that looked like a

summer afternoon — the dying man who looked healthy and well. Both illusory — deceptions, obfuscations of the truth. *Things aren't always what they seem.*

I had gotten the call a few days earlier. A week after that Christmas celebration where everything was joyful and filled with hope, my dad began to cough up blood. First a little. Then a lot. Then came the vomiting, and within 2 days he was at the hospital being treated for an ulcer in his throat.

While the doctors and nurses were running their tests and scans, my brother David gave me a call.

“Timmo” — my brother calls me Timmo, just like dad did — “They have some scans on the screen. They were looking at his throat, but got a good look at his lungs while

they were at it.”

“Timmo, are you sitting down?”

“Yes”, I lied.

“Buddy, I don’t know how to say this, but there are hundreds of spots in both of dad’s lungs. The doctors look very concerned and they’re speaking in hushed voices. They keep glancing over here and looking worried.”

Sure enough, an hour later, we all received the news that nobody ever wants to hear.

*Cancer. Stage 4.*

He’d had it for months and nobody knew. Smiling, laughing, opening Christmas presents, cracking jokes — and dying slowly from an aggressive cancer.

## Dying Inside

Right now it feels to me as though we are suffering through a cold and bitter crisis of hope and identity in the church. Even though the sun is shining and we **ought** to feel its warmth, instead we just go on suffering through the malaise, the confusion, the stress and the hustle of being pulled in a million different directions every day.

We're trying to keep our chin up, but the truth is things are not going well for the human race at all. Each of us is acting as though everything is going along just fine, but inside, many of us are dying. We are more stressed, depressed, angry, irritated, divided, self-medicated, hurried, worried, busy, confused, and just downright hurting than we have probably ever been. And if we don't catch this cancerous hopelessness soon, it could be fatal.

This, in spite of the fact that in the history of Christianity, there has never been a generation of Christians more pampered, affluent, comfortable, or healthy.

We of all people ought to be great, shining beacons of hope to the world around us!

But we're not. We keep anchoring our hope into things that can't sustain it — things like the success of our favorite sports teams, our preferred political candidate winning the election, getting the bonus we want or the promotion we think we deserve at work. . . even placing our hope in the continued good health of a loved one.

We place our hope in things that are not only unsure, but utterly *unstable*. Things that are in flux, things that “could go either way”. What a foolish gamble!

Now, the reason that I think we do *that*, even as Christians, is because *we're just not that inspired by what we think the hope of Christianity is*. So we go searching for “understandable” hopes, and put our weight on top of them instead, optimistic that they will hold us up. And they never do, but we keep trying.

## Hope & Desire

C.S. Lewis once said that “we can only hope for what we desire” — if we are *hoping for something to happen*, then *it is something that we want to have happen*.

And if we don't *want* something, we won't *hope* for it - or *hope* for its opposite!

I don't *want* to get a stomach bug this weekend. So I won't *hope* for that. In fact, I'll *hope* for a weekend of perfect health and relaxation instead!

I don't *desire* for my wife to get into a car accident. So I *hope* that this does **not** happen. I hope that everywhere she goes, she gets there safe & sound.

Here's the secret: most of us don't *desire* to go to Heaven the way it has been described to us.

Oh, sure. We *say* we do. We *say* all the right things, like we've been trained to:

“How are you doing?”

“Doing great, how about you?” — spoken by the husband who waged World War III in the car with his wife on the way to church this morning.

“How can I pray for you?”

“Hey, God is good! Just pray that God would give us what we need to serve Him better.”  
— spoken by the wife who is so terrified of the future that most days she can’t even drag herself out of bed without hitting the snooze button 4 times first.

“God is so good!”

“All the time!” — spoken by the father who stopped believing in the goodness of God years ago, ever since his beautiful, perfect little daughter was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis.

“I’m so thankful that Heaven is my home!”

“Me, too! I can’t wait to stand before the throne praising God forever!” — spoken by the young professional who is so *bored* by the idea of “singing forever and ever while wearing white robes and floating in the clouds” that he *literally never thinks about it* and it *literally never* influences his decisions one way or another — and whenever he *does* think about it, he gets so uncomfortable that he says to himself in his deepest, most secret thoughts: “well, it’s better than being tortured in fire forever!” and goes on to think about his upcoming camping trip or the next time he gets to sleep with his wife instead. You know, the things he is *actually* excited about.

See my point?

If you think that the Hope of Christianity is “You will eventually lose everything that you love — even now, you have already lost most of what matters to you. Even though

you were born useless, vile, and evil, God wants to fix you! And sure, everything you do with your time is a waste unless it's 'church work' - and everything you love and every happy memory and beloved childhood place will be destroyed by God like the Death Star because none of it really matters — and afterward you get to go to The New Place Beyond the Sky and sing to God forever and ever” — that is a difficult thing to hope for.

The world doesn't buy it, and I don't blame them! It sounds cheap, boring, dull, and unbelievable. It sounds disconnected from everything that matters to humans - family, job — even calling — friends, the environment, the world (which we naturally happen to be pretty fond of!), pets, hobbies. . . I can hear your average 20-or-30-something indignantly saying “*so you're telling me none of that matters?*”

Actually, now that I mention it, it sounds kind of. . . *bad*. You're telling me that you believe God destroys the Earth and everything in it? And that the people who didn't *believe the right way* go on to get tortured in fire for trillions of years while the ones who believe the right thing go on to sing forever and ever?

It gets worse — once, I had a Christian friend admit to me in private: “Um. . . *to be honest, that also kind of sounds like torture to me.*”

The atheist faces a purposeless ultimate defeat of life, in the heat death of the Universe, suffering through moral emptiness, bitter heartbreak, & confusion in the meantime.

The Hindu hopes for the “everlasting, silent tranquility of death.”

The Buddhist hopes for “oneness with the universe through the dissolution of the



identity and total material detachment.”

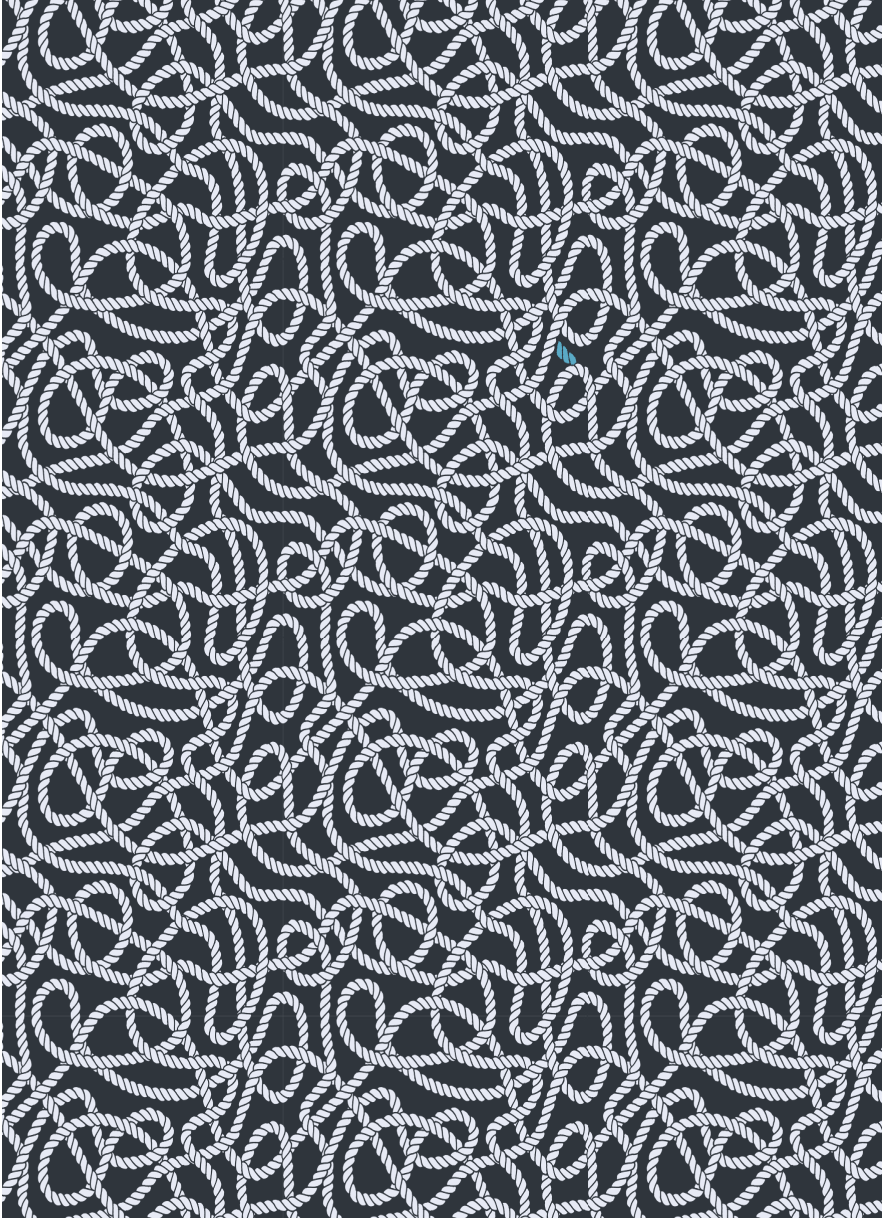
Frankly, “total universal destruction and 2 different kinds of eternal torture” is no better.

Thankfully, *things are not always as they seem.*

## **Truth Is Better Than Fiction**

I want you to imagine with me a length of rope that fills your entire city and grows by every second. Now, imagine that you’re holding *one end* of that rope, and one inch of rope at the very end is painted blue.

The blue section of rope you hold in your hand *is the entire history of humanity.* Starting from the very first humans, all the way through *even into the future* to where the last humans exist who are on the face of the Earth before God brings eternity. Thousands and thousands of years, maybe *millions* of years, and all the combined lives of billions of people, all in one little, insignificant one-inch-long bit of blue rope, held in the palm of your hand.



The rest of the rope is eternity. After God comes and brings the eternal state to fruition, *that is the rest of the rope. It never ends. It dwarfs even millions of years on the time scale, making it appear as an insignificant dot on the map.*

The entire existence of everyone who has ever lived looks like a dot. And eternity looks like a line stretching on infinitely.

*Shouldn't we try our best to get "eternity" right? To understand what is coming as best as we can, and live accordingly?*

How foolish it would be to only think of the dot! To hold up the little blue piece of rope to your eyes and point around at various parts of it, saying "I'm going to work really hard on this part, so that I can retire in this part right here, and make this part more comfortable, so that I can spend time with my grandkids here..." all the while ignoring the massive white rope coiling up to your waist and spreading all throughout your city.

For thousands of years, Christians have believed in the "traditional view" of eternity: everyone will exist forever in either Heaven or Hell, with the Earth destroyed.

*The only problem with this view is the Bible.*

The phrase "go to heaven when you die" does not appear *one single time* in the Scriptures, in any form.

The truth is far more impressive. The truth, my friends, is far, *far* more beautiful. And it *makes sense* of everything that matters to you in life. It *restores* and *redeems* and *revives* and *resurrects* every aspect of your life, and then gives it all back to you a hundred-fold.

