

*This comprehensive exploration delves into the biblical narrative of God's kingdom, emphasizing the dual existence of physical and spiritual realms and the ongoing cosmic conflict between good and evil.*

## **Unveiling The Battle For God's Kingdom**

By Rev Thomas L. Vent ThM

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# UNVEILING THE BATTLE FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

Explaining the mysterious story of the  
supernatural battle to stop God's kingdom with man  
that resulted in our current "two-world" existence

REV. THOMAS L. VENT

*With personal reflection and application of each chapter  
by Dr. Nathan T. Vent, PhD*

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## PREFACE

As I think back on my life and the road I have travelled as a believer in Jesus Christ, as an ordained minister and Pastor, I believe that my interest in the Bible was first triggered when I was about 8 years old and I finally decided to look inside that old zipper cased Bible that always sat on the top of a broken, old console TV that sat in the living room of the small apartment I grew up in. I moved it and handled it many times but one day I finally decided to pull the old, tattered zipper down that encased the contents and look at the pages within. I had been told by my grandmother that it was an old family Bible passed to her by someone in their family, but the strange thing was, I had never seen anyone in my family use it or even look at it. It seemed to me that it was more of a religious relic being kept by a very non-religious family for some reason. I still clearly remember turning the pages and reading some of the content and thinking this was totally foreign words and thoughts to me. The pages were old and brittle with a distinct smell of aging paper as I flipped through them. After deciding it was something beyond me, I zipped it back up and returned it to its designated spot-on top of the old TV cabinet. It would be seven or eight years later, as a teenager, that I would be confronted by the Bible again. This time, being enticed to church by my girlfriend, I listened to the stories contained in the Bible, and in some strange way it struck a chord deep inside me. A spark of interest flared up...a curiosity was stirred in me. Those initial experiences in church and being introduced to the King James Version of the Bible, eventually led to me hearing about the fall of humanity and Jesus and His place in the Bible's story as the Savior of mankind. After months of being drawn by the Holy Spirit, I eventually came to Jesus for

forgiveness of my sins and surrendered my life to Him as my Savior and that started me on a lifelong path of discovering what this unique and unusual book was all about.

The years to follow were filled with endless hours of reading, studying, and sharing with others the contents of this book as I understood them at that time. Throughout this journey, which has continued almost 50 years now, I have learned important and valuable information *about* the Bible, but I have also experienced many potholes, dead ends, shady methods, and shallow practices that, at times, actually blurred my understanding of the Bible. I understand now that the Bible is a very complex, complicated, and most of the time, very difficult book when it comes to understanding the true purpose and meaning of the stories in it. I have had my share of lessons, sermons, and books that promoted the “simplicity” of the Bible, the favorite stories of the Bible, or understanding the Bible in just “10 minutes a day!” (a real book). But, unfortunately, none of them opened up the true, complex story of the sixty-six various writings that make up our protestant Bible (the Catholic Bible contains a few writings that were added later by a Catholic council).

With this book, I am sharing what I have come to understand over my years of Bible study, to be the general flow and purpose of the Bible stories and the importance of their content. This will not be a simple task. It will not be easy (*for me*) to *condense* and *summarize* the entire biblical story, *God’s story*, into one short book. I am long winded by nature. It will require that I resist the temptation to discuss some favorite theological issues, focus on favorite stories, and avoid most *denominational issues* that have tended to compartmentalize and divide Christianity. I will also try

to resist using the theological *microscope* that is prevalent in most church/denominational circles who often...

*Take an obscure or difficult biblical issue, form an identity from it, gather people around it, and then claim it to be the truth that "makes us right and everyone else wrong."*

As prevalent as that tendency is, I have no interest in this practice. There are theologians on all denominational sides that proclaim to have solved the *mysteries* of the mind of God. While most theologians and preachers are uniting around pet doctrines and favorite biblical themes, average people are being starved of the Bible's *true* purpose. Simply put, my mission with this book is to review God's story in such a way that people will have their interest stirred to learn more about it.

Maybe you also grew up as I did with a dusty family Bible sitting around and you never found a reason to explore its contents or message. Maybe you have always heard that the Bible is full of errors or scientifically incorrect. Maybe you have been told that Jesus was just another man or a prophet, but He was not God. Maybe you grew up going to church but quit because it got too boring, or you didn't "get into it." Maybe you still go to church but suffer from sermons built on pet verses, or social topics and still do not really understand the story of the Bible. Whatever your reason for avoiding the Bible, I hope this book will at least encourage you to reconsider your reservations and hopefully take a step on a lifelong journey to understand God better.

### ***Encouragement From Dr. Vent On Applying Each Chapter***

*It is so easy to read a book out of genuine curiosity, learn some insightful information, highlight some interesting points, and*

*then place it back on the shelf. Unfortunately, this happens far too often with the Bible. The Bible is not a book about religion, history, or moral guidelines. The Bible says about itself that it is alive and powerful; in fact, the purpose of the Bible is to show us who God truly is and who we really are. Inside the cannon of the sixty-six books that encompass scripture, we find God revealing His kingdom through various ways and different spokesmen. It is a supernatural kingdom not of this world which makes the Bible a supernatural book. We see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as our triune God works through people to prepare an everlasting Kingdom.*

*There is nothing more important in your life than being in His Kingdom and nothing in this world more rewarding than being used by God to influence others for His Kingdom. Reverend Vent provides for us the thread that runs throughout Scripture of God building His Kingdom on earth. From Genesis to Revelation, this book will highlight God in action as He prepares for Himself a people who will trust Him, love Him, and worship Him. I encourage you dear reader that as you read each chapter to do three things: First, take your time and read each chapter carefully and dwell on the Biblical passages for an extra moment or two. Let God's Word sink into your inner being and hear what Yahweh is telling you. Secondly, consider yourself and your relationship with God as you learn about His Kingdom. Be careful not to think "well that's for people a long time ago" or "that may be someone else's problem but not mine." Keep it about you and God primarily and then from there consider how your life is impacting others for God's Kingdom. Ask yourself what does this mean for me in my day-to-day life? Lastly, ask the Lord for faith to see and to accept the supernatural realities*



*contained in the Bible and ask Him for wisdom to be able to apply the precious truths that have been provided for us.*

*After you finish carefully reading through each chapter, there will be some questions for you to consider. Some of the questions ask for a simple yes or no answer but I would encourage you to elaborate on your answers. Some questions ask for examples from your own life and others may ask for you to describe past events. The purpose for the questions is to encourage you to reflect and give deliberate consideration on some of the important points made in each chapter. It may be helpful for you to write down your answers in a notebook or in a Word document. The goal is to apply God's word to our life and the only way we can do that is to ask the Lord to show us truth about Him and about ourselves and then be willing to engage in honest reflection. Some answers may be confidential in nature and can be shared with others based on your comfort level. Others may serve as effective small group discussions. My prayer for you is that, if you haven't already done so, that you enter his Kingdom through being born again, and that you live in His Kingdom by faith until we see our King face to face.*

