

Heaven and Earth E5 Final

Heaven & Earth - Q&R

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Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible Project. Today on this podcast episode, we're going to do something a little bit different. About a year ago, Tim and I recorded a live question and response on YouTube. We were answering your questions about heaven and earth, actually, the first video that was released on our YouTube channel. Many of you have asked for that Q & R to be posted on our podcast so that you can just listen to it instead of have to watch it on YouTube.

Some of the questions are, why do we talk about heaven and earth and not hell? Could people have gotten injured in the garden before the fall? What's the deal with Hebrew temples versus other temples in the ancient world? And many other questions. So we're going to dig into all that. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[00:01:04]

Jon: Today we're going to talk about your questions on heaven. There's a video that we did on heaven and earth.

Tim: Yeah. I picked it from among your questions you guys were sending in. Sean Horton, you asked a good question that we've been asked many times. So it's good chance to address it. Sean's question says, "My question is, the video talks about heaven and earth but hell is never mentioned? Was that intentional? And if so, will hell be covered at some point?" Great question, Sean.

It was intentional that we didn't talk about hell because we felt like we had enough ground to cover just in reframing the concept of heaven and earth. Just by itself, that's a topic that's really important. What hell is and how it fits into the story of the Bible is itself complex and needs a lot of reframing from our modern distortions of it. So we just decided to separate those out.

Here's but an interesting fact about that though. If you ask most modern people, in the Bible, when you think of a word pair, if I say, Heaven, most people would say, hell. Heaven and hell. What's interesting is you will never find anywhere in the Bible, heaven, and hell in the same sentence. And that's because, in the Bible, Hell is not the opposite pair of heaven. Earth is the opposite pair of heaven. And heaven and earth appear as a key unified idea all over the Bible.

Jon: So if you type in "heaven and hell" into Bible gateway with quotes around it, you won't find it.

Tim: That's right, you won't find it.

Jon: But if you type in "heaven and earth" you will find that all over?

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Tim: You'll get a ton of hits in the Bible. And that's because, and it's what we explored in the video, that the vision of reality in the scriptures is not even of heaven and earth as separate spaces but as overlapping spaces. The main storyline of the Bible is about heaven and earth interaction with each other. That's not on most people's radar. And it's strange because it's actually what the story of the Bible is about.

So we left hell out because once you have this reframed story of what the Bible is actually about heaven and earth, then hell fits as one piece in that larger story.

Jon: So we don't have a theme video on hell planned, but we are going to tackle it in some way.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. We're going to do a theme video on the theme of the Day of the Lord in the prophets, which will be about God's justice in the prophets and in Israel's history leading up to the kingdom of God coming on earth. Then we are going to do a video on some kind of final judgment in some way.

Jeff Pace, you had a really interesting question about, "Did Eden allow for the possibility of painful injury prior to Adam and Eve eating the fruit? Wondering if this is any different from how it will be in the new heavens and the new earth?" That's a really great question.

The Eden story depicts the commission and the task of humans in the world and in the garden as work. Gardening. Like cultivating and gardening, which is really hard work.

Jon: It's tough.

Tim: It's the hardest work. Yes. Like farming. The hardest workers I've ever met in my life are farmers and they have the scars to prove it. In that sense, the work requires resistance and you're overcoming conflict with something, whether it's dirt or weeds. So yeah, work.

In the Eden narrative, the curse in Genesis 3 after human sin is that the environment in which humans now operate because of their sin and selfishness is going to be more difficult, and their relationship to creation itself will be one of adversity or hostility. And that's depicted in this image of thorns and thistles.

I don't think we should push that to mean therefore there were no weeds before the fall just like there were probably mosquitoes and other types of annoying pests. But it's that the environment is now complicated and fraught with hostility because of sin. And one of that will be even our relationship to creation itself.

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So I do think that has implications for how we think about the new creation that we're going to have meaningful work. It's going to be the work. It's going to be redeemed, healed version of how we experience the world now.