*Forever.*

We're going to begin to explore this multi-faceted diamond of good news in the next chapter - and indeed throughout this entire book.

We're going to look broadly at answering 2 primary, titanic, paradigm-shifting questions:

- What is the eternal future promised by Christianity?
- With that as our goal, what needs to change about how we live today?

Read that again. And then again. If you want to know what this book is about, that would be what you write on the sticky note and stick to your mirror.

Because it is absolutely crucial that we get eternity right.

The good news — the *real* good news — of Christianity is the only reason that I have shed no sad tears for my father. It is why even when things look so confusing in this life, when it seems like evil and death have the final word, I can raise my head high and smile.

It seemed as though Wisconsin was warm and beautiful when I found out my dad was dying, but it was frigid and cruel.

It seemed like my dad's life *ended* when the cancer finally took him, but it was just the *beginning* of a life so beautiful that I can't summon the words to describe it.

It seemed like Jesus's crucifixion was the *defeat* of God's plan to rescue humanity, but it was the beginning of God's victory.

*Thank God! Not everything is — in reality — as it so often seems to us.*

Let's start, then. Let's go first to *Jesus's* own words about what He came to do. Perhaps we can pick up the trail from there.

# INTRODUCTION - NEXT STEPS

Throughout this book, at the end of every chapter, there will be an offer of help or some next steps I think might be of use to you. If you take these steps, I'm confident that the message of this book will become real to you in a way you only imagined when you first began it!

If you bought the "**Design & Destiny Life-Change Guide**", go to the section for "Introduction" and follow the "Make It Real" steps there.

<https://theoverlap.life/life-change-guide>

For this chapter, please take our Hope assessment: <https://theoverlap.life/hope-quiz> and then come back here with your score, ready to see what it means:

**0-15 — Desperate for Hope** — This is a dangerous place to be as a Christian! A serious change of mind and heart is needed in order to live effectively as a believer. Keep reading, or reach out for help if you need it!

**16-40 — Hopeful, but Confused** — You have a sense of hope in your life, but you're not quite lined up with what the Bible says our hope is. Keep reading with an open mind!

**41-50 — Profoundly Hopeful** — You get it! God's plans for the future are clear to you. If you want help putting it into practice, go to <https://theoverlap.life/book-offer!>



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***The Answer Jesus Gave***

*“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about... when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”*

*- C.S. Lewis*

***(Real quick — if you skipped the introduction — don't. Go back, and then join me here!)***

What do you think Christianity is Capital A “About”?

I happened upon a survey the other day — thousands of people answering their questions about their views regarding Christianity. The answers were startling — and illuminating.

When asked what they thought Christianity was most fundamentally about:

12% of respondents said “loving your neighbor.” OK!

25% said “being forgiven of your sins.” Fine!

A full 40% said “going to Heaven when you die.” As expected!

But, amidst a smattering of other answers, **only 4%** gave *the answer that Jesus himself gives over and over on the pages of Scripture.*

Four Percent. And of those 4 percent, I wonder how many of them truly understand what He *meant* by it. Probably very few, I'm sorry to say.

*Since 99% of us don't even know what the hope of Christianity truly is, once we finally grasp it, it holds the potential to upend everything and change our whole life to fit the incredible story that God is telling.*



## The Hope That Overcomes All This

If Christianity is *for* anything at all, it should be the triumphal announcement of some radically good news, as the result of which the world is now a different kind of place, and the future a different kind of reality. If it's worth placing your weight on — unlike your football team winning this weekend — it has to be a hope that overcomes, well... *all of this:*

*All the pain, all of the sadness, all of the evil, all of the brokenness, all of the crushing weight of the great destructive evils as well as the minor banal evils that beset every day; the pervading sense of pointlessness and despair and malaise and ennui that have haunted every second of the lives of every human being that exists, and every human being that has ever existed in the history of the world.*

That sounds like a tall order. It is. We're skeptical of any claim that *anything* will overcome even the simple pains and foibles of our own lives; to imagine all of the suffering of the billions of humans all down through history? The Holocaust? The Trail of Tears? The Crusades? The Rwandan Genocide? Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, famine, diseases like Malaria and the Bubonic Plague?

Whatever the hope of Christianity is, if it's worth anything, it will have to outweigh those real, weighty, and substantive evils to an infinite degree.

Loving your neighbor is an excellent idea - Jesus himself said so. Being forgiven of your sins is a crucial pillar of what Christianity is about. Going to heaven when you die, while *true in one very limited sense*, is not the focus of Christianity; remember that

the phrase “go to heaven when you die” doesn’t show up a single time in either the Old or New Testament. None of these is what Christianity is “About”. None of them represents a hope for a good future, a putting-right of all that is wrong.

It is the answer that *Jesus* gave that far outweighs the evil of the world.

The answer that Jesus gave is an infinite degree better than any other answer, and it is the reason why Christianity changed the world, starting in the Ancient Near East 2,000 years ago.

The answer that Jesus gave is what emboldened Christians to show no fear when being thrown to lions in the Colosseum in Rome. The answer that Jesus gave is what also emboldens Christians today in the Middle East to say to the jihadi pointing an AK-47 at their head, “You can kill me, but take my Bible.”

The answer Jesus gave is so powerful that it infinitely outweighs the pain, suffering, and despair in the children’s hospitals, the refugee camps, the abusive homes, the smoldering ruins of villages both now and back through history, torn by war. Jesus’s answer *overcomes* all of that.

The answer that Jesus gave is why I *still*, years later, have shed no sad tears for my father.

The hope of Christianity is something breathtaking; something so surpassingly wonderful that I have seen it literally change people’s entire way of life overnight once they really grasp it. And if you don’t know to which teaching of Jesus I am referring, *that is the issue that this book will help you resolve.*

## The Central, Ultimate Hope of Christianity

**Hope is, by definition, forward-looking.** As Paul says in Romans 8 (a chapter to which we will refer often), “Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8:24b-25 ESV)

Hope is always anchored into something in the future; it isn't retroactive. We don't have it in fullness yet. And if a hope is “*ultimate*” then it must be the *final* hope. The end-all, be-all, fix-all thing that will overcome all the wrongs and evils of this world.

I'm going to be frank: most of us grew up being told that “Heaven” is that hope. We were all wrong — gloriously, awfully wrong — and I can't wait to unpack why.

There has been a great confusion over the minds & hearts of the people in our churches. Even most of the leadership, most of the pastors, most of the authors, most of the songwriters seem to have completely skipped over the part of the story that *Jesus* thought was the most important.

Most forms of modern Christianity are something like a skyscraper built on a cracked foundation. We think we know what the story is “about”, and so we read that into the Scriptures, we formulate our arguments and assumptions on top of it, and before long we are 5 wrong conclusions down the road, with no way of seeing where we went off the path; we weren't on the right track to begin with.

So, what *are* the worldviews at war here, and how do we know which is the right one? What are the beliefs people hold about where we've come from and where we're going?

What are the *stories* we tell ourselves and each other to try and make sense of where we've come from and where we're going?

## The Worst Story



First, let's start with what your neighbors and coworkers *think* the story of Christianity is.

So, here's me. I live on Earth. God made it, humans broke it. Humans are evil and God doesn't actually like them very much. And He's really, really angry all the time, killing people left and right who dare to oppose Him. But since He's so... good?... He gives most people a chance to live a good life.

So here goes the direction of your life and you'll do some good things and some bad things, but at the end of it all when you die, if you did more good than bad, you go to the good place. If you did more bad stuff you go to the bad place.

In the good place, we become angels with little harps and play music on clouds. And there are pearly gates, and some guy named Peter. We don't really know what that's about.

And Jesus had to die, for some reason. We're not sure about that either.

But then down in the bad place there's fire and little men running around in red suits with pitchforks stabbing you while you burn.

And either God is there, or the Devil is there, and one of them is doing the torturing. We're not really sure which and that makes us kind of uncomfortable so we don't talk about it much.

And then at the end of the world, God destroys the Earth and the entire created universe and everybody that was left either goes to the good place or the bad place.

...*Sheesh*. OK, that's not a good story... so, what corrections do we usually make to that way of framing Christianity? Your average rank and file Christian or your average small-town pastor would say:

"No! You don't get into heaven by being good, you get in by being perfect! And none of us is perfect! Every one of us has sinned, so we are all doomed! But God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life!"



*NOT the right story — and thankfully, not all bad — but the one we all learned.*

... Is that better? Yes! Way better!

Something *like* this is what the overwhelming majority of Christians envision when

they think of the word “Gospel” — the good news, the message of Christianity.

But is that it? Is that the message of Christianity? You just tack on the cross to the bad story and suddenly it all *works*?

Listen... I love you. I want what's best for you. But even **this** story, the one where we tell people how to get saved — it just isn't cutting it. Worse, this isn't our story. It's not the story of the Scriptures. And it isn't what Christianity is based on.

It is NOT false. It's just that it's not *true enough*. Maybe more importantly, it's not what Jesus had in mind when He said the word “Gospel.”

The fact — and it is a fact — that we are all sinners who have fallen short of the holiness of the Creator God and justly stand condemned against the standard of His perfect goodness and Holiness is a horrible, horrible situation for humans to be in. And God, because of His incredible love, *has indeed* made a way for us to be rescued from the destruction we deserved, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is very good news indeed! A person can become rescued from their sins by hearing this “simple gospel!”

But let's just imagine for a moment that a traveling evangelist comes through a jungle nation, where nobody has ever heard of Jesus before.

And what he tells the native people there is *this* story right here. The kind where Jesus is simply a way to be forgiven of your sins so that you can go to heaven when you die.

And you know what? Wonder of wonders, the entire village believes the message!

They're saved! Thank God! Praise God! His Word is powerful and mighty to save, and they all now have eternal life! *Amen!*

*But...* what are some questions these jungle folk flat out don't have answers to if all they received was "Jesus saves"?

- Why am I here?
- Where did humans come from?
- Why did God make the world?
- What is God's plan for my future?
- How should I change what I'm doing now?

And what are some questions that this story gives them *wrong answers to*?

- Am I still a sinner? (More on this later.)
- Where are we all going?
- What happens to this beautiful jungle that I love so much?
- Does anything I do in this life matter?

In fact, this same thing happened to many of the churches represented in the New Testament. Paul or some other missionary would come with the message, many people would give their lives to Jesus, and then the teachers would leave.

And everything went perfectly in all of the churches from then on, right?

Of course not! Just for some examples:

Paul has to write to the church in **Galatia** and remind them not to add works as a requirement for their salvation.

The **Corinthian** churches were having disorderly gatherings and getting caught up in all kinds of sexual sins.

The **Colossians** were getting deceived by Gnostics who were telling them that there was some better, secret way to learn about God.

The **Thessalonians** thought Jesus was coming back in a couple of days, so they quit their jobs and decided to wait for him to return rather than working and spreading the good news.

Even the **Romans**, to whom Paul wrote his *magnum opus* — were struggling with trying to integrate a Jewish and Greek congregation around the new culture of the Kingdom — and failing. Hence, the letter.

The simple message about how you can be saved is important, but it's not the full story...

The full story is beautiful, and nuanced, and complicated. And so it bears repetition. Paul and the rest of the New Testament authors are *constantly* working at explaining the full message, if we're really listening. But most of the time, we aren't listening.