*For His Glory,*

*Dr. Nathan T. Vent*

# INTRODUCTION

The Holy Bible. That is what is written on the cover or the edge of most English versions of the Bible. What makes it Holy? When I was a young street kid I only ever heard the word “holy” attached to another crude word. Why is this attached to cover of most Bibles? What makes it such a special book? *Holy Bible* means that this book is “set apart” and “different” from all other books. Before I continue with my mission of explaining the purpose and the overall story line of the Bible, I need to take time to briefly explain what the Bible *is* and what it *is not*. Let me begin by explaining what it is. In its most basic form, I offer this summary, please read it slowly and carefully:

*The Bible is a collection of writings about God and His story of **two worlds** - a **physical** world and a **spiritual** world and about **how** and **why** these two worlds exist and how they relate to each other and even overlap at times.*

The Bible tells us how these worlds, which I will refer to as *dimensions*, will eventually *merge together* and at the same time wind up being mutually exclusive of each other. Yes, the Bible is about *two worlds*, a spiritual world and a physical world, and contains information as to how mankind is to understand and interpret these worlds. Information on how they came about and how they will end up. Information on the struggles to comprehend these worlds and how to resolve these struggles. But before I get into the details of these worlds or *dimensions*, I need to explain some important considerations about my sole source of our information about these worlds – the Bible. I will not reference theological books, although I have many, bible commentaries or biblical encyclopedias, just the Bible. Content

that I have pulled together over many years to understand God's story. This is why...

### ***The Bible Is Uniquely Valuable***

First, let me state my personal position on the Bible very clearly...

*There has never been a **compilation** of written, historical documents that have stood the test of time, and proven to be true and relevant like the Bible.*

The simple fact that for over 2000 years since the completion of the last New Testament letter, we find that...

- People are still reading **The Bible** privately, gathering in groups to study it, writing books about it, founding learning institutions devoted to it, and continually translating and retranslating it into virtually every known language of the world.
- Men and women are forsaking modern life and conveniences to take **The Bible** to foreign cultures and explain it to underdeveloped societies.
- **The Bible** has outlasted all opponents and critics over the centuries and continues to change lives and thread itself into almost every community in the world. There has never been another book that has had as much impact in the world, a fact in itself that shows the importance of understanding how it connects two very different worlds.
- The real characteristic that sets **The Bible** apart from every other collection of writings is the fact that it is the "Living Word of God" and when properly understood it has the ability to bring *supernatural changes* to the reader.

- Humanity has the potential to “*flourish*” whenever they are introduced to ***The Bible***, and the opposite is true of a society that bans, rejects or disallows it into its midst.
- History is filled with periods of time where in parts of the world people have been ruled by evil wicked leadership that fought to keep ***The Bible*** and its influence *out* of the peoples reach fearing it would bring them *hope*.
- ***The Bible*** is the “*seed*” of every salvation experience...

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*“Since you have been born again, not of perishable **seed** but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God “(1 Pet. 1:23)*

---

It brings a “**New Birth**” experience that Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus...

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*“Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (Jo. 3:3).*

---

It awakens a person’s “**Faith.**” Once it enters a person’s mind through the invisible portal of *faith*, it begins the process of changing the individual into the likeness of Jesus...

---

*“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are*

*called according to his purpose. For those whom  
he foreknew he also predestined to be  
**conformed to the image of his Son**, in order  
that he might be the firstborn among many  
brothers” (Ro. 8:28-29)*

---

It “**Secures**” salvation as it is woven *within the makeup* of the individual it assures their final salvation and prevents them from *destructive, enslaving sin patterns...*

---

*“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning,  
for **God's seed abides in him**; and he cannot  
keep on sinning, because he has been born of  
God. By this it is evident who are the children of  
God, and who are the children of the devil:  
whoever does not practice righteousness is not  
of God, nor is the one who does not love his  
brother” (I Jo. 3:9-10)*

---

- **The Bible** stimulates spiritual growth in every true believer...
- 

*“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual  
milk, that by it you may **grow up** into salvation “*

*“But I, brothers, could not address you as  
**spiritual people**, but as people of the flesh, as  
**infants in Christ**. I fed you with milk, not solid*

*food, for you were not ready for it”  
(1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2)*

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It's the “**Guiding Light**” by which he finds new direction in life...

---

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psa. 119:105)*

---

It's the “**Internal Force**” towards a new way of living and a new world view...

---

*“It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that comes from the mouth of God.” (Mat. 4: 4,10)*

---

Paul called this process, “becoming a new *creation*” where everything in life is seen through a new perspective...

---

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17)*

---

and it gives every true believer an “eternal” view of future glory that sees us to the end of this life and into the next...

*“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an **eternal weight of glory** beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to **the things that are unseen**. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are **eternal**” (2 Cor. 4:17-18)*

---

Okay, so now take a deep breath and just keep in mind that **the Bible** is *indispensable* in our journey through this life, and it should *never* be neglected if we really want to understand God’s story and what His plan for the world is.

### ***The Bible Is An Extraordinary Journey***

With all this being said, the Bible is not really “a book” as we often refer to it like the modern books as we are used to reading. In reality, it’s a collection of ancient manuscripts, or better *writings*. The various writers of the Bible were keenly aware of the fact that God was using them to record His own story. Listen to what the apostle Peter said about these writings:

---

*“For we did not follow cleverly devised **myths** when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” **we ourselves heard this very voice** borne from heaven, for we were with him*

*on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully **confirmed**, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**" (2 Peter 1:16-21)*

---

Before I explain and unpack these verses and point out what Peter felt about the biblical writings he studied, I want to briefly discuss what the Bible isn't. I think this is important because before we can appreciate the importance of *God's story* contained in the Bible, we must strip away some of the false ideas, misuses, misconceptions, and even some strange ways people use the Bible. Here are some of the main *misconceptions* about the Bible.

- First, the Bible is not a "rule book" for life. It's not written so we can find some spiritual rules, lists or regulations to live by. Although there are many principles and guidelines for our lives contained in the writings, it is primarily not about rules. Many people use the Bible as a kind of a "quick reference" to look up rules, principles, or verses about how to live life, gain success, make decisions about business matters or about relationship matters. People often use *isolated* verses that are taken out of their context or not even applicable to our modern situations to prove a point or claim a promise. This is a



very inappropriate way to use the Bible. The American religious culture has fostered this habit by shrinking down the Bible into catchy phrases and sentimental verses and marketed them to people on coffee cups, calendars, refrigerator magnets, small devotional booklets, and a plethora of other ways that are really useless.

- Second, it's not a "love story" as it has commonly been portrayed. Yes, there are discussions about love in the pages of the Bible, and yes it says that "God is love," yet it is not primarily written as a love story. In fact, anyone who has read through the Old Testament will recall reading stories of betrayal, adultery, murder, incest, idolatry, judgment, child sacrifice, dismembering of human bodies, slavery and a surplus of other situations that sound like anything but a love story to the reader.
- Third, it's not a "science, accounting, geography or history book," even though it may contain statements and information in some of these areas, it was not written to expound these areas. When God was inspiring prophets 2500 years ago, did He understand astrophysics? Of course He did! Would the ancient Israelites have understood it? Hmmm, odds are no. There have been cults formed that have taken verses from the Bible and twisted them into meaning something they didn't (yes there is a "flat Earth" society!). In fact, believers have been split over the "old Earth" or "young Earth" views of creation for decades even though the poetic dramatization of the first two pages of the Bible were never intended to establish a firm time frame for creation.