Jon: But we had this conversation before about this perspective of Eden being where there was no pain. Like no mosquitoes. A garden with no mosquitoes, a place where you couldn't write a scratch yourself, you wouldn't feel pain. Is that inherently in the Genesis story?

Tim: Yeah. It's not just my conviction, but it is my conviction that we have read most of those ideas into the story. There's no indication that you couldn't chop off your thumb with your sickle. There's just no indication. What there is an indication, is that human beings because of their closeness to proximity to God's presence, and what the Tree of Life symbolizes as God's gift of eternal life, that that was possible and accessible, but ultimately, that it was lost.

So it wasn't the tree of you'll never cut your finger off. It was the tree of eternal life because you're in God's presence. I think we just have to humble ourselves and say we don't know. The point of the story is to say that things were set up to be as good as they possibly could have been but we ruined it. That's the point of the goodness of the garden.

Jon: And it's so hard. It racks my brain to try to have categories for what that means. I want to know like, well, what does it mean that we won't die and what's that really going to be like, and what will pain be then and how to will we do all this. But there's a certain amount of just mystery to that.

Tim: Yeah. The Bible's purpose isn't to answer all of our questions about those kinds of things; is to tell us about what God has done in the story through Israel, and Jesus to redeem heaven and earth and to bring them back together again. Which leaves all kinds of things unanswered. And we just are going to have to deal with that one.

Ben Brown, you had a good question about, "How does the Israelite view of heaven and earth compare to other ancient Near Eastern perspectives of God's space and human space?" So what we talked about in the video and what Ben's keying into is that in the Israelite worldview, the place where heaven and earth God space and human space overlap is in temples.

That idea is not unique to the Israelites. That was a shared idea among the Canaanites, the Egyptians, and the Babylonian. So that is in common.

Jon: And if you wanted to go to the divine space where God was, you go to a temple. That's the overlap.

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Tim: That's the overlap. So what makes the Israelite in the biblical vision unique is that the God whose heaven you're entering when you go into the temple isn't just a local tribal God. The confession of the Old Testament is that the God of Israel is also the creator of heaven and earth.

And so the idea that the God space and human space used to be completely united that that was lost, that human beings have done something really wrong to each other and to God's world, and that God's on a mission to heal that rift and bring heaven and earth back together. Now we're getting uniquely Israelite. That's unique to the biblical story and worldview.

The Egyptians and most Babylonians had more of a pantheistic or a pan and theistic...that's a rabbit hole we don't have to go down. But they had a different view. The nature of time is totally different. The Israelite views unique in that God's on a mission to bring heaven and earth back together again.

Jon: All of creation coming back together,

Tim: Yeah, all of creation being a unity of heaven and earth. That's a uniquely Israelite Jewish Christian Bible idea.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: Good question, Ben. That was insightful. Alan, he asked a question about what he called the intermediate period between death and final resurrection. Is there any indication in Scripture that alludes to heavens absence of time or adherence to time?

One of the most common stories used to unpack this is like, what's happening to someone, let's just say a Christian after they die, but before the resurrection into the new creation? Because Jesus, for example, as he's hanging on the cross and the criminal hanging next to Jesus says, "Remember me when you come in your kingdom," and Jesus says, "Today, you'll be with me in paradise," it's one of only three clear passages in the Bible that even talk about what happens in between right after death.

So the question is, is does that today refer to some disembodied state or does that today refer to resurrection into the new creation? In which case what, Alan you're calling the intermediate state is just however long it is until you die. Paul in this letter, the 1 Thessalonians uses the metaphor of sleep - that believers go to sleep when they die awaiting the resurrection and new creation.

Jon: Paul also talks about it as being with God. Right?

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Tim: That's right. Well, asleep. Yes. And then in two places - there's his letter to the Philippians and then in 2 Corinthians - he just described it as, if the believer is not alive in their body anymore, they are with Jesus.

Jon: With Jesus.

Tim: So "with me in paradise" is from Jesus, "with Jesus," Paul says twice. That's all the information we have about what happens after we die. It's good to just say we don't know the answer to most of our questions about what that's like. The Bible just doesn't talk about it.