Let's take a closer look at the "Gospel" — and this time, why don't we let the Scriptures do the talking?

## A "ReKnewed" Gospel

Before we get too much further, I'm going to introduce you to the term "ReKnewed".

You're going to have to allow me a little bit of cheesiness, I'm afraid. You see, what I want you to do is to Rethink everything you thought you knew about the message of Christianity, built on the solid foundation of the "Renewal of All Things."

So, for most of the rest of the chapters in this book, we will have "ReKnewed" in the Chapter Titles. Every pastor is allowed a few bad puns, and I'm no exception.

People start to get kind of twitchy when you start to talk about "the Gospel" in a way that's different from how they understand it.

I can't blame them! I think it's honestly a good impulse - we need to fiercely guard the core of truth in Christianity. As Paul said in the introduction of his letter to the wayward Galatians:

[6] I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—[7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. [9] As we have said before, so now

I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. - Galatians 1:6-9 ESV

I'm not here to distort the Gospel of Christ. *I'm here to restore it to the best of my ability to the one Paul believed that he was defending.*

The Scriptures are the most marvelous work of art that has ever existed, and it is not close. There isn't a single wasted word on its pages. It is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, it is the Christian's weapon of defense and its means of advance & deposition against the powers of darkness, every page glowing with the pulsating power of divine words conveyed through human vessels. In fact, to borrow more of Paul's words:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

A hearty amen to that!

It is also sometimes *profoundly confusing* to sit down and read. Where you expect inspiration and beauty, oftentimes you instead find bizarre stories of talking snakes & donkeys, patricide, fratricide, what-the-heck-was-that-ricide, and, to borrow a technical term, a *hot mess* of sex scandals, insane rituals of idol worship, dense and hard-to-unpack Hebrew poetry, and several-page long lists of names and descriptions of the shapes of national borders from 2,000 years ago. Most Christians try to just kind of *distance themselves* from the Old Testament especially, like your weird Grandpa who won't stop telling inappropriate jokes and violent war stories in front of the kids.

We can't distance ourselves from the Bible, friends — there's nothing for it. We must dive in *deep* and do the hard work of *reading it and allowing it to speak for itself* if we hope for it to divulge its wonders. As Biblical scholar Michael Heiser says — “if it's weird, it's probably important.”

The one thing we *cannot* do is say “Oh yeah, I know what the Bible teaches! I've read it cover to cover and I know it like the back of my hand!”

If you've got nice, settled, comfortable beliefs about what the Scriptures have to say - for Heaven's sake, *don't read the Bible on its own terms*. Unless you want to have your categories blown out of the water. In which case, pour yourself a cup of coffee, or tea — or maybe something a little stronger — and dig in.

With that, let's turn our attention to the first chapter of Mark. I'll give you some of the context. Mark 1:1 in the ESV reads:

■ “The beginning of the **gospel** of Jesus **Christ**, the Son of God.”

We're only at verse 1 and already we have some things to unpack!

The word “Gospel” in English is a German word. The Greek word is “*euangelion*”, and it means “good news” or a “good announcement”. Tuck that away for a minute.

Next, what about “Jesus Christ”? The word we translate as “Christ” is another Greek word “*Christos*”, that we just chose not to translate from the original language when we brought it over. When we say “Jesus Christ”, in that usage “Christ” sounds almost like a last name. It's not. It is a Greek word for the *title* used to refer to the very *Jewish* concept

of the Messiah: the anointed one that God sent to rescue His people.

Are you with me so far?

So already, this is a different story from the one our friends think we believe! It's not some moral lesson like an Aesop's fable, using vaguely religious sounding words. It's the beginning of the good announcement of God's rescue plan through His chosen servant, whom the Jewish people were waiting for in desperation for thousands of years.

One thing about the Gospel of Mark is that it goes *very* quickly. The story just **moves**. So, within 14 verses, John the Baptist came already, Jesus is already baptized, and the testing in the wilderness has already happened, leading up to verse 14. No time wasted. So, because I really want you to get this, I'm going to put this in the form of a story leading up to Jesus's answer.

## **The Fisherman**

Your name is ישעי (Yeshayahu, or "Isaiah"). You're a fisherman, living in Rome-occupied Israel, 2,000 years ago.

Life for you is good - you live nearby the lake of Galilee, which is huge and always has fish, so there's plenty of money for you to live on and care for your family. Your uncle Yochochunan tells you that although the Romans have been here for 50 years, you are living on your ancestral homeland, and one day you hope to see it restored to God's people. You hope and pray to God that one day, Israel will be restored as the rightful kingdom over the rest of the world, prepared to bless the world as God's chosen people.

You are walking to your boat one day, and as you walk by, you see a man get kneecapped by a Roman soldier because he didn't pay his taxes, which are more than he gets to take home.

A little further on, you hear some hushed whispers from other fishermen, talking about a rabbi who has entered the region, working the teaching circuits. They call him "Yeshua min-Natseret" - *Jesus who is from Nazareth*. The whispers are that people who are sick and weak and hurting enter this man's presence, hear his words, and are completely transformed.

You are looking for some good news. You walk to your community synagogue, and just like the stories said there is a *huge* crowd, probably 400 people, outside of the gates. From the middle, you can clearly hear a man speaking in a very authoritative voice. It seems he's the one who they all came to hear, this Yeshua person. You begin to push through the crowd and you make it through the group until you see him standing in the middle, delivering his message to the people gathered. He turns in your direction and you begin to make out His words, and he's talking about... what?

*What do you hear Jesus saying?*

If you put yourself in Yeshayahu's situation here, what do you hear?

Some of you might think of parables, some of you might think of the Golden Rule, some of you might think about his I Am statements from John, other people might think about His radical teachings of loving your enemy or turning the other cheek - what you hear in your mind tells you part of what you think Jesus is about.

What did *Jesus* think Jesus was about? What was the concept He was constantly teaching about? It shows up over 50 times in the 28-chapter Gospel of Matthew alone. About 1 and a half times a page. There's ONE thing that He uses to summarize all of His teaching — and only 4% of us got the answer right in the survey.

Let's circle back to the Gospel of Mark. Chapter 1, verse 14:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

Wow! Alright, this is it, guys! This is where we'll hear the story! Our fisherman breaks through to the front of the line, then Jesus turns to him and starts telling him what the good news is!

Here's the part where we learn about Heaven & Hell and how to live a good life, right guys?

OK, here it is, what does Jesus say the good news is?

Let's all read Mark 1:15:

you can be saved from your sins and go to heaven when you die through having faith in the power of my sacrifice!

...

Spoiler alert: *that's not what it actually says.*

Maybe we just need to read it again, let's see...

“The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Or, a more literal translation / paraphrase would be:

“The time has come! **God's Kingdom** is here among you! Turn away from your current way of life, and come live differently in light of the good news.”

What's the good news? What is *the gospel*?

***Jesus has brought God's Kingdom to us, and we have been invited to join it.***

## **The Best Announcement of All**

*Jesus's purpose for coming to Earth was to bring the Kingdom of God to fruition, and you are invited to join it.* This might be the most important single thing you can know!

The way that Jesus tells the story in Mark:

Do I have to try really hard to be “good enough” to *enter* the Kingdom of God? (No.)

Is the story about me *at all*? (... no.)

Is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven mentioned at all? (... no. Those become important later as *part of the story*, but they aren't *the story*.)

Is the story about me going somewhere or is it about something coming here? (... something coming here.)

Jesus's story, even the very Gospel that Jesus came to announce, is that God's Kingdom has come to the Earth. So — our friend's story about what Christianity is about is completely wrong. **Completely**. And the one we gave in return is only about *half* wrong.

Brothers, *we have forgotten or otherwise lost so much of what the Gospel is!* We have worked very hard over the centuries on what we believe is the most important part for an unbeliever to hear correctly: that there is a way for them to be saved from the punishment they deserve for sinning against a Holy God. And that is obviously a **hugely** important part of the story. But did we capture *any* of the rest of the story?

Apparently in Jesus's mind, the story of the Bible, the story of who He is and what He came to do, and the story of the gospel, the good news, the good announcement... that story is NOT about us going somewhere, whether we're good enough or not.

*It's about God coming **here** whether we are ready or not.*

You might not understand just yet why this is such a titanic paradigm shift for us. You're probably thinking that I just oversold my point. "What's the big deal? Wasn't God already ruling over the universe? What even changed?"

Or maybe you're asking "So, did Jesus just make this up out of whole cloth? Is this His radical new idea? What's the point of Him dying, then?"

We have to go back to the very beginning. This is where it gets *really* interesting.



# CHAPTER 1 - NEXT STEPS

If you bought the "**Design & Destiny Life-Change Guide**", go to the section for "Chapter 1" and follow the "Make It Real" steps there.

<https://theoverlap.life/life-change-guide>

If you've got questions about how to live out the life of God's Kingdom, we're happy to talk! If you're like the new converts in the jungle nation, and you feel like you are left with a lot of lingering questions about your life, faith, and calling, then go to:

<https://theoverlap.life/chapter-1-offer>

and follow the next steps there! We want to make sure that everybody that reads this book has everything that they need to thrive and succeed in living the Overlap Life. If you feel stirred by the pages of this book, but it doesn't answer all of your questions, we are only a few steps away from stepping in to offer some help, coaching, counseling, and discipleship to get you moving in the direction of living consistently with the Gospel that Jesus came to preach.

We would love to hear from you!



# 02

## Heaven & Earth

*“And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them.*

*And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story.*

*All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”*

*— C.S. Lewis, from The Last Battle*

So, where should we start if we're trying to let the Bible reframe our understanding of the hope of the Gospel? Like most good stories, it's best to start at the beginning.

## **In the Beginning**

▮ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. - Genesis 1:1 ESV

From sentence 1 in the Bible, we have two distinct spaces. Heaven, & Earth. God's Space, and Humans' Space.

We understand the Humans' Space really well. We live here, there are trees, animals, mountains, birds, water, and so on.

God's Space is harder for us to understand — we get lots of imagery in the Scriptures of attempts to explain what it looks like. This is why it's so hard for people to imagine what it would be like to go there — it's beyond our ability to understand it and put categories to it.

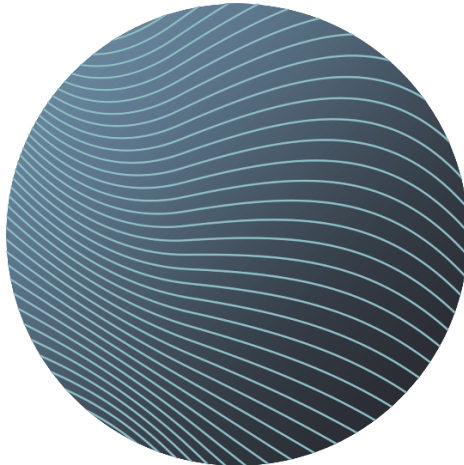
But what I want you to understand - and this is of *titanic* importance — in the Bible, these are not always *separate* spaces. Did you know that? In the Scriptures, Heaven & Earth form a *single, dipartite created reality*.

