

I. Introduction

- A. When you read a book, and come to the end, it's over. No more book. The story is concluded.
- B. But not with God. When you read God's story — actually, when you live in and experience God's story, and then come to the end, it is not over. You've heard of "the song that never ends?" This is the end that never ends.
- C. Welcome to part 8 in our Endgame series. This is basically a Bible study in Bible prophecy. History has a beginning, middle, and an end. The Bible has a lot to say about the end. The end rests in the hands of God, just as easily as the beginning and the middle. He's got it all under control.
- D. Theology is how we organize our thoughts about God, and about what God says. So, when we produce theology, we look at the Bible. The Bible says a lot about a lot of topics. When we pick a topic, say the end of this world as we know it, we can identify which places in the Bible talk about that topic. Then we can start seeing out all the pieces fit together. This is how theology is made — I love theology and I hope you do to. We are basically organizing what the Bible says by topics.
- E. One of the big topics is the future. This is called eschatology — how we organize everything the Bible teaches about future things.
- F. Though this is not the end of the series, I do have one more message in this series, it is the end of eschatology.
- G. Let's apply our hearts and minds today to the topic:
 1. *The Eternal State*
- H. After all the trauma of the end times, after all the rage of Satan. After the Rapture, after the Tribulation, after the AntiChrist, after the Battle of Armageddon, after the Second Coming, after the Days of Judgment, after the Millennium... after God has fulfilled all his promises, and all his covenants with Israel, with the Church, with the world, and supremely with his Son Jesus...
- I. After the smoke clears, then what?
- J. Then welcome to the Eternal State. What will eternity look like?
- K. May I remind you we have no way of knowing these things apart from the Bible, and really apart from serious Bible study. Nobody's dreams, nobody's visions, nobody's opinions or trips to heaven or near death experiences, have anything to say to us at all, not now and not ever. The only way we can know about the eternal state is through the Bible. Do you know what? Because the Author of the Bible is the creator of the Eternal State.
- L. So Back to the Bible.
- M. I want to look at its Promise, its Essence, and its Qualities.

II. The Eternal State

- A. *Its Promise*
 1. The Eternal State is promised in several places in the Bible, using a variety of important terms.
 - a) *"So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'* (Matthew 19:28)
 2. Jesus is speaking to his disciples. They have asked Jesus about their rewards. Jesus pushes it all the way to the future times. He call the future times by a particular term: the Regeneration. *"In the Regeneration..."* This is an amazing word. It was used by the Stoics. It was used by the Pythagoreans. It was used by the Mastery Religions of Ancient Greece. It was common in philosophy and religion outside of Christianity — with a very different set of ideas than Jesus had here.
 3. It was also used by Paul in Titus 3:5. And hinted at by Jesus in John 3.
 4. Regeneration means to be born again. The day you are saved, you are born again. You have your physical birth, and now you have your spiritual birth. Born again.
 5. Jesus is saying that the whole created order will be born again. Not that everybody in it is saved. But that the creation itself, and the universe, and everything in it, will be transformed. The curse will be lifted. Entropy will be halted. Evil will be punished and banished. Whatever physics we know will be abolished.
 6. This makes me very glad. Do you know why it makes me very glad? Because I don't like living inside a Pain Machine. This fallen world is a morally broken Pain Machine. And this day of Regeneration is the day God crumples up the Pain Machine and throws it away.
 7. We have the same promise echoed by Peter at the Temple after he healed a man born unable to walk. Peter stands up and preaches to a crowd. He tells the story of Jesus, and his death and resurrection. Then he adds:
 - a) *"whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."* (Acts 3:21)
 8. This is the Eternal State again. It is a promise of a coming age. Peter calls it the times of restoration of all things. All things is the biblical phrase for the universe. This is the times of the restoration of the universe. The context is important, because the man is crippled, and in that culture, the man in poverty. But now the man is healed, which is a picture of what happens in the time of the restoration of the universe. Because brokenness is gone. Poverty is gone. And paradise is restored. Actually, better than paradise, so let's call it Paradise Plus. The Garden of Eden only leveled up.
 9. This is God's promise to the world, and therefore to me, and to you.
 10. There is another important phrase to describe the Eternal State.
 - a) *"For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain."* (Isaiah 66:22)
 - b) *"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."* (2 Peter 3:13)
 - c) *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea."* (Revelation 21:1)