So as far as our relationship to time, time...I don't understand quantum physics really, at all. I've tried.

Jon: I think physicists are now starting to wonder if time is real. Like they're actually legitimately questioning whether time even exists. They can't prove it. Anyways, I don't understand it, either.

Tim: I don't know what it means to ask that question.

Jon: Me neither.

Tim: To the point where I can grasp that time is a dimension, it's called the fourth dimension. There's heights, width, depth, and then we experience the three dimensions as we go through time. And so, time is a feature of living in a material world as far as I understand it.

And so, to the degree that the whole storyline of the Bible is not about escaping the material world and going to a spiritual non-material world, that's not the Bible or Christianity at all. The hope is of resurrection into a new physical world.

And so unless there's some property of that physical world that makes it so that it doesn't experience time. The Bible just doesn't talk about that at all. But my hunch is that we would experience continuity through times the same way we do now because of our nature just as creatures.

Jon: That's how we experience reality is in time.

Tim: Is in physical space and time. But the Bible just doesn't go there. This is going to be repeated theme for the rest of the live stream about heaven is that the Bible just doesn't answer most of our questions. But it's good. It's good to develop the skill of knowing what the Bible does speak to and what the Bible doesn't speak to when it comes to these kinds of questions. So Alan, thank you for that great question.

This one was from Austin House. This might be a hobby horse for some people when they think about heaven and earth and this kind of thing. Or maybe not. I don't know. But it's a question about the thousand-year

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reign of Jesus in relationship to actual heaven. What's the relationship between those two? Good question, Austin.

So what you're asking about is in the book of Revelation, the way John unpacks the storyline of how heaven and earth come together, there's this idea that there's the final battle and conquering of evil in the world. And that what Jesus does is set up 1,000-year reign so that the martyrs - this is in Revelation chapter 20 - that the martyrs, people who have had their heads cut off is actually who he specifies, for Jesus have a chance to reign over God's world vindicated from their suffering. And John distinguishes that from then the final return of Jesus and the merging of heaven and earth.

What's interesting about that passage is the only thing like it in the New Testament. Every other place in the New Testament that talks about the return of Jesus or the new creation, it just has "Jesus returns, sets up His kingdom defeats evil, forever and ever, and then it's the new creation."

So once again, I think we have to humble and say what John's doing in Revelation 20, it's the only thing like it in the whole Bible. So we should acknowledge this probably going to be a diversity of views. And there are. Some people think that that is a metaphorical way to talk about the vindicated suffering believers who follow Jesus who are reigning in God's kingdom and it refers to the period we're in now that even though they might be killed or martyred.

Think of the martyred Egyptian Christians who have their heads cut off on the Libyan coast last year. It's alive issues still today, and it was 2,000 years ago. And so, some people think Revelation 20 is giving a special place of honor to mark Christian martyrs in God's kingdom period right now. And that even though they die, they are reigning just like Jesus, his death was his enthronement as king.

There are some people who don't hold that view. They think that the thousand-year reign is referring to some kind of earthly kingdom that Jesus will set up here on Earth, home based in Jerusalem for 1,000 years as this intermediate kingdom, and then he'll bring the whole heaven on earth.

If you're asking for my opinion between those two, my strong hunch, I could be wrong, but my strong hunch is that the first view that it's a way of talking about the kingdom period now, where the martyrs receive a place of honor. And that even though they've been killed, actually they are reigning with Jesus Himself. So I could be wrong about that but that gets into a whole other set of questions.

Josh has...I'm looking at on the live feed. Josh, you asked, "In regards to the end of the world, is heaven coming here or does Jesus take us then

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bring heaven to earth?" That's a good question. There are differing views on that as there are on almost everything.

My humble opinion - and I could be wrong about this, but I don't think I am - I think the New Testament gives a pretty clear vision that when Jesus returns, he will bring his heavenly kingdom to earth and that God's kingdom will come and his will will be done here on Earth fully as it is in heaven.

