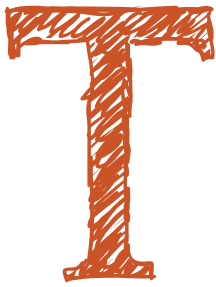


Why the Reality of the
Resurrection Means
You Don't
Need a
“Bucket List”

BY RANDY ALCORN





he term “bucket list” was popularized by the 2007 movie of that name. It’s an inventory of things people want to do before they “kick the bucket.” The idea is, since our time on earth is limited, if something is important for us to do, we have to do it now, because this is our

only chance to do it.

This makes sense from a naturalistic worldview, one which doesn’t recognize any afterlife. It also makes sense from various religious worldviews that maintain there may be existence after death, but without resurrection and physical properties, and with no continuity between this life and the next. The one worldview in which the bucket list makes no sense is biblical Christianity.

Don’t misunderstand. My wife Nanci and I enjoy life—going new places and doing new things. I don’t believe this is wrong, nor is it wrong to list things you’d like to do if God gives you the resources and strength. But the “bucket list” mentality, that this life is our only chance to ever enjoy adventure and fun, is profoundly unbiblical. It disregards the teaching of the resurrection:

- But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. . . . The earth will give birth to her dead. (Isaiah 26:19)
- Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace. (Daniel 12:2 NLT)
- We will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:52-53)
- The Lord Jesus Christ . . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21)

Despite the centrality of the resurrection in

Scripture and church history, many Christians have never been clearly taught its meaning, so they imagine they will live forever in a disembodied state. A sincere believer once told me, “I hate to admit this, but I don’t look forward to Heaven. I wish I could live with Jesus on this earth. I want all sin and suffering and death to be gone, but I still want to enjoy the beauty of God’s earth.”

This man loved Jesus, but did not want leave this world and become a ghost or an angel.

As much as he loved Jesus, the Heaven he’d heard about seemed terribly boring and tedious. He’d heard that he should live now in light of eternity, but he thought eternity would mean the end of his opportunity to enjoy music and literature and adventure and travel and learning and discovery. So God would understand, he hoped, if he spent his time and money on his bucket list. After all, now was his only chance to experience happiness.

Ironically, what he wished for is exactly what the Bible promises! We will live with Jesus in these bodies made new, and on this earth made new, without sin and suffering. Once he knew the true biblical story, the unfolding drama of redemption culminating in the resurrection of our bodies and our universe, he could at last realize there was no need for the bucket list.

For the Christian, death is not the end of adventure, but our exit from a world where dreams and adventures shrink, and entrance into a world where dreams and adventures forever expand.

That’s why Nanci and I like to talk about our post-bucket lists, consisting of all the things we look forward to doing *after* we die, and in particular, after the resurrection. We’re told there will be not only a New Earth, but a New Heavens (Revelation 21:1), the celestial heavens made new, presumably with new galaxies and stars and planets scattered across the New Universe. Remembering the Andromeda Galaxy I first marveled at through my telescope before coming to faith in Christ, I would love to journey there, to the New Andromeda Galaxy, to the praise and glory of King Jesus.

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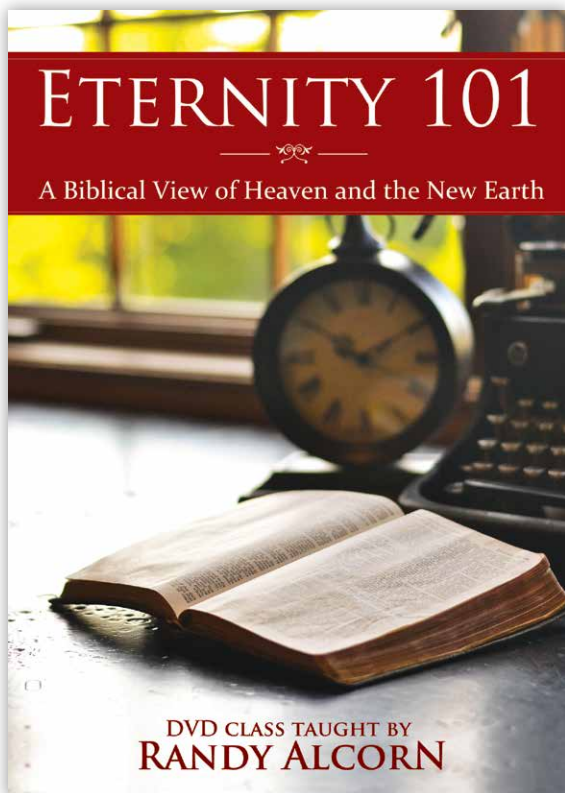
Nanci's post-bucket list includes her dream to spend a lot of time by a lake, playing with dogs. Joni Eareckson Tada, once freed from her wheelchair, says she wants to run through flowered meadows on the New Earth. Since we're told we will have physical resurrection bodies and we'll be living on a physical earth, why not?

The Bible doesn't specifically tell us about dogs on the New Earth, but it tells us about other animals (Isaiah 65:17, 25) so why shouldn't we expect dogs? It tells us we will eat and drink (requiring food and liquid), and walk and talk, so why not run through meadows? Or are you expecting an earth without grass and flowers?

Perhaps an alarm is going off—"but that's unspiritual—we should only want to be with Jesus." Well, Jesus is right at the top of both of our post-bucket lists! Would the same God who says we should eat and drink to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31) be offended if we want to play with His animals for His glory and travel to the stars for His glory?

Of course, some of what's on our post-bucket list may not be exactly as we envision it, but we know this for sure: God has revealed that we will be real people with real bodies living on a real earth with other real people and the real King of Kings—so anything there will be far *more* than we imagine, not less.

I think God is honored when we let the imaginations He gave us soar as we move our eyes beyond this present fallen world, to anticipate the risen one—holy and happy beyond all comprehension—that the Carpenter from Nazareth has gone ahead to build for us (John 14:1-2). ■



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