There are many, many places in the Bible where Heaven and Earth “overlap”. This is why I named my company “Overlap”. More on that later.

Think about it - in Genesis 1 & 2 in the Garden of Eden, are the humans and God in totally separate places? Or are they accessible to one another? Adam and Eve were

said to be able to walk with God himself in the garden. They were together, able to see one another, touch one another, and interact.

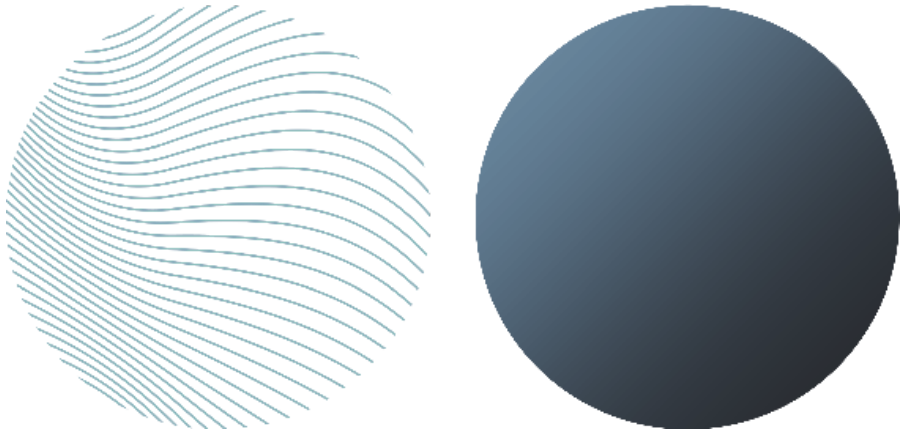
Heaven & Earth are fully united spaces in Genesis 1 & 2.



*Heaven & Earth overlapping in the beginning of Creation.*

The good times last for 2 pages, and Genesis 3 comes. What happens in Genesis 3?

The serpent comes and deceives Adam & Eve into eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And as a result, God banishes Adam & Eve from the garden. The Heavenly “God Space” and the Earthly “Human Space” are separated and driven apart.



*Heaven & Earth divided at the Fall.*

However, God wants to unite them again. This is where, a little further on in the story, we come to the concepts of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

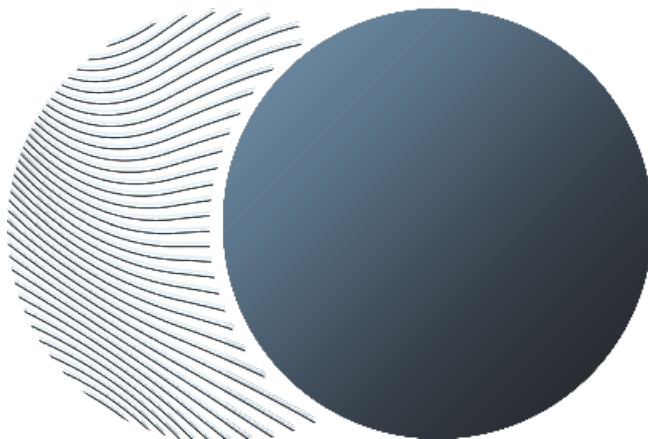
The entire reason for the existence of the Temple is that it served as an overlap of Heaven & Earth: a space where God's presence and glory physically manifested into our space. Interestingly, the temple was decorated with fruit trees, flowers, images of angels, gold, and jewels, etc. It was designed to make you feel as though you're *going back to the garden*.

But remember - Heaven & Earth were driven apart because of our sin, on the heels of which evil and death entered into our world.

So, our space is full of sin and evil and injustice and brokenness.

But God's space is holy and good and beautiful and righteous and just.

*That is the fundamental problem for why they can't unite in full yet.*



*Heaven & Earth partially overlapping through the tabernacle, the temple, Jesus, and the church.*

Right away, God started to fix it. In the ancient temple system, you would sacrifice an animal - the animal would absorb your sin, and you would be “made clean” so you could go and be in God’s Space in the temple. However, this was a privilege that was only available to Israelites in Jerusalem, because that’s where the temple was, and those were the only people allowed in.

(I’m skipping over a lot here to give you the broad strokes, so bear with me!)

Now, the Jews KNEW that God’s plan was to restore things back the way that they were in the garden. If you were a Jew who knew your Scriptures, you KNEW that this story was not finished - this was not how God wanted things to work forever.

We know from the story of Abraham that God wanted to bless *all of the nations & families of the earth* **through** the family of Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3).

Picking up on that promise, the prophets conveyed in many different ways that God wanted to restore His blessing to the *entire earth*. The sacrificial system at the temple was a way for God to keep Heaven and Earth connected through one people group, but it was not the end of the plan. This was just one of the earliest phases of His plan — somehow, this blessing would need to extend out to all of the nations through the people of Israel before it could be completed.

Which brings us to Jesus.

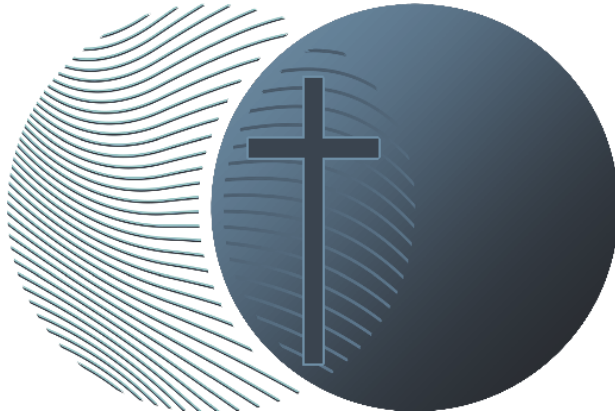
## **The Temple & The Sacrifice**

The arrival of Jesus is the fulcrum of history. Out of the promise God made to Abraham, through the people of Israel, to the promise of a future King, and the promises in the prophets of the Messiah — Jesus arrived and fulfilled them all.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1:14 ESV

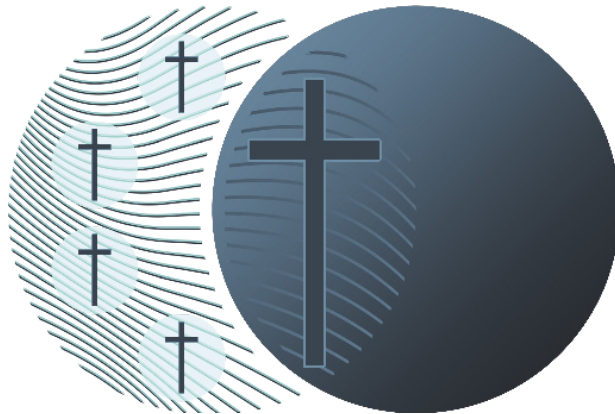
That word for “dwelt”? That’s the same word used to describe the tabernacle. Remember when I said that there isn’t a single wasted word in the Scriptures? Here’s a good example. God is “tabernacling” with us through Jesus.

**So John’s claim when it comes to Jesus is that He is now the place where Heaven & Earth overlap.**



So now, when Jesus is walking around Jerusalem, Galilee, Capernaum, all these places - is he staying in “godly” places and talking to people who think they are holy?

No! He’s getting in with all of the muck and the sin and the grossness of humanity, healing the people of their sicknesses and correcting their misunderstandings about God, forgiving people of their sins, and creating little pockets of overlap in Heaven & Earth.





He even taught his disciples to **pray** that God's Will would be done, and that His Kingdom would come on earth just as it is in Heaven.

This brings us to John 1:29, just a little bit further down the page:

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! - John 1:29 ESV

Now **this** claim is that Jesus is not only the temple - he's also the temple sacrifice.

John the Baptist has inside information about who Jesus is and what He came to do. And John, the author of this work is looking back on this moment, probably with something like this in his mind:

When they crucified Jesus, the Romans had no idea that they just made the temple sacrifice that would create the clean space for humans to enter into God's presence. And they had no idea that what they had just done was aid Yahweh, the God of Israel in destroying their own false national gods. They had just completed God's plan to make a once-and-for-all sacrifice that opened wide the door for *all* humans to step into God's Space again.

And the most important aspect of this story: did Jesus stay in the tomb? No, on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. And the Scriptures tell us that when He did, He defeated Sin and Evil and Death forever and ever.

*And while that is absolutely incredible, this next part is where all the power is.*

## The Plan for the Fullness of Time

In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **making known to us the mystery of his will**, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a **plan for the fullness of time**, to **unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth**. - Ephesians 1:7-10 ESV (Emphasis Mine)

Friends, the redemption that **we** have through Jesus's blood didn't just bring forgiveness of sin - it also revealed to us "the mystery of his will" — something that God had purposed all along that was unknown before these things happened — which is...

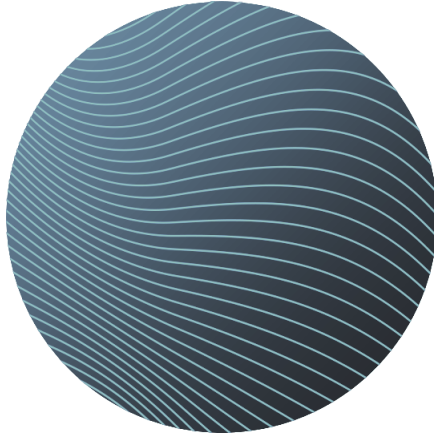
***To reunite all things in Heaven and on Earth in Christ at the fullness of times.***

Read that again. And again, if you need to.

The ending, the "fullness of time", "happily ever after" part of the Biblical story is NOT to destroy the Humans' Space and bring us all up to God's Space for eternity.

**The ending of the Biblical story is God cleaning the Humans' Space of all its evil, transforming the Humans themselves to be like Jesus, and uniting Heaven & Earth into one space through Christ — just like it was in the very beginning.**

Paul is saying that the resurrection of Jesus was both the *model* and the *means* for the future: the restoration of all things.



*Heaven & Earth fully overlapping again in the eternal future.*

If we have ears to hear it, this message screams from every single page:

Paul says that the world, the entire created order, groans for the day of its redemption, when the sons of God are revealed. (Romans 8:18-25)

Peter, in his letters, says that we await a New Heavens and New Earth, where righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13)

Jesus Himself casually mentions “The Restoration of All Things” in a private conversation with the disciples. (Matthew 19:28)

But surely, the citation that is the most powerful is John’s Vision at the end of

Revelation, the last 2 chapters of the Bible, the closing of the Biblical Canon. John puts every Old Testament verse talking about the hope for a good future into a blender, pushes the “liquefy” button, and pours it out onto a page.

Let’s unpack that next.

## **John’s Mosaic of Old Testament Prophecy**

Before we begin, a few words of advice.

First — these 2 chapters represent the last word, on the last things, in the Word of God. Read them with the kind of care and fervor you would read a hand-written letter from your closest friend.

Second — recognize that what we do NOT have is security-camera footage of the eternal reality. What we have is the content of a letter, written by a persecuted Jewish follower of Jesus, written in a specific genre of literature, to a group of 7 churches from 2,000 years ago, citing 15 *other* works that are hundreds of years older than he was, in order to describe something that is essentially indescribable, using symbols, terms, imagery, and phrases that *they* would have understood.

