

“A Whole New World”

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Revelation 21:1–4 (ESV)

¹ 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. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “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. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”¹

I’m going to go out on a limb and make a prediction about tonight’s game. Someone is going to win the Super Bowl. Either the Carolina Panthers or the Denver Broncos are going to win. A few days later, there will be a parade in either Charlotte or Denver. One player will be named the MVP of the game, and he’ll probably appear on one of the late night shows. Perhaps he’ll get a new endorsement or two. And then February will give way to March, and we’ll be thinking about March Madness. And then the baseball season will begin. And before you know it, there will be the NFL draft, and then the NBA finals. A few people may even watch the Stanley Cup finals. Then there will be the baseball season and the Summer Olympics. Finally, a new football season will begin, and everyone will wonder who will win the next Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl is a big deal in America, but it’s not lasting. Once the Lombardi Trophy is hoisted into the air, Super Bowl glory doesn’t last long. Not only that, but winning the big game doesn’t satisfy the deepest human longings. Some people who have even won the big game have found that it’s not what they thought it would be. After Tom Brady and the Patriots won their third Super Bowl, he was interviewed on *60 Minutes*. This is what Brady said:

Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? . . . I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: God, it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me?

Of course, Tom Brady now has four Super Bowl rings, and about eleven more years of life experience. Yet something tells me that he was upset about losing two weeks ago to the Broncos, and that he still wants one more championship.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

At that point in the interview, Brady was asked, “What’s the answer?” And Brady responded,

I wish I knew. I wish I knew. I mean I think that's part of me trying to go out and experience other things. I love playing football, and I love being a quarterback for this team, but, at the same time, I think there's a lot of other parts about me that I'm trying to find. I know what ultimately makes me happy are family and friends, and positive relationships with great people. I think I get more out of that than anything.²

I think that’s admirable of Tom Brady to say. Relationships certainly last longer than Super Bowl victories. But even those relationships, like all things in this life, come to an end.

We long for things to be satisfying and enduring. We long to experience joy and beauty in this world. But even the greatest moments and experiences we have are tinged with the thought that they won’t last. That’s something that David Skeel, a Christian legal scholar wrote about in a book called *True Paradox*. He says that in this life, we have experiences that seem to be paradoxical, and Christianity best explains them. In a chapter on beauty, he says that it’s not uncommon for us to experience something beautiful and be overwhelmed with both joy and a bit of sadness. We all long for beauty, and we desire this world to be beautiful, but we also realize that beauty doesn’t last, and the experience of it is fleeting, and this makes us sad. Every once in a while, we get glimpses of beauty that suggest a world where everything is right. But these glimpses are brief, and they leave us wanting more.³ I feel that way about music: it’s hard to hang on to a moment in music. It comes and it goes. Of course, you can play a piece of music again, but the beauty of it is elusive. We long for a day when everything will be beautiful always, just as we long for things that no Super Bowl victory, no amount of money or fame, can give us.

We’ve been looking at the important events in the story of the Bible over the last few months. The end of the story of the Bible promises us that one day God will make such a world. This world will be eternal, without end. It will be beautiful, filled with a radiance that we haven’t seen yet. It will be a world of peace and harmony, where God dwells directly with his people.

Today, we’ll see that this perfect world, the new creation, is a physical place, it’s full of people, and it’s a kingdom. We’ll be looking at Revelation 21-22, which, along with Genesis 1-2,

²This interview was conducted in June 2005. The relevant part of the transcript is available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-tom-brady-part-3/> (accessed February 5, 2016).

³ David Skeel, *True Paradox: How Christianity Makes Sense of Everything* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 63-88.

form the bookends of the biblical story. We might say the story comes full circle. But, really, the ending is better than the beginning.

Revelation can be a tricky book, but I think the ending is rather clear, once we learn how to make sense of the images that the author, John, is presenting to us. To give us some context, at the end of Revelation 20, there is a resurrection of all people, followed by judgment. Satan and all those who have rejected Jesus are cast out of God's creation, and then we see a new creation that arrives.

The new creation is a place. First, we see it's a whole new world. Revelation 21 begins with this verse: "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." Remember that the Bible begins with this verse: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The phrase "the heavens and the earth" is a way of referring to everything—the whole of creation. The old creation "passes away" and a new one comes. Just as Jesus died and came back to life in a perfect body, this world will die and be resurrected. What will happen exactly, from a scientific perspective, I don't know. But it will be a miracle. And it's very important to point out that for those who are united to Jesus, eternity will be spent in a real, material world. It's not a disembodied existence. That means that the physical world matters. Our bodies matter.

We Protestants tend to elevate the immaterial aspects of our existence above the material ones. We tend to think that our ideas, our beliefs, and our emotions are more important than our bodies. But when God made human beings, he made them with physical bodies. When God remakes us in Christ, he starts with the inside out. But in the end, we will have resurrected bodies. So the physical aspects of life matter just as much as the non-physical ones.

I want to point out one more aspect of this new world. We're told "the sea was no more." Does that mean there will be no water in this new world? Well, I don't think so. In order to understand the book of Revelation, we have to understand that it uses symbolic language. Now, some Christians will freak out a bit when they hear that. I think they do so because they think that symbolic is somehow opposed to what is true. But that's just wrong. A symbol is something that is true, but it represents a greater reality. Jesus often used symbolic or metaphorical language. He said he is the bread of life (John 6:35, 48, 51). He said he is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). He said he is the door (10:7, 9). He said he is the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14). He said he is the true vine (John 15:1). But that doesn't mean Jesus was a loaf of bread with a

doorknob who emitted light, tended sheep, and grew grapes. So if we're to understand what it means to say that "the sea was no more," we have to look for clues in the book of Revelation to help us figure out just what that means.

Greg Beale says that the word "sea" has five meanings in Revelation:

(1) the origin of cosmic evil (. . . 4:6; 12:18; 13:1; 15:2); (2) the unbelieving, rebellious nations who cause tribulation for God's people (12:18; 13:1 . . .); (3) the place of the dead (20:13); (4) the primary location of the world's idolatrous trade activity (18:10-19); and (5) a literal body of water . . . (5:13; 7:1-3; 8:8-9; 10:2, 5-6, 8; 14:7; 16:3 . . .).⁴

So, in other words, in the new creation, there will be no more evil, no more death, no more people who rebel against God and cause God's people harm, and no more idolatry. The old creation will be replaced with a new one.

The new creation is also described as a city. Verse 2 of Revelation 21 says, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband." In Revelation, there are two cities that are contrasted. One is Babylon, which represents the city opposed to God, the city of sinful man. The other is Jerusalem, the city of God. But this isn't the Jerusalem on earth right now. It's important to know that. It's the heavenly city, the city of God, where all the saints dwell. And when God remakes world, it will be that city.

This is how that city is described in verses 9-21:

⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1042.

measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

There's a lot to explain in those verses. When we talk about the people in the new creation, I'll explain more. But now, I want to focus on the dimensions of the city. We're told that its length and width and height are all equal, and that these measurements equal 12,000 stadia each. Twelve thousand stadia is roughly 1,500 miles. So this city is supposed to be 1,500 miles long and 1,500 wide. The length of the Roman Empire from Spain to the Euphrates River was about that long. So the city is supposed to be the size of the known world. This is another way of saying the whole world will be this heavenly city. The whole world will be inhabited by God's people. But we're also told the city will be about 1,500 miles high. Again, this is symbolic language. I don't know how a city could be literally 1,500 miles high. But the shape of the city is significant. It's a cube. The only other cube in all of the Bible is the Most Holy Place, the inner room of the temple, where God's special presence was found on earth. So the whole point of this description is to say that the new creation is going to be a massive Most Holy Place. It's going to be a temple, the place where God dwells with his people. That's why there's all this talk of gold and precious jewels, which are usually associated with the tabernacle and the temple and the high priest's garments in the Bible.

