

**HEALING HEREAFTER**



**Finding Rational and Refreshing Answers  
for Why We're Here  
and Where We're Headed**

**Jason Dykstra, MD**



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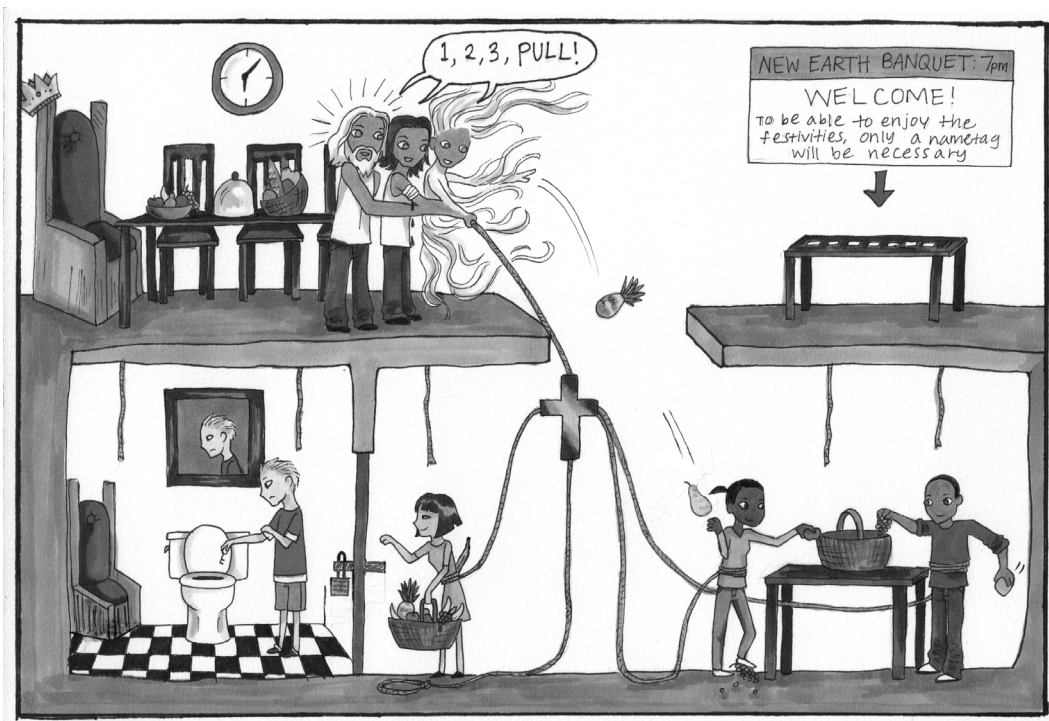
*For everyone who wonders  
what the hereafter has in store for us,  
and especially for those who want to know why*

*With deep gratitude and love  
to my Savior, spouse, and sons,  
who all significantly gave of themselves  
to make this possible*

## Booklet 9

# Where Are You Taking You?

Healing Hereafter *Applications*



1

Throughout *Healing Hereafter* we have sought to construct a framework for our beliefs about Hell and Heaven that is biblically consistent, remains logically sound, and practically addresses not just one, but the great majority of questions that arise when we ponder the Christian afterlife for as long as we have. More questions might remain, but I know of no ground left untouched that is vital to explore. In our exploration, we have discovered a framework that is uniformly based on one thing: God's chief purpose in creating human beings (Acts 17:26-28, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). Once we were able to identify that, God, free will, sin, evil, suffering, death, the afterlife, Hell, faith, the solution of Jesus, a relationship with God, doing good, perfection, and Heaven all started to fall into place within this construct, making a lot of sense. This was encouraging because God *should* make sense when he needs to, every aspect of the afterlife *should* be explained by whatever framework approximates the truth, and this framework *should* always remain consistent with God's purpose for it if he is truly behind it. God will get his way in a Godmade worldview. As a fresh and fast-paced way of summarizing much of what we discussed, we're going to ask whether or not God gets his way in many ideas we found to be wanting, and then we'll do the same for those we found to be working. The contrast between the two is stunning!