- Fourth, the Bible was not written “to us” but it was written “for us” and this makes a big difference when trying to understand what it means. Since it was written to people in another culture and in a different time in history, it must be understood through their eyes and through the languages they used, and then whenever possible applied to our current culture. When we fail to consider this when reading the Bible, it makes it very difficult to understand dietary restrictions, social customs, and ritual ceremonies found in the Old and New Testaments. It either makes certain customs and practices mentioned seem like the Bible is too archaic to be useful today, or we wind up thinking an ancient custom is meant to be kept today.
- Fifth, (and this is a “sacred cow” in many church traditions) many preachers say that the Bible is so “simply written that even a child can understand it”. This is just not true. The Bible is a very complex book containing ancient history and customs that need to be recognized to be understood. It contains historical narrative, law, poetry, proverbs, parables, and prophecies that can easily be misunderstood outside their intended purposes. Many portions of the Bible were intentionally “cloaked in mystery” for reasons I will explain later in the book, and those areas can be especially difficult to understand. It is true, however, that a *true believer* through the help of the Holy Spirit can recognize truth that is relevant and applicable to their life even without a *complete* understanding of all the historical and cultural background. Yet even that doesn't make the

Bible “easy” to understand. Peter even said this about the writings of Paul:

---

*“There are some things in them that are **hard to understand**, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16).*

---

I for one am glad he wrote that, so I don’t feel so dumb when it takes me extra time to understand certain passages. I don’t think there is anything “heroic” about challenging a new believer or a beginner with the Bible to just “jump into it” without giving guidance as to how to understand its background and culture.

The reason I point out these traditionally *bad* ways that people use the Bible is to clear the way for a proper understanding of what the Bible actually is. As the above verses from the Apostle Peter point out to us, the Scriptures were not merely “myths” written down by men but *actual events* that people were “eyewitnesses” to. Men were privileged to hear the very voice of God, see the presence of God, and be influenced by the Spirit of God as they wrote their experiences and messages. It was “inspired” by God, meaning He *influenced* the writers so that His message was not left to the “will of man” or any *private* construction of men. How amazing is the Bible? Considering through this inspiration of God, the Bible was compiled over 1500 years, in three languages and over three continents by forty different writers from various walks of life, *all* recording truth about God and supernatural events from God

that all agree with each other. But the real question is *Why?* Why did God inspire all these different writers to contribute their messages, their writings, their letters, their wisdom, and their experiences? My answer to that question is this...

*These inspired writers of the Bible were all contributing to telling a unified story, God's story, that explains and unfolds the drama of two worlds coming together, falling apart, and God working to put it back together again.*

It is important to understand that the Bible is an *inspired, infallible, and intentional* book written, not just as Jewish history, but as “*redemptive history*.” These writers give us inspired glimpses and hints of supernatural life even *before* this world was created. They give us scenes of heavenly places, spiritual beings, supernatural activities, life and activities in *another dimension of existence*. Men wrote about...

- Things they were shown in this “heavenly” dimension,
- Transported back and forth from another dimension,
- Having the “heavens” open up several times so men could see inside,
- Experiencing *spirit beings* among them from that dimension.

The Bible gives us these details as it tells *God's story* to all of us. Therefore, we must put aside inaccurate and false “Hollywood” type conceptions of heaven and God along with images that have been promoted by religious traditions but *not* grounded in accurate biblical information. This is the purpose of this book. To explain the story of God and His *worlds* and how it all relates to us. Answering the questions: What was God doing? What was His plan? Who were the main characters in this *multidimensional* “Two-World Drama?” Does it really make any

sense? I hope you'll patiently stay with me chapter-by-chapter as I review God's story and help you discover the biblical truths that link mankind to two worlds. Yes, I'll admit that at times this story will require...

- ***Imagination*** or allowing the facts and details to take us places never seen by man,
- ***Cancellation*** or putting aside *preconceived* ideas, which is sometimes a difficult thing to do,
- ***Transportation*** or trying to think about the biblical facts like the *original* ancient recipients would have done,
- ***Meditation*** or reconsidering things that have been missing in our modern understanding of the Bible, and
- ***Motivation*** or being willing at times to think outside the box of "religious tradition"

### ***Things Go Bump In The Night***

I realize that I'm taking a lot of time to lay the groundwork for the journey we will take in the book, but it is very important because we must be able to understand the importance of the Bible and faith in our lives to be able to comprehend that this life contains a *supernatural element* that is often misunderstood or neglected. Every society in every generation has had some kind of awareness of an *unseen* dimension around us. Ghosts, goblins, and ghoulish stories abound everywhere. It's almost impossible to read books, watch movies, or even live life very long without entering into some form of discussion about the occult or spirit world. In fact, I was a boy who grew up with a fascination for monsters and werewolves and I loved watching a late-night movie series on Saturdays called "*Creature Features*." But after becoming a Christian, the supernatural and

the spirit world (at least the *evil* spirit world) was very much *deemphasized*. Now, I know that to many people the supernatural world is just gibberish and the product of human imagination, *but it shouldn't be*. We, of course, should *not* try to see supernatural interference behind *everything* happening that we cannot explain, but we should be aware that there are *supernatural occurrences* around us on a regular basis. Therefore, this book will show how the spiritual dimension of God intermittently and in unexpected ways *interconnects* with this physical world and why.

**\*\*Note to the reader:** God's name in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament is ***Yahweh*** and I will use this traditional name throughout this book to maintain our connection to the way ancient people related to Him from the beginning.

### ***Another Important Thought Before Beginning this Journey***

Since my entire frame of reference for telling *God's Story* is *the Bible*, as should be evident from just quickly flipping through the pages and seeing the many scriptures I use, I must point out something else important if this book is going to make sense to you. It's kind of like a scene in one of the episodes of the 70's sitcom "Happy Days," when Fonzie was teaching Richie how to act tough so he could scare off a bully who had been threatening him. Just as they were about to finish, Fonzie said, "There's one small detail I forgot." Richie asked what it was, and he said, "You had to have hit someone at least once in your life!" And Richie said, "That's not a good detail to leave out Fonzie!" Ok, I don't want to leave out an important detail either. That is, the writers of the Bible *knew* that the things they were describing, quoting and explaining were going to be very difficult to comprehend at times, not only for their *original* readers but also for *all future*

readers. This is why they often gave us “disclaimers” to be able to keep their information in perspective. For example, Paul, the presumed writer of Hebrews, plainly writes...

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*“Now **faith** is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By **faith** we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible... And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God **must believe that he exists** and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Heb. 11:1-3, 6)*

---

Paul makes it clear that there *are certain conditions* that must be met to understand the big picture of God’s story...