11. In the Eternal State there is a new heaven and a new earth. Just as God created this heaven and this earth — this cosmos and everything in it — in that future day, he will create a new one. (2 Peter 3:10-12, Revelation 20:11).
12. The Eternal State is a new order of creation, related to, but different from this one. It is the universe born again (regeneration); it is the universe returning to his pristine state with improvements (restoration); and it is the universe made new with no Pain Machine in sight (a new heaven and a new earth).
13. That is the promise of the eternal state.
14. What is its essence? This is great, because it is really astonishing when you get it.

B. *Its Essence.*

1. The heart and soul of the Eternal State is something you've probably heard a million times, and I bet you take it for granted.
2. I want to show you three Bible verses where God pitches a tent. Did you know God was a camper?
 - a) *"May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant." (Genesis 9:27)*
3. Okay, Noah is speaking. He is prophesying over his three sons, Japheth, Shem, and Canaan.
4. Shem is the important one here. May God dwell in the tents of Shem. Think about this. You go camping and you pitch tents. For us today, that's a hobby, it's a past time. For me, I'm a city boy. Sorry. Camping is a Holiday Inn. For our society and our culture, when we think of tents, we think of camping. Not back then. They lived in tents. They were nomadic. Tents felt like homes. Imagine here's your tent. Then your neighbor's tent. Then God's tent. That's the idea. Where's God? Two doors down. I think he's grilling. Wouldn't that be awesome?
5. God is no longer far away. God is no longer way up there in heaven. God in his greatest glory and direct manifestation is no longer hidden. You don't have to search for him. You don't have to wonder about him. The invisible creator God is right there, in the same encampment as you.
6. This is ultimate joy. This is ultimate blessing. It doesn't get any better than this. It is a remarkable promise.
7. May God dwell in the tents of Shem.
8. It is also an important prophecy. Because, do you know who was descended from Shem? Abraham. And Abraham was the father of all the Jews. The Jews are Shemites, or Semites, as we pronounce it today. They are called Semitic because they are descendants of Shem. And because they are descendants of Shem, they inherit the astonishing promise that God will pitch his tent among them.
9. Go a couple thousand years later, to Jesus, and the second verse.
 - a) *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)*
10. The Word is God himself, the second person of the Trinity. God became flesh and dwelt among us. Who is that? That is Jesus.
11. But that word "dwelt" is the Greek word *skeno-o* (skay-NO-oh), which literally means to pitch a tent. When Jesus came into the Word, God was keeping a promise to Shem.
12. In Jesus Christ, God pitched his tent among us. No matter what cool stuff you will have in heaven, it cannot compare to this. The essence of the eternal state is everyday enjoyment of the presence of God. Everyday hanging out with God. The separation is gone. The alienation is over. The distance is closed. You and God are like this. And you get to enjoy his company forever. Just like a promised a few days after the flood of Noah.
13. This is the eternal state.
 - a) *"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle [skene — tent] of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.'" (Revelation 21:3)*
14. It is easy to get caught up in the stuff of heaven, and forget about the most awesome experience of all.
 - a) You don't just get heaven.
 - b) You get God.
15. When you're tenting, everybody is close. It's not like God is upstairs and we're stuck downstairs. Or God is in this wing of the mansion, where it's fancy, and we're in the servants' quarters.
16. We're tenting. We're close. We're going to rub shoulders, and bump into each other and hang out and make kosher s'mores.
17. You have this picture of God dwelling with us in tents at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis. You have it in the middle of Bible with Jesus. And you have it at the end of the Bible in Revelation. Which is how the story of the Bible reaches an incredibly satisfying conclusion.
18. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men. The end... only it's an end that never ends.
19. Okay, so that's the promise of the eternal state. The essence of the Eternal state. And now...

