What are we going to do in heaven? Do we sit on clouds? Will we just sing? Will there be parties? Will we play basketball? Will we invent things? Will poetry be written? Will crafts be made? Will we give gifts?

A common false impression about eternity was seen clearly on an old episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation. In this episode a member of the “Q continuum” longs for an end to his existence — Why? He complains that everything that could be said and done has already been said and done — so since he will live forever all he has to look forward to is repetition and utter boredom. “For us, the disease is immortality.”

Boring — that’s what many people think heaven will be like. BORING! Actually that just betrays a heresy in our own thinking about God — because if we think heaven is going to be boring then it means we think God is boring. But how can God be boring when He is the one who created adrenaline, good feelings, our taste buds, the thrill of victory and nerve endings that send pleasure feelings to the brain! God is the one who came up with laughter, joy, exhilaration and fun — humans didn’t create that.

Some around us say, especially after a few beers, “I’d rather have a good time in Hell being with my rowdy friends than being bored in heaven with a bunch of goody-two-shoes” (that’s a the slang term from my day). Don’t allow that kind of thinking to go unchallenged — whether others are saying it or your mind is thinking it. First of all, hell is a place totally separate from God and also separate from anyone else — it is a fearful and lonely place. There is no hanging around, smoking, & shooting pool with the friends. This is actually the same lie of the devil that caused Eve to fall into sin. satan basically told Eve she couldn’t have a good time just doing what is right — she needed something more — satan wants us to think we need a little rebellion in our life so we won’t be bored. But it is sin that leads to emptiness. Drug addicts are convinced that drugs make their lives happier, when everyone else can see those drugs have already enslaved them.

Second, this idea that heaven is boring may be common in America, but it is way off base. And that is what we have been looking at in November. So let’s continue now with a new question — what are we going to do in heaven? And won’t that get boring after a few million years?

PROPOSITION: We have much to do in heaven in terms of our responsibilities (like running the universe) and our enjoyment of creative & fun things — boredom won’t be in our vocabulary in heaven!

I. Rule/reign with Christ
A. Original mandate

Let’s start at the beginning. God’s original design for men and women was to rule or reign over His creation here on planet earth. READ Gen 1:26-28. God designed humans for responsibilities that genuinely help others & God’s creation. We were made to develop & manage this planet for God. God did not create us to be robots doing the same task over and over again, but entrusted us with responsibilities that require us to use our minds, our creativity, our strength, our planning, our imaginations and our skills to meet the ever changing challenges before us. Instead, we decided to rebel against God’s rules, which allowed satan to become the “Prince of this world”, made work frustrating, corrupted ruling with self-interest & led to humans being enslaved to sin & selfishness. Turn to Dan 7.

B. Affirmed for future in OT and NT

(Dan 7:13-14, 27; Luke 19:17; I Cor 6:2-3; II Tim 2:12; Rev 22:5)

Even though humans botched up this original mandate to rule and reign righteously, God has not given up on that goal. In Dan 7, Daniel is given a vision of 4 powerful, world conquering, empires that would control God’s Promised Land followed by a picture of the final anti-Christ. But God wipes all of those kingdoms away and replaces it with His Kingdom. READ v 13-14. This is a tremendous picture of the future rule & reign of Jesus’ over all the earth and over all peoples. Now there is a surprise in the interpretation in v 27 – READ. It is not just Jesus who will rule, reign and have dominion, but He will share this with all true believers. The original plan of God has not been lost, but will be fulfilled in even greater ways in the future by those humans who follow God’s way here. Notice this says it is forever (“everlasting dominion” & “won’t pass away” in v 14 & “everlasting kingdom” in v 27.) so we are not just talking about the millennium, but all of eternity. We find this same promise repeated often in the NT.

Luke 19:17 “Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of 10 cities.’ Faithful Christians will be given the reign or rule over whole sections of the new earth.

I Cor 6:2-3 “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? ... Do you not know that we will judge angels?” The tense of the verb here implies it is on-going judgment, not just a one time event. That is something leaders regularly do.

II Tim 2:12 “If we endure, we will also reign with Him [Jesus].” We will be co-rulers with Jesus forever.

Or Rev 22:5 which we saw 2 wks ago, Believers “will reign for ever and ever” – God originally made us to rule & reign & He will restore that privilege in the future.

C. Reward for faithful service

In fact, this ruling and reigning is a reward by God for faithful service by believers here on this earth. We’ll see more on that in Matthew 25 in a few minutes. Turn to Psalm 8. READ.
D. To bring glory to God

(Psalm 8:6, Ps 37:11; Isa 57:13; Rev 21:24-26)

So God originally designed men and women to rule & reign righteously over all He created on earth. The Lord called us to be good managers who help all life flourish. Even though our sin and selfishness has caused us to fall far short of this goal, God confirms in both the Old Testament and New Testament that that is still His goal for humans in the future – for eternity. **Why might that be? Why were we created in God’s image?** Around 275 years ago, the NE pastor Jonathan Edwards wrote a book called “The End for Which God Created the World.” In it, he points out that God has this tendency in Himself to communicate His glory. That is, when God creates something, it naturally reflects some positive aspect of God’s character which in turn leads us to be more amazed in God Himself, when we rightly see what God did.

