* Introduction
  + Most Christians spend more time thinking about a week-long vacation than they do thinking about eternity.
  + That’s a problem, because when we fail to think deeply about our final destination, it leads us to accept *half-truths* about heaven peddled by *culture* rather than the *whole-truths* we find in *Scripture*.
  + These half-truths aren’t full blown lies. But they’re incomplete enough to rob us of our *purpose* in the present and our *hope* for the future.
  + That’s what’s at stake.
  + So this morning, we’re going to replace 4 pervasive half-truths about heaven with 4 whole-truths.
  + And by the end, my prayer is that you will have an exponentially greater sense of purpose in the present and *hope* for our eternal future.
  + Here’s the first half truth: Earth is our temporary home—a maxim that is peddled *hard* by pastors *and* American Idol winners alike.
* HT #1: Earth is our temporary home
  + Half truth
    - Let’s start with what’s true about this half truth. The moment a Christian experiences physical death, their body stays here on earth and their “spirit [or soul] returns to God.”
    - So it IS true in a sense that we Christians leave this earth and “go home to heaven when we die.”
    - The lie is that we *stay* there.
  + Bodily resurrection
    - Unpacking some of Jesus’s most famous words will help us understand this.
    - In John 14:2, he said, “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?”
    - But check this out: The Greek word used for “rooms” here is monē, which denotes “*temporary* lodging.”
    - Our “mansions in the sky” aren’t permanent residences.
    - They’re more like Airbnbs.
    - Because ultimately it is not we who go to heaven, but heaven—and the souls of the redeemed currently *in* God’s dimension of heaven—that come to earth to live in resurrected bodies.
  + New Earth
    - And where are those physical resurrected bodies going to live forever?
    - On a physical *earth*.
    - This is precisely what we see in Revelation 21:1-3: I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God….And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.”
    - Belinda Carlisle was right after all: Ultimately “heaven is a place on earth.”
    - Contrary to what the homilies and hymns might teach you, God never intended to “fit us for heaven to live with him *there*.” He promised heaven on earth and to dwell with us *here*.
    - Now, some of you are looking at me right now like, “hold up a second, Jordan, I think you’re forgetting that little passage about how the earth is going to burn up” in the end.
  + 2 Peter 3
    - This idea is rooted in a *very* old, borderline heretical interpretation of 2 Peter 3:10. Here’s the King James Version your Sunday School teacher taught you 40 years ago: The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.
    - Sounds pretty clear that earth *is* our temporary home, right? Not so fast, my friends.
    - N.T. Wright, whom Newsweek has called the world’s leading New Testament scholar, is worth quoting at some length to explain: “[In 2 Peter 3:10] we have a statement which in older translations came out one way, but which, with all the biblical manuscripts we now have, almost certainly needs to be changed. In the older versions, this passage ends with the warning that ‘the earth…will be burned up.’ A cosmic destruction: the end of the physical world! Is that really what Peter wrote? If so, it’s the only place in the whole of early Christian literature where such an idea is found. But in some manuscripts of the New Testament, including two of the very best, the word for ‘will be burned up’ isn’t there. Instead, there is a word which means ‘will be found,’ or ‘will be discovered,’ or ‘will be disclosed.’”
    - You know how fire departments often manage controlled burns of the forest?
    - THAT’s the picture here.
    - God will use fire to burn up the weeds and thorns and thistles of this earth—anything that is contrary to his will—SO THAT the GOOD stuff will be found, discovered, and disclosed.
  + Death Star / Moana
    - Contrary to what the American End Time tabloids might tell you in your Instagram feed, the earth isn’t going to be vaporized like the Death Star in Star Wars.
    - If you’re looking for a pop-culture analogy to explain the “New” Earth, you’ll find a much more accurate one in *Moana*.
    - One of the main characters in Moana is a beautiful personified island named Te Fiti who is covered with lush green grass, towering trees, and the most vibrantly colored flowers you can imagine—probably a decent picture of what earth looked like prior to the Fall.
    - But when Te Fiti’s heart is stolen, her beauty crumbles. Her once-gorgeous exterior is covered with lava rock, and Te Fiti turns into a monstrous version of her former self.
    - Her appearance is so different that everyone mistakes her for an entirely different being.
    - But the movie doesn’t end with Te Fiti being destroyed. It ends with her being renewed.
    - When Moana restores the heart of Te Fiti, the island’s hardened exterior begins to break, and the original Te Fiti—beautiful, lush, and colorful—emerges from the ash.
    - The contrast is so stark that this appears to be a brand-new island. But of course, it’s not. It’s the original Te Fiti, but better. Not a new island, but one that is *like* new.