Right now, we often make distinctions between places that are "holy" or "sacred" and places that are "secular." But the whole earth will be a sacred space. We tend to think of heaven as a separate entity from earth. Heaven is where God dwells. But here, at the end of the Bible, we see heaven and earth coming together. They are one. The heavenly city comes to earth. That's why it says in verse 3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, '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.'" The whole earth will be God's dwelling place, a place of worship. Like the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament, there will be nothing unclean in it (verse 27). There will be no sin in it. There won't be one part of the new creation where God doesn't dwell with his people, where God isn't worshiped, where there is evil and crime and

despair. The whole earth will be heaven. The whole earth will be a temple. The earth will be sacred.

So the new creation is a physical place. And the holy city isn't just a place and a temple, but it's also a people. In verse 2, it says that the holy city was "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Throughout the Bible, the relationship between God and his people is described in terms of a marriage. God is the husband, and his people are the wife, or bride (Isa. 54:5; Hos. 2:19-20; Rev. 19:7). And that language is used here in verse 2 and in verse 9. Again, this is a metaphor. God's people are "adorned." They are made beautiful. They will be his people, and he will be their God (verse 3). That's covenant language, which describes a binding relationship of love. Everything in the Bible is pointing to this marriage. All the marriages on earth are a shadow of this marriage. That's why marriage is between a man and a woman: they are two different, complementary partners. This marriage isn't between God and God, or human and human, but God and man. And that's why marriages are exclusive and require faithfulness. God does not tolerate sharing his people with false gods or idols. They should be devoted exclusively to him.

God's people will be made beautiful, just as a bride is beautiful on her wedding day. That means that God will completely clean up his people from their shame and sin and failures. Of course, the whole basis for this relationship, and for this cleaning up, is Jesus. His death on the cross paid for the sins of his people, and he gives his people the Holy Spirit, who is at work in them to change their hearts so that they love God and hate sin. In the book of Revelation, Jesus is often called the "Lamb," which is a reminder of his sacrificial death on the cross. All sin requires death, and Jesus died in our place, so that we don't have to die forever.

That means that if you're a Christian, you can take comfort in knowing that God is making you acceptable to himself. Yes, we should be obedient to Jesus and try to live the way he wants us to. But it's the power of God that works in us to make us obedient. If Jesus died for you, if you are one of his people, then God will make sure you are prepared for that wedding, when God comes to earth to dwell with his people. You are beautiful in his sight.

In this picture in the book of Revelation, we get a glimpse of who this bride is, or who these people of God are. Verses 5-7 say:

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and

the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

God's people are the ones who are spiritually thirsty and come to Jesus to have that thirst quenched. They are the ones who conquer. The one who conquers will be God's "son," his child. What does it mean to conquer? Earlier in the book of Revelation, it says that God's people overcome the dragon, "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" through Jesus' death on the cross and their confession of faith in him. Revelation 12:11 says, "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." Christians are not God's children because they are so moral. They are God's children because they've been adopted by him. They're his children because God paid the price for their redemption. And since Jesus died for them, and they've been adopted into the family, they talk like they're part of that family, and they live like they're part of that family. They're even willing to die for their family, "for they loved not their lives even unto death."

These people—God's children—aren't part of the family because they belong to a certain ethnicity or culture, or have a certain skin color. They are Jews and Gentiles who have been saved from their sin by grace through faith. Remember in that that description of the new Jerusalem, there is talk about gates and foundations. Verses 12-14 says,

¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

All the numbers in Revelation represent something. Twelve recalls the twelve tribes of Israel. And twelve also reminds us of the twelve apostles. Here, there are twelve gates and twelve foundations. You might expect Old Testament Israel to be the foundation of this city, but the real foundation, according to the apostle Paul, is the cornerstone, Jesus, and the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 2:20). And true Israel, the people of God, is Jesus and everyone who is united to him by faith. There were people in the Old Testament who had faith in God and his promises. The main example is Abraham, whose faith was credited to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). Abraham didn't know the name "Jesus," but he knew there was one true God who made

the heavens and the earth and who promised he would bless the earth through Abraham's offspring (Gen. 12:2-3). Anyone in the Old Testament who trusted in God's promises is part of this city. And now that Jesus has been revealed, anyone who puts their faith in him will be part of this people.