If God's purpose for humans is to find perfect community with him forever, does God get his way if that perfection cannot be maintained because the people in Heaven always have the freedom to sin? Or if those God is supposed to be communing with can always choose to go to Hell where God is not? Or if Heaven is simply the ultimate vacation resort for humans where God merely functions as the management, if even that? Or if people can experience this community with him without wanting a growing relationship with God? Or if Heaven is actually here, no better than earth or even than Hell? God's purpose for creating humanity is thwarted if any one of these things is true.



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What about God's process of salvation? Does God get his way in choosing to make sure that at least some people are saved if the solution allowing salvation doesn't fix the problem? Or if we're inexplicably supposed to erase our imperfection by doing x, y, and z? Or if Jesus wasn't perfect and therefore had to die for his own sins and not ours? Or if he never died at all to atone or be a substitute for our own death? Or if he never was resurrected to act as our ransom and exemplify God's hope of resurrection for us as well? Or if the faith required for salvation doesn't have any connection with the purpose for humanity that it was supposed to be achieving, such as the disconnected faith that is not in finding God, but solely in the steps of the gospel or in human works? Or if the solution he painstakingly provided through Jesus is not the only way, just one unnecessary way amongst far easier paths? God's process of salvation is meaningless if any one of these things is true.

What about God maintaining his virtue of justice? Does God get his way if his punishment for our sin doesn't justly fit the crime? Or if he predestines us to sin and suffering, only to hypocritically blame us for them, command that we stop them, and claim his own innocence through it all? Or if he uses a double standard to send some to Hell and some to Heaven without giving anyone a say in the matter? Or if instead, that double standard is to automatically save some human spirits, no strings attached, while requiring faith from everyone else? Or if he doesn't find ways to equally offer the gospel to everyone, while maintaining that he wants all to be saved through Jesus? Or if he never finally punishes evil, forever delaying avengement of those tyrannized by it and forever subjecting to imperfection those who want to fulfill his purpose for them by being made perfect? God cannot maintain his virtue of justice if any one of these things is true.

What about Hell? Does God get his way if Hell doesn't exist, disallowing humans the free-willed choice whether or not to experience meaningful community with God in Heaven? Or if love wins "because God's love will eventually melt even the hardest of hearts,"<sup>21</sup> as God punishes the Hell out of them until they "want" Heaven? Or if Hell as a correctional facility proves time and time again in the Bible to drive people farther away from community with God rather than closer?

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God doesn't get his way with Hell if any one of these things is true.

What about Heaven? Does God get his way if the suffering and misinformation of memory perpetually mar its perfection? Or if Heaven maintains inequality, mistrust, and sorrow because everyone there can remember the unfair or tainted experiences we had and the choices we made here? Or if a continuous Heaven forces God's imagination of what it could be into the best-of-earth that many people think they want it to be? Or if a continuous earth prohibits God from victoriously being able to do what he said he will do in ending this planet to fashion a perfect, brand New Earth? God doesn't get his way with Heaven if any one of these things is true.

What about God's authority? Does God get his way if nothing but free will dictates what will happen to humans forever, never able to make Heaven truly Heaven for his and their sakes? Or if his non-human creation on earth or in Heaven will always be subject to the suffering caused by humanity's ability to choose to know and understand evil? Or if the only way God's love can win is by humans repeatedly subtracting from, adding to, and changing the content and meaning of the words God gives us in the Bible? Does God get his way if human words trump his own, if his word is not good enough to be the final word? No.

But God does get his way when his purpose for humans of eternal perfect community with him dictates and can be found within everything he does concerning our salvation. When this purpose allows God to remain true to his good and rational nature in his creation of a human spirit, the presence of the free will tied to it, and the resultant potential for evil, suffering, and Hell. When God can remain just by making the punishment for the problem of sin perfectly fit the crime. When God can remain merciful and loving by sacrificially offering himself as a solution that no human deserves. When God can remain logical by providing the gospel of Jesus' perfection, death, and resurrection that truly applies to and solves both our problem and our punishment. When the way of salvation he arduously provides through Jesus is the only way, not an illogical manmade mantra or an incompatible mess of multiple paths. When the people who end up in the Godmade Heaven are those who actually want to