C. *Its Qualities*

1. What will the Eternal State actually be like?
 - a) *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'" (Revelation 21:1-5)*

2. This is the ushering in of the eternal state. It is described in metaphors. The reason it is described in metaphors is because the human mind can't grasp it otherwise. It is too magnificent, too glorious, too wonderful. So the Bible uses language of accommodation, a kind of dumbing down something otherwise enormous and out of reach.
3. So, what are some qualities of heaven?

D. Qualities

1. Heaven is BEAUTIFUL beyond description.
 - a) "And the city, the holy one, new Jerusalem, I saw descending out of heaven from God." This city — which stands for heaven — is decked out as a bride — which stands for the most beautiful and radiant place you can imagine.
2. All the BAD STUFF has been removed from Heaven.
 - a) Verse 4 is one of my favorites verses in all the Bible:
 - (1) And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21:4) This is the end of the Pain Machine. This is the end of suffering. These things have no place in heaven.
 - b) Besides metaphors, the best way to describe heaven is through negatives. All the bad stuff that happens on earth, the stuff that make you long for heaven won't happen in heaven — not even a hint of it.
 - c) You have the same negative kind of description in 1 Peter 1:3-4. This is what you are destined:
 - (1) "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you," (1 Peter 1:4)
 - d) This is what you are destined for in the eternal state. And notice it is stated in negative form. The inheritance you receive when you walk through the pearly gates is incorruptible. It will never wear out. It is undefiled. It is morally pure, and manufactured with no defects. It does not fade away, like your muscles and your mind. Not this, not this, not this... because the bad stuff is far away forever.
 - e) We have the same kind of "negativizing" teaching again in 1 John 3:2:
 - (1) "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)
 - (a) There is a whole lot that we don't know and we can't know.
 - (b) But the bottom line is we shall be like Jesus, and Jesus in heaven is awesome.
 - f) A third quality we can look forward to in heaven is this:
3. Heaven overflows with PLEASURES and JOY.
 - a) You can be the biggest hedonist in the world. You can be the biggest thrill seeker you know. If you don't know Jesus, you haven't even scratched the surface of the pleasures and the joys that you will one day experience in heaven if you have Jesus. How do we know? The Bible makes it clear:
 - (1) "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalms 16:11)
 - b) You know how excited kids get at a birthday party when the cake comes out? Multiply that. Multiply the fun. Multiply the good feelings. Multiply the pleasures. Multiply the joy. Multiply the intensity of all of it.
 - c) Of all the things we can say about heaven, this one is in the top tier for me. It's personal.
4. In Heaven, you will eat the BEST FOOD you've ever eaten.
 - a) There has been a long running debate over whether or not there will be food in heaven. I mean, we're immortal, so I guess we don't need it that way. But here is my evidence there will be Italian food, I mean food, in heaven.
 - b) One of the main features of heaven will be the Tree of Life. This is a gorgeous tree, and it is massive. It runs along both sides a river that flows through heaven, and is 1,400 miles long. So double that, because the tree grows on both sides — meaning looks like an orchard — so that makes for 2,800 miles of the Tree of Life. And every month it produces a new crop of fruit.
 - c) If there is no eating in heaven, why is this Tree bearing all this fruit? You want to know what?
 - d) No. No. Not so we can eat it.
 - e) That fruit is for the livestock.
 - (1) Because you know what's going to be in Heaven? Good food.
 - (2) Do you know what's going to be in Hell? Calories. And Allergies. And autoimmune disorders. And carbohydrates. And weight gain.
 - f) Revelation 19 describes the wedding supper of the Lamb — a wedding feast worthy of the Son of God. Revelation 2:7 talks about eating. Revelation 7:16 says God's people will never suffer thirst. Psalm 78:23-25 says in the Old Testament, God's people ate manna, which was the "bread of angels." If angels can eat, so can we.
 - g) I think I've made my point. Right, God?
5. Heaven is REUNION DAY with people we love who have gone on before.
 - a) The Bible is clear on this. You will still be you. You will be recognizable. People who know you in this world will know you in heaven. There's a scene in the gospels where Jesus is glorified. It is called the Transfiguration. It's like Jesus got plugged into the world's biggest power grid and started shooting off lightning bolts. Who should show up for the fireworks but Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 17:3,4). In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul talks about comforting each other with the knowledge that truly saved people will all meet up again in heaven.
6. Bonus facts:
 - a) Heaven will have streets of gold. (Revelation 21:21)
 - b) Gates of pearl. (Revelation 21:21)
 - c) No night in heaven. (Revelation 21:25).