It’s a challenge to interpret Revelation even *with* a guide. But I want you to do your best to *picture* what John is describing here, while understanding the 2 above points.

Ready? Let’s dive in:

## **Revelation 21:1–7** — *The New Heaven and the New Earth*

[1] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] 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. [4] 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.”

[5] And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” [6] And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. [7] The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

## **Revelation 21:22–26** — *The New Jerusalem*

[22] And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. [24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. [26] They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

## **Revelation 22:1-5** — *The River of Life*

[1] Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb [2] through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

[3] No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

[4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

**Wow.** What just happened to us? I get chills every time I go over these verses! If this doesn't stir up a longing in your soul, I'm genuinely not sure what will.

This chapter deserves an excruciatingly detailed breakdown. . . But for now, I'm simply going to cite the references and give one breakdown of all of it at the end.

New Heavens & New Earth — Isaiah 65:17-25

The Holy City, the New Jerusalem — Isaiah 60

I am Making All Things New — Isaiah 43:18-21

To the one who conquers — Revelation 2 & 3

Glory of the Kings — Isaiah 60, Daniel 7

The River of the Water of Life — Ezekiel 47

The Tree of Life — Genesis 2

Name on Forehead — Deuteronomy 6:4-8

See His Face — Exodus 33:20, Isaiah 6, *various other citations.*

God makes “all things new”, not “all-new things”. We will be living in a bodily existence, in a completely restored Earth, permeated with God’s presence, restored to the fullness of its Glory!

*In short, we will be living once again in a perfect overlap of Heaven & Earth.*

There are also cities and kingdoms - meaning, that the history of humanity isn't *erased*, for us all to start over, but *redeemed*, so that “the swords are beaten into ploughshares” and even the evil things that humans invented will be eradicated only if they cannot be reinvented for good.

Cities. Jobs. Hobbies. Kings & Queens. Kingdoms. People from every tribe, nation, and tongue in the history of the world. Parties. Feasting. Music. Food. Telling of Great Stories. Art. *Adventures*, even! All in a restored creation that is beyond description in its beauty and holiness.

There's no sin or evil anywhere, there's no death or mourning or crying or pain, all of your thoughts are perfectly pure and right, there is no sickness, everybody you meet is somebody you can trust completely, everything is far more beautiful than you can possibly imagine, and you will never run out of fulfilling things to do in trillions of years.

(By the way - "no sea", "no sun", and "no night" are probably not literal - the consistent testimony of the Scriptures is that God *restores* the existing universe - instead, the sea and nighttime are common Old Testament images for danger, chaos, and evil. And the lack of the sun probably represents that God Himself is all that is required to light the place.)

Oh, and most importantly, God is there. EVERYWHERE is permeated with His presence (Habakkuk 2:14) and we will see him face to face without fear, as His newly remade sons and daughters. (1 Corinthians 13:12). *We will see our Father face-to-face. Full-on. No veil. No terror that you'll melt in his presence. Because in seeing Him, you'll become like Him (1 John 3:2).*

Isn't this beautiful? What the Bible is offering us is not only eternal life with God - it is all of the things we love most and enjoy most about life **on Earth**, to be enjoyed perfectly forever in worship and thankfulness to the God whose idea it all was in the first place!

*I will drink coffee.*

There will be sunrises and sunsets.

Waterfalls. Rain. Rivers.



Animals.

Conversations with friends in your living room over home-cooked meals.

Camping.

Traveling to places like the grand canyon.

And there's no date on the calendar circled in red for when the vacation ends. No curfew or canceled plans. We will wander the beautiful places of God's beautiful Creation, restored to the fullness of their beauty, for all of eternity!

I'll return now to the quotation I opened with in the beginning of this chapter, from C.S. Lewis' *The Last Battle*:

“All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

That future is yours, my friend. The Scriptures themselves have been saying it for thousands of years. If you have trusted in Jesus, it is coming, it is yours, and nobody can ever take it away from you.

It will start with 5 seconds of perfection.

Can you imagine that? Just 5 seconds of pure, unfiltered happiness.

What about 15 minutes of complete, heaven-on-earth bliss with unbelievable joy, no accusatory thoughts, no bodily pains, no pain or crying anywhere in the universe. Imagine if God were to offer you *15 minutes* of that right now. Even 15 minutes would be completely life-changing!

*Then a full day.* Then a full week. Then a full month — then a *year*.

50 years. Then an Earth lifetime.

*Then 10 Earth lifetimes.*

*A million years. A billion years. Then, a trillion years, and then on into eternity.*

I could spend the rest of my entire career studying this. In fact, I could experience it for the next trillion years straight and it would *still* be true that “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

## **Where We Went Wrong**

I don't want to dwell on this too long, because the news we have just received is *worth* spending the rest of our lives simply getting more and more excited about. And we have a *million* implications to unpack for how it changes our lives today.

But it's worth taking a moment to stop and examine — how did we as Christians get so far off the course? The only reason we're not shouting it from the rooftops is that we've somehow *managed not to hear it in the first place*. . . How can that be? How could we

have missed this excellently good news?

First, some math. There are 1,189 chapters in your Bible.

66 unified books & letters, written by around 40 distinct authors, over thousands of years.

Interestingly, there are only 4 chapters in the entire Bible where there is no sin, no evil, no brokenness or sickness of any kind. In short, 4 chapters where *God's reign in His Kingdom is present in fullness*.

These 4 chapters *happen to be* the first 2 and the last 2. The beginning of the Creation and the lives of the first humans on the one hand, and the “eternal future state” of God’s plan for the universe on the other. And, most interestingly of all, they reflect each other, each section being connected with the other in a million ways.

Have you ever started a movie after you missed the first 15 minutes, or stopped watching a movie 15 minutes before the end?

It’s hard to make sense of the story if you miss the beginning and the end. In the beginning, all of the characters are introduced, you learn how they’re all related, the premise is set forth, the stage is set, and maybe even the *origin story* of the main character is shown. This is called the *exposition*. It’s where you get all of the characters, the setting, and the fundamental basic information that is crucial to the thrust and plot of the story.

The *ending* of the story is even more important! It’s the conclusion, the *denouement* —

when the climax of the action is over, and the complexities of the plot are all unraveled and the conflict is resolved. The mystery is solved, the bad guy dies or gets thrown in jail, the main character marries the girl, they have impossibly beautiful children, all is right with the world, and they *all lived happily ever after*.

The Bible has 4 main sections to its story:

Creation (“The Exposition” — 2 chapters)

Rebellion (1 chapter)

Redemption (1,184 chapters)

Restoration (“The Ending” — 2 chapters)

In broad strokes, it goes like this:

God created the Heavens & the Earth, filling them with good creatures and causing it to flourish with life and beauty, culminating ultimately in Humanity, which He created to be His partners. All is well with the universe as God rests with His creatures, beginning what was intended to be trillions of years of fruitful partnership, taking the universe someplace beautiful through working alongside the humans. This is **Creation**.

A traitorous creature enters the Human’s Space and convinces them to disobey God, and forfeit their obedience to His Will in favor of a self-exalting self-worship. Humanity sins, death and evil enter in behind them, and the world is now marred and twisted - as are the humans themselves. This is the **Fall**.

Then comes the long, tragic story of human history. Humans continually make a mess of things with their evil and selfishness, twisting and further distorting the goodness of God's World. But God's plan — taking on many forms over the course of history as the phases of the plan developed — was to *restore* the original design.

The plan culminates in Jesus, who completes the plan perfectly in every way, securing all that was needed to fix all that was wrong. Then, He commissions the church to be His hands and feet to the rest of the world, living out and spreading the Good News of God's Kingdom, living as a group of Newly Remade Humans until the Kingdom of God is full. This is the long story of **Redemption**.

When God's Kingdom is full, when everyone who *would* have said yes *has* said yes to God's invitation, God deals with evil and completes the Overlap once again. Humanity is restored to its original design — sin, evil, and death are gone forever, and now the work of taking God's good world someplace beautiful can begin again.

Now, let's dig up that revised story we had from earlier:



*This story is incomplete by comparison.* Where is God's original plan for the creation? Where is the promise to *restore* the creation that we have just heard about, found in the last 2 chapters?

Imagine missing *both* of those parts of the story. Imagine walking out of the movie theater after the latest Marvel epic having seen everything but the beginning and end. You'd walk out saying "huh? What was that all about? Why did all the people in the theater cheer at that part? Why did the main character start crying about his mother halfway through? Who's that purple guy with the weird chin?"

It would be crazy. A waste of a movie ticket! *And yet, that's what we do with our Bibles!*

We chop off Creation and Restoration when we read the Scriptures. We act as if the story of humanity began with our Fall from grace and banishment from the garden, and we never go beyond God's promise to simply rescue us. We act as if sin was just. . . part of the story from the very beginning.

We don't typically keep in mind what the Scriptures are saying humans were "made for", or what they are "destined for" if they partner with God. Certainly not when we're knee deep in the scroll of 2nd Kings and we're embroiled in the latest scheme by Israel's latest wayward king to try and enrich himself on the back of unrighteous treatment of the people.

In short, we think quite a bit about what God rescues us *from*, but hardly at all about what God rescues us *for*.

So, remember how 1,184 of the 1,189 chapters take place in the "Redemption Arc" of the story? That's 99.5% of the Bible's verses, spanning from right after the Fall in Genesis 3 all the way through the Revelation 20 passages about the Millennium (wow, lots to unpack there, sorry, no time).

Of course, the Redemption part references the beginning and the future hope many, many times. They are all interconnected, telling one whole story. But 99% of the sermons you hear, 99% of the Bible studies you go to, 99% of the conversations you have about what your favorite verses are in the Bible — 99% of all that comes during the “Redemption” part of the story. Which is fine!

*Except...* 99.9% of the **Years** of humanity’s existence are going to be spent in the “Restoration” part of the story, not the Redemption part. And the *best* way to understand the Final Eternal State is to understand what God wanted it to look like in the *first place*.

So, we’ve missed the boat because we haven’t taken the whole Bible as a unified story. We clip it up one verse at a time to make sense of it that way, and we forget the first three rules of Scriptural interpretation: *context, context, and context*.

## **It’s Cultural**

It’s not just a hermeneutical issue — it’s also a cultural one.

In our churches, we talk a **lot** about going to Heaven when we die. We talk a **lot** about “entering into glory” and “singing forever.”

All of our hymns speak of heaven. All of them. And it IS important! My father is there right now.

Anybody who dies in Christ is there with Him immediately. It’s beautiful, and it’s better than our broken and sinful world to an infinite degree!

But, to quote the great Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright, “Heaven is important, but it’s not the end of the world.”

And, to quote him again: “The great Christian hope is not life after death. . . it’s *life after life after death*.”

A lot of mistaken Christian ideas from the Medieval period of church history have seeped into the broader Western culture, sprinkled with some Gnosticism and a hearty pour of Platonic Dualism.

No wonder we *don’t* talk about what the *Bible* talks about, which is the unifying of Heaven & Earth & fullness of the Kingdom of God! We are trying to undo thousands of years of cultural influence to get back to the original message from 2,000+ years ago!

*Imagine if we as Christians had a view of Eternity which was:*

centered on preparing for Christ rather than an “antichrist”.

centered on the mark of the lamb rather than the mark of the beast.

centered on preparing for redeeming the earth rather than escaping it.

centered ultimately on hope rather than on fear.

So, to get us back on track, let’s pause and reconsider the weight of the Gospel — let’s see how it really ought to change *everything* about how we choose to live our lives.



# CHAPTER 2 - NEXT STEPS

If you bought the "**Design & Destiny Life-Change Guide**", go to the section for "Chapter 2" and follow the "Make It Real" steps there.

<https://theoverlap.life/life-change-guide>

This chapter introduces the main theme of the book; God's plan for eternity is the Overlap of Heaven & Earth.

If you went to a traditional conservative church like I did, the chances are pretty good that you have never heard this message before.

There is some shaky ground ahead of you - there are a lot of potential assumptions you could make that would be contrary to the Bible's story and meaning. Even worse, there are some commonly held traditions that will need to be uprooted! The rest of this book will deal with some of that, but there's no way that I could handle every objection and answer every single question.

If you're desperate for some answers, you can always go here:

<https://theoverlap.life/chapter-2-offer>

and follow the next steps there! I don't want to leave anybody hanging, and would like to remind you that I've heard every question and objection - I would love to offer you a pastor's hand & heart in navigating it all and applying it to your life.



# 03

## *Parallels & Paradigms*

*"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 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."*

*- Romans 8:18-21 ESV*

We have just received *titanic* news.

The good news of the Gospel, the message of Christianity, the reason Jesus came to the Earth in the first place, was to *begin the in-breaking of God's Kingdom, to start the re-unification of Heaven & Earth, the eradication of all evil, and the Restoration of All Things.*

This news falls upon us like a landslide, clearing hundreds of millions of pounds of rock and uprooting trees in its wake, then plunging violently into the sea and creating a massive wave that crashes against the far shore, continuing the upheaval.

Everything has changed. The entire landscape of Christian theology must adapt to the (very old, original) message.

In philosophy, a paradigm is a distinct set of concepts or thought patterns, including theories, research methods, postulates, and standards for what constitutes legitimate contributions to a field.

A *paradigm shift* is then a *change* in those concepts, thought patterns, theories, research methods, postulates, and standards.

For Modern Christians, this is the paradigm shift to end all paradigm shifts. It reframes *literally the entirety of created existence from the beginning of time to eternity*, and so we must do the hard work *now* of dealing with the aftershock and the tremors - of taking all of the implications of this change to our worldview to their fullest extent.

Any theological framework that does not emphasize the Eternal State of totally overlapping Heaven & Earth is hereby deficient in its theology.

This isn't to say that, in treatments of smaller subjects and themes from the Scriptures, one needs to shoehorn in long treatises of New Creation. Rather, it means that having the New Creation as the great fundamental background should cast a different light upon each of these realms of study. The reality of the New Creation should constitute a new focusing lens through which we see all else that is at work in the story of the Bible, our philosophical arguments, and our Christian theology.

## Parallels

There will be one predominant theme throughout the rest of the book, and I'm going to introduce it here. Pay close attention, because this is where I lay out the pattern for understanding the rest of what happens in this book.

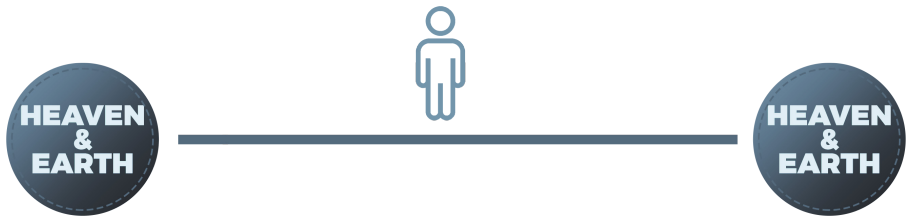
The way that you make sense of the entire Biblical story, and your place within it, is by *always* keeping in mind the connections between the *beginning* of the story and the *ending*.

We are going to take the rest of the chapters of this book to expand upon all of the most important themes that are introduced on pages 1 and 2 of your Bible as representations of the “ideal state” of the created order — things like work, rest, relationships, reigning, creation — and then anchor them into the future where those *same exact themes* find their ultimate culmination & fulfillment.

For instance, in both the beginning chapters and the final chapters, we see God, dwelling in unity with His people, face to face, enjoying together the goodness of the world He created, with no sickness or crying or pain. We see God commissioning humans to rule over the Earth in partnership with Him. We see a pattern of Work and

Rest that is deeply connected with the purpose of the created order. (More on all of this later.)

In short, everything is connected and paralleled — there is a straight line between the *initial* “Heaven & Earth Overlap” and the *future* “Heaven & Earth Overlap” - and we can firmly situate our own lives and our own story on this line — we were *created for*, and are *destined for*, a total overlap of Heaven & Earth once again. And so everything in our lives can be nicely, neatly integrated into the story - because there is *continuity* and *return to the original design*.



*A straight line connecting what we were created for to what we are destined for.*

The old story we used to abide by simply didn't have this feature. It seemed as though humanity had *always* been sinful and broken and evil and vile, and the earth also irredeemably broken and wrong in its own right, and we were headed for a future reality where *all of it* was gone and destroyed and we would live an entirely different kind of existence in Heaven.

In that story, it seems like nothing we do matters: our bodies don't matter, our jobs don't matter, our relationships and hobbies and what we do for rest & relaxation don't matter. The “only thing that matters” is evangelizing so that people can go to the “singing torture” instead of the “fiery torture”.

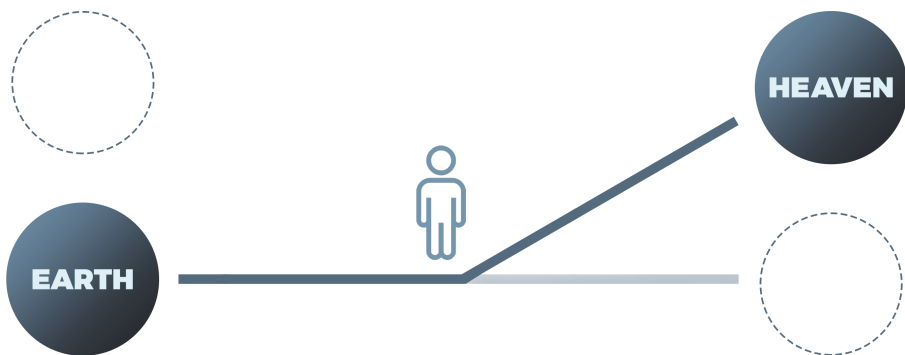
And then we went looking for justifications of that view, and it became the constraining criteria for how we make sense of the Scriptures. We'd read a passage in one of Paul's letters where it sounds *very much* like he's saying the *opposite* of the old story and we would be so blind to his *actual meaning* that we would just plug our ears to his message. (A good example is the passage I've quoted at the beginning of this chapter: Romans 8:18-21.)

Even specific words took on new, accidental meanings. For instance, *resurrection* simply IS, by definition, "the rising of a *physical* body from *physical* death back to *physical* life" — but we've used it as a shorthand to instead mean "going up to be with God in a disembodied heaven when I die" — in other words, the *opposite* of what the word is supposed to mean.

Where in the Biblical story of a return to the overlap of Heaven & Earth there is continuity and return to the original design, a sort of *bookend of ideals*, in this view we have an assumption that we are going instead from *bad* to *ideal*. . . and the terrible (good?) news is that the *ideal* we are collectively moving toward is both *completely incomprehensible* to us, and has *nothing to do* with what we would consider "good" in this world.

*We are asked to believe that part of what makes it "ideal" is that it looks nothing like this world.*

Few things have done more psychological damage to earnest Christians than the mistaken belief that "everything I think is good here will burn because it's actually all evil". What a bleak view of God & the Creation He made and called *good!*



*This story: Everything is bad and you should feel bad. Until you go to be with God, then you should feel good! Until then, just try not to make too much of a mess.*

Now you know what I meant by “strong delusion” and “great confusion” in earlier chapters. I thought when I wrote those words that they would come off a little too harsh — now I am not sure they are grave enough to describe the torsion this Gnostic / Platonic dualism has imposed on the Scriptures and our cultural understanding of them.

But remember, *not everything is as it seems.*

Mercifully, this is NOT the story.

The true story is much, much better. And the implications of this view are *absolutely massive.*

## **Ripple Effects**

The landslide has done its “damage” now. All of the deeply-rooted trees of “the physical

world is bad”, and “any non-church work is a waste of time at best and sinful at worst”, and “who cares? It’s all going to burn anyway” have been pulled up from the root and destroyed in its wake. The crashing wave is on its way, and it is about to blast onto the shore of your life, flooding every area of your existence with answers to the question: “what now?”

Well, *now* we begin the hard task of *Christian theology* - that process of re-thinking of the paradigms that guide and shape our thoughts and way of life in light of the new story.

I have very good news for you — *we are given some very good examples, because this is what is going on in all 4 Gospels and in every single letter of the New Testament.*

What is a letter from Paul or Peter? First and foremost, it is a piece of mail written by someone who has received the Good News that God is beginning His work to re-unify Heaven & Earth, addressed to a community of people who have heard the same Good News, *about how to live out that new reality in the here and now.* Remember, *that* is the Gospel, not “if I trust in Jesus I go to heaven when I die”.

And so, *every single letter of the New Testament is an attempt by someone to whom Jesus had revealed this plan to help another person or group of people re-think every aspect of their life today in light of what God is now doing.*

That is so *ridiculously* important that I will write it again, and fill in some blanks for you to latch onto, for mental examples.

*Paul’s letter to the Colossians is an attempt by Paul to help them re-think every aspect of their life*



*today in light of God's plan to restore the universe through Christ.*

*Paul's first letter to Timothy is an attempt by Paul to help him re-think every aspect of his life today in light of God's plan to restore the universe through Christ, and to help him teach this same thing to the Ephesians.*

*Peter's letters are attempts by Peter to help the persecuted Christians re-think every aspect of their lives and their current sufferings in light of God's plan to restore the universe through Christ, changing how they navigate their sufferings now.*

This is a **staggering** re-frame of the letters for most of us. Again, I never learned this in church — and survey results showed most of you didn't, either.

Over and over, the rationale behind a commandment in the New Testament is this: "Take the future reality and drag it into today, to live it out to the best of your ability."

You're probably getting tired of me telling you to write things down — I'm sorry, but you had better continue to write some of these things down. Or maybe re-read the chapter a couple of times. Or read it out loud to your friends and family. *Isn't this all wonderful?*

So, what were some of the implications of this Good News that Paul wanted his readers to grasp?

Nothing bad that you suffer through here can compare with the glorious future God has prepared. Nothing can take it away from you - not sickness, not being persecuted, not death. It's coming, it's real, and it's yours.

In that day, we will all be perfectly holy and unified, with character exactly like Jesus's character. To the best of our ability, we need to live that way here and now!

Don't steal, or lie, or hurt one another - that's the old way of life. Instead, be loving, kind, giving, patient, and self-sacrificial. That's what newly remade humans do!

Your work will continue on, so whatever you do, do it the way you would if you were working for the Lord. You know that He will reward you for everything good you do!

What you do on Earth matters because *both* this place *and* your body are going to exist permanently in the New Creation - redeemed and without sin. So, start living that way today! Don't allow sin in your life, because that means you're moving *away* from God's plan for the universe. "Therefore, honor God with your bodies!" Don't destroy it with promiscuity, drunkenness, and drugs! That's not what it was for in the beginning, and that's not what it's for in eternity!

We are living through a part of the story where everything is broken, wrong, difficult, and inextricably intertwined with evil right now — but you should live differently because you know how the story ends!

In Christ, God has made a completely new kind of humanity — so stop dividing yourselves on race, or gender, or economic status — instead, build a unified community that revels in the fact that God has redeemed all of you for this eternal future!

This good news should give you hope that cannot be taken away from you! (In fact,

whenever the word “hope” is used in the Bible, it is talking about this! Hope for future resurrection and the unification of Heaven & Earth in Jesus.)

These are just some of the implications; there are many, many others.

The Gospel of God’s Kingdom & the Unification of Heaven & Earth changed the world once. We seem to have lost our grasp on it in the intervening years.

*I believe that if we re-grasp this message, it could change the world again.*

If you *think* about the New Creation, if you *meditate* on what it means for you, if you *remind* yourself all the time about how wonderful the New Creation will be, you will have *everything you need* to live well in *this life*.

I don’t mean the “health and wealth”, “name it and claim it”, “blab it and grab it” so-called “prosperity gospel.” That puerile view does no justice to the reality of sin and death on this earth. It pretends, with its head in the sand and its fingers in its ears, that “everything is alright now! The promises of God are yours in their fullness!”

No. We must be more sober-minded than that.

What we *do* have is the Good News of where we are headed. And the helpful admonition that “you are on the road to that place right now - in all of your ways, live as though you are taking steps toward that future reality.”

And what if we *really lived* like it was promised to us? What if we really lived like we believed that our future was perfect life on a remade Earth?

You could stare into the face of death and not be afraid.

You could be fed to the lions by the Roman empire knowing that in the future your body will be remade, and you'd be able to *befriend* those lions in the New Earth.

You could lose all your earthly treasures in an instant and know that you have an eternity of Heavenly ones waiting for you in a remade world.

You could struggle through sickness knowing that one day your body will be *unimaginably* healthy, and full of life.

From here, let's begin unpacking all of the various ways in which your life should be redefined as a result of these things.

Let's begin with **you**.

# CHAPTER 3 - NEXT STEPS

If you bought the "**Design & Destiny Life-Change Guide**", go to the section for "Chapter 3" and follow the "Make It Real" steps there.

<https://theoverlap.life/life-change-guide>

We are about to go into the implementation-heavy parts of the book. It would be a good idea to get the "**Design & Destiny Life-Change Guide**" if you haven't already - it's 60+ pages of practical steps to apply the message found on the pages of this book.

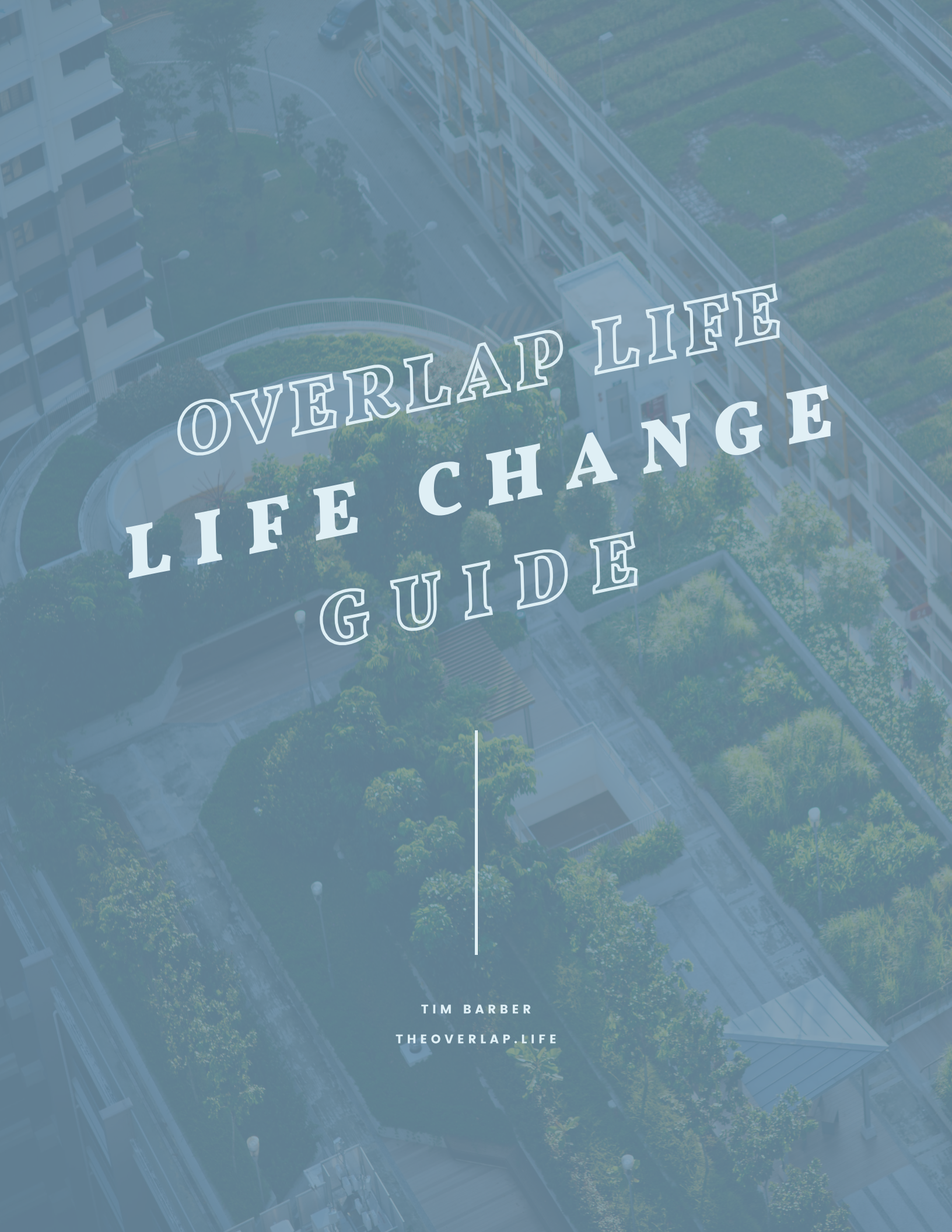
<https://theoverlap.life/life-change-guide>

We are also planning some live events into the future for working through the contents of this book together!

In particular, we've partnered with some brilliant people to plan out and launch an online challenge, to really gather together the people who are serious about living in light of this new paradigm for the Christian life and want to be held accountable to following through. To get access to that live group challenge, you should go here:

<https://theoverlap.life/chapter-3-offer>

in search of next steps!



OVERLAP LIFE  
LIFE CHANGE  
GUIDE

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TIM BARBER  
THEOVERLAP.LIFE

# INTRO TO THE GUIDE

Dear Reader,

Thank you for purchasing the **Overlap Life "Design & Destiny" Life-Change Guide!**

The reason that you have this guide in your hands is that you were convinced that I have uncovered something life changing and beautiful in the story of the Bible, and possibly, it means that you took a leap of faith and trust in me before you ever read a word from inside the book.

I understand that you're banking on me to deliver excellent teaching from the Scriptures in order to justify the price you paid for these materials. I'm honored, and I can say confidently that because it's not my authority by which I teach, God's Word is up to the challenge.



You're probably in 1 of 2 situations:

1. You already know that the future destiny of humans is *a return to a complete overlap of Heaven & Earth — a better Garden of Eden...* and you want some tools to help you better live that out.

2. You're serious about living a better, more hopeful, more Scripturally-informed, more "eternity-minded" life of partnership, service, and closeness with God, and you want to do whatever it takes to get there.

Either way, you're my kind of people!

I want to let you know about an opportunity that nobody aside from "my kind of people" are going to receive.

I have to tell you - by today's standards, the book is a little *beefy*. It's not a quick afternoon read over a cup of coffee or a 20-minute YouTube video. It takes some doing, and some brain power to get through. I had to pack in all my study notes and references to the Scriptures, because if I didn't, the message would sound so radical that it would sound to our modern ears like it's too good to be true. The only way most of us can be convinced is if we're shown the truth from the Scriptures. And that's a good thing!

Unfortunately, that means it takes a little bit of time to get the result of a changed life out of the materials. And for some people, that's unfortunately enough time to lose their motivation to change.

But if you're the kind of person who is really serious, and already knows the basics of



this New Creation theology, *then you and I can go a little deeper.*

***I'd like to offer you one of my 1-hour intensive coaching sessions at half price.***

As a pastor, I've had a lot of conversations with people who came into my office or hopped on a Zoom call *ready for me to disappoint them, confuse them, and fail them* like all the other counselors they'd gone to.

I've developed something of a reputation for being able to deeply reframe life's problems in light of eternity and apply "eternity-mindedness" to your situation.

We can talk about whatever is going on in your life — business, marriage, parenting, finances, evangelism, illness, or whatever — and I can help you think through your problems in a way that actually leads to a path forward in partnership with God, whatever that might look like.

These same skeptical people that come into my office often leave with surprising, concrete, exciting answers, and a clear roadmap forward — not the Spiritual-sounding fluff they expected when they came in.

I've seen people transform their marriages, the way they parent, even leave and start businesses because of our conversations... because once you understand the story of the Scriptures, it makes sense of every second of your life, and clears away all the clouds between you and the God you love & serve.

If you're interested, I would seriously love to hear from you. There are a few steps you

need to take, but if you'd like to take advantage of this offer, just go to:

<https://theoverlap.life/guide-offer>

And follow the instructions there. I can't wait to talk to you face-to-face.

Further up and further in,

*Tim Barber*

# HOW THIS GUIDE WORKS

In this document, we will go chapter by chapter through the book "The Overlap Life", unearthing and expanding upon some of the key principles and insights, so that we can start to build and implement a concrete plan for living in light of its message. Every section of this guide corresponds to a chapter in the book, and each is intended to be consumed immediately after the content of the chapter.

Within each section, you'll find **3 main sections:**

**I. Your Turn** — This is a chance for you to engage with the material in your own personal reflection. You'll see 3 symbols - a book, a lightbulb, and a bow and arrow, along with paragraph sections for you to engage in.



**Book** — What is a 3-5 sentence summary of the chapter? When you write it down and condense it down for yourself, studies show that you retain it as much as 5 times better. Don't skip this!



**Lightbulb** — What is a core idea that is brand new to you, that stood out in the material? What did you have to unlearn in order to learn this?



**Bow and Arrow** — The application question. How is this going to change some aspect of how you approach life?

**2. Make It Real** — This section will take different shapes - sometimes discussion questions, sometimes a symbolic action, sometimes a journaling prompt, sometimes an assessment. This is a way for you to cultivate the habit of acting out the new way of thinking you learn in the book.

**3. Prayer Direction** — This section is an invitation to ask God for what Paul did:

*[17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. - Ephesians 1:17-21 ESV (Emphasis Mine)*

We pray for an enlightenment and an "opening-of-the-eyes" through the Scriptures to the hope God has given to us. These will be sample prayers, but the words themselves have no power. It is the meaningful expression of your Spirit to God and the attempt to communicate with Him and ask for His guidance and love and power that make the difference.

*A lot of resources like this are jammed with a lot of extra fluff, or recapitulations of passages from the book to inflate the page count - I'm not going to do that to you.*

All that you'll find in this booklet is what you need in order to allow this message of the Overlap Life to become real to you, to change your habits, your identity, your

relationship with the God of your hope, and how you understand and feel about your future. Nothing more, nothing less.

I would recommend that you go through the book with some dear believing friends and do the chapter discussions together, and even the symbolic actions. It's always more powerful when you're able to do this together!

As you finish each chapter, I urge you to pause and come back here for reflection time. I've worked very hard to make it worth your while!

***With that, let's begin!***

# INTRODUCTION

## ***Chapter Recap***

Life under the sun is not always what it seems. Humanity in general is not doing well because it is suffering from a critical lack of hope, and many Christians are not doing much better here in the West. The key to resolving these issues is to re-capture what the hope of Christianity actually is.

Unfortunately, it has been lost to most of us in the church because we have forgotten how to read the Bible's message on its own terms. This book is about recovering the hope of Christianity for all of eternity, and learning to live in light of that reality.

## ***Your Turn - Introduction***



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## ***Make It Real - Discussion Questions***

We opened this book with 2 important questions that are going to frame the whole discussion throughout:

1. What is the eternal future promised by Christianity?
2. With that as our goal, what needs to change about how we live today?

Find a few trusted friends and ask:

How would you have answered those questions before reading this book? If you haven't read the book yet, how would you answer those questions now?

I want you to record your answer now so that you can assess later on in the book how close you were to the Biblical vision for eternity. You might be surprised!

*As a bonus, ask yourself these questions:*

What am I resting my hope upon? Is it stable?

In a few sentences, how would I explain eternity to a neighbor who is unfamiliar with Scripture?



## **Prayer Direction**

*Heavenly Father, we so often struggle through hopelessness, discouragement, fear, outrage, and anger in this life under the sun.*

*We so often lose sight of the promises that You have given to us as your children.*

*Lord, we should be eternally, immeasurably grateful for just how good You have been to us. You have rescued us, forgiven us, and given us hope and an eternal future. But we have grown complacent and lost sight of the truth of Your Word.*

*Please, fill us anew with the encouragement to continue on in service, and love, and sacrifice for You. Help us to keep eternity in mind as we make our choices in life. Help us to keep in mind that Your Word commands us to store up treasures for ourselves in Heaven, and to run our race with conviction so that we may attain the crown.*

*Send us a fresh infusion of Your Grace, Lord. And in Your Spirit, guide us forward as we strive to live lives of Spirit-empowered obedience. In Jesus' matchless name we pray, amen.*

# CHAPTER I

## THE ANSWER JESUS GAVE

### ***Chapter Recap***

We think Christianity is about going to Heaven when you die. And because we think that, we are deaf to the real message of Christianity.

The hope of Christianity, the answer that Jesus gave, the entire reason that He came to the Earth - was to bring God's Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven. This is how we make sense of salvation, resurrection, eternal life, and all the questions of "what happens when we die" — it is all to be understood in light of that story.

And when we understand the full weight of that promise, that hope, that future, the story Jesus came to tell — it becomes for us a hope so robust that we can face anything with our heads held high and the Gospel in mind, ready to brave it all for the God who loved us so much.

## ***Your Turn - Chapter 1***



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## ***Make It Real - Personal Reflection & Journaling***

This chapter contains some material that might be highly disturbing for people of a certain church background - nevertheless, it's what the Bible teaches.

*I want you to take 10 minutes to do a stream-of-conscious journal entry.*

Stream-of-consciousness means you don't self edit; you don't think about how you want to phrase things. If you are typing it out on a computer, you don't go back and correct punctuation and spelling errors. You spend 10 minutes writing without stopping, and allow whatever falls onto the page to fall out of your mind with no doubling back.

This is a counseling trick that helps you to break down your mental barriers and give voice to your real thoughts, not the ones that you feel comfortable enough to surface and express. And your real thoughts are what we are after.

What comes out of you when you do it this way is not the trimmed, edited, self-censored version of "what you think" or "what you believe" - it is the actual verbal product of your thoughts.

So, take 10 minutes (time yourself!) and write out an entry (typed or hand-written is fine as long as you don't stop) that answers this prompt:

How does Jesus's message about the Kingdom of God coming to Earth change what you think Christianity is Capital A "about"?

Then, assess your answer. Is it scattered? Is it clear? Is it doubting or confident? Do

you think I'm full of it? Which verses come to mind that establish the point for you?  
Which verses come to mind that seem to refute my point?

I'm not asking you to agree with me; this might even sound like a threat to what you believe! I'm asking you to engage with the material. You don't have to be in agreement with me, as long as you are still on the journey.

Besides, the next chapter is where it begins to get really good.

## ***Prayer Direction***

*Heavenly Father, Jesus instructed us to pray that Your Kingdom would come and that Your Will would be done just as it is in Heaven. His entire teaching ministry revolved around the message of Your Kingdom coming to the Earth. Even the very Gospel is not simply about how we can be personally saved — but even that beautiful truth is absorbed into the full Gospel, which is the good news about Your Kingdom and Your plan to set everything right.*

*Lord, we need Your help to live this way. We need Your eyes to see the Scriptures in the original context. We need Your Spirit to guide us into all truth.*

*We beg of You, God — strengthen our hearts and renew our understanding of Your Word. Help us to see the message of Christianity as strange, and new, and surprising again; so that it can once again uproot our comfort and unsettle our ease, so that we can remember that not everything is as it seems — teach us to set aside every weight and run the race set before us, fixing our eyes upon Jesus. Until the day that we all are with You, reigning with You in Your Kingdom forever. We pray all of this to you in the precious name of Jesus, amen.*

# CHAPTER 2

## HEAVEN & EARTH

### ***Chapter Recap***

God's plan for eternity is very similar to God's plan for the beginning - a total overlap of Heaven & Earth. When Adam & Eve sinned, they broke that overlap and allowed sin and death to enter. But God began His plan of rescue and re-unification. And Paul tells us in Ephesians 1 that His plan all along was to reunite them in Christ Himself.

Eternity is literally Heaven on Earth. God intends to restore the entire Earth, destroy all sin, evil, death, brokenness, crying, and pain, and personally come to dwell here with us... forever.

The way to make sense of the Bible is by keeping the beginning and the end in mind. What God intended at first, and what He promises for the future.

# Your Turn - Chapter 2



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## ***Make It Real - Symbolic Action***

I want you to go for a drive to the most beautiful natural area within half an hour of your home.

I want you to take your favorite drink there — coffee, tea, or something a little stronger.

I want you to sit in that place, admire the natural beauty of it all, and dwell with this one truth:

God made all this and called it good. God's plan is to restore all of this. *Jesus died so that humanity and the creation itself could be rescued from death.*

Sit in silence if you want, sing songs if you want - but I want you to take a break, go out into the natural beauty of this good world, and repeat to yourself that God intends to restore the world and *dwell here with us.*

Take your drink and drink it slowly; savor it. Allow the refreshment and joy that comes from this simple gift to fill you with gratitude to God as you take in the scene.

Then leave from here with this thought: "I can give gratitude and glory to God in everything I do."

Alternative: If leaving your house is an issue, pour yourself a drink and watch YouTube videos of nature. Some good searches: "nature scenery", "planet earth", and "beautiful nature". But do the same thing. Take the time and sit with the truth that God intends to restore this world.



Bonus: When I undergo this practice, I like to listen to Istvan Vardai's performance of the Prelude to Bach's "Cello Suites". You can find it freely on YouTube; I recommend it heartily.

## **Closing Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, words fail to describe Your goodness, beauty, and excellence. Words escape us to adequately express our gratitude for Your plan from the beginning of time!*

*And yet, Lord, we must try. We trust that the Spirit will step in and express our deepest thoughts to You, because He intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray as we ought.*

*This world is beautiful and good, and it is groaning under the weight of our sins. We were your enemies, God — but You, being rich in mercy, forgave us of our sins through the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ — and now we have been invited to become citizens of your Kingdom.*

*Thank You, Lord. For us as believers, nothing is lost. We receive Your Kingdom and the Earth and all its beauty, and glorified bodies just like Jesus has. These are infinite blessings that cause our life here — whether 20 years or 100, whether good or bad, whether easy or difficult — to fade into insignificance.*

*Thank You that Your plan for humanity and the story of the Universe is total redemption and restoration.*

*Help us to grasp this and live it out in Your Spirit, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray these things, amen!*

# CHAPTER 3

## PARALLELS & PARADIGMS

### ***Chapter Recap***

We have to go all the way back through the Scriptures to update our understanding as a result of this new paradigm for the story. After all, the story that you live in is the story that you live out.

And if the story of Christianity is that we come from and are destined for an overlap of Heaven & Earth, then we who are in Christ are connected with who we were designed to be from the beginning and who we will be for eternity.

It is no exaggeration to say that every second of life must change as a result. In fact, that was the implication that the rest of the New Testament authors came to — all of their letters are attempts to flesh out all the ways that everything is different now that Jesus is the risen King of the Universe.

## ***Your Turn - Chapter 3***



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## ***Make It Real - Discussion Question***

Pose the following questions in a group of trusted friends:

What are some wrong assumptions you'll make if you think that Heaven is your destination, not the New Heavens & New Earth?

What does it mean to be connected with God's ideal state in the beginning and eternity?

Which letter of Paul's is your favorite? Why? Are you brave enough to read it again with this paradigm in view?

What is your favorite Bible verse? Does it have anything to do with God's plan to restore the Universe?

This chapter represents a major shift in tone for our journey together. I want you to keep this paradigm in mind throughout the rest of the book, because it will be crucial to understand everything that's coming.

To that end, I'm also going to recommend that you do another 10-minute stream of consciousness. Come to grips with this Biblical paradigm, by whatever means necessary! And then, with the Biblical paradigm in mind, we can begin to adjust our views of self, life, work, rest, and relationships.

## **Closing Prayer**

*Everything changes now, Lord. This new paradigm for understanding Your Word redefines every second and every square inch of our lives. Humans were made for the overlap of Heaven & Earth, and that is exactly what You have promised to return us to in eternity.*

*We are about to turn to the chapters of this book where we undertake the hard work of living in light of eternity. Help us to be like Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, and the others — who, upon seeing the full beauty of God's plan for the universe, gave their entire lives over to fulfilling it in every second of their time in this life.*

*Teach us to number our days, Lord. No day is guaranteed to us, and every one of them is a precious gift. But You, Lord — You have given to us infinite life in immeasurable glory.*

*Help us to live our lives on the continuum - the story of Overlap in Heaven & Earth. Help us to live as though you are here with us and Your Kingdom in some sense has already arrived, and we are already a part of it. All of this to the praise of Your glory and honor in the church to all the ages, forever and ever. Amen.*