Verse 27 says that "nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." The Bible teaches that God wrote the names of his people in his book before he created the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15). God chose these people to be his bride. He paid the bride-price for them. And he brought them to himself to be clean.

Since we're talking about who is part of this city, we should make this clear: not everyone will be a part of this city. At the end of Revelation 20, we're told that Satan and those whose "name was not found written in the book of life" were cast out of the world and into the "lake of fire," a place of unending torment (see 20:10). Revelation 21:18 says, "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for the murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Those are harsh words. This is a list of the sins that many people in the Roman Empire committed in John's day. They are previously mentioned in the book of Revelation. This list performs a certain function: it's meant to encourage Christians to be faithful. A lot of the language in Revelation is meant to encourage them to remain faithful, even in the face of persecution. The promise of living in a new creation with God is part of that picture—it should motivate us to persevere in our faith.

But I want to say this, in case someone is listening today who might not understand the Christian faith. At one point in our lives—and perhaps even at several points in our lives—we have all been cowardly and faithless. We've been liars. We've worshiped something or someone other than God. Most people are sexually immoral according to Jesus' standards. That is, most people have struggled with lust, and many have had sex outside the bounds of marriage. Does that mean there's no hope for anyone? No. There is hope. Let's turn briefly to one of Paul's letters. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. He was addressing a group of somewhat dysfunctional Christians. He writes,

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor

drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This is what Paul means: people whose lives are marked by such sin—people whose very identity is sin—will not inherit the earth. They will not be a part of the kingdom of God. But Paul makes it clear that egregious sinners can be washed of those sins and made holy because of the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He says, “such were some of you.” So if you are a Christian, at some point, your life was identified by your sin and your broken relationship with God. But there’s great hope: God can change your identity from sinner to saint. That doesn’t mean you have to become perfect before you’re acceptable to God. No, that wouldn’t be good news. The good news is that God takes mess-ups and misfits like me and you and he washes us, sanctifies us, and justifies us. He says we’re innocent and he causes us to start living as if we really are.

So there’s hope, but the point is that the lives of Christians should be different. Christians need to turn from such sins. There should be some evidence of a changed life. If God has called you to himself, he’s in the process of transforming you, and there should be some evidence of that.

The new creation is a physical place full of people. And it’s also a kingdom. Let’s look at the beginning of chapter 22.

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

We’ve been looking at the major events of the Bible for the last few months, and we began with God creating the world, and creating a garden, the garden of Eden. A river flowed out of Eden and in the garden there was a tree of life (Gen. 2:9-10). Now, John sees a similar scene. This picture recalls the garden of Eden, and it also recalls a prophecy in Ezekiel: that a water would flow from the temple and bring life wherever it went (Ezek. 47:1-12; see also Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8). The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is this living water (John 7:37-39). He’s bringing life to

the whole world. The whole earth has become the garden of Eden. We're back home, where humanity started. There is no curse for sin. There is healing and life. I'll come back to this good news in a moment.

But first I want us to focus on this: God's throne is in the middle of this scene. God—the Father and the Son—are pictured as being surrounded by their servants, with the river representing the Spirit. God's people are serving him in his temple. They are royal priests, reigning forever. The whole scene is completely and literally God-centered. God is said to be the light of this new world. He illuminates everything and chases away all darkness.

Light is also associated with God's glory and splendor. The new Jerusalem gleams "like a most rare jewel" because it has "the glory of God" (21:11). The gold and all the precious stones reflect God's radiance and his beauty. And in chapter 21, verses 22-26, John writes,

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

There is no need for a temple, because God dwells directly with his people. His presence isn't mediated like it was in the Old Testament, or even like it is now. His people will be with him directly.⁵ So God is superior to any temple building. As in chapter 22, we're told there's no need for a sun and a moon. This is a fulfillment of things we find in Isaiah 60 (vv. 19-20). The idea is that the world of shadows and darkness, which in John's language often represent sin, is banished. And God is superior to the sun. His light shines more brightly. There will be no missing God's glory. As surely as the sun's rays illuminate everything in the old world, God himself will be seen by everyone in the new world.

