

# THE REFINER'S FIRE

## DISCUSS THIS

Which of these three models is the correct biblical model?



OUR WORLD

DESTRUCTION

HEAVEN

The Destruction of Everything



OUR WORLD

DESTRUCTION

A DIFFERENT WORLD

Starting over Entirely



OUR WORLD

REFINEMENT

RENEWAL

The Setting Right of Everything

## DISCUSS THIS

“The human body matters. It is good and beautiful, and is a fitting home for the human soul.

“The created world matters. It is also good and beautiful, and is, and a fitting home for the human person.”

## **DISCUSS THIS**

Where do these other models come from?

## **DISCUSS THIS**

*They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”*

*But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. 2 Peter 3*

What is this passage talking about?

Was the world annihilated in the flood of Noah?

## **DISCUSS THIS**

**Fire**, in Scripture, very often communicates a process of \_\_\_\_\_? (fill in the blank)

*But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. Malachi 3:2.*

What does soap have in common with fire?

## **DISCUSS THIS**

What happens when you put gold in a fire?

*Their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15*

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What was God's original **Grand Intention** for humanity?

Does the annihilation of the world fulfil the **Grand Intention**?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How are we co-laborers with God in bringing about the New Creation?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

The problem with a future obliteration is that, if it is true, so many good things are going to be destroyed, and lost forever...and the loss of good things is always a tragedy.

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Not all goodness has to do with morality.

What was Augustine's insight in this regard?...How does it relate to *Genesis 1* (*God made everything, and it was good. All of it.*)? Where does evil come from?

Are trees good? Stars? Laughter? Relationships? Art?

Are they worth preserving, fighting for? Is that what Christ did on the cross?

When these good things are carried forward into the New Creation, what will be different about them there?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How does the annihilation view undermine the significance of our lives?

If God is going to take a giant eraser, and rub out the entire white board of our world, and start over from scratch, does it really matter, ultimately, in the long run, what we write on that white board?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How does this discussion inform our answer to the question “What about environmental concerns?” from a Christian viewpoint?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

The larger point, though, is that the Bible is very, very insistent that each human life matters, that what we do matters, and that human history matters, in the long run.

How will the Kingdom work of Moses, for example, carry forward into the New Creation?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15: 58.*

Why is our labor in the Lord not in vain?

God’s plan for humanity is a grand plan spanning all of Old Creation and all of New Creation, linking them together.

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Will any good parts of this creation be lost? And be absent in the New Creation?

What about mathematical discoveries? The work of Bach? Athletic achievements?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How can it be that it is often, but not always, small and insignificant people who are the most important and helpful in human history and in the work of the Kingdom of God.

*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are. 1 Corinthians 1:26-28.*

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What was N.T. Wright's cathedral analogy with the Current Creation and the New Creation?

How does this arrangement infuse our ordinary, everyday faithfulness with eternal significance and unending worth?

## **THE NEW HUMANITY**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How do these two verses relate to each other?

*[God's] plan in the fullness of the time, is to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the Earth. Ephesians 1:10*

*[God has appointed his Son] through whom also he made the universe, heir of all things, Hebrews 1:2*

## **DISCUSS THIS**

*Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ Romans 8:17  
All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the  
present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. 1 Corinthians  
3:21-23*

*“He who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.  
Revelation 21:7*

## **DISCUSS THIS**

Because we will inherit all things, we are going to need to take care of all things!

*“If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment  
instead of before the Lord’s people? Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will **judge the  
World**? And if you are to judge the World, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?” 1  
Corinthians 6*

*“If we endure, we will also **reign** with him.” 2 Timothy 2:12*

*And they will **reign** for ever and ever. Revelation 22:5*

“Our destiny is to join a tremendously creative team effort, under unimaginably splendid  
leadership, on an inconceivably vast plane of activity, with ever more comprehensive cycles of  
productivity and enjoyment.” Dallas Willard

## **DISCUSS THIS**

Will the degree of responsibility and domain of the rule of human beings in the New Creation  
will be the same as we currently have in the Old Creation?

*“The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’ “‘Well done, my good  
servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take  
charge of ten cities.’ Luke 19:17*

Why will the extent of our power and influence be so vastly increased?

**(END OF AUDIO SEGMENT ONE)**

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**(START OF AUDIO SEGMENT TWO)**

## **BEAUTY**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How do we know that God values beauty?

“Nature is God’s art.”

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Is beauty good? Are the arts worthy of our time and energy?

What is the function of beauty? What does it do to human beings?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Will beauty be a part of the New Creation? How do we know this?

## **REST AND PLAY**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Why did God rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Creation?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

*The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.  
They shall not hurt or destroy*

*in all my holy mountain; Isaiah 11:8–9*

Why are children so free, happy, spontaneous, confident, and authentic?

How does this relate to rest in the New Creation?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How is play related to rest?

Is play good for people? Is it healthy?

*Again, I will build you, and you shall be built. Again, you shall adorn yourself with tambourines,  
and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. (Jeremiah 31:4)*

What will play look like in the New Creation?

## **COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Will we recognize our loved ones? Will we be able to spend time with them?

*I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it  
new with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29*



## **CELEBRATION**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What do these two passages have in common?

*I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” Matthew 26:29*

*“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation*

## **PLEASURE**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Who made pleasure?

Why do Christians, on the whole, tend to have a very glum and severe picture of God?

*He will take great delight in you. [He] will rejoice over you with singing as. Zephaniah 3:17.*

Does God want us to experience pleasure? A little bit of pleasure? Or a lot of it?

If so, why is it so fleeting in this life? And why is there so much suffering and hardship?

“The Christian story begins and ends in joy, Tolkien pointed out.”

## **INNER HEALING**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Do you think that we all have wounds that are too deep for complete healing in this World?

*God himself will be with them and be their God. 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.” Revelation 21:3-4*

### **DISCUSS THIS**

*I will also give [the one who is victorious] a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. Revelation 2:17*

What did George MacDonald have to say about this verse?

## **GLORY**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What are the two aspects that the Hebrew word for **glory** communicates?

- 1.
- 2.

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What is the source of God’s glory?

What will be the source of our glory?

“When we draw near to God, He rubs off on us.” What does this mean? How does it relate to Moses when he was up on the mountain communing with God?

Is God “rubbing off on us” in that same way, even now?

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18*

*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 6:19*

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Was God's original intention to share His glory with humanity?

*Psalm 8 says God crowned human beings with glory and honor.  
Man is the image and glory of God 1 Corinthians 11:7*

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Will God's original intention to share His glory with humanity eventually be fulfilled?

*We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:17)  
Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Isaiah 60:1-3*

## **THE BEATIFIC VISION**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What is the greatest bliss and satisfaction that a person can have?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What is the Beatific Vision?

*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12*

### **DISCUSS THIS**

How does the Beatific Vision relate to wonder?

Wonder is "a feeling of surprise mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable."

### **DISCUSS THIS**

What is **worship**? What Old-English does it derive from?

How does the Beatific Vision relate to worship?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Why will our worship in the New Creation be an indescribably poignant, whole-person response? An ecstatic upward movement of the will, intellect, the emotions and all the rest of us?

Anslem: “God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.”

This means that as a person comes to know God more and more, they will come admire Him more and more.

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Why does each person have a unique role in worshiping God?

“There is a chamber in God Himself, into which none can enter but the one, the individual, the peculiar man—out of which chamber that man has to bring revelation and strength for his brethren. This is that for which he was made—to reveal the secret things of the Father” - George McDonald

## **CONCLUSION**

### **DISCUSS THIS**

In what way will the New Humanity forever serve as an astonishing testament to the unfathomable wisdom, power, and love of God?

### **DISCUSS THIS**

Why is knowledge a prerequisite for hope?

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures **might have hope**. Romans 15:4.*

*This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison 2 Corinthians 4:17*

“God created it all, and us all, out of the abundance of His own bottomless joy and goodness, as a gift and as an act of celebration. And He created us to be, like Himself, creatures of freedom, bottomless joy, and majesty.”