- We must **believe** that “He exists.” This seems obvious but it is a critical starting point for any spiritual journey. Through the many years of being a Christian myself, I have tried to explain God’s plans for mankind to many people who could not even get past this first *foundational* fact: There is a God. I had a conversation with a skeptic one time who was hung up on the fact that children die of cancers and other diseases and could not accept there was really a God who would allow this to happen. But once a person engages this unique “faith” to believe that there is a God (often referred to as common grace) He will then “reward” those who seriously seek Him by

*drawing* them to be *reconciled back to Himself* by revealing Christ as Savior and being “born again” through the forgiveness of their sin.

Let me add an important thought about having “faith.” Some people have been taught to think that “faith” is the opposite of “intellect,” but this is a total misconception. Genuine faith always comes through our “intellect” as a process of thinking, contemplating, and reflecting on the “things not seen.” This is why Paul stated that it brings “substance” or “assurance” to our thoughts about God and those thoughts deepen our “conviction” or become our “evidence” that the truth about God we find in the Bible is genuine. It’s not believing “despite” the facts, it’s believing because of the “facts.” But unfortunately since...

---

***“The natural person **does not accept the things of the Spirit of God**, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are **spiritually discerned**” (1 Cor. 2:14)***

---

*Many people cannot understand much of the Bible because they are not really true believers.* Some people live their lives *enamored* by the thought of God and heaven but never truly *surrender* themselves to Him for salvation from sin.

- The next important area, once a person is born again is they must also be growing or “*maturing*” their faith to be able to understand the Bible. Paul wrote...



*“But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. **I fed you with milk**, not solid food, for you **were not ready for it**. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh.” (1 Cor. 3:1-3)*

*“**But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.** None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— **these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.** For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:7-10)*

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So, depending on where you are right now in your spiritual journey in the Christian life and how much time you have invested in *reading the Bible, praying, thinking about spiritual things*, and just *trying to live like Jesus* will all determine how difficult this journey through *God’s story* will be for you. Since Yahweh is Spirit, He wants us to understand the spiritual nature and the spiritual implications of the Bible. After the Apostle John wrote out the complex vision of the future that he was shown by Jesus in what is titled *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, the last book in our Bibles, he closed with Jesus saying...

*“Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near” (Rev. 22:10).*

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This is clearly an *invitation* for everyone to openly *investigate* everything John had just seen and wrote about. One thing to notice about this vision from Jesus to John that we are to investigate is that *it clearly reveals events that are occurring simultaneously in two distinct dimensions...*

**In Heaven**

- Raptured believers/millions missing
- Worship around God's throne
- Believers rewarded by Jesus
- Christ opening scrolls in heaven
- Christ's wedding feast with believers
- Christ gathering the believers to return from the judgments for the final battle
- Creation of new eternal heaven and earth for all believers

**On Earth**

The Anti-Christ calming the world

False prophets emerging to deceive earth

Chaos and judgment of unsaved begins

Destructions occurs each time

Darkness and destruction continues

People hiding in fear

Fiery place of eternal torment for all unbelievers

Yes, it's all in his writings plainly bouncing back and forth from scene to scene revealing the perspective of future events

from two very different dimensions, a physical one and a spiritual one. Because this aspect of the Bible has been largely ignored, explained away, or at least minimized in churches and in bible teaching and preaching, many believers are ignorant or at least uneducated about the *supernatural aspect of the dimension* around us. I will do my best to stay focused on this “two-world” aspect of God’s story and to show how the *heavenly dimension* connects with this physical world in many ways. If for some reason you have lost the importance of understanding God’s story or just never really understood it, I hope this book will be a fresh review of what the Bible is all about. I trust you will take your time to go chapter-by-chapter reading them slowly and paying close attention to the Scriptures used. Please resist any temptation to only read my comments and skip reading the Scriptures because they are the real *truth*, not my words. In fact, I would like to think that a person could slowly and carefully read *only* the verses I have used in this book and come away with a basic understanding of God’s story without ever reading my personal commentary. After each section, take advantage of the “Truth Applied” questions to better be able to relate the chapter your personal understanding of God’s story.

Now, with all that said, let’s begin the journey to understand what God has been up to through all these centuries. *Let’s read God’s Story.*

**PHASE 1:**  
**KINGDOM IN CHAOS**

*“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.” (Psa. 27:4)*

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE CONCLUSION?**

Several years ago, as I was visiting with an elderly gentleman in his home helping him with some physical difficulties he was having, I saw on the stand under his television a series of DVDs stacked, and the top one looked like a documentary about the civil war. I remember it had an older picture on the cover of a soldier and the topic was about the battle of Bull Run. I made a comment about the DVD and as he shared his interest in civil war history I told him that I had remembered reading about how costly the battle of Bull Run was as the opening battle of the civil war. He quickly corrected me and explained that it was *not* the opening battle of the civil war, the first battle occurred months earlier at Fort Sumter, South Carolina as the confederates took their first fort at Charlotte’s harbor. I stood corrected as I unintentionally had these historical events out of order.

In a similar way, I have had discussions with people and needed to remind them that the Bible is not like any other book, it’s not a typical history book that looks at a particular time period describing events in the chronological order they occurred. The Bible was not assembled that way, it never intended to give people a strictly “linear” timeline of historical events. In fact, many of the books of the Bible, at least in our English Bibles, are not placed in the order of biblical history. This sometimes

makes it difficult for new readers of the Bible to understand the full story of the Old Testament because it would require reading much of it out of order to get a fuller understanding of when the stories actually occurred. But as I said in the introduction, the Bible was not written to be simply a history book, it was intended to be a record of “redemptive history,” and it tells this story in a different way than the typical modern historians would write about history. It has an unusual *purpose*, an unusual *plot*, very unusual *people*, with unusual *problems* in unusual *places*. I usually explain to people that the Bible is not giving a “linear” history, but a “circular” history. That is, what we read in the first chapters of Genesis are connected to the last chapters of Revelation. The Bible’s story of redemption comes to a complete circle and ends where it started, and all the books in between tell us about the journey.

### ***A Notable Puzzle***

As I begin this journey into God’s story as it has been recorded in the Bible by prophets over many generations, I must admit that many of the details of the two ends of this story, namely the end of *Revelation* and the beginning of *Genesis*, are full of *mystery*. When I was a new believer I went through a phase of being captivated by the book of Revelation at the very end of the Bible. I remember laying on my bed in the evenings and reading it chapter by chapter trying to visualize and comprehend the future events depicted and what it was going to be like to be in heaven and see Jesus and all those angels described. As I discussed the book with older Christians at my church I found out that there are a lot of different opinions on what the visions mean and wound up with many questions. I was eventually told by my pastor not to rush to the end of the

Bible too quickly as a new believer because understanding *Revelation* requires a good amount of knowledge of the rest of the Bible. So, I slowed down on the book of Revelation and turned my time to mostly New Testament reading.

It's not a matter of having *no* clear, understandable facts in *Revelation*, there are clearly some, but much of what we find in these two writings, Genesis and Revelation, are left *intentionally* vague by God. This has caused some issues for Bible readers, preachers and theologians as they try coming to a consistent and clear storyline of future events. The lack of *clear* detail has also led to many misconceptions, simplistic views, and deceptive interpretations of how God's story begins and how the end will meet the beginning. But here are a few comments on the obvious lack of detail and clarity allowed by God.

- First, *God's story* was initiated by Yahweh giving Moses a description of "the beginning" (possibly by some type of fast-moving panoramic vision) while together on top of Mount Sinai and then tasking him with writing it down. Something we don't often think about is that Moses had a very *limited* Hebrew vocabulary to describe what he was seeing as he wrote the first pages of Genesis. In fact, there were only 8,700 original Hebrew words available to us at that time compared to our modern English which contains roughly 470,000 words according to "Websters." Moses had less than 2% of our available vocabulary! As you can see, this made describing things back then much more difficult than it would be today. This accounts for why much of the creation story uses vague words and "picture" language to describe what was seen by Moses. I'll explain this in more detail in later chapters.

- Second, I believe that God kept much of the details of these areas *intentionally* cloaked in mystery so as to not have our hearts just wanting the *benefits* of salvation rather than desiring to be *restored* back to God in relationship despite being lost and broken. In fact, too many people have been given the false idea that salvation is just “not going to hell” because of a shallow “decisionism” infecting much of modern Christianity. There are way too many members of churches thinking that they are going to heaven because they were baptized, or said a prayer, or signed a card, or became a church member but in reality they are actually not truly “born again.”
- Third, much of the detail that is available to us can only be understood from consistent searching of the Scriptures and gradually seeing the picture come together. Keeping track of thoughts and facts that the different writers give us to add clarity to the afterlife or the “spirit realm.” I often explain to people that the Bible was the first “hyperlinked” book, meaning the serious Bible reader must learn how to go back and forth to see how God’s whole story is delicately woven together. God desires that we spend a *lifetime* filling in the details of what’s in store for His children.

Now we begin a journey, an exploration, that involves *two worlds* or, as I will refer to them throughout this book, two “*dimensions*” of existence. They are...

- *Physical* and running like a clock wound up by God and slowly ticking down since the creation of our solar system
- *Metaphysical* or a state of existence that is partially physical and partially spiritual and can be revealed as a combination of both



- *Timeless* meaning a state of existence that is always and only *now*.

We will discover how these two worlds exist and how, at times, they even overlap. But I get ahead of myself, let me start the story from the point God intended it to be all along, in a place called “paradise.”

### ***A Nearby Paradise***

My wife Cindy and I had just celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary with a special renewal of our vows and another dinner reception with our church, friends and family. Since we were married right out of high school and went off to college together right afterward we never really had a classic honeymoon after our wedding. This time we would. I planned an eight-day second honeymoon for both of us in Hawaii. I had heard many stories from people who had been there, seen many movie scenes in Hawaii, and even read lots of articles about Hawaii, but nothing can compare to the first time we both watched the island of Maui come into view as the plane circled and began to descend into the airport. Neither of us had ever seen anything as beautiful. That week was filled with beauty like we had never experienced before. To us it truly was an earthly paradise. But I have a feeling that it will pale in comparison to the “paradise” mentioned in the Bible.

This term is used for the “heavenly” place Paul called the “third heaven” and is only used in three places in the New Testament. When Jesus was on the cross and he spoke to the thief crucified next to him who had just asked him to “remember me when you come into your kingdom” to which Jesus responded...

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*“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in **paradise**” (Lk. 23:43).*

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The second mention is from the Apostle Paul when he was recounting the experience he had years earlier when he was caught up into this “third heaven.” It was a *metaphysical* experience that confounded his senses because he was not sure if he was even in his body or out of it, but he knew that he had been brought into “paradise” where he said...

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*“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third **heaven**—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into **paradise**—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter” (2 Cor. 12:4)*

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The third reference explains a little more about the importance of this place, it’s written to the church at Ephesus by John as the first of seven instructions to real neighboring churches in Asia Minor in Revelation chapter 2, and as Jesus closes the instructions to the church He says...

*"To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the **paradise** of God." (Rev. 2:7)*

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This is a very important clue for us. Notice that the promise of "paradise" includes the eating from the tree of life. Where is the tree of life? It's found in two places in the Bible, first it is seen in Genesis 2 in a special garden in the area called "Eden" where Adam was originally placed and given the responsibility to care for it, and it is also found in Revelation 22 in the new "city of God" revealed to John.

Let's clarify what we have just read...

- *Is "**paradise**" the place the thief was going to after he died by crucifixion that day? or...*
- *Is "**paradise**" the place that Paul was brought to for instructions concerning the "mystery" of the Gospel, and shown the unseen realm around us? or...*
- *Is "**paradise**" the place promised to the Ephesian believers after they die and leave this world? or...*
- *Is "**paradise**" referring to the "paradise" of Eden or the "paradise" John saw as the *new Earth*? The answer to all of these is – Yes!*

This is just one of the links in the Bible story that connect Genesis, the beginning of God's story, with Revelation, the *new beginning* of God's story. A circular record of God's story is being established as we study the inspired writings.

When we think of how God's story connects the end of the Bible with the beginning of the Bible, it now makes sense why Jesus referred to himself like this...

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*"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22:13).*

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He is identifying *Himself* as the link of "the beginning" of God's story to, not an ending, but a "new beginning!" According to Jesus, this "paradise" or "third heaven" is where He and the Father and the Spirit were located before this physical universe was ever created. They were together in a dimension of existence different than our physical world. A spiritual and *metaphysical* form of existence beyond what our limited senses can see or touch. Yet, the Bible shows us in many places and in various ways that this heavenly dimension is very close to us, even all around us and *interconnected* with this physical world.

When Jesus prayed for his disciples and all believers in John 17, twice He said...

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*"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you **before the world existed**...Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me **before the foundation of the world**"*  
(Jo. 17:5, 24)

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When Moses wrote in the beginning of the book of Genesis that Yahweh created the “heaven” and the Earth, he was referring to the atmosphere around the world or the skies. But we must understand that this creation recorded in Genesis chapter one was simply part of a “new creation” that was separate, but *within*, what Paul called “the third heaven,” the *timeless* dwelling place of the Triune God. This world, after creation, was intended to be the *exact* place that we read about in Revelation 21 and 22.

### ***A Necessary Plan***

As I review “God’s story,” I am not going to try to solve centuries of debate over the prophetic vision John records in the book of Revelation. Theological minds greater than mine have disagreed for centuries over timelines and what is literal and what is simply symbolic or metaphorical language. But what I will do is look at the plain language that gives us descriptions, although sometimes vaguely, of what life in this *paradise* will be like. But even though John’s vision was dynamic, colorful, strange, and filled with many *symbolic* scenes and *strange* creatures, and often his vision was mis-proportioned by this earth’s physical standards, it does not mean that the book of Revelation should not be understood “literally” rather than as a mere *allegory*.

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***“After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this” (Rev. 4:1)***

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John was taken through a “door” into the heavenly dimension and was shown *years* of real future events as he was brought into a *timeless* state that after it was over may have seemed like moments to John. But the visions he was shown were still indicating a *real* earthly timeline, *real* personalities, and *real* events.