The point of this may seem unclear so let’s see how this works in Psalm 8. As Jesus’ followers, we have been & will be given the opportunity to reflect God’s glory in what we do. **READ v 1.** Clearly, David is over-the-top amazed at God at this moment. He is especially amazed at God’s awesomeness and majesty. **Where is David seeing this greatness of God?** V 1b “You have set your glory in the heavens”. V 3 - READ. David looks at the grandeur, size, power and greatness of the universe and that evidence enlarges his understanding of the Creator’s greatness. What makes this picture even stronger for David is the personal care that the Creator God has shown to humans who don’t have the power to create stars, design atoms, or create laws that work like gravity. **READ v 4.** Not only has God cared for us, even though we are less than a gnat in the universe, but God has given humans special abilities and responsibilities that other creatures don’t have. **READ v 5-6.** When David’s eyes are opened to just a small part of the plan and power of God, he sees God’s glory. **READ v 9.**

So what Psalm 8 & Jonathan Edwards are pointing out is that in everything God creates and does, He makes some aspect of His great perfect character reflected in it. Since we humans have been uniquely made in God’s image, then we have the privilege to use the ingenuity, creativeness, hard-work, diligence and intellect God enabled us with to produce things from this earth that also reflect His glory – that is they reflect some aspect of God’s character. So it should NOT surprise us when we see marvels of engineering in the ancient world – like the Pyramids, Stonehedge, or Great Wall of China. These aren’t produced by some super-intelligent extra-terrestrials – God built in to humans the desire & the ability to discover and then creatively use the materials on this earth to reflect His glory and manifest His attributes. The great cathedrals of Europe weren’t made by mistake or selfishness – there is something in us that wants to use our rulership & management abilities to make something that shows **God’s impressiveness.** There is something in us that wants to create something big because God’s big. We are going to keep trying to discover new ways to be transported into space, because there is something in us that wants to explore the vastness of God’s creation because God’s vast. **Since God has no limit in any attribute, there is no limit in what we can create, enhance, or live out in communities & relationships.**
Because of Jesus, in heaven we will again reign, or rule, as God desired from the start. We will again be able to organize, manage, create, develop, and skillfully do things that will reflect God's glory. In heaven, we will continually learn new things, we'll continually develop new skills, we will continually learn how to better work together with those having different abilities, we'll continually use creative, imaginative, sharp, & intentional actions to build, create, organize, & do that which will reflect God's glory clearly. We're not going to be given paint-by-number kits in heaven. We are going to get to develop cultures, and cities and infrastructures and learning environments and fun activities and discovery places where ever God puts us in control.

If you let your mind grasp just a little of this it will leave you breathless. Boring won't be in heaven's vocabulary - the greatest privileges of leadership and work have will all be combined together in a way that will make us want to jump out of bed every morning to get back to the work God's entrusted us with. Imagine calling over to your mom in heaven, "Hey mom, come over sometime and check out that 14,000 story building we just finished" or "You should see the system we've developed so everyone in our town is learning this new thing together." That is the mind-boggling privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ forever. But won't that get boring?

E. Ever-expanding government

Isaiah 9:6-7 is a popular passage at Christmas. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He (that is Jesus) will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace." Then it adds "of the greatness (or increase) of His government and peace there will be no end." This can not just mean that the Christ's reign will never cease because we have this extra word increase. And it can't simply mean His governmental authority will have no limit because Jesus will already have all authority at that time. The original Hebrew really does mean "increase" or "expansion". What this is saying is that Christ's government for eternity will be ever-expanding. How can the government under Jesus keep increasing when He already is over everything?

How small our thinking is when it comes to heaven. What if God keeps creating new worlds, galaxies and universes which are then put under Jesus and then under us? The sinfulness of humans may have put a temporary moratorium on creation - much like when an artist's picture gets wrecked and the artist needs to first concentrate on restoring that picture before going on to a whole new project. Like with Adam & Eve, God is probably going to keep creating things then hand those over to us to use our God-given abilities to create, organize, design & discover all we can so it will reflect God's glory. God is by nature creative - why would He stop? I hope this is beginning to boggle your mind, because it sure has boggled mine. There is no way this all can be boring. Let's turn to Matt 25 and see at least 4 things we will do for eternity.
READ Matt 25:21 & 23. Notice the contrast – the greatest things we can do on earth now are just considered “a few things” when compared to heaven – talk about humbling. And none of these heavenly responsibilities will be dependent on our education, status, finances or current abilities here on earth. But they will be dependent on our faithfulness, our obedience, our sacrifice and time given for God’s work & commands. Notice four key elements here that will affect what we do in heaven.

A. Work
First there will be work we are given in heