1. Introduction – I am Sean Costello. We are studying Randy Alcorn’s book, Heaven. This is our fifth week. I am so very glad to be back after taking a month off.

Summary of Last Week - Anticipating Resurrection

* 1. Why Is Resurrection So Important?

In short, because Scripture promises it!

1. Resurrection must be Physical –

Job 19:25-27 “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

2. Continuity is Critically necessary –

1 Corinthians 15:53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

3. The Resurrected Christ is the Model For Our New Bodies –

Post Resurrection Road to Emmaus, appeared among the the Disciples, Luke 24:39 “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Philippians 3:20-21 – “the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body”

* 1. Why Does All Creation Await Our Resurrection?

Short Answer: Because we were given Dominion on this earth… and as mankind goes, so goes creation…

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”

Romans 8: 19-23 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. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Anthony Hoekema -- The kingdom of God … does not mean merely the salvation of certain individuals nor even the salvation of a chosen group of people. It means nothing less than the complete renewal of the entire cosmos, culminating in the new heaven and the new earth.

Alcorn - The gospel is far greater than most of us imagine. It isn’t just good news for us— it’s good news for animals, plants, stars, and planets. It’s good news for the sky above and the earth below. Albert Wolters says, “The redemption in Jesus Christ means the restoration of an original good creation.”

* 1. How Far-Reaching Is the Resurrection?

The Resurrection Must Have Taken Place On Earth

Alcorn - Jesus became a man and lived as a man on Earth, in order to redeem mankind. His victory had to take place on Earth— the dwelling place of mankind— and it has to culminate on Earth, where Christ will return to set up his Kingdom with his redeemed and resurrected people. We were created from the earth to live on the earth. Our hope isn’t that we’ll be delivered from our bodies but into our new bodies, and into the new world where we’ll live with Jesus.

The Resurrection is so far reaching that Our Deeds Will Follow Us

Gladiator - Maximus: “Brothers, what we do in life echoes in eternity.”

Alcorn relates that Bruce Milne writes, “Every kingdom work, whether publicly performed or privately endeavoured, partakes of the kingdom’s imperishable character. Every honest intention, every stumbling word of witness, every resistance of temptation, every motion of repentance, every gesture of concern, every routine engagement, every motion of worship, every struggle towards obedience, every mumbled prayer, everything, literally, which flows out of our faith-relationship with the Ever-Living One, will find its place in the ever-living heavenly order which will dawn at his coming.”

Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

Introduction

If God were to end history and reign forever in a distant Heaven, Earth would be remembered as a graveyard of sin and failure. Instead, Earth will be redeemed and resurrected. In the end it will be a far greater world, even for having gone through the birth pains of suffering and sin— yes, even sin. The New Earth will justify the old Earth’s disaster, make good out of it, putting it in perspective. It will preserve and perpetuate Earth’s original design and heritage.

Alcorn, 143.

This week’s lesson is Seeing The Earth Restored

3 Questions:

1. Where and When Will our Deliverance Come?
2. Will The Old Earth Be Destroyed? … Or Renewed?
3. Will the New Earth Be Familiar? … Like Home?

Opening Prayer

1. Starting Discussion Questions:
	1. Where and When Will our Deliverance Come? (Consider Hebrews 11:13-14, 16; Revelation 21:1-2, Genesis 3:8, Isaiah 66:22-23; Acts 1: 6-8)
	2. Will The Old Earth Be Destroyed? … Or Renewed? (Consider Psalm 102:25-26; Luke 21:33; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1, Eccl 1:4; Psalm 78:69; Acts 3:21)
	3. Will the New Earth Be Familiar? … Like Home? (Consider Philippians 3:20; Genesis 3:22-24)

**Sean’s Notes**

Where and When Will our Deliverance Come?

To this earth and after a literal Millennial Reign.

Hebrews 11:13-14, 16: “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. **14**For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. … But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. …”

Revelation 21:1-2: “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.”

“The hope of the ancient Israelites was not only for their distant offspring but also for themselves. They longed for God’s rule on Earth, not just for a hundred years or a thousand, but forever.”
Alcorn, 144.

“Since where God dwells, there heaven is, we conclude that in the life to come heaven and earth will no longer be separated, as they are now, but will be merged. Believers will therefore continue to be in heaven as they continue to live on the new earth.” Anthony Hoekema

Alcorn, 144

As to the question of WHEN, Let’s NOT get hung up on the Rapture and/or Millennial Reign…

“Theologians differ over whether the Millennium should be understood as a literal thousand-year reign, and when it will occur in relation to the second coming of Christ. Christians generally hold one of three views about the Millennium: postmillennial, premillennial, or amillennial.”
Alcorn, 145.

Regarding the WHEN, Alcorn says:

“But regardless of when the old Earth ends, the central fact is that the New Earth will begin. The Bible is emphatic that God’s ultimate Kingdom and our final home will not be on the old Earth but on the New Earth, where at last God’s original design will be fulfilled and enjoyed forever— not just for a thousand years. Hence, no matter how differently we may view the Millennium, we can still embrace a common theology of the New Earth.
“
Alcorn, 146.

Regarding a Literal Millennial Reign, Alcorn points out that the Jews historically understood OT Isaiah passages literally:

Isaiah 66:22-23: “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain. **23**From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord.”

