



Colleen answers our questions about heaven and shows how our deepest desires—for beauty, wonder, peace, healing, happiness, power, worship, and belonging—are fulfilled when we get to our heavenly Home. She draws deeply from God's Word, infusing our hearts with hope, even in our darkest days.

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garden



IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS a Garden. In the end, there will be a City. And in the in-between, we're exiles longing for Home.

When God created us, He put us into home. He put us in the Garden of Eden, the one place where every capacity—the intellectual and aesthetic and emotional and psychological and spiritual—every one of our capacities was absolutely sustained, totally fulfilled, absolutely supported.¹

Out of nothingness, God created a world filled with every beauty and blessing imaginable, including the Garden—the place where He walked and talked with the ones He made in His image, the ones He'd loved long before He said, "Let there be light" (EPH. 1:4; GEN. 1:3).

The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From

there it divided and became the source of four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. Gold from that land is pure; bdellium and onyx are also there. The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.” (GEN. 2:8–17)

And the man did die. So did his wife. The first man and woman spoiled the Garden for us all by their sin of unbelief—but the God of the Garden already had an exquisite plan to restore us to Himself and bring us back Home.

What happens between the Garden and the City is the greatest love story ever told. And we are part of it—the sweeping epic that began long before us and leads to a breathtaking future we’ll share together forever. Until then, we’re longing, we’re looking . . . for “the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (HEB. 11:10).



What does the Bible give us that secular theory cannot match? In a word: hope: hope understood not in the weak sense of optimistic whistling in the dark, but in the strong sense of certainty about what is coming because God himself has promised it . . . a destiny that reaches beyond this world to a kaleidoscope of wonders, enrichments, and delights to which it gives the generic name “glory.” This destiny is big and exciting.²

For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and melodious song. (ISA. 51:3)



home



NO MATTER WHERE I'VE LIVED or how briefly I've lived there, home has always been where my people are. As a single woman, I was happiest when my front door swung open to students, colleagues, friends, and family—filling even the smallest spaces with giant joy. Since becoming a wife and mom, I've not only wanted to create a place of love and belonging for my husband and son, but I've also looked at every potential new apartment and house with one burning question: *Can we host people here?*

I guess that's why when Jesus tells His disciples, "I am going away to prepare a place for you" (JOHN 14:2), I can almost hear the warmth in His voice and see the excitement in His eyes. It's the same excitement I sense in verses like this one:

What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived—
the things God has prepared for those who love him
(1 COR. 2:9)

Have you ever known someone whose home is a special place of belonging for you? They seem to have a sixth sense for

creating a space where you feel loved in every detail: There's a spread of your favorite foods and drinks; a cozy blanket waiting for you; a basket of toiletries if you spend the night. They seem to instinctively know whether you need to sit quietly and rest, or pour your heart out, or laugh your head off.

But as humans, our attempts at creating a place of belonging have limitations. In striking contrast, God knows *no* limitations nor constraints—He deals in the infinite and exhaustless. No wonder our five senses can't begin to process what He's preparing for us. But if we know Him, we know that

He will do it well, for he knows all about us. He knows what will give us the most happiness. . . . He loves us, too, so well that, as the preparing is left to him, I know that he will prepare us nothing second-rate, nothing that could possibly be excelled. We shall have the best of the best, and much of it; we shall have all that even his great heart can give us. Nothing will be stented.¹

My journey through decades of hardship—including extended singleness, cyclical depression, chronic illness, and terminal cancer—has proven to me that God is exactly who He says He is. “He is my faithful love” (ps. 144:2), and He has never failed me. He's never shortchanged me; He's always outgiven me. So I can live in the mystery and the unknown, even when it's painful or scary. I don't need all the details about Home ahead of time, because what I *do* know is enough: The God who is preparing a place for me and for you and for all His

children is the God who created us, rescued us, and continues to pour out His goodness and love on us.

The One who spoke galaxies into being, who breathed out stars like Mu Cephei (the size of 2.7 quadrillion Earths) and deep-sea mysteries like the bioluminescent vampire squid—who dreamed up 11,000 bird species, sculpted snowflakes, and crafted subatomic particles—is the One who has saved His best work for last.

We haven't seen anything yet . . .

But Jesus gives us glimpses of what He's preparing. We know that Home will be vast and prosperous (ISA. 9:7), safe and peaceful (ISA. 32:18), a place of endless joy and pleasure (PS. 16:11), where people from every tribe and tongue and nation will enjoy and serve and worship God forever (REV. 7:9–12; PS. 145:1–2).

There will be no more sin or evil, grief or death, pain or tears (REV. 21:3–4, 27; 22:3). We will be perfectly loved and will love perfectly in return. We will see God face to face, and we will be like Him (1 JOHN 3:2).

Home is where we finally, fully, and forever *belong*. Where we are perfectly known and loved, safe and satisfied.

We foreshadow this future—this ultimate belonging—when we laugh late into the night with our best friend, dance with a child, confide in a trusted roommate, rest quietly with our spouse, share a favorite meal with our people, or sing our hearts out with our church family.

But these are just hints of Home, sneak peeks into the place of perfect belonging where the presence of Jesus is so excessively good, we'll need resurrected bodies to handle it all. In the

meantime, we can lean all our hope into the promise that God has given us:

For I will create new heavens and a new earth;
the past events will not be remembered or come to mind.
Then be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I will create Jerusalem to be a joy
and its people to be a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people.
The sound of weeping and crying
will no longer be heard in her. (ISA. 65:17–19)

LORD my God, you have done many things—
your wondrous works and your plans for us;
none can compare with you.
If I were to report and speak of them,
they are more than can be told. (PS. 40:5)



The great fairy tales and legends—“Beauty and the Beast,” “Sleeping Beauty,” King Arthur, Faust—did not really happen, of course. They are not factually true. And yet they seem to fulfill a set of longings in the human heart that realistic fiction can never touch or satisfy.

That is because deep in the human heart are these desires—to experience the supernatural, to escape death, to know love that we can never lose, to not age but live long enough to realize our creative dreams, to fly, to communicate with nonhuman beings, to triumph over evil.²

*How great are his miracles,
and how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an eternal kingdom,
and his dominion is from generation
to generation. (DAN. 4:3)*

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