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be in perfect community with God. When the type of faith God looks for in humans naturally results in this community as well, partially on earth and fully in Heaven. When he makes good on his claim that he wants everyone to be saved by eventually giving all humans equal access to the gospel and never forcing anyone to choose to go to Hell. When he proves he despises all the evil that he commands against by entering into a relationship with us so that we value what he's all about enough to obey him, even giving us his Holy Spirit to help us do good amidst evil. When Heaven uniquely transcends that evil and imperfection that will still and always remain on earth. When Heaven is about him and his people, not human hedonism. When his just wrath compensates those who oppress humanity. When he judges everyone at the same time and according to the same standard. When Hell is what humans have chosen, instead of a not-so-correctional facility that only accomplishes the very opposite of God's purpose for them. When God doesn't pretend to want people to be able to freely choose him on earth, only to get nasty about coercing them to choose him in Hell. When he makes Hell understandable by honoring their choice and the consequences of that choice when they decide to be there. When he makes his discontinuous, equal, and immeasurably great brand new Heaven unmistakable by acting to assure that it will forever fulfill his purpose of eternal, perfect community with him for all who want it. When he successfully communicates a consistent, straight-forward, rational, and practical hereafter throughout history via his words in the Bible. When his words are comprehensively, honestly, and understandably conveyed to us, without manipulation. When humans do not attempt to usurp his authority with what they deem to be their own. God gets his way when God's word is the final word.

## 2

**A**s we near the end of our time together, it is my fervent desire that whatever difficulties, misconceptions, antagonism, or

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confusion you have been enduring regarding the hereafter have at least begun to heal. Christianity has been described as a “unique synthesis of time-honoured ideas into a code that had both a universal resonance and a simplicity.”<sup>2</sup> That is exactly what it has become to me—and much more, of course—since I openly discovered how the Bible resolved my own questions about its afterlife. I earnestly hope your consideration of how *Healing Hereafter* interacts with your belief system produces a similar result. My goal was to make sense to you, to objectively inform you, and to offer the genuine, lasting hope that comes with a comprehensive biblical exploration of Hell and Heaven. Perhaps the framework above accomplished that all by itself, and if so, I am very excited for you and thankful to you for working through it with me!

What remains are my encouragements to you, both to those who picked this book up with faith in something other than Christianity and to those who identify themselves as Christians, as you all synthesize this into something practical to apply and enjoy. For the person who is not a Christian, wow! You made it a long way through a lot of the Bible to get here, and you certainly have my respect and gratitude for doing so! I am known for being somewhat long-winded even by the people who like me the most, and you stuck with me without having even met me! If it was because you benefited from what God’s words have to tell us, that is awesome. But regardless, your perseverance has proven that you didn’t start this book satisfied. Not many folks are entirely content with their understanding of the afterlife if they are willing to finish a whole book about the Bible’s. And as my final effort to help heal your hereafter, these are my encouragements for you.

*First, you’re not getting the whole story from those who preach a halfway Hell.* The idea of a temporary Christian Hell is unbelievably attractive to anyone—including me—who has meaningful relationships with those who are choosing to go there. However, the problem is obvious and unavoidable; such a Hell *is* unbelievable when you are honest and open about what the Bible consistently and persistently has to say. Thankfully, God is intimately aware of the emotional turmoil that this realization produces; after all, he took on himself the sin

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and suffering of the world, under circumstances that any of us would consider Hellish, to make it possible for us to escape Hell! And he continuously looks for those here who choose to escape, laments those who don't, and longs for those who are choosing Hell to choose him instead. I have never met anyone who warns us about Hell and agonizes over Hell more than God does in the Bible! But he will not force us to want him against our will—his purpose for humanity will fail if he does so—and we know now that an eternal Hell has to be accessible if the Godmade Heaven is to be achievable. God has made Hell understandable, not attractive. He wants us to learn about it but also to loathe it, so that we will let him heal each one of us from it.

Just like a good doctor. Suppose you know there is a problem with your health but are confused about what it is. You anxiously visit a doctor who examines you and runs several tests. He discovers that you have a horrible but potentially curable cancer, so long as a prompt but potentially difficult treatment regimen is implemented. But since he knows that this is unpleasant news to share and a truth that you might not want to accept, he convinces himself that it would be most helpful to withhold this information from you. Instead, as he goes over the test results with you, he adds to, subtracts from, and changes the meaning of the findings to persuade you that you have a condition that is only temporary and will almost certainly heal, knowing that you will trust him as an authority on the matter, as you don't possess an extensive understanding of the evidence yourself to question him with. This news does not really make sense to you, but it's what you wanted to hear from a seemingly reliable source, so you decide to disregard other research you have done to explain your persisting symptoms, desiring to maintain that whatever is causing them can't possibly be as bad as that research suggests. Six months later, you learn the truth, except now your cancer has become incurable. While you may have received some false relief during the time of your initial ignorance, how would you feel now? Wouldn't you wish that both your doctor and you had valued the difficult truth over your feelings and desires? Would you ever recommend that another person seek this physician's advice? Would you not confront this doctor and warn his other patients for their sakes, but ultimately

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for his as well? And these would be your reactions under the best of circumstances, right? You have even more reason to act in the same way toward those who preach a halfway Hell, both for the sakes of those who listen to them and for their own. Conversely, God—the best healer of all—makes the cure to experiencing Hell understandable to you now at the risk of discomfort, inconvenience, and offense, so that you believe that it's bad enough to accept his solution for you before it's too late. Now that's a good physician!

*Second, you're not getting the whole story from a hurtful Hell either.* A Hell that God is indifferent to people going to is hurtful. A Hell that God wants people to go to is more hurtful. A Hell that God forces people to go to is even more hurtful. A Hell that God forces people to go to and blames them for is still more hurtful. And a Hell that God forces people to go to, blames them for, and enjoys their torment in is the most hurtful Hell of all! You may have heard such Hells preached from either noble or nasty motives, from genuinely loving warnings or hateful prejudiced proclamations. They're not holding back the truth; they're going far beyond it. The doctor here has no qualms telling you all about your cancer or the imminent need for curative treatment, consistent with other research you did prior to the appointment, fearing the worst. But then he goes on and on about the discouraging details of it, far more than you ever truly need to know. And perhaps, as his lunchtime approaches, he is quite indifferent to the emotional response you're exhibiting. Oh, and if you happen to be the type of person he doesn't particularly care for, he may even seem to want you to have this cancer. Or knowing the lifestyle choices that put you at risk, he may not just make a point to blame you for it but appear to take pleasure in doing so! Unfortunately, although deep down you know the best course of action, your onerous encounter infuriates you to the point where you seek a second opinion from the first doctor, who pleasantly assures you that everything will be alright in the end, even though the story ends exactly as the first one did. What would your reaction be to the overadvising doctor? You'd be glad he valued the difficult truth over your feelings and desires, but not at the utter expense of them. Would you ever recommend that another person seek this physician's advice?

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Would you not at least consider confronting this doctor and warning his other patients for their sakes, but ultimately for his as well? And these would be your reactions under the best of circumstances, right? You have even more reason to act in the same way toward those who preach a hurtful Hell, both for the sakes of those who listen to them and for their own. As improbable as it may seem to you, many of these overadvising folks don't mean you ill will; there is value to be found in their message, but it is so restricted by their condemnatory disregard for your emotional considerations that it ceases to be recognizable or helpful. Conversely, God—the best healer of all—makes the potentially curable Hell understandable to you now. He expects you to take responsibility for the lifestyle choices that put you at risk, but he is distraught at the diagnosis, comes alongside you to understand your feelings, voluntarily reproduces your symptoms in his own body so that he can truly empathize with you, and finally gives his life for you by donating the vital organ you need to replace your diseased one, all so that you believe that he's good enough to accept his solution for you before it's too late. Now that's a great physician!

*Third, you're not getting the whole story on Heaven.* Heaven is not an endless church service where we only wear robes, play harps, and sing on the clouds before God. God created us for far greater experiences than that. It is not an ultimate island getaway where we finally get the perfect tan—as alluring as that may be for someone like me who works in the dark all day! God created us for far more of himself than that. It is not a futile fusion of earth/Hell/Heaven, now and forever. God created us for far more perfection than that. And it is not the longest and most painful continuous family/friend reunion that a person with mostly non-Christian loved ones could possibly witness. God created us for far more equality than that. What the New Earth *is* is a refreshingly discontinuous, diversely non-segregated, blank slate where people can perfectly find God, be who he created them to be, and enjoy everyone else in a brand new place full of wonder and opportunity. Satan loses, God wins, and *all* God's people are unmistakably and forever lovin' it! Even more than McDonald's.

