

Healing Hereafter: Quick-read Version

(For briefly examining nearly all the questions and conclusions found in Booklet 8.

Please explore the Full Version of this booklet for a more thorough discussion and extensive biblical and scholarly evidence validating the summaries below.)

Booklet 8: Having Your Cake and Eating It Too

Chapter 1

We finally describe the Bible's most detailed and lengthy account of Heaven to you. Its vision of perfection is quite refreshing—particularly after focusing on Hell—but that discussion prompts us to ask how a Heaven containing free-willed humans could *stay* perfectly void of suffering, especially for eternity. We biblically and logically demonstrate how both angels and humans chose to sin in equally perfect circumstances and how the lack of someone tempting us in Heaven would not change our likelihood of sinning there. Instead, the Bible explains that although the first, full humans had free will, they were given a very specific way to use that free will to sin and know evil if they so chose. But then it carefully notes that in Heaven, humans will not be given that option to use their free will to sin. We discuss how humans are changed on the day they enter the New Earth, so that the choice to sin and introduce suffering will be permanently removed, even though other free-willed decisions will remain unaffected.

Chapter 2

Such an unmistakable Heaven prompts us to ask three very important questions, and these respectively allow our framework to wrap up the loose ends regarding Hell, then Heaven, then what they both mean for us now. To be maximally

comprehensive and objective, we spend significant time unpacking them. First, we ask if God removes the choice of Hell's inhabitants to be saved as he does Heaven's inhabitants to sin, which vaults us into a discussion about why Hell has to be forever. Several potential answers people offer are evaluated. The first reason is simply that the Bible says Hell is forever, and either we don't need to know why because God does or we can trust his words because his willingness to die for us proves his trustworthiness. We clearly display how these claims are examples of logical inconsistency and circular reasoning, and we also remind ourselves why we have no reason to believe that anything God says or does is trustworthy if we are content to claim that questions about God's trustworthiness are impossibly mysterious. The second reason given is God simply decided that some decisions we make are eternal ones—setting us on an unalterable trajectory that lasts forever—one of which is a person's decision to reject God's goodness and enter Hell. We realize that this is simply another way of saying that Hell is forever because the Bible or God says so; it does not address why they say it. Thirdly, we consider if Hell might be forever because it would make Jesus' salvation less heroic or praiseworthy otherwise. In addition to balking at a forever Hell that generates any sort of praise, we explain why Jesus' accomplishment would only be diminished if Hell were less than forever *prior to* Jesus' death and resurrection. Since these events have already occurred, we learn why a forever Hell is no longer connected to the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice. Also, we find that this argument bases the punishment for our sin on how much glory and prestige Jesus gets rather than on the actual offense committed, making God's sentence of an eternal Hell an unjust one. The same problem is encountered in the next argument, which states that Hell is forever because the offense of sin was against an infinite being, meriting an infinite punishment. Again, the sentence is not justly based on the crime, but on the status of the person offended, and we illustrate the injustice

forced upon God by this claim. Fifth, some suggest that Hell is forever because people know too much once they're there to leave any room for genuine faith that would prompt God's salvation. But we recall that it is not how much evidence or reasoning we have for faith that validates it; rather, it's genuine because its object is a God who can and will do what he says and that what he says is the best. In fact, we discover why faith without supportive knowledge is literally quite dangerous and reflect on the Bible's constant encouragement to use reasoning and experience to bolster our faith. Faith is still possible in Hell, but it would only lead a person there to believe God's words that Hell is forever. Moreover, simply knowing that God can and did do what he said he would regarding Hell does not necessarily force people to believe that he can and will do everything else he says or that these other things—like pursuing eternal community with him—are the best. Since faith therefore remains possible in Hell, an alleged inability to exercise it does not keep anyone there forever. Likewise, the answer to the original question of whether or not God removes the ability of those in Hell to choose salvation is found to be no, because it's not necessary. We remember that our ability to sin in Heaven is removed to keep us from making Heaven imperfect, not to keep us from abandoning faith and losing our salvation; likewise, this restriction is unrelated to the notion of God removing people's free will to embrace faith and salvation in Hell. He doesn't have to keep Hell either perfect or imperfect, so he doesn't alter its inhabitants' free will toward either end.

Chapter 3

So if these explanations aren't adequate, then why does Hell have to be forever? The Bible gives us two answers intimately related to each other. After surveying its examples of those who are clearly going there, we find that absolutely none of them demonstrate any desire to escape their predicament in favor of the only

alternative, God's Heaven. In fact, many of them make their desire to remain separated from God even more clear, confirming once again that Hell is not functional as a temporary correctional facility. Although it is possible for people there to have faith, the Bible unanimously teaches that none do. We examine the expertly-recognized definitions of "fixed"—the Greek word *sterizo*—as it is used to describe postmortem separation from God. We learn that it applies to people's minds, not just to persistent geographical separation, further demonstrating people's constant lack of faith in Hell. The second reason that Hell is forever is the absence of God there. Hell exists because free will necessitates a place for those who choose an existence apart from perfect, eternal community with God. God cannot force himself into Hell without negating this free will and therefore the fulfillment of his purpose for humans. But because he cannot be there, he also cannot specially predestine any who have saving faith (which apparently won't be anyone in Hell anyway), instigate any written or practical presentation of Jesus' message, or be present as the Holy Spirit to guarantee salvation or empower the persistent good deeds inseparable from salvation. There is no God in Hell for people to initiate a relationship or build community with. We biblically and logically unveil that Hell has to be forever because every single component of the salvation process remains absent there: human saving faith, God's special predestination, presentation of the solution of Jesus, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a growing relationship with God, and increasing emulation of his ideals that express a genuine desire for Heaven. And after remembering that God doesn't desire anyone to choose Hell and explaining why it can only be less than forever if Heaven is impossible, forced, or inaccessible, we conclude that the biblical Hell is ultimately understandable.

Chapter 4

So we move on to the second question raised by an unmistakable Heaven: even if we can't choose to newly sin and suffer there, how can Heaven's promised lack of mourning, crying, and pain be realized if we can remember our earthly sin and suffering? The possibility that it can't is raised, and we begin to examine the strength of this claim. We learn that the Bible directly states that we won't remember our pre-Heaven life, that our skills and relationships in a Heaven of memories would be less fulfilling, and that such a Heaven would encourage segregation, inequality, and exclusion. The popularity of such a concept is found not to arise from biblical evidence for it, but rather primarily from the emotionally-appealing, cliquish, and even fabricated teachings that prevalently spread unrecognized and unchecked in many Christian circles. Some who believe in a Heaven of memories claim that the saved outside of these circles would not experience the segregation, inequality, and exclusion remembered from earthly experience because God would somehow fix this and offer perfection independently of these memories. But if remembering life before the New Earth is not necessary for God to make perfection optimal for some, it is not necessary for anyone. We address the question of how God and angels can perfectly observe and remember human suffering in the current heaven and on the New Earth if we cannot. The Bible answers by showing how their superhuman knowledge of what God accomplishes through suffering and how their superior natures and abilities allow them to recount human suffering in Heaven without tainting its perfection for them. We discuss why this can never be the case for humans in a Heaven of memories.

Chapter 5

We then embark on a closer examination of our recollections of earthly life to determine precisely what role they play in suffering, both here and in Heaven. We

realize that the memory of an evil occurrence is an equal or greater cause of suffering than the event itself, that it generates its own unique experiences of evil independent of the event, and that there is no reason to believe that the primary and secondary suffering associated with this memory ever completely subsides. The conclusion that memory is inseparable from suffering is illustrated in no better way than an inhabitant of Heaven's observation or recollection of a loved one in Hell. This example catches proponents of a Heaven of memories at a loss, as they can only address such a sordid scenario by proposing that watching friends and relatives in Hell will make Heaven so good that we won't be able to suffer with them or make us love Jesus so much that we will no longer love them enough to suffer with them—even to the point that we no longer consider them to be human. We instead follow the Bible's lead in concluding that humans in Heaven simply won't remember those in Hell and can't observe them either. But memory does not only make Heaven imperfect through suffering, but through misinformation as well. We admit how inaccurate a very large number of our recollections are and how harmful that can be, learning how the Bible therefore teaches that our imperfect reasoning will not just be altered, but completely disappear. Nonetheless, some suggest that we will be able choose in Heaven which memories to keep or get rid of. However, this process itself would cause recollection of suffering there, and we would never be able think of every evil or false memory to get rid of anyway, maintaining our ability to suffer later there because of them. Others argue that God will remove all of these recollections for us, but the absence of so many memories intimately interwoven with the good ones that remain would render our modified recollection of earthly life utterly useless nonsense. And if God also filled those gaps with new perfected "memories," we learn how they still wouldn't make any sense and ask why God doesn't just replace *all* of our earthly memory with whatever new and perfect information he pleases. Enabling us to

relearn what we perfectly can about our former lives without remembering them avoids all of these problems and makes a lot more sense.

Chapter 6

So why then does a belief in a Heaven of memories persist? The first reason we unearth is that it is such a chronic and common belief among Christians who more or less keep to themselves that no one ever challenges it. And if someone does, the resultant disturbing questions and doubt will eventually give way to this belief, as it is too ingrained to change. But as many of these folks know, the doubt will return, and in the meantime, they are unable to adequately answer these questions for someone who hasn't been around Christianity long enough to be willing to wait them out. The second reason people hold to a Heaven of memories is the concept of continuity, the idea that our lives here and on the New Earth are one big continuum, at least as much as they can be. And indeed, there are several places the Bible confirms continuity of this life with postmortem existence. However, as we survey these passages, we learn how every one of them involves individuals in Sheol/Hades, a very prevalent place in the Bible that continuity supporters rarely address or explain. Because we're never told that any region of Sheol/Hades—even Paradise—needs to be perfect, there is no problem with the Bible's accounts of people remembering their earthly lives there, at least minimally suffering there, or observing folks on earth or in other parts of Sheol/Hades from there. What we do not find in the Bible, besides the two exceptions below, are examples of human continuity in the places we are told are perfect: the current heaven and the New Earth. Jesus and judgment day are the only two times human memories of earthly life appear to be present in the current heaven, and we find no definitive memories like this in the Bible's descriptions of the New Earth. We realize that this is actually optimal; by giving the saved both a postmortem place to continuously

reunite with loved ones (Paradise) and then a discontinuous eternal destination where none of the imperfections of memory or continuity apply (Heaven), God gives us the best of both worlds.

Chapter 7

Nonetheless, supporters of a continuous Heaven offer other passages as evidence, so we review them. Some reveal that we will retain our names on the New Earth, and the Bible retrospectively identifies a few people by name who will be there. But it does not follow that they will be remembered or recognized there by other humans simply because they are present and bear the same moniker. And the rest of the passages don't concern the New Earth at all, but rather individuals prior to entering Heaven. Moreover, we discover that none of these verses mention human recognition or remembrance in Heaven in any way, nor do they identify individuals there as our earthly family or friends. We conclude that there is no biblical evidence of a family or friend reunion on the New Earth. However, we do acknowledge that there will be rewards there for deeds done here, so even if we don't remember our relationships, will we continuously remember our accomplishments? We find no biblical or logical reason a reward necessitates memory of why it was given. And we also see that the Bible only specifies two categories of rewards in Heaven: community with God and various positions of authority. The first is simply a recognition of the persistent earthly deeds done through faith and with the help of the Holy Spirit as part of the salvation process, and there is no biblical evidence that any record or human memory of these deeds endures beyond judgment day. The second is simply a necessity on the New Earth to maintain a functional society; we will need to occupy such positions whether or not we remember why we have the ones we do, so there is no role for this memory there. In fact, biblical rewards turn out to only be a problem in a continuous

Heaven, where humans can recall connotations of inequality and oppression tied to earthly societal hierarchies that would pollute a perfect understanding of our Heavenly positions.

Chapter 8

In spite of this, many hold on to a continuous Heaven because they believe that the earth itself is continuous, and therefore that this planet will be transformed into the New Earth. There are a few confusing aspects in biblically evaluating this belief, so we start discussing this earth's fate by addressing them. First we peruse the several Old Testament passages that seem to refer to a future time of bliss in a place that partially resembles this earth but partially resembles the New Earth. We learn that it is common in prophetic literature for the same prediction to be fulfilled in multiple ways or at multiple future times, and biblical examples are offered. We also discover two periods of bliss that are predicted for the distant future: a peaceful epoch on this earth prior to a final battle before judgment day and a perfect eternity on the New Earth. Because the passages above often refer to both, understandably lumping them together given their remoteness, similarity, and chronological proximity, it is difficult to ascertain which verses definitively refer to which place. However, what is certain is that the details given cannot consistently refer to both, so it is invalid to use any of these passages to claim that this earth and the New Earth are the same or continuous, and we find how contradictory it is when people attempt to do so. Instead, we identify the verses that can only be referring to the New Earth and exclusively use them to more accurately and definitively arrive at our conclusions. The ark of the covenant is then used as a specific example verifying how continuity is almost completely nonexistent from this earth to the New Earth. Then we clarify what is contextually meant by the words "earth," "restore," "redeem," and "renew" throughout the Bible

to see if they support the continuity of earth. We discover that the latter three words only ever refer to our entire planet in the context of judgment day, where we are reminded how many discontinuous things are ending. That this earth is one of them is repeatedly confirmed in a biblical blitz of what we are directly told about the earth's longevity, culminating in the unequivocal doom that it "falls-never to rise again."

Chapter 9

Given this finality we ask why the belief in a continuous earth remains popular and identify three firmly-embraced ideas that cause folks to hold on to it. First, people consider this earth to eventually be the New Earth because their entire realm of experience so far is here. This life is what they're comfortably familiar with, so this is what they want Heaven to be like. Understandable, but when we ponder how it would only be comfortably familiar to humans who lived a long and happy enough life here, how any Heaven would be just as comfortably familiar after a few years there, how many things once comfortable to us acceptably aren't anymore, and how limiting a forced best-of-earth Heaven would be to God, we concede that the only one who truly knows what is comforting to humans should be free to make a Heaven far greater than our best suggestion. God makes a Heaven that remains optimal for everyone there, regardless of their experience on earth or their familiarity with Christian community here.

Chapter 10

Second, many cling to a continuous earth because they believe that, along with humans, this planet and the entire universe were also saved by Jesus and must therefore not be destroyed, but be perfected with us. The idea that human sin somehow infects the whole universe with imperfection arises from an Old

Testament curse put on creation and a New Testament frustration that creation is subject to, but upon closer inspection we find that they are two quite different entities. We know that the consequence of human sin is the knowledge of evil and suffering, and we discover immediately after the first human sin that God quite logically curses the ground solely—and very specifically—as a way for humans to experience suffering, not because God's innocent and good creation was illogically infected by human sin. Throughout the Bible we find that whenever God curses creation, it is directly related to humans enduring the consequence of their sin, not to some fallen state of creation. Moreover, we learn that the restoration of creation found in passages describing the New Earth all directly relate to humans no longer experiencing suffering from creation as the curse is lifted, not to aspects of creation being perfected that never cause human suffering. This is because they don't need to be perfected since they were never inexplicably infected by human sin to begin with, which is precisely why Jesus is a *human* solution who only effectively removes *human* guilt and death. No just or logical atonement in the sacrifice of Jesus is found to eliminate alleged zoological, botanical, or celestial imperfection. Creation's frustration is different from the curse; it's the detrimental impact *humans* have on creation because of their sin, not the impact that God's curse has on it to punish them. Therefore, in Heaven, creation's frustration is removed by humans becoming incapable of sin, not by God lifting the curse for humans via Jesus to free them from the knowledge of evil and suffering that creation was sometimes used to effect. Creation is not guilty or deserving of punishment. Rather, it is used for human punishment, so it does not need to be continuously perfected and restored to the New Earth, and we illustrate yet again how the Bible logically confirms this.