Regarding a Literal Millennial Reign, Alcorn says:

“Those who insist that Revelation 21– 22 should be understood figuratively must then also take all the Isaiah passages figuratively. But Jewish scholars understood them literally. There’s every indication Jesus took them literally. The heart cry of the nation was for the Messiah to come and set up his physical Kingdom on Earth. It’s worth restating that we should expect Isaiah’s prophecies about the Messiah’s second coming and the New Earth to be literally fulfilled because his detailed prophecies regarding the Messiah’s first coming were literally fulfilled (e.g., Isaiah 52: 13; 53: 4-12). When Jesus spoke to his disciples before ascending to Heaven, he said it was not for them to know when he would restore God’s Kingdom on Earth (Acts 1: 6-8), but he did not say they wouldn’t know if he would restore God’s Kingdom. After all, restoring the Kingdom of God on Earth was his ultimate mission.”
Alcorn, 148.

Will The Old Earth Be Destroyed? … Or Renewed?

“Will the present Earth and the entire universe be utterly destroyed, and the New Earth and new universe made from scratch? Or will the original universe be renewed and transformed into the new one? At first glance, some Scriptures seem to answer “utterly destroyed”:

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. (Psalm 102: 25-26)

[Jesus said,] “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Luke 21: 33)

The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3: 10)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (Revelation 21: 1)

Alcorn, Randy. 151

In contrast, there are other passages that speak of the earth remaining forever:

He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. (Psalm 78:69

A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. (Eccl 1:4)

“Anthony Hoekema says, “If God would have to annihilate the present cosmos, Satan would have won a great victory. … Satan would have succeeded in so devastatingly corrupting the present cosmos and the present earth that God could do nothing with it but to blot it totally out of existence. But Satan did not win such victory. On the contrary, Satan has been decisively defeated. God will reveal the full dimensions of that defeat when he shall renew this very earth on which Satan deceived mankind and finally banish from it all the results of Satan’s evil machinations.”

Alcorn, 153.

Even if the term New Earth appeared nowhere in Scripture, even if we didn’t have dozens of other passages such as Isaiah 60 that refer to it so clearly, Acts 3: 21 would be sufficient. It tells us that Christ will “remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.” When Christ returns, God’s agenda is not to destroy everything and start over, but to “restore everything.” The perfection of creation once lost will be fully regained, and then some. The same Peter who spoke these words in Acts 3 wrote the words about the earth’s destruction in 2 Peter 3:10.

Alcorn, 153-154.

Acts 3:17-21: “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. **18**But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. **19**Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, **20**that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, **21whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.**

“Albert Wolters says, “Redemption means restoration— that is, the return to the goodness of an originally unscathed creation and not merely the addition of something supra-creational. … This restoration affects the whole of creational life and not merely some limited area within it.” It will be as if an artist wiped away the old paint, stained and cracking, and started a new and better painting, but using the same images on the same canvas.”
Alcorn, 154.

Regarding 1 Peter 3:10:

“I think the key to understanding the qualified meaning of these images of destruction in 2 Peter lies within the passage itself. The passage draws a parallel between the earth in the time of Noah, which was “destroyed” through the Flood, and the time to come when the present world will be destroyed in judgment again, this time not by water but by fire (2   Peter 3: 6-7). The stated reference point for understanding the future destruction of the world is the Flood. The Flood was certainly cataclysmic and devastating. But did it obliterate the world, making it cease to exist? No. Noah and his family and the animals were delivered from God’s judgment in order to re-inhabit a new world made ready for them by God’s cleansing judgment.”
Alcorn, 154.

To further make his point, Alcorn talks about the meaning of the word “new” in Revelation 21:1

“The Greek word *kainos*, translated “new,” indicates that the earth God creates won’t merely be new as opposed to old, but new in quality and superior in character. According to Walter Bauer’s lexicon, *kainos* means new “in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by what is new. In such a case the new is, as a rule, superior in kind to the old.” It means, therefore, “not the emergence of a cosmos totally other than the present one, but the creation of a universe which, though it has been gloriously renewed, stands in continuity with the present one.”

Alcorn, 155.

To Summarize our answer, the earth will be restored to a new Edenic pristine condition

Will the New Earth Be Familiar? … Like Home?

What Will Our Home Really Be Like?

 “This is it. … the country for which I was made!” “At last, the real world!” “ I’ve been born. All my life on Earth was but a series of labor pains preparing me for this.” “This is joy itself. Every foretaste of joy in the Shadowlands was but the stab, the pang, the inconsolable longing for this place!” “How could anyone be satisfied with less than this?”

Alcorn, 162.



Genesis 3:22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Philippians 3: 20 “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”

“Nothing is more often misdiagnosed than our homesickness for Heaven. We think that what we want is sex, drugs, alcohol, a new job, a raise, a doctorate, a spouse, a large-screen television, a new car, a cabin in the woods, a condo in Hawaii. What we really want is the person we were made for, Jesus, and the place we were made for, Heaven. Nothing less can satisfy us.”
Alcorn, 166.

Remember that we are Sea Lions, designed for the Sea, but living in a Desert.

“C. S. Lewis said, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.””
Alcorn, 166.