And that brings us to my final encouragement for you. No, not

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McDonald's; I'm still a doctor interested in your physical health, not just your spiritual health, after all! *With this Godmade Heaven in mind, be open-minded enough to truly consider all that we have discussed, so that you might find perfect community with this amazing God.* To this end we have explored God's words comprehensively, entertained and addressed numerous counterarguments, and tried to anticipate and answer subsequent questions. That's how I got to this point myself, and quite honestly, the journey has been so beautifully satisfying and exciting that I've much enjoyed sharing it with you! Make no mistake, none of this means that what I've said is correct, but it does demonstrate that I truly want you to have the most objective and thorough understanding of the biblical Hell and Heaven as possible. Therefore, I encourage you to respond to this book by asking the question I posited at the very beginning: Does this framework—compared to the one that you currently have—more adequately and comprehensively offer consistently applicable explanations for *all* of the questions and topics that we've pondered, and why or why not? Teach me where I can learn from you, and let yourself learn what you can from me. If a unified story that works has arisen from these pages, then I encourage you to enjoy being part of it! And hey, at the very worst, merely purchasing this book will bring a little spring to people in need anyway, right? But you read this far for a reason, didn't you? Don't be satisfied to let them be the only ones who benefit from your investment!

Now for my encouragements for those who are Christians. *First, I similarly encourage you to be open-minded.* The way that you've always understood Hell and Heaven may not jive with all that we've found them to be. The things that you'd really like to believe about the hereafter may not be consistent with everything that the Bible has to say about it. And the historical or denominational constructs that you use to describe your concept of Hell and Heaven may not be giving you God's whole story either. These constructs are extremely useful for organizing and summarizing our convictions, and doing so can be very helpful. But because they're so convenient and concise, too easily and too often our beliefs are derived from them instead of from God. I fully realize that what we've discussed in this book is



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itself a construct to help organize and summarize our beliefs. That is why I intentionally used the Bible at every opportunity that I could to support what was said, and you have been repeatedly challenged to use the words of God to validate my own (1 Corinthians 4:6). I know that it's more comfortable to maintain the status quo, I know that it's easier to reject new concepts in favor of old ones, and I know that it's more convenient to invoke mystery—the “God knows, so I don't have to” approach—to “explain” everything that is confusing about God rather than doing the work to discover how much he really does reveal to us.

But this comfort, ease, and convenience comes with a price: the recurrent doubts of poorly answered questions, the aching suspicion that your convictions just don't make sense, and the nagging awareness that your beliefs can't possibly fit together into one unified story that works. It's easy to give a neat and tidy answer to one deep question of life while ignoring how that answer completely falls apart when you ask the other deep questions. But there's another price to pay, one that no Christian should ignore. For good or bad reasons, the belief that they are going to Heaven is so ingrained in many Christians that accepting mystery as an answer to questions about Heaven doesn't threaten that belief as it should. Likewise, they'll accept mystery as an answer to questions about Hell, because the belief that they're not going there is so entrenched that it doesn't faze them if those questions aren't adequately addressed. However, they forget that the non-Christians that they offer mystery to don't have any existing confidence in Christianity to overcome a suboptimal answer to a crucial question about the hereafter. Often, the only reason non-Christians have to believe *is* the answer, so when they're told that they can't ever know the answer and don't need to, they understandably turn to other worldviews for a better answer. You can give them a better answer, so decrease your doubt and their disappointment by engaging the Bible to find one. Respect mystery where it *must* be found; we cannot and don't need to understand everything about God. But reject mystery where it promotes excuses or complacency in learning what we *do* need to understand about God. It has been the persistent, dedicated task of this book to offer you a

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framework as rooted in the Bible as possible, providing answers to life's deep questions that are not only coherent together but support each other. So Christians, I also invite you to ask the question I posited at the very beginning: Does this framework—compared to the one that you currently have—more adequately and comprehensively offer consistently applicable explanations for *all* of the questions and topics that we've pondered, and why or why not? Teach me where I can learn from you, and let yourself learn what you can from me. If a unified story that works has arisen from these pages, I encourage you to enjoy being part of it!

