

Dual Citizens

I was born and raised in New Zealand, the land of the long white cloud and a ratio of nearly six sheep for every one person. I often remember as a child watching the sun in summer sink below the horizon late at night, and, in winter, layering up as warmly as possible through the short, dark, freezing days of relentless rain and, oftentimes, snow.

Heaven + Earth: The End Of The Story

Inarguably, it's the end of any story that's the most important part.

While the beginning of a tale gives context and setting, and the middle gives the story its shape and drama, it's the ending that provides meaning and gives resolution to the narrative. It's the ending that makes sense of everything, that allows all the intersecting threads of drama, intrigue, risk, loss, joy, and homecoming to find their place and purpose within the story and, particularly, in its overarching conclusion.

Humanity's story; an ongoing tale of love and war, victory and defeat, joy and tragedy, has not yet reached its conclusion, but, surprisingly, its ending *has already been written*.

While scientists and philosophers have had much to offer to the conversation about our origins and humanity's remarkable traverse through history, with all of our astonishing achievements, they have little to offer on the subject of

where we might all be going or how our story finishes. When it comes to science, we are left largely in the dark about the questions that matter the most.

What are we here for?

What is the purpose of life?

Where will we end up?

Life's Most Profound Questions

It's to the Bible alone that we can turn for answers to life's most profound questions. It has much to say about not just how we supposedly got here and why, but also how humanity's story will reach its epic conclusion.

The Bible is the living, Spirit-breathed Word of God, the written revelation of what God has been doing in the past, what He is still doing right now, and what He has intended for the future of humanity.

The Word of God is like a vast tapestry, its main theme interwoven with many sub-plots and side stories that run like golden threads through an intricate design. Each of these threads complements the complete telling of God's story and confirm again and again to us the way in which God views the world, the people who inhabit it, and how important each one of us are to Him.

Far from being just black text on white pages; this book unveils the purpose, intentionality, and creative action of the Eternal One; breathed out, captured by way of quill and scroll by the faithful scribes who heard 'the voice of God', recording the Eternal's story for all to read.

What we also learn about God's story is that the master storyteller hasn't been absent or detached from His story, but fully present and, in fact, His full, enveloping presence, His

close and intimate dwelling with humanity was actually the point of the story all along. What began in a garden, where God once [walked with us](#), will find its epic conclusion in a 'new creation', in a restored and regenerated earth where God at last dwells with His people.

The end of our story will actually be *our new beginning*. The conclusion of our story doesn't end with us going to be with God; but *with God coming to earth*, returning, at last, *to be with us*.

God's story has a conclusion, an ending, a moment when all the loose strings are neatly tied up and we'll sit back, with a sigh of satisfaction at a tale well told and an ending more glorious than we could ever have imagined.

The Purpose Of God

Much of scripture is given to expressing the heart of the Creator and what His hopes and dreams were for this place we call Earth, along with us, its inhabitants, as His intended image-bearers.

"Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." | Genesis 1:26, CSB "Yet as surely as I live and as surely as the whole earth is filled with the glory of the LORD." | Number 14:28, ESV "And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all humanity together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." | Isaiah 40:5, ESV "On that day the LORD will become King over all the earth – the LORD alone and His name alone." | Zechariah 14:9, ESV "And blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen." | Psalm 72:19, ESV

It was always the purpose of the Eternal to fill this good

earth with His glorious presence, as deep and as expansive ‘as the waters cover the sea’. Despite human failure and many, many detours in this story, God has declared that His purpose will not be thwarted. He will accomplish what He intended for His creation, even to [His own personal cost](#), as it turns out.

“I declare the end from the beginning and ancient times from what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.’” | Isaiah 46:10, ESV

The Kingdom Of God

This glorious and absolute rule and reign of the wise and faithful king is what the New Testament terms the ‘*kingdom of God*’.

[The gospel](#) is the good news that in Jesus, who is both saviour and king, God is saving, rescuing, atoning, justifying, ruling, and reconciling people for the glory of His name and in pursuit of His purpose.

What many people think of as ‘the gospel’ – being ‘[saved](#)’ – is actually only just one aspect of a much larger story, *the full gospel* (‘good news’) story of God’s will and purpose for the earth and how humanity is part of that.

“To grasp the significance of the message of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus, we can also resort to statistical analysis. The term basileia (kingdom) occurs 162 times in the New Testament and 121 of those are in the Synoptic Gospels where the preaching of Jesus is recorded. The formula “kingdom of God” or the “kingdom of heaven” occurs 104 times in the Gospels. This message is not only the inaugural message of Jesus and the focus of His great Sermon on the Mount, it is his final message. “After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The gospel of the kingdom

includes the necessity of salvation since the very message begins with the call for repentance, but it goes beyond the call to salvation and includes the demand for kingdom-focused living. It insists that we are saved for a purpose.” – SBC Life

The kingdom of God is more than social justice or personal salvation. ‘The kingdom of God’ is the promise of God from the beginning to fill the earth with His glory, essentially, all of Himself, and to rule justly in the hearts and lives of all of humanity. It also includes the promise of total reconciliation with humanity; only made possible in Jesus (Ephesians 1:11-12, 1 Timothy 1:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:18, 1 Peter 4:11, Romans 11:36, Revelation 1:16).

Heaven + Earth

God didn’t just create humanity with purpose, He also created the earth with purpose. He cares deeply about what happens to this place we call home and all that He intended it to be.

A critical and essential reality of the kingdom of God includes its physicality. ‘The kingdom’ is not just an individual, spiritual, Christian *experience* but a literal reality that will be fully expressed and outworked *on the earth*.

Interestingly, intrinsic in the idea of ‘kingdom’ are the following five things: King + Rule + Realm + Law + Land. You can read more about these different aspects in the articles. [‘The People Of The Kingdom’](#) and [‘The Kingdom | Now, But Not Yet’](#). However, the particular focus in this article is the reality of ‘land’ or physicality. This reality, when compared against many different passages in the Bible informs our understanding of what, or more specifically, where, this physical reality is intended to be.

Contrary to what many people may think, *going to heaven is not*

a Christian's final ending or God's promise. Resurrection and life – heaven's own eternal life – on a regenerated and restored earth, is the hope for every [person of the kingdom](#).

Earth is the place where God's will is to be done (where His kingdom will be fully revealed) in the same way as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10), earth is the intended inheritance of those who have been faithful, (Psalm 37:11, Matthew 5:5), earth is the place where peace and safety will finally reign supreme (Isaiah 2:4, Ezekiel 34:25) and where righteousness will take up residence (2 Peter 3:13), and earth is where all creation will finally be set free from its bondage and brought into the glorious freedom that God always intended for it (Romans 8:21).

Earth is the place where the curse of Eden will finally and completely be overthrown and God will return and take up residence amongst His people. Our long exile will be over.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God." Revelation 21:3, BSB

"As N.T Wright and other New Testament scholars have shown, it's important to understand that kingdom terminology refers not to some faraway paradise filled with disembodied souls, but rather to the will and reign of God, unleashed into the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus." (Rachel Held Evans). N T Wright puts it this way: "Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about."

The life of heaven – the "life and light of mankind" came to earth in the person of Jesus, shining brightly and giving hope in a damaged and disordered world. In Jesus, we can see the

intention of God all along for His creation. In Jesus, all the fullness of God's glory was displayed in human form and we can see the kind of life God has intended for us.

What God began in the resurrection of Jesus is what He intends to do for all of creation; to regenerate, to restore, and to fully dwell with His creation in all His glory.

The earth, renewed with heaven's own life, is the epic conclusion to the story, and the final pages close with this promise: *"The angel showed me a river that was crystal clear, and its waters gave life. The river came from the throne where God and the Lamb were seated. Then it flowed down the middle of the city's main street. On each side of the river are trees that grow a different kind of fruit each month of the year. The fruit gives life, and the leaves are used as medicine to heal the nations.*

God's curse will no longer be on the people of that city. He and the Lamb will be seated there on their thrones, and its people will worship God and will see Him face to face. God's name will be written on the foreheads of the people. Never again will night appear, and no one who lives there will ever need a lamp or the sun. The Lord God will be their light, and they will rule forever. (Revelation 22:1-5, CEV)

"One day the veil will be lifted; earth and heaven will be one; Jesus will be personally present, and every knee will bow at his name; creation will be renewed; the dead will be raised; and God's new world will at last be in place, full of new prospects and possibilities." | N T Wright

What happens after the end? Well, the short answer is we don't know. We're told so much in the Bible about God's purpose, His

original intention for creation, and the lengths to which He has gone to get that story back on track. (Although, side-note, was it really ever truly off-track...?). We're also told how this particular story will conclude.

But what comes after? As it is written, "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). The great Christian author, C S Lewis, puts it this way: "All their life in this world and all their adventures 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." (The Last Battle)

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