    - That is the best picture I’ve ever seen of what Scripture says will happen to the earth.
    - Believer, our hope is not for a whole new world, but for a whole *renewed* world. An earth that isn’t new so much as it is *like* new.
    - Which makes *perfect* sense given the context of Scripture
    - In the beginning, God saw ALL that had made and called it very good—including this earth!
    - And he has never once retracted that claim.
    - God “is not a Creator who rejects and replaces; he reconciles and redeems.”
    - And that includes the earth!
  + Whole truth
    - Friends, it is only half true that earth is our temporary home.
    - The whole truth is that earth is our temporary home *until* it is our perfect and *permanent* home.
    - Now, some of you are asking yourselves, “Who cares?” Why does that matter to my life today?
  + Why does this WT matter?
    - Let me break this down the stakes of this whole truth as clearly as I can.
    - IF earth is our temporary home and the present heaven is our permanent one
    - THEN matter doesn’t matter and the only thing of eternal significance are the “spiritual” things we do like sharing the gospel and “saving souls”
      * Because—as this argument goes—souls are the only thing God plans to save!
      * Building your business DOES NOT matter
      * Playing your sport DOES NOT matter
      * Selling real estate DOES NOT matter
      * Unless, of course you can leverage those things to the instrumental end of sharing the gospel
      * But they have ZERO *intrinsic* value
      * And if THAT’s true
    - THEN frankly most of us are wasting the vast majority of our lives
      * Because I’m willing to bet you spend WAY less than 1% of your waking hours walking non-Christians through the Romans Road
    - My friends, that math is *deeply* depressing. But more importantly, as I hope you’re starting to see, that math is *deeply* unbiblical.
    - Because IF this earth will one day be our perfect and permanent home
    - THEN matter matters deeply to God and your *spiritual* work of “saving souls” AND the *material* work of making this earth more useful and beautiful must have eternal significance
    - And if THAT’s true THEN 100% of your life can matter for eternity
    - Here’s how one theologian who is way smarter than me put it,“The significance of secular work depends on the value of creation, and the value of creation depends on its final destiny.”
    - And because the final destiny of the earth is *redemption* rather than *destruction,* your work *with* the earth—typing on aluminum MacBooks, kicking a soccer ball, or selling homes—must bring pleasure to God.
    - Psalm 37:23 says this explicitly: The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.
    - Not just the “spiritual” things you do. But also the super “earthly” things you do in a godly way.
    - Let’s move on to Half Truth #2: We are going back to Eden.
* HT #2: We are going back to Eden
  + Intro
    - Now, in my experience, people who understand that heaven is ultimately here on earth still have anemic views of what all that actually entails.
    - One of those views is that the New Earth will be merely a return to the Garden of Eden.
    - Again, this half truth has a modicum of validity.
  + Half truth
    - In Revelation 22, we see that everything sin broke in Eden in Genesis 3 has been renewed and that “the tree of life” is once again at the center of the earth.
    - But the *location* of the tree of life is the first clue that the New Earth is much more than just Eden 2.0.
  + NJ
    - Unlike the Eden we know from Genesis 1, this vision is of the garden of Eden *surrounded by* a city—the seven MILLION foot tall New Jerusalem—the work of God’s hands.
    - If that’s surprising to you, then pay attention because this is going to knock your socks off.
    - Scripture makes clear that it’s not just the work of *God’s* hands that will be present on the New Earth. It’s *also* some of the work of *human* hands.
  + Isa. 60
    - After describing the New Jerusalem, John says this in Revelation 21:25–26: “On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into [the city].”
    - What is John talking about?
    - Thankfully, we don’t have to guess, because Isaiah answered that question for us in the Old Testament.
    - And even though Isaiah wrote some eight hundred years before John, scholars agree that “both men were working with the same material.”
    - And so “Isaiah 60 serves as the best biblical commentary on Revelation 21–22.”
    - In that commentary, Isaiah says this: “Your gates will always stand open . . . so that people may bring you the wealth of the nations” (verse 11).
    - This language is nearly *identical* to John’s. But unlike John, Isaiah goes on to list out what some of “the wealth of the nations” are.
    - They include incense, ships, and refined silver and gold.
    - Make no mistake about it: Ships? Incense? Refined silver and gold? These are all *works of human hands* and Isaiah and John are watching Jesus welcome these cultural goods into the New Jerusalem.
    - The implication here is startling! These prophetic visions suggest that some of the *literal* work of your hands—the product you’re building, the essay you’re writing, the truck you’re repairing—has the chance of *physically* lasting into eternity.
    - Does that blow your mind as much as it blows mine?
    - I hope so.
    - It’s only half true that we are going back to Eden.
    - We are going back to Eden *surrounded by* the work of God’s hands and some of our own.
    - Why is it so important that we understand that?
    - Not ONLY does this whole truth give us greater purpose in the present
    - Not ONLY should it give us greater hope for the future
    - MOST importantly, this whole truth helps us appreciate the power and glory and *majesty* of Christ our King all the more.
  + Why does this WT matter?
    - Randy Alcorn explains this well: Some may think it silly or sentimental to suppose that nature, animals, paintings, books, or a baseball bat might be resurrected. It may appear to trivialize the coming resurrection. I would suggest that it does exactly the opposite: It *elevates* resurrection, emphasizing the power of Christ to radically renew mankind—and far more.
    - Mic drop. Obama style.
  + Transition
    - Okay, so we’ve just seen that heaven is ultimately on earth, and it’s *way* more than just a return to Eden.
    - But what on earth will we be *doing* on earth for eternity?
    - John Eldredge says, “This is probably the one aspect of our future most shrouded in religious vapors, fogged in by a pea soup of vagueness, emptiness, and heavenly foam.”
    - Why? Because we’ve settled for half truth #3 that we will *worship* for all eternity.
* HT #3: We will worship for eternity
  + Intro
    - Nobody summed up this HT better than Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn:* “The Widow Douglas told me she was going to live so as to go to the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. Well, I couldn’t see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn’t try for it.”
    - While I never said those words out loud, I quietly agreed with that statement for a long, long time.
    - I remember sitting in chapel in elementary school, horrified at the idea of spending billions of years playing a harp.
    - The idea of heaven wasn’t a source of *hope* for me. It was a source of *dread*.
    - Over the years, I’ve heard *so* many adults and kids admit those same fears in hushed whispers laden with shame, which is why I’m convinced that peddling this half truth is one of Satan’s favorite schemes.
    - The Enemy doesn’t need to convince us that heaven isn’t real.
    - He just needs to convince us that heaven is *lame*.
    - Because if he can do that, he can steal our purpose in the present, our hope for the future, and our motivation to share our faith.
  + Half truth
    - Now, Scripture does make it clear that we will worship God forever.
    - That is the VERY POINT of eternity.
    - But the reason I call this a *half* truth is that our understanding of the word *worship* is, at best, half-true.
  + Defining worship
    - When we think of worship, we think almost exclusively of musical worship. And while there will certainly be musical worship on the New Earth, God’s definition of worship is much broader than strumming a harp or lyre.
    - A quick trip to Genesis 2 will make this clear.
    - In Genesis 2:15, it says that “God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” The word we translate as “work” in this verse is the Hebrew word *abad*, which is the exact same word we translate as “worship” in Exodus 3:12 and elsewhere in Scripture.
    - That means that Adam and Eve were worshipping God not just when they walked with him in the garden or sang him a song. They were worshipping God as they carried out the First Commission God gave you and me to fill, subdue, and rule the earth on his behalf.
    - And in what may come as the greatest shock of this talk so far, *the same will be true for you and me for all eternity.*
  + Work in heaven
    - Revelation 22:3–5 makes this crystal clear: No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will *reign* for ever and ever.
    - Did you catch that? God’s Word doesn’t say that we will sing “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” for ever and ever.
    - Or recline in a hammock for ever and ever.
    - We will reign for ever and ever.
    - But what exactly does it mean that we “will reign for ever and ever” with Christ?
    - It means a lot of things. One of which is that we will *work* for ever and ever with Christ.
    - Again the prophet Isaiah helps us see this truth: See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. . . . [My people] will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain…they and their descendants with them. (Isaiah 65:17, 21–23)
    - Believer, whether you love or hate your work, this promise should FIRE YOU UP and *massively* fuel your hope.
    - Because just as the paradise of Eden was a *vo*cation and not a *va*cation, so it will be on the New Earth.
    - Only now, for the first time in millennia, our work will be perfect and painless once again.
    - No more bad bosses
    - No more stress about exams
    - No more anxiety on Sunday nights about what awaits you Monday morning
    - Because ALL of our working, creating, and exploring will be free from the curse of sin.
    - It will be work that is challenging but satisfying.
    - Difficult but fruitful.
    - All honey, no bees.
  + Summary
    - It *is* true that we will worship for eternity.
    - But the *whole* truth is that we will worship for eternity *by* singing, filling, subduing, and ruling the New Earth with King Jesus.
    - But that’s *way* off in the future right? What does this mean for you right now—today?
  + Why does this WT matter?
    - Here’s what it means: If you will be filling, subduing, and ruling over creation with Christ forever, then the work you do with him *today*—building spreadsheets, playing the piano, or preparing meals—is anything but “secular” and temporal. You are rehearsing something that is deeply sacred and *eternal.*
    - And so, you are *free* to joyfully and enthusiastically *lean into* that work as the good, eternal gift from God that it is.
    - Here’s the final half truth about heaven we’ll explore today: You and I are called to “keep watch” for Christ’s return.
* HT #4: We are called to keep watch for Christ’s return
  + Intro
    - You and I live in the “already” and “not yet” of the kingdom of heaven.
    - The kingdom has been inaugurated by Christ, but we are still waiting for God to completely and permanently rip the veil between heaven and earth and consummate the marriage between these two dimensions.
    - What are you and I called to do in the meantime?
  + Half truth
    - In a sense, we’re called to “keep watch” for the second coming of Christ per Jesus’s command in Matthew 25:13.
  + Whole truth
    - The reason it’s only *half*-true that we are called to “keep watch” is found in our interpretation of Jesus’s words here.
    - The American End Times industry has interpreted this to mean a passive sort of watching marked by endless speculation about when and where Christ will return.
    - Which is sad because this is not even close to the kind of watching Jesus called us to.
    - Immediately after he instructed his disciples to “keep watch,” Jesus launched into his famous parable of the talents, the story of a master (who, of course, represents Jesus) putting his servants to work while they wait for his return.
    - Jesus couldn’t have made it any clearer: We are called to keep watch for his return not by *sitting* on our hands but by *working* with them.
    - This is an aspirational GIF for me. I long to look like Sterling K. Brown.
  + Summary
    - It’s only half true that we are called to “keep watch” for Christ’s return.
    - The whole truth is that you and I are called to keep watch for Christ’s return *by* giving ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.
    - And that means FAR more than simply sharing the gospel. Because, as we’ve seen, the kingdom of heaven has far more than saved souls.
    - So what is “the work of the Lord” stated more broadly and biblically?
    - I can’t answer that question more beautifully than my friend John Mark Comer has so I won’t. Here’s what pastor John Mark says: We’re called to a very specific kind of work. To make a Garden-like world where image bearers can flourish and thrive, where people can experience and enjoy God’s generous love. A kingdom where God’s will is done “on earth as it is in heaven,” *where the glass wall between earth and heaven is so thin and clear and translucent that you don’t even remember it’s there.*
    - In other words friends, the good news of the gospel is not that I get to go to heaven *when* I die, but that I get to partner with God in cultivating heaven on earth *until* I die.
  + Transition
    - OK, we’ve covered *a lot* of ground in a short amount of time.
    - Let me close by breaking down what all of this means for you and me.
    - At the beginning of this talk, I promised that replacing these half truths about heaven with whole truths would lead to exponentially greater purpose in the present and hope for the future.
* Conclusion
  + Purpose
    - Do you see just how much purpose these whole truths assign to your life?
    - Before you walked into this room today, you understood how 1% of your time at school or at work matters for eternity—the 1% you spend on spiritual things like prayer, or evangelism, or writing a check to those who do that work “full-time.”
    - But here’s what I hope you now see:
      * Because this *earth* is eternal
      * Because your *job* is likely eternal
      * And because God might carry some of the *literal* work of your hands onto the New Earth…
      * You can be confident that *100%* of your time at work or at school matters for eternity—the “spiritual” tasks as well as the super “earthly” ones.
      * I hope that gives you an unparalleled sense of purpose tomorrow.
  + Hope
    - But I pray these whole truths have *also* given you an unparalleled sense of hope for the future
    - A future where Christ gets greater glory because he is worshiped as King of heaven AND as King of earth
    - And a future where you and I experience deeper joy as we worship Christ our King by singing AND by working and reigning alongside him for evermore.
  + TRIY
    - Lord willing, this October I will be publishing a picture book to help your kids grasp these whole truths about heaven so that *they* can experience this purpose and hope decades before you and I did.
    - But I honestly wrote it as much for you as I did for your kids or grandkids.
    - When we began work on this project, I told my publisher that it had to feel like an episode of Bluey that makes 5 year olds smile and 55 year olds weep.
    - So I want to close by reading it to you as a poetic summary of the whole truths about heaven we just explored.