There is one passage in the New Testament in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians chapter 4 where Paul uses an image of Jesus arriving, and then of believers coming up to meet Jesus in the air when he returns. That has been unfortunately misunderstood in the last 5,200 years or so to refer to believers getting raptured or evacuated off of planet Earth for some period of time, and then God rains hell and brimstone down on earth in what's called the tribulation. And then Jesus comes back and sets up His kingdom.

That used to be the view that I held until I just started reading these passages and realizing the evidence for that view, what I'm calling the rapture view, is zero. There's just zero evidence for it in the New Testament. This actually isn't that controversial anymore, but it was a really widely held belief and still is in especially American Christianity.

Anyway, 1 Thessalonians 4 is the only place that you could get that Jesus zaps a bunch of people up and then brings them back down again when he returns. But for a number of reasons, I think that is just a fundamental misunderstanding of what Paul's trying to say in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Just to clarify, what he means in 1 Thessalonians 4 is that he uses a word [unintelligible 00:20:12] the meeting - the believers come to meet Jesus. A much better translation would be to greet Jesus or welcome Jesus. And it's great.

Paul uses a word there to describe the arrival. How Romans would describe the arrival of the Emperor to their city is how Paul describes the arrival of Jesus in the kingdom. When he talks about believers meeting Jesus in the air, it's not so that they go away with him. It's actually that they greet him and welcome him as heaven and earth reunite here fully. Anyway, 1 Thessalonian 4 is awesome, but it doesn't have anything to do with the rapture.

Jon: Can I choose the next question?

Tim: Yes, you should, Jon.

Tim: Rachel Kovak, you sent a great question earlier today. It is a little bit different.

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Jon: She asks, "In the Old Testament, God says if you can just be a good person here on Earth, all is well. So the Old Testament, basically, it's really focused on what you're doing here on Earth now: justice, taking care of the poor, that kind of stuff.

In the New Testament, God wants to save your soul, "save your soul from hell." So the question is, why the change? Is there a difference between the perspective in the Old Testament which doesn't really talk about the afterlife very much if at all? So let's talk about that.

Then in the New Testament, all of a sudden, it seems like it's a lot more about this idea of salvation being this just getting to heaven one day when you die, saving your soul from the possibility of eternal torment.

Tim: Rachel, really good question. And by the way, you're awesome. In the New Testament, God wants to save your soul from hell. I would say that it's a real misunderstanding of what the New Testament is actually trying to say.

I would say if you read the New Testament, you would only get that idea, God wants to save you from hell, if somebody told you that that's what the New Testament is supposed to be about, and then you go read it. But that idea of summarizing the New Testament with God wants to save us from hell, you wouldn't get that idea just reading the New Testament by yourself for the first time.

Jon: I would read about hell and you would read about God wanting to save you...A salvation?

Tim: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, totally, salvation. Loads of salvation in the New Testament. Salvation from hell, I can only think of one text off the top of my head that could be understood to talk about being safe from hell. Part of it is just there's a storyline assumed there, namely, that the story of the Bible is about individuals going throughout life, and then at the moment of their death, there's a moment of final judgment, and you either go to the good place or the bad place after you die.

That way of thinking about the Bible just isn't true to what the story of the Bible is actually trying to say. It's so full of half-truths and simplifications. It's just we need to scrap it and start—

Jon: It's taking a different, more modern paradigm and then placing that back over the story of the Bible and finding it in there. But if you approach the Bible for it's actually saying, it's not necessarily there.

Tim: Yeah. Or it's just the idea of what salvation is and the idea of what hell is has a totally different kind of meaning when you actually see it in the framework of the biblical storyline. It's not that it isn't real, it just has a different meaning.

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Ultimately, I think what modern Christianity has done is piecemeal bits and words and images out of the Bible and made up a new narrative. That's kind of Bible-ish, but that isn't actually true. Now, that's all kind of theoretical.