- d) You will have a glorified body in heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:52-55; Philippians 3:21).
- e) Christ gives it light. (Revelation 21:22,23)
- f) Heaven is forever. (John 3:16, Luke 16:9)
- g) Heaven is fun. (Psalm 2:4, where God laughs)
- (1) There is so much more, but that's enough for now.

III. Conclusion

- A. Revelation 22:4 simply says:
 - 1. And they shall see His face. (Revelation 22:4)
- B. When Moses asked God to show him his face, God said, "You cannot see my face and live." But that was true of a mortal person. In heaven you will put on immortality. You will have capacities and abilities you never had before.
- C. One day you will see the face of God, and live. You will see in that moment, true beauty, true glory, true greatness, such that it outshines anything you have ever seen before by magnitudes of infinity. To see him now would be blinding, like looking at a thousand suns.
- D. But to be outfitted with Christ, and to see the Father's face? The superlative love and glory and affection in that glance will make every moment of difficulty and care on this worn out planet worth it all.
- E. One day, hopefully soon, your difficulty will vanish. One day, your sorrows will melt away. One day your present cares, your worries, and all the things that break your heart will be faded memories.
- F. And you will be transfixed in the gaze of your God who does all things well.
- G. And seated at his side, will be your Savior, and your Friend. Seated at his side, will be Jesus. The scars will still be there — the only scars to last forever — a memorial to the Old Rugged Cross and the salvation purchased there.
- H. Heaven is where you get to see Jesus. What will you see in his eyes? Will it be a blaze of splendor? I think so. His eyes are as a flame of fire, the Bible tells me. Will it be a twinkle of delight and joy? Yes, that will be there too.
 - 1. To see his face implies the certainty of your salvation. You will be everlastingly safe.
 - 2. To see his face implies a clear knowledge of him. In that look, you will know him with a depth and a passion with which you've never known anything before.
 - 3. To see his face suggests a welcome into his favor. He has lifted up your face, and welcomed you to gaze into his eyes.
 - 4. To see his face suggests closeness and nearness to the Lord. The gap is closed. The barriers are shattered. The fellowship is sweet.
 - 5. And to see his face means you will be like him. "They shall be like him, for that shall see him as he is." To look into his eyes is to unlock a radiance and glory in your being that will dazzle the angels forever.
 - a) And they shall see his face.
 - (1) What a day that will be, When my Jesus I shall see.
And I look upon his face, the One who saved me by his grace.
When he takes me by the hand, and leads me to the Promised Land.
What a day, glorious day, that will be.
(Lyrics to What a Day That Will Be)
- I. This is your eternity. This is your destiny. Aren't you thankful for that Old rugged Cross? Aren't you thankful for Jesus, for a Savior, for an open door to glory? Aren't you glad you know where you're going?

IV. Butterflies instruction

- A. Listen... before I pray I want to give you some instruction.