



Heaven Sets Our Purpose and Goal

Matt Garvin

December 14, 2014

Informed by the doctrines of creation, redemption, resurrection, and the New Earth, our present lives take on greater importance, infusing us with purpose. Understanding Heaven doesn't just tell us what to do, but why. What God tells us about our future lives enables us to interpret our past and serve him in our present.

~ Randy Alcorn

"Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 NIV

If we recognize that we have been called to provide our world with a preview of God's coming kingdom, the hope of that kingdom's coming will shape all that we say and do in the here and now. As we are pushed forward in our mission by the impetus and forward movement that we saw in Jesus' own words and works while he lived among us, we are also pulled forward by hopeful expectation of the future kingdom to be revealed when Jesus returns.

~ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen

Every act of love, gratitude and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one's fellow human beings, and for that matter one's fellow non-human creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed which spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honoured in the world – all of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation which God will one day make.

~ N.T. Wright

Love is the language they speak in God's world, and we are summoned to learn it against the day when God's world and ours will be brought together forever. It is the music they make in God's courts, and we are invited to learn it and practice it in advance. Love is not a "duty," even our highest duty. It is our destiny.

~ N.T. Wright

Shalom is concerned not merely with human survival but with human flourishing. This is why beauty is an integral part of God's perfect world from the start. His intent was not merely for his image-bearers to get by. He desired for us to thrive and flourish — to delight in the wonder, awe, and joy of a world filled with reflections of his beauty.

~ Skye Jethani

The future garden city of God will be a place where no evil or injustice abides; it will see the world perfectly ordered so all things may flourish. Those who belong to Christ and have experienced the renewing power of his resurrection, however, are not content to wait passively for this future to arrive. They are cultivating the order of Futureville (*heaven*) now in anticipation of what is to come.

~ Skye Jethani

Futureville (*heaven*) is not ruled by the fear of scarcity but by the blessing of abundance. In John's Revelation we are told that the gates of the garden city are never shut. In other words, there is no threat that would ever cause the inhabitants of Futureville (*heaven*) to retreat behind walls or gates. There is no fear of scarcity that would cause its citizens to contract inward and hoard their resources. Instead, citizens of Futureville (*heaven*) are able to live expanding lives that look ever upward and outward. They can see the world through eyes of faith rather than fixate upon themselves with eyes of fear.

~ Skye Jethani

Instead of _____, we have _____.

Instead of _____, we have _____.

Instead of _____, we have
“everyone doing _____ in their own eyes”.

Instead of _____, we have _____ and _____.

In the world... _____.

From the very beginning, in Jesus’ own teaching, it has been clear that people who are called to be agents of God’s healing love, putting the world to rights, are themselves to be people whose own lives are put to rights by the same healing love.

~ N.T. Wright, Simply Christian

The Christian Vocation is to be in prayer, in the Spirit, at the place where the world is in pain, and as we embrace that vocation, we discover it to be the way of following Christ, shaped according to his messianic vocation to the cross, with arms outstretched, holding on simultaneously to the pain of the world and the love of God
~ N.T. Wright

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NIV

All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible.
~ T.E. Lawrence

Small Group Questions

1. What was the main thing you were left with from Pastor Matt’s sermon?
2. Pastor Matt quoted a speech from the movie Mockingjay. Have there been speeches in movies or in real life that captured your heart? What do you think about Pastor Matt’s daughter’s observation about the church?
3. Randy Alcorn believes understanding Heaven “enables us to interpret our past and serve him in our present.” Bartholomew and Goheen assert that “the hope of that kingdom’s coming will shape all that we say and do in the here and now.” Do you believe they are right? How does a vision of heaven affect your day to day life?
4. N.T. Wright believes that what we do now can “find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, in to the new creation which God will one day make.” What have been some moments in your life where you have made the choice to build with “gold, silver and precious stones”?
 - Where in your life do you most see and experience Love? What is it like for you?
 - Where in your life do you most see and experience Beauty? What is it like for you?
 - Where in your life do you most see and experience Order? What is it like for you?
 - Where in your life do you most see and experience Abundance? What is it like for you?
5. N.T. Wright believes “the Christian Vocation is to be in prayer, in the Spirit, at the place where the world is in pain.” Do you find yourself running into Self-Absorption, Utilitarianism, People doing what is right in their own eyes, Greed or Poverty regularly? Where do you feel the pain of these things the most?
6. Where in your own life can you see Self-Absorption, Utilitarianism, a desire for your own will, Greed or Poverty? N.T. Wright points out that “people who are called to be agents of God’s healing love, putting the world to rights, are themselves to be people whose own lives are put to rights by the same healing love.” Take a moment to pray and ask Jesus where you need his healing love. Write it down. Share with the group to the level you are comfortable.
7. As you take the journey of your life and discover in an ongoing way your own calling, is it possible that God might have wired you to be an agent of his Kingdom with a particular emphasis on Love, Beauty, Order or Abundance? Do you find yourself caring more about one of these things over the others?
8. T. E. Lawrence said “dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible.” What Heaven - fuelled dreams do you have?