Jon: Can I say really quick about that?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: A lot of people get nervous when you say that because it sounds a little dismissive of hell. And there's this fear that what is true is that there's going to be an accounting for what you do, that God's going to come and judge the world. There's going to be justice on the world.

I guess there's this fear of if you're dismissing the idea of hell, then people aren't going to have motivation to do the right thing. So you're taking the teeth out of this message.

Tim: And I agreed with that. That's why I would never, never dismiss the idea of hell or final judgment. What I'm saying is that the common popular understandings of what hell is are so distorted and actually not true to what the Bible's trying to tell us that we need to rebuild from the ground up again.

Apparently, we need to do a theme video on final judgment. But you can't start there. Where you start is with the story of heaven and earth. In the Old Testament, the Old Testament story begins with heaven and earth united, and then humanity through rebellion and giving God the F bum, which I'm still quite proud of that video that we've gotten a lot of flak for that one.

I mean, it was very inappropriate, which is why we tried to censor out Adam's middle finger. But that's the best we could do. Anyhow. So that's how the story begins.

And so the Old Testament storyline is then about God's selecting one family out of the nation's and what he wants to do is at least restore heaven on earth, as closely as possible in and through this one family. And so Israel is that family. And so Israel was called to be a nation of generosity and justice, and within themselves as a little picture of heaven and earth more united than it is anywhere else.

And so, Rachel, to your question, that's why to be a good person here on Earth there's a focus so much of the laws. But it's not just about being a good person here on Earth. That's what humans are for. We're made for justice and honesty and integrity and healthy relationships. That's what we're for.

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But Israel, it turns out has a rift between heaven and earth in themselves just as much as anywhere else. And so, the story of the New Testament is the story of Jesus coming as one person in whom heaven and earth completely overlap. And he comes through his kingdom to begin to do something for humans that they couldn't do for themselves through his life and death and resurrection.

Then to begin through his kingdom movement and the coming of the spirit to begin a people movement in whom heaven and earth is overlapping more and more inside themselves, and also in our communities pointing forward to the complete reunion of heaven and earth.

Jon: I love the part of the video where we show that the Lord's Prayer is "Our Father who art in heaven, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." So may your reign happen here on earth as you reign in heaven.

Tim: I'd reframe the question and say, "the Old Testament is about God's kingdom and heavenly presence, invading more and more of Earth, culminating in Jesus in the New Testament where heaven and earth locked together forever in the person of Jesus. And then through Jesus and His kingdom movement, more of Heaven is invading Earth and that will culminate in his return."

And so, what God is saving people from is themselves, is from evil and the grip that evil and selfishness has on all us, from dark spiritual powers of evil that work on humans in really mysterious and odd ways. The way that the story ends...

Again, this gets to the question earlier about where does hell fit within the story? Hell fits within the heaven or story as a place where God allows people to exist in their rebellion and in their resistance if they don't want to humble themselves before Jesus and be a part of his kingdom.

But hell in that word and what that refers to is own rabbit hole and worth exploring in its own right. But it's not someplace other than heaven and earth. It's a place where people are sustained by God's mercy and care but God allows them the dignity of not being in a relationship with Him if they don't want.

That's why it's really important that our language about hell is actually true to the Bible's descriptions of it. There are lots of different images for that. Paul the parcels most profound one I think, in this letter in 1 Thessalonians is about exclusion from the presence. It's about people who don't want to be a part of the reunited heaven and earth. And God honors that decision.

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So a lot more to be said there. But Rachel it's a good question. I think it really involves reframing our vision of what the story of the Bible is actually about.

I don't know how to say your name. Sagoterbury. Anyway, you have a great question. It says what was the knowledge of the people in the time of the Book of Kings? Hezekiah, when he learned that he had to die, He wept bitterly. Isaiah chapter 38 says, "All does not thank you or praise you?" Did Hezekiah not know about heaven?" That's a great question. It's a great question.

There's a couple of things going on there. I would say in one sense if by heaven we mean a place of disembodied non-material existence where people float on clouds and worship God forever and ever, then I would say, yeah, Hezekiah does not have that as any part of his imagination.