*Second, as with non-Christians, you're not getting the whole story either, just with different consequences.* If your Hell is a halfway Hell, there's no lasting danger in not telling people about it. Where's the urgency of explaining an eternity that's never forever? Why rock the boat and risk the inconvenience and potential backlash? There's no pressing reason for them to believe you anyway, right? In fact, what's the hurry to accept it yourself? Why not experience the diverse existence of living a little bit with and a little bit without God here, exploring Hell for awhile just to be sure that's not where the real party is, and then settling down in Heaven to get in on that perfection action? After all, the more you bring Heaven to earth, the less of earth there is to experience, and everyone will get plenty of Heaven later anyway! Besides, God can't possibly really care how you live your life if the worst you'll get from him is a time out in the garbage dump. And since apparently, "God says yes, we can have what we want, because love wins,"<sup>3</sup> he'll love whatever you want to do anyway. Beware! This mentality can develop very quickly, because no matter how hard you try to muster motivation to serve the God of a halfway Hell, these questions will always be lurking in your mind, won't they? The halfway Hell gives non-Christians little reason to believe and Christians plenty of reasons to leave. Ironically, it's the same with a hurtful Hell. How can you get motivated in any positive way to share with someone a God who makes people involuntarily sin, suffer, and go to Hell? How persistently can you obey God's command to love your neighbors by telling them how much God hates them unless they repent? How enthusiastic can you get to spread the "good" news that

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God wants to torment them forever if they don't believe? How long before you throw in the towel on sharing this God because you've thrown in the towel on God himself? Sooner or later, the hurtful Hell gives non-Christians little reason to believe and Christians plenty of reasons to leave too.

But not getting the whole story on Hell isn't the only danger. The same danger applies to not getting the whole story on Heaven. How exciting is it to do and share the x, y, and z required for any one of several manmade Heavens? How pumped up do you get always trying to be good enough to get into Heaven, and how willing are you to welcome others into that stressful salvation? That Heaven traps you under the endless oppression of legalism, having to be a flawless rule-keeper, or God will turn you away. But in the end the to-do list gets so overwhelming that *it* turns you away. Doing good deeds is a good thing, but many of you know exactly what I'm talking about, don't you? On the other end of the spectrum are those who don't do; they just believe. They pray the prayer, recite the four spiritual laws, memorize a picture with two cliffs and a cross-shaped bridge, or quote John 3:16, and call it good, living their life much like before, but now with the expectation of a really nice eternal vacation at the end. However, even the beach resort Heaven can't maintain its appeal. The more fortunate among them already have access to the best beach resorts here, without much room for improvement in a Heavenly one. Why share that Heaven with friends, when you're pretty sure that they'll enjoy your waterfront condo more anyway? And because even the perfect beach resort can't be *that* much better than what we've got here, the less fortunate among them share this hesitation, not considering such an earth-like Heaven good enough to risk changing their whole lives for, let alone uncomfortably bringing it up with others. After all, if Heaven has merely resembled an eternal vacation for you, how often have you found yourself sharing that with someone else? Believing in the gospel, in whatever form is most understandable to you, is a great thing, but many of you know exactly what I'm talking about, don't you?

Manmade Heavens are nothing more than a big disappointment, and it really isn't much of a surprise that the best Heavens that

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humans can come up with are no more than the best earth that they can conceive, like the simultaneous earth/Hell/Heaven or the continuous New Earth. So why should it be surprising that these mistakable Heavens ultimately don't satisfy either? If each human's purpose is meant to be fulfilled in perfect community with God, these Heavens can't satisfy because God is so conspicuously absent from them! It's not overworked legalism, knowledgeable complacency, or continuity that will excite you about the Godmade Heaven; it's developing ever-increasing wonder and intimacy with the creator who can't wait to finally, fully engage in an eternal relationship between him and his own. So never settle for less than the whole story on Hell and Heaven, so that you will always have reason to believe, share, and be excited about what God is doing!

*Finally, let God's words enlighten others' words, not vice versa.* Some of you have known the whole story all along, maybe even from childhood, and your problem is not getting too little of this story but getting too many other stories. As part of the church crowd you regularly encounter a lot of different opinions about Hell, Heaven, and other things from a lot of different people, an experience that has been described as "a deep, wide, diverse stream that's been flowing for thousands of years, carrying a staggering variety of voices, perspectives, and opinions."<sup>4</sup> But with no course to direct it, this stream becomes uncontrollable, spilling beyond its boundaries and bringing disaster instead of refreshment. The cacophony of opinions brings confusion, not clarity, and the flooding stream brings uncertainty, not security.

There is a better stream. "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1). This stream has one source: God. It carries one voice, not many. It will never flood, because no opinions can ever be added to swell it. It brings life, not disaster. His constant words enable your consistent beliefs, achieving powerful purposes. But only if you jump in. Reading, studying, remembering, and connecting all of what God teaches us in the Bible, not just the familiar or comfortable parts, empowers you to answer "impossible" questions, quench resurfacing doubts, bring clarity to mystery,

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and makes sense of what God has, is, and will be doing throughout history. It has for me, and I want you to enjoy that same security and satisfaction! So take a break from the bookstore to benefit from the Bible. Leave the swollen stream to immerse yourself in the water of life. And when you return, you'll be able to spot every part of that stream that floods beyond its bounds long before it can ever sweep you away. The love, logic, and longevity of God's words are unmatched and beautifully come together in divine ways to make sense of *history*, and I would be thrilled if our time together has enabled you to experience that!

Very little of what I've shared with you had its origin in sermons, websites, books, videos, or any formal education in theology. Rather, it is primarily the product of a now 20-year old challenge to continually be immersed in the Bible. God names as blessed the one "whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers" (Psalm 1:1-3). In contrast, God's reaction is quite different to those who don't immerse themselves in God's river but prefer to flood the swollen stream instead: "Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar (Proverbs 30:6)." Some teach that Jesus considers our personal opinions about the Bible to be authoritative.<sup>5</sup> Thank God they're not! Why? Because adding to, subtracting from, changing, and irresponsibly extrapolating the words of the Bible wouldn't just allow you to justify halfway Hells, hurtful Hells, or hohum Heavens; they would allow you justify any opinion you want! The same wide stream that brings these hereafters has also brought crusades, witch trials, holocausts, and deadly cults, hasn't it? When the Bible is nothing more than black letters with "all that white space waiting to be filled with our responses and discussions and debates and opinions and longings and desires and wisdom and insights,"<sup>6</sup> God's words become no more than our words—whatever it is that we want those words to be—which makes it pointless for him to communicate anything to us at all! Besides, God has some black letters to specifically address our white space, the very words he closes the last book of the Bible with

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to leave fresh in our minds. “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19). God’s words are not to be amplified, abridged, or paraphrased, either in Revelation or elsewhere (Proverbs 30:6). And those who welcome and encourage the spread of information that misrepresents Jesus’ words are held equally guilty (2 John 1:9-11). We must be careful to validate whatever we share with others about our eternal homes as much as possible, as “we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations.”<sup>7</sup>

None of this is to say that the opinions of others are worthless, and when the Bible is not clear to you conceptually, literarily, or historically, such insights can be of great assistance—as can creeds, confessions, catechisms, and denominations. But *only* by making God’s words more understandable, *never* by contradicting them. Remember when Paul—a greater Christian icon than any clergy today—taught in Berea, his audience welcomed his knowledge and education, but they weren’t satisfied with his words until they had “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11). They didn’t resort to the hipper neighboring synagogue, consult the rabbi with the most letters behind his name, or pick up the newest best-seller scroll. They read the Bible. If they needed to double-check Paul, then we need to double check everyone. And it’s not only important for you to seek others advice on the Bible to learn from them; it’s important for you to seek it to be corrected by them if your opinions are causing the stream to flood. This is true for me as well. It’s no accident that God’s book permeates this one, and the framework above underwent considerable and constant revision whenever the Bible necessitated it. However, I still want you to double-check me, even above and beyond the hundreds of referenced verses that we’ve discussed, because my words must align with God’s, not vice versa. Virtually every day that I have spent writing this book, my prayer has been that when you are finished examining my words, they will

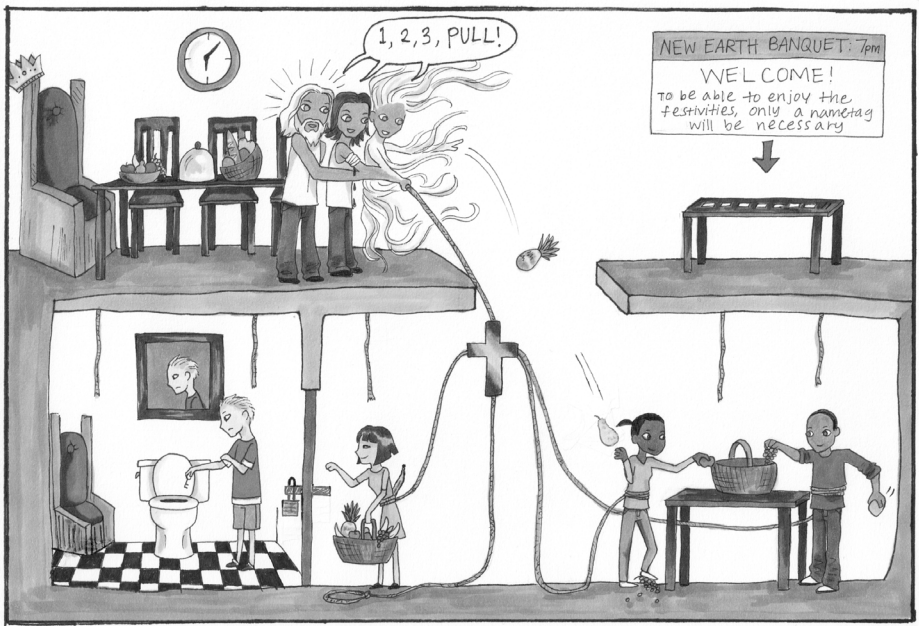
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have done so. Let it be, amen.

God, purpose, free will, evil, suffering, death, salvation, perfection, the afterlife, Hell, and Heaven are all kinda big topics, and we've covered a lot of ground together! There's a lot to think about and a lot to decide. But this book is all about getting the whole biblical story of Hell and Heaven to you, so that you can make an informed choice. It's my best prescription for healing hereafter, and this treatment offers me no financial incentives in self-referral! It's rational, refreshing, and straight from God's words. And as it becomes familiar and freeing, may Hell be understandable for you now and Heaven be unmistakable for you always!

Dictation complete.

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## WHERE ARE YOU TAKING YOU?

In this pictorial summary of the major components of our framework, we see the three persons of the divine trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—about to accomplish the work of saving those who have freely exhibited faith that God’s solution of Jesus, via the cross, will be both effective and best. Several other potential solutions are extended to them, but all permit them to take credit for doing the work of their salvation, which ends up being completely ineffective anyway. God equally extends his gospel to every existing human, whatever their background. Those who will be saved are equipped by the restoring fruit of the Holy Spirit to bring spring to everyone, both by the word of the gospel and by the good deeds arising from a growing relationship with God that progressively reflects his perfect nature. However, God’s people imperfectly accomplish this when they complacently ignore their God-given gifts, hypocritically disfigure God’s own substantial efforts to relieve suffering, and selfishly hold back his blessings for themselves. Nonetheless, they each have and will continue to be increasingly effective in inviting others to God’s saving solution and bountiful best. God cannot foresee or predestine the response of anyone who has yet to freely decide. There is a limited time to reply to the gospel, so that God can accomplish his purpose in creating those who want eternal, perfect community with him. Those who don’t want it fix their own minds and existence in a place where it can no longer be made available to them—the Hell where there is no God to keep them from assuming their own rightness and exhibiting their own authority. Those who do want community together with God will take advantage of the eternal New Earth festivities, with God crowned as the only rightful authority. They biblically bring only their name and self-awareness continuously with them—leaving the imperfections of memory otherwise behind—which enables rather than erodes their perfect enjoyment of the Godmade, unmistakable Heaven.

## Notes

1. Bell, R. (2011). *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 108.
2. Stanford, P. (2002). *Heaven: A Guide to the Undiscovered Country*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 27.
3. Bell, R. (2011). *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 119.
4. Ibid., p. xi.
5. Ibid., p. x.
6. Ibid.
7. Lewis, C.S. (2005). *Made for Heaven: and Why on Earth It Matters*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 93.