Let me explain something about the use of “allegory” and “metaphor” in the Bible. When I was a freshman in high school my English class was given the assignment of reading, discussing, and interpreting the novel *Moby Dick*, by Herman Melville. I figured this would be a piece of cake, I saw the movie with Gregory Peck! Once I began reading the book and discussing its literary style in class I found an amazing story with connections I never thought of. Throughout the book, opposites are used to explain the nature of life containing both beauty and ugliness, life and death, friendship and hatred, intelligence and ignorance, love and brutality. They always seem to come together, creating a kind of confusion and terror for man. These opposites drive Ahab mad and Pip as well, when he is left alone in the ocean, dodging sharks, and yet seeing “God’s foot.” Unlike American classic literature, the proper way to interpret the Bible is by using the literal, grammatical, and historical method.

When I refer to “literal” I mean the “plain sense” of the language used which does include such things as *metaphors* and *figurative* language. The biblical writers were often led to use this type of language to reveal their message, for example, Jesus said, “Herod that fox!” using a “direct comparison” between two people or objects, and even Paul said that Satan was *like* “a roaring lion.” But when theologians or pastors see

the biblical stories as *allegories*, this is something completely different, because it requires taking a lengthy portion of the Bible and interpreting it to mean something *completely different* than what it literally appears to mean. Often allegories are used to reveal some type of *hidden* message usually dealing with society, morality or politics. I point this out because many interpreters of the Bible attempt to allegorize much of it, especially the prophetic passages, and this is why they miss the strong *supernatural* backdrop that makes up God's story. First, let's lay the groundwork by looking at what the *physical* environment will be like, starting with the believer.

### ***A New People***

When Paul was speaking about the believer in his writings he made several observations that we sometimes take for granted. For example, when he wrote to the Corinthians he said that:

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*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Cor. 5:17)*

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And to the Galatian church he said:

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*"For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**" (Gal. 6:15)*

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And he wrote to the Colossians:

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*“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have **put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator**”*  
(Col. 3:9-10)

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When we become a true believer and put our faith in Christ to save us from our broken, sinful self, Jesus said that is being “born again.” Which means everyone has the ability to be born twice, once physically and once spiritually. Paul says that at that moment of new birth we become new “creatures” and are being turned into the **image** of our creator. Now, when I turned to Christ and was born again, I really did sense this change. I could not explain it at the time, but something was different inside of me. My eyes were opened, and I began to see the world around me different. I began to have new desires and a new hunger and thirst for spiritual things that I never had before. In fact, I became so different my dad who was an unsaved man at that time said to me, “Son, it’s okay if you are religious now, but don’t become a *fanatic*.” I wasn’t even aware that my changed behavior sent those signals to my family because although I had sensed change in me, at the same time, I was still me. I still looked like me, sounded like me, and had thoughts like me. I was “new” but still *me*. Every day since my “new birth,” I have had to deal with the conflict between my maturing new *self* and the old *self* struggling to keep control of me. This is the reason Paul could write to the *gentile believers* in the *church* at Ephesus and tell them...



*"Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk **as the Gentiles do**"*

*(Eph. 4:17)*

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This is like telling an American to stop living like the Americans. Since we cannot change our native-born ethnicity, Paul had to be referring to becoming a whole *new* person that goes beyond ethnicity and completely changes our perspective on life. He points out to them that the *old* way of finding their identity as a *mere gentile* meant relating and interacting with this world while being...

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*"Darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity" (Eph. 4:18-19)*

---

The descriptions in these verses break down this way-unsaved people are...

- ***Darkened in their understanding,***
- ***Alienated from the life of God because of the***
- ***Ignorance that is in them, due to their***
- ***Hardness of heart. They have become***
- ***Callous and have given themselves up to***
- ***Sensuality,***

- **Greedy** to practice every kind of
- **Impurity.** (Eph 4:18-19)

Do you recognize these characteristics that are seen in a life lived *only* in the flesh and *only* in *this* world? Paul then describes for them what it means to be changed into this “new person” with the new desire to ...

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*“**Put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to **put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having **put away** falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as*

*God in Christ forgave you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”*  
(Eph. 4:22-5:1)

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These verses can also be broken down to see the true believer must...

- ***Put off your old self***, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be
- ***Renewed in the spirit of your minds***, and to
- ***Put on the new self***, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having
- ***Put away falsehood***, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.
- ***Be angry and do not sin***; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief
- ***No longer steal***, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something
- ***To share with anyone in need***. Let
- ***No corrupting talk come out of your mouths***, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And
- ***Do not grieve the Holy Spirit*** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
- ***Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.***

- **Be kind** to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore,
- **Be imitators of God, as beloved children.** And
- **Walk in love**, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This is what becoming a “new person” looks like. Look at this list carefully because we will see it again in a slightly different form in a later chapter. I’m so glad that God is willing to change us, but He is not done changing us yet...

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*“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that **is to be revealed** to us.” (Ro. 8:18)*

*“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day... For we know that **if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan**, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For **while we are still in this tent, we groan**, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, **so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.** He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So, we are always of good courage. We know that while we are **at home in***

**the body** we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be **away from the body** and at home with the Lord”  
(2 Cor. 4:16, 5:1-8).

“So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is **imperishable**. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in **glory**. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in **power**. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a **spiritual body**. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear **the image of the man of heaven**... I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **imperishable**, and we shall be **changed**. For this perishable body must put on the **imperishable**, and this mortal body must put on **immortality**” (1 Cor. 15:42-53)

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In these passages, Paul is revealing to us our *future spiritual or metaphysical* body. In 1 Corinthians 15 he takes great measure to link our future bodily changes to Christ's post resurrection body.

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*“The **first man** was from the earth, a man of dust; **the second man is from heaven**. As was the man of dust, **so also** are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, **so also** are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, **we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.**” (1 Cor. 15:47-49)*

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This gives us a clue as to how we will exist in the eternal future. After Christ revealed himself to people after His resurrection He remained on earth for another 40 days among His disciples and we find that He could...

- *Enter closed rooms (Jo. 20:19)*

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*“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, **the doors being locked** where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”*

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- *Disappear (Lk. 24:30-31)*

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*“When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they*

*recognized him. And he **vanished**  
from their sight."*

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- *Be touched and it felt like His body (Lk. 24:37-39)*
- 

*"But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. **Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.**"*

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- *Eat real food (Lk. 24:42)*
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*"They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and **he took it and ate** before them."*

---

- *Be recognized with His former appearance (Jo. 2:18)*
- 

*"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, **"I have seen the Lord"***

---

- *Converse, teach, and relate to others (Lk. 24:32)*

*“They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, **while he opened to us the Scriptures?**”*

---

And the book of Revelation gives us more clues as to what our glorified/hybrid bodies will be like. It says that we will...

- *Not feel pain or sorrow (21:4)*

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*“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes...neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

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- *Dwell with God face to face eternally (21:3; 22:4)*

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*“Behold, the dwelling place of God **is with man**. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and **God himself will be with them as their God.**”*

*“They will **see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads.”*

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- *Not need to sleep (22:5)*

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*“...and night will be no more.”*

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- *Never thirst again (21:6)*

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*“To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”*

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- *Never die again (21:4)*

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*“...and death shall be no more”*

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## **A New Place**

Now let's turn our attention to what will happen in our eternal surroundings. John saw something that once again links the *end* of the story with the *beginning*...