Jon: Nor did any of the prophets in the Old Testament.

Tim: Right. Part of that is due to even the concept itself of resurrection and some kind of continued physical existence after death, that is an idea that emerges through the storyline of the Old Testament and actually doesn't come to be talked about explicitly until pretty late in the Old Testament period.

So you have Psalms for example that come from early in Israel's history where the poet, he's praising, is thanking God for rescuing him from some disaster. And then he says, "God is so faithful, God of Israel is so faithful, even death can't keep you from your loving commitment to our people and to us and so on."

And so, you have these poems. Like Psalm 73 is a beautiful expression where he says, "There's no way that death can be stronger than God's loving commitment to me in this world." Right there you have the seedbed of the idea. And it's not speculation about life after death. It's staying God's character, He made this world good, and that death at a real level is a violation of the beauty and the goodness.

In some ways, it's woven into the natural process of the world, but in other ways, it seems like a violation. So, the idea of resurrection and life after death is born out of a conviction about God's goodness, and His character and His commitment to this world.

That's why Hezekiah is so bummed. Because the predominant view in the Old Testament is that once you die, you go to the grave. Sometimes it's translated as sheol. The uniform conviction in the Old Testament is, yeah, in the grave, nobody's worshipping God because they're dead. They're dead.

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But there emerges this hope. But is it possible that the grave is less powerful than God's love for his world? And the psalms and then the prophets land on the side of saying, "Yes, God's love is more powerful." So Ezekiel has a vision that God is going to recreate His people's someday in a profound way. And then the book of Daniel is where it comes together of resurrection, of recreation of humanity's physical existence. And then that is what is assumed. That idea is assumed all over the New Testament.

That's a long answer. It's an important one to say, the idea of even resurrection and new creation is one that emerged through time in the Old Testament story. Isn't that interesting? It actually really bothered me for a long time when I first learned that. And there's no way around it. That's clearly how the idea developed. But over time, I actually came really to see it as beautiful part of the way that the Israel and the biblical authors were waking up to the far-reaching consequences of God's covenant love for the whole world and for creation.

Anyway, sorry. I could go on. That's a good question.

Jon: Yeah, it's a good question. A lot of people are asking about...I mean marriage came up a couple of times. Because Jesus says there won't be marriage in heaven. But what's kind of cool about thinking about heaven and earth uniting is it stops becoming this very mystical place that's hard to imagine and who knows what is just floating around? Just something very concrete. Because we know what this existence is like.

So we can start to imagine, "Oh, in heaven, I can still work, I can still do projects, I can still hang out with people, have conversations. It just gets more real.

Tim: There's a continuity between our existence in heaven and earth now and the existence of renewed, healed heaven and earth in the future.

Jon: But there's some sense the continuity is going to be a bit different.

Tim: A lot different. I mean, I wouldn't even say a bit.

Jon: You wouldn't say a bit. A lot.

Tim: Well, I'd say Jesus and New Testament authors would say it's similar, but it's different.

Jon: It's a lot different. One thing is, Jesus says we're not going to get married. You could speak to that maybe a little bit. But then also speak to other ways that we see that it's different.

Tim: The most helpful analogy is to think about, has any part of the universe undergone this new birth or transformation into the new creation where heaven and earth overlap? The answer of the new testament to that is

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yes. It happened in the person of Jesus. That his resurrection existence is a little bit of new creation. And so the resurrection stories in Matthew, Luke, and John, it gives us this portrait of the new creation, but here in the old creation.

Think about how the disciples encountered Jesus. They recognized him. It was still Jesus' physical body, but it was a body that had continuity with his body from before because it still had the scars and the marks of the nails and so on. But yet at the same time, sometimes they didn't recognize him. He was the same yet different.

His body had properties that made it so that if the door was locked, he could be in the room all of a sudden, and then Jesus would be gone from the room.

Jon: Just something that we can't do.

Tim: That's remarkable. I think we just have to say, the only concrete experience that the apostles ever had of the new creation was that - those experiences with the risen Jesus.