The fact that God is King will be acknowledged by everyone, even the "kings of the earth." Again, this is another fulfillment of Isaiah 60 (vv. 5-16). The point isn't that people are going to be streaming into the new creation from outside. Those people who are cast out of this creation can't come in. The point is that the nations will come to Jesus, and even kings of different nations will recognize that Jesus is true King, the King of kings (see Jer. 3:17). People

⁵ John describes the whole new creation as a temple, and then he says that God is the temple—this is the way the language of Revelation works. The symbols and metaphors overlap in interesting ways.

from different nations will bring their glory and honor—their praise and worship—to Jesus. There will be people “from every tribe and language and people and nation” there (5:9; cf. 7:9; 14:6).

What’s amazing is that God’s people will “reign forever and ever” (22:5). They take part in God’s reign. Adam and Eve were supposed to rule over the rest of God’s creation as royal priests, but they failed. Yet Jesus didn’t fail. He is the true Adam, fulfilling everything that humans were supposed to. And everyone who is united to Christ shares in his reign.

What will it be like for us in eternity? It’s hard to say exactly. We’re not given a lot of information, and I don’t want to speculate too much. As I’ve said before, we’ll have physical bodies and live in a recreated or renewed world. I imagine the world will be beautiful. The new world will probably look a bit like this one, just as Jesus’ resurrected body looked like his body before he died. But it will be so much better. I imagine it will be the furthest thing from boring or frustrating. I imagine we’ll have jobs to do. But beyond that, it’s hard to know.

But there are some things we can know about eternity from this passage. I skipped over chapter 21, verse 4 earlier. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” There will be no more crying or mourning or pain, and there will be no death. It’s hard to imagine a world like that. There will be no more loss, only great gain.

It will be a place that is safe and secure. The fact that the walls were measured meant they are secure. But the gates are always open, so there’s no threat. There are no enemies that can hurt or destroy (see Isa. 11:9). There will be no need for soldiers, police, or weapons (Isa. 2:4).⁶

But the greatest thing, really, is that we will see God. Revelation 22:4 says, “They will see his face.” This is the great hope of the whole Bible, that we would see God. In Numbers 6, the high priest’s blessing is, “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you” (Num. 6:25-26). Job, in the midst of his suffering, said, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has

⁶ Rev. 22:4, with its mention of “his name will be on their foreheads,” also speaks to protection. In Ezekiel 9, there is a vision of judgment. Those who have defiled the temple in Jerusalem with idols would be killed, but those who “sign and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it” would be marked on the foreheads. They would be “passed over.” In Rev. 13:16, those who belong to the beast are marked on the forehead. They are owned by him. But in 14:1, those who belong to the Lamb have “his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.”

been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26). In his Psalms, David wrote about his hope of seeing God. In Psalm 17:15, he writes

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

And in Psalm 27:4, one of my favorite verses in the Bible, he writes:

One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that I 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.⁷

Above all, David wanted to be with God. He wanted to see God. He knew that God was beautiful, more beautiful than anything else. God is better than his creation. What will it be like to be in God’s direct presence, to “see” him? I don’t know, but it will be better than anything we have right now.

So if you are a Christian, take hope in this world to come. If you’re suffering, know that it will not last forever. This dark night will be followed by a brilliant and beautiful morning. If you feel a bit like Tom Brady, aching because the things of this world aren’t satisfying, then know that, like David, you will be satisfied with God’s likeness. That knowledge helps us to endure whatever we’re going through know.

If you’re not a Christian, consider that the things of this world won’t get you what you’re hungering for. They come and go. Even the greatest glories of this world, like a Super Bowl victory, don’t last long. They won’t quench whatever you’re thirsting for. I would urge you to put your trust in Jesus.

Wherever we stand, we all need to live in light of eternity. This life is only the beginning. After this life, after death, there is a life that will go on forever. And for those who put their trust in Jesus, that life is beyond what we can imagine.

At the end of C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he writes these words. I think they’re an appropriate commentary on the end of the Bible:

[T]he things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most

⁷ See also Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2.

truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.⁸

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: Harper Trophy, 1994), 228.