On a day coming soon, though nobody knows when,

We’ll look up at the sky and see heaven descend.

Jesus said He won’t stay in the clouds way up there.

He’ll bring heaven to Earth, and He’ll live with us here.

When heaven comes down, we’ll all rush to meet Jesus

Bringing paintings, inventions, and gifts for Him with us.

When we long at last reach our final destination,

We’ll hug long-lost loved ones from every nation.

Then we’ll all turn and stare at God’s epic new world,

and the city he made out of gold, gems, and pearls.

As we step through the gates, we will all be in awe

that a city can stand seven million feet tall.

There will be no more sin, no more sickness or sadness

Just the best things made perfect, bringing God and us gladness.

The sun will stay set, and the moon will be gone,

as God’s radiant light blurs the dusk into dawn.

But the best part by far is King Jesuswill be there!

Making everything new with His peace, love, and care.

And now you might think that our story is ending,

But in fact, this is just the beginning.

Because Jesus wants you to *rule* with Him—

to explore and fill the kingdom of heaven with Him.

For [RS4] kingdoms have more than just people and kings.

They have art and bakeries, campfires and swings.

God says He won’t rule this world all on His own,

He’ll send princes and princesses out from His throne.

To ride without fear on the backs of great lions

And blaze brand-new trails through the middle of Zion.

To master the flute, piano, or timpani

As Jesus applauds your brilliant symphony.

Perhaps you will bulldoze roads for new cities,

or help lead the Jesus welcome committee.

Or create a new sport with no need to worry

About getting hurt or needing to hurry.

You might spend time learning new subjects and skills

With no fear of testing or loud fire drills.

Maybe you’ll explore galaxies far, far away

And marvel at what God once made in a day.

So don’t think for one second that Heaven is boring,

because we’ll be reigning, creating, and exploring!

Not just for our joy, and surely not for our glory

But to love and to worship the One who is worthy.

It’ll be so much better than your wildest dreams—

ruling heaven on earth next to Jesus our King.

* Conclusion
  + But hey friends, here’s what I hope you’ve started to see during this talk: We don’t have to wait for the New Jerusalem to drop from the sky to rule heaven on earth next to Jesus our King.
  + Jesus IS king of heaven and earth—present tense.
  + His Kingdom IS at hand—present tense. In part now and in full soon.
  + What are we supposed to do in the meantime?
  + In our schools, in our neighborhoods, in our offices—work to make the glass wall between earth and heaven so thin and translucent you don’t even remember it’s there.
  + Now, I could tell when I read that quote a few minutes ago, about half the room was like "that's beautiful Jordan" while the other half wanted to stand up and shout HOW!? What does that look like PRACTICALLY Jordan?
  + If I had another hour, I would spend it answering that question. But I don’t. So let me leave you with this.
  + Scan the QR code and I am going to send you a PDF which includes:
    - 15 marks of the kingdom of heaven that you and I are called to reveal in the present
    - 3 super practical ways to reveal those marks of the kingdom along with case studies from everyone from C.S. Lewis to a call center rep
    - A link to *The Royal in You* picture book
    - Also going to send you a video of this talk.
  + Praying those resources serve you well as you seek to reveal more of heaven on earth at work, at school, and in your neighborhoods tomorrow.
  + Let’s pray.