Chapter 11

The third idea that ties people to a continuous earth is the belief that Satan is victorious over God if this earth is eventually so ruined that God decides to start over with a brand New Earth. However, we've already learned that eliminating this planet so that it never rises again is not Satan's plan, but God's, so Satan can only win if the earth is continuous. Not to mention that Satan is not defeating anything when this planet meets its end; in fact, he's just been defeated by God and is about to be sentenced to Hell forever. We also observe that even if this earth could be rebuilt from the biblical destruction it undergoes, it would be from such an unrecognizable state—literally in pieces—that there would be nothing victorious to God or meaningfully continuous to humans about it. And which time period would such an earth be continuously restored from, and how would that be comfortably familiar to anyone who didn't live during that era? Finally, we acknowledge that no earthly time period would be continuously familiar for non-human beings, like angels or any other potential saved, sentient beings in our universe, who would be forced to reside on a New Earth that is our world, not theirs. Evaluation of earth's continuity leads us to conclude that the three ideas perpetuating belief in it limit how wonderful Heaven can be, force an unjust punishment on a good and innocent creation, cause the solution of Jesus to no longer make sense, rob God of the victory of keeping his word, and force Heaven to be uncomfortably unfamiliar to most of its inhabitants.

Chapter 12

We adopt the biblical, logical discontinuous New Earth, but then we explore whether or not our bodies or interactions are still continuous there. The subjective, biblically-absent notion that we will all be blemishless and beautiful in Heaven is challenged by the reality of conflicting remembered standards of beauty and the impossibility of meeting them all simultaneously, especially while still remaining

recognizably continuous. We do biblically confirm that the resurrected bodies of both the saved and unsaved will be imperishable and likely have at least some general anatomic continuity. Then we observe Jesus' resurrected body to discover how much it can teach us about our imperishable bodies. We acknowledge that Jesus is God with divine bodily capabilities, and we aren't; moreover, his resurrected body needed to possess its precise form and abilities to convince people of his resurrection and the worthiness of sharing it with the world, and ours won't. And when we consider that the resurrected form he took on this imperfect earth is vastly different from the multiple forms he assumes later on in the perfect current heaven, we have every reason to believe that his resurrected body on the perfect New Earth that ours will be like is anything but predictable. We even discover that the body he exited the tomb with was quite unrecognizable, even to those who knew him the best. Because there is almost nothing we can reliably infer about the appearance or continuity of our bodies on the New Earth from Jesus' body, we gather our information from everywhere the Bible talks about other folks' resurrected bodies instead. The list of details generated only serves to further reestablish the exceedingly limited continuity our bodies will display, and especially in the cases of marriage and family relationships, we find the discontinuity striking, yet also sensible. We end our expedition into continuity by determining that it is almost never a biblically or logically responsible method for extrapolating information about the New Earth, and we summarize the many reasons why in two parallel stories of a person's trip to a continuous Heaven of memories and to the discontinuous Heaven of the Bible.

Chapter 13

The first story poignantly points out how a comfortably familiar Heaven of reunions inevitably results in a confusing, disappointing, segregated, and unequal

experience of suffering, resembling Hell far more than Heaven. We conclude that humans would never ultimately want this Heaven, that God would never create this Heaven for them, and that therefore, he doesn't.

Chapter 14

The second story pulls together concepts from this book's entire framework to discover the Heaven that humans would truly consider perfection, that God would choose to create, and that therefore, he biblically and logically does. It is insistently rational and most refreshing, and we have every reason to conclude that the biblical Heaven is perfectly unmistakable.

Chapter 15

At long last, we arrive at the third and final question prompted by the concept of an unmistakable Heaven, one that takes us from anticipation to application. If God can keep the New Earth perfect by allowing humans their free will, except the ability to sin, then why didn't he simply create us that way in the first place on this earth? The answer is nothing other than God's purpose for creating us: to reach out for him and find eternal, perfect community with him. He had to give us free will so that we could truly engage in a meaningful relationship with him, genuine individuals choosing to know him and his goodness, not slaves coerced into his bidding. This free will had to include the option to know what is not God, to sin and know evil. God could not possibly know if we freely desired to be in perfect community with him unless we had a period of time to freely choose not to.

Humans have to have the free will now to ultimately choose God and his goodness or sin and evil before God can know which of them desire to have their ability to sin removed in Heaven. To use our free will to make this ultimate choice is the primary reason for our existence from the time that our physical life begins to the

time that our eternal fate is decided. Indeed, there would be no point to this period of time if we're all eventually saved or if God has already chosen who will be. God has to make us mistakable before we can demonstrate who of us desire to be made unmistakable in Heaven. Our framework is complete; we are only left with the decision of where it will take us.