Jon: This guy that didn't seem to adhere to the rules of physics as they understood them.

Tim: Yeah. But it was Jesus. He ate a meal with them. It was this world but it was fundamentally different from this world too. That's the analogy I think, so we are to at least take up and to explore is that the new creation is similar yet different. And we just have to say we don't know what we don't know and be okay with that.

When it comes to marriage, it is interesting. Jesus got asked a question about marriage and the resurrection and so on. It's in Matthew, I think it's 19 or 21. It might be 22. I taught on it. I teach sermons regularly at my church, Door of Hope. I have a whole 45-minute sermon on it. If you go to Door of Hope website and look in the series on Matthew, I have a whole teaching on what Jesus talked about the resurrection there.

But in a nutshell, the biblical vision of marriage is closely tied to gender and closely tied to procreation. The whole idea of the new creation, which opens up more unanswered questions is that new life won't need to be generated out of sexual intercourse.

Jon: Making babies.

Tim: I mean, that raises so many interesting questions that we don't have answers to. But the idea is that that won't be necessary in the new creation. And some marriage in the Bible is intimately tied together with procreation. And the idea is that human communities and lives are being

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sustained through healthy, loving relationships and in proximity to God, the source of all life.

That's essentially what's underneath Jesus answer to that question. There's way more to it so feel free to go into the sermon if you want. But great question.

Jon: Cool. Last question. Titus. "When we talk about heaven, I get concerned that we get so obsessed about heaven and we have no idea what it's actually going to be like. You've heard the phrase "so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good." I remember one thing that you said. We were talking about Paul statement where he said, "There's faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love." Maybe speak to that a little bit where it's like...because hope is this hope in heaven, and—

Tim: It's the hope of heaven and earth reuniting.

Jon: I'm talking about—

Tim: You are in the old story.

Jon: I'm in the old story of like, we're going to the sky.

Tim: In the biblical story, the hope is that heaven and earth reuniting.

Jon: Coming here.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And one day, we won't need that hope. Faith is where we have to live in this time where it's still coming together, and we have to have faith when it's not apparent. At one point, we won't need the faith anymore, and so all that will have left between those three things is love. That makes love the most important thing.

Tim: Yes. That makes love the meaning of the universe.

Jon: It makes love the meaning of the universe. It sounds very hippie.

Tim: Or the hippie sound very much like the Bible on that one.

Jon: So as we get excited about heaven, we really should just be getting excited about love—

Tim: Jesus boiled down the meaning of human existence to loving God, which means honoring God and about allegiance and devotion and trust, and then loving your neighbor as yourself. For Jesus, that's the meaning of life.

And so doing that, living as if the kingdom of God is really here through Jesus and His presence through the Spirit, living as if heaven and earth have already reunited through Jesus, that takes an immense amount of

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hope and immense amount of faith, and an immense amount of love that I don't always feel like I have resources for.

But we hope that our hope will become reality one day and that our faith will be a posture that comes true, but love is the point of the whole deal. That's why Paul says at the end of 1 Corinthians 13 that love endures. It never fails.

So whatever the renewed heaven and earth are all about, it's a place of healthy loving relationships that's safe where everyone can flourish. The whole point of having that vision of hope isn't that you sit around and wait for it, it's that we experience it and participate in that now. That's why we pray the Lord's Prayer every day - at least Jesus expected that we would pray it every day - is because that's such a strange idea to have.

Jon: Every day to like resetting yourself and say, "Okay, I want God's reign, His king kingdom to be here in my life."

Tim: Yeah, here on this bit of earth as it is in heaven.

Jon: Thanks for listening to this question and response episode of The Bible Project. It came from our YouTube channel. We have a few YouTube Q and Rs that we did live, the people who showed up and asked these questions. You can see those on our YouTube channel, youtube.com/thebibleproject. You can watch the other videos we have up there.

We can make these videos for free because of your generous support to this project. So thank you so much for being a part of it with us.