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*“Then I saw a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things **new**” (Rev. 21:1-2, 5)*

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Remember that Moses described the initial work of God this way...

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*“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1-2)*

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In the same way that we were made “*new creations*” but remained recognizable with familiar characteristics, the “new heaven and earth” will be *renewed* yet it will remain familiar and *recognizable* to us. There will be no floating on clouds like cartoons show, neither will we be transported just “somewhere beyond the blue” to a strange, fluffy “heaven.” The word translated “new” in the Greek is a word that means “fresh, unworn, new in quality,” and reminds us of Paul’s description of this physical world since the first sin of Adam...

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*“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to **futility**, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its **bondage to corruption** and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been **groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now**” (Ro. 8:19-22)*

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In our future eternal surroundings, the world and the environment will be “renewed” with a perfect quality and

freshness that Yahweh had started with “in the beginning.” This renewal will start from our skies and our atmosphere then proceeding down to this decayed and partially destroyed Earth as John saw them both “*transformed*” into something *new* and *fresh* with all the destruction and decay instantly removed. Essentially, this earth we occupy will be *engulfed* by the heavenly paradise that has been out of our sight in a spiritual dimension beyond our physical ability to see it or explore it. *This renewed heaven and earth will be our “paradise” for a timeless eternity.*

### *A New Eden*

In Genesis chapter 2 there is a unique process started by Yahweh. It involved the center of the region Moses called *Eden*, and it contained what was planned to be the center of worship of God for all humanity. It was the place that contained the first *tree of life* and there were three *rivers* that flowed out of this plush *garden* area. Adam served Yahweh through this place and was the designated caretaker of the environment. And since it was the place that Yahweh would meet with him and walk with him, he would have also served as a prototype “priest” and the garden a prototype “temple.” This is apparent because throughout the Old Testament the varying images of Eden were incorporated into the tabernacle of Moses and into the later Temples. This garden *in Eden* was the place Yahweh chose to meet with Adam and served as His dwelling place on Earth, another pattern continued in the future worship structures.

In the last chapters of the book of Revelation, John sees another structure descending to the Earth, a tremendously large structure called “The New Jerusalem.” It will serve as the eternal center of “paradise” and will be the primary dwelling place of

Yahweh replacing the former temples. It also contains a tree of life and a flowing, crystal clear “river of life.” As in the beginning of creation, this new dwelling place will have no need of the sun as the Lord God will be the light. The measurements given for this place are so large that many have felt that they were just symbolic. If the measurements are taken literally this city is approximately 1400 miles wide, 1400 miles long, and 1400 miles high and is either the shape of a cube or a pyramid and on a strictly *physical planet earth* like we are on now, it would be unrealistically big reaching into outer space. But after the “renewal” of our atmosphere and planet into a *metaphysical planet* the laws of physics will be altered on earth as in our bodies. Either way, this city is so large that it could easily contain “dwelling places” for all the redeemed of all time. The base of this city alone would be about half the size of the United States, and it could possibly hold as many as 600,000 floors! Imagine how intricate a huge facility with this much space could spread out accommodating millions of saints.

The vision John saw also included a huge wall around the city with gates that never have to be closed. It will radiate God’s light to remaining Earth which must also continue to have nations and population structures and governments because it says, “*the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it*” (Rev. 21:24). How this new paradise will function is left unknown to us. It’s part of the “hidden things of God” that He chose not to reveal. It stands to reason that this “paradise” of God, the new heaven and new earth, will be complex and enormous and fully designed to accommodate believers forever.

### New Responsibilities

The Bible also gives us clues as to what we will be doing in the future eternal life with Jesus. We will be able to...

- **Engage** socially with spirit beings of various creative types (Rev. 5:11; 19:10)

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*"Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and **the living creatures** and the elders the voice of **many angels**, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands."*

*"I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, "You must not do that! **I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers** the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.""*

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- **Enjoy** interactions with countless numbers of other redeemed people from all over this world and from all time periods (Rev. 7:9)

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*"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from **every nation**, from all **tribes** and **peoples** and **languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice,*

*“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

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- ***Encounter** people that were a central part of our lives and fully know them (1 Cor. 13:12) (Jesus did say that once we’re in heaven there will be no “giving in marriage” meaning no more new marriages, it does not mean we won’t continue to enjoy the person who we were one with here on Earth)*
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*“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then **face to face**. Now I know in part; **then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.**”*

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- ***Educate** and learn about God and the Trinity and the depth of His person and His ways will forever continue (Col. 2:3; Eph. 3:18-19)*
- 

*“To reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

*“You, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that*

*surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

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- ***Enthusiastically*** worship of the Trinity without distractions (Rev. 4:8-10)
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*"And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and **day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"** And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders **fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever"***

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- ***Energetically*** serve him without fatigue day and night (Rev. 7:14-15)
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*"They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and **serve him day and night** in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."*

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- **Effectively** rule with him over all the universe, including having responsibilities to coordinate activities on the Earth (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6; Lk. 19:15-19)

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*“If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also **reign** with him”*

*“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will **reign** with him”*

*“When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, **you shall have authority over ten cities.**’ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ And he said to him, ‘And **you are to be over five cities.**’”*

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- **Equally** “judge” the saints and assume responsibilities in making decisions that will keep order within the nations (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 20:4)



*“Do you not know that **the saints will judge the world**? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?”*

*“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the **authority to judge** was committed.”*

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- **Exalt** God through singing and using our various personal talents (Rev. 5:8; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Ja. 5:13)
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*“And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song”*

*“Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in **psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart**, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”*

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, **singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

*“Is anyone cheerful? Let him **sing praise**.”*

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*Living A Blessed Life*

Towards the end of Revelation, John hears a closing remark that is very important to our understanding of how God's two worlds were meant to function.

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*"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

***Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.***

*Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters,*

*and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* *"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.*

*I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come."*

*And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price" (Rev. 22:12-17)*

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As we venture further and further into God's story, you will see a *common thread* that connects two different dimensions. A *thread* that God is using, like a master tailor, to weave and repair what was broken and ripped out of His world. The clue is found in the words "*blessed* are those..." This is a very unique word

that will appear at several points in God's story. It is based on the Greek word "*makarios*" and was taken from the Old Testament Hebrew word, "*esher*." Both of these words are used to carry a specific thought to God's people, unfortunately most of our English Bibles simply use very commonly used English words to translate both, they use "blessed" or "happy." But in our modern age the word "blessed" does not relay the *best* intended meaning of the original words.

When most people think of being *blessed*, they usually think of a situation or a place in life where something is happening *for* us that makes us *feel* happy. Often times I will be speaking with someone in public or on the phone and as we are finishing, they will say to me, "Have a blessed day!" There is nothing wrong with this statement, they are simply expressing a hopefulness that "good" things will occur in my life that day. But in the ancient Hebrew culture in which the Scriptures were written it meant something much different, and this ideal was adapted by the Greco/Roman culture of the New Testament. This is a relevant concept in God's story because it is *the defining quality of life* throughout Yahweh's kingdom, so I'll lay the basic groundwork for this idea here. When Yahweh decided to create other living beings and a completely new physical world in a dimension distinct from *paradise*, He had a goal in mind...

*Every living creature in God's two worlds would live eternally together with Him, fulfilling their assigned purposes and experiencing a life of complete **fulfillment** and **flourishing** in this new environment.*

The better way to translate the word *blessed* is "fulfilled" or "flourishing" and it reflects an *internal condition* that is *not dependent on anything external other than God Himself*. The final invitation by Jesus in the above Revelation passage is

actually the closing “benediction” of Jesus as he reunites “the beginning and the end” of God’s story. Or better said, the *original* beginning with the *new* beginning. Jesus reminds us that He is, was and always will be “*the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*”

There you are. The Bible is pretty clear as to what the redeemed will be doing for eternity and what life will be like - They will be serving God with each other, worshipping Him, ruling with Him, learning about Him, socializing with millions and millions of other believers and living a completely fulfilled life apart from sinful thoughts and actions. In short, in the new Heaven and Earth believers will spend their *eternal, timeless existence loving God with all their heart, all their soul, and all their mind and they will forever love their neighbors as themselves!* Does this sound familiar? As God’s story continues, the obvious question is, why aren’t we there right now if this is what an all-powerful Creator intended all along? I’m getting there, let’s continue the story.

### ***A Lesson for Living in Two Worlds***

Taking a glimpse into the *future life* of those who have been *born again*, should be of help to us in living our lives with a keen sense of *expectation* and *preparation* for an eternity of worship and praise of the one who redeemed us. Revelation chapter four and five give us glimpses of the heavenly spirit beings and the redeemed of earth *together* praising and singing and worshipping our Lord as he takes His rightful place on the throne next to the Father. I believe that when we finally join together with the angels in Heaven to praise Him, we will then fully experience what it meant when Jesus explained this...

*“But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Mat. 23:34-40)*

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This will be the ultimate *motivation* for everything we say and do throughout eternity. It will not be *forced* or *faked* but will be the *natural inclination* woven throughout every thought, conversation and activity that occurs in our new life in a wonderful new world.

Another word that was used as a *connector* between the two worlds is **joy**. Most Christians do not resound with the idea of “joy” too seriously because being “happy” is what usually drives them, but *joy* is closely tied to the ability of a person to “*flourish*” in their current circumstances and relationships. Unfortunately, it usually gets confused with *happiness* which is always dependent on circumstances and whether events and people in our lives are impacting us the way we want them too. In contrast, *joy* is a gift from the Holy Spirit to believers and is not dependent on anything from *this world* but the *heavenly world*. The Bible tells us...

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it **abundantly**” (Jo. 10:10)*

*“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your **joy may be full**”  
(Jo. 15:11)*

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22)*

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These verses show that Yahweh’s intent for His children is that they would live *abundant* lives *full of joy* provided by His Spirit, and unlike happiness, joy is not dependent on the *impact* or *interference* of this broken world. In Yahweh’s eternal kingdom this will be how everyone will live. Life will always be fulfilling, disappointments will be gone, unfulfilled expectations will never again be experienced, we will be *flourishing* in every aspect of our lives. When believers allow the Spirit to *fill* them as they live in *this* present world, He cultivates the “**fruit of Joy**” in their lives and helps them rise above circumstances *regardless* of what they are and in this helps them in *connecting* the two worlds in their lives.

**APPLYING THE BIBLE TO MY LIFE**

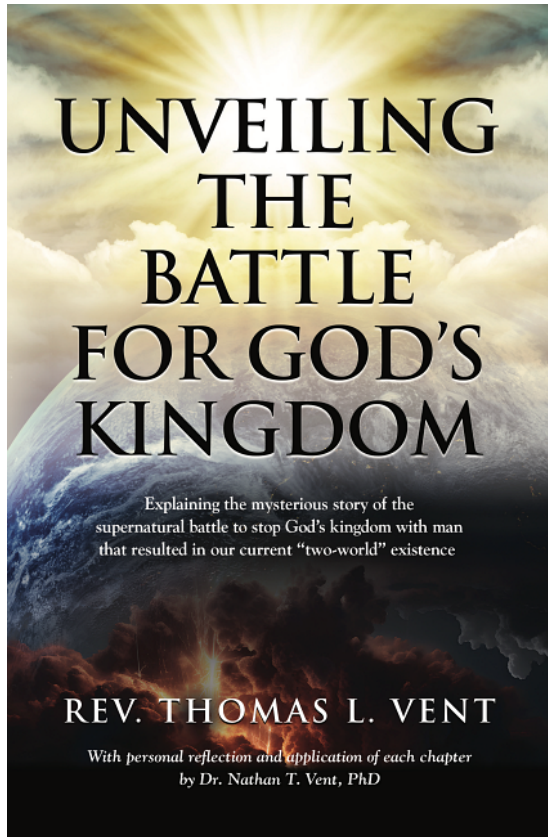
- 1) Have I placed my faith entirely in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice on the cross and am I born again? This is the beginning of eternal life and must not be overlooked.
- 2) Now that I am born again, what changes has Christ made in my life? What do I desire now? What thought patterns and habitual behaviors have been impacted by the Holy Spirit? One way of looking at this is “I used to think this way about such and such and now I see it differently” or “I used to engage in this sinful behavior regularly and now with the Lord’s help I am free from that behavior.”
- 3) Now that God has changed me and continues to change me through faith in Christ, can I see moments in my life when I have not obeyed the admonition to put off the ‘old man’ and to put on the ‘new man’? Can I see the difference between my life as the ‘old man’ before Christ and my new life in Christ now as the ‘new man’? What does this comparison of my ‘old man’ and my ‘new man’ look like?
- 4) The Bible teaches us that God will finalize his work in making us new people and He will make a new creation for us to live in with the family of God, and we will love and serve Him forever. How has God begun this work in my life now and in what ways is He changing me into a new creation?
- 5) It is very important that I understand that the blessed life is a life of total dependency on God for everything that I need. It is even more important that I see this need in my

everyday life. Do I see that God is the greatest good and that relying on Him is the ultimate blessing? What happens when I depend on Him? What happens when I do not?

- 6) Joy is a gift from God and the Bible teaches us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. How important is having joy and expressing joy to others in my life? Have I experienced this abundant life that is found in Jesus Christ through the experience of supernatural joy that extends beyond life circumstances?



Thomas Vent is an ordained minister, church planter, and theologian. He currently resides in the Midwest with his wife of 47 years, Cynthia, 5 children and 23 grandchildren. Tom has also written, *“Searching for Identity,” “We Were Warned,” “Loving God, Living Me,”* and *“A Plea for Spiritual Honesty.”*



*This comprehensive exploration delves into the biblical narrative of God's kingdom, emphasizing the dual existence of physical and spiritual realms and the ongoing cosmic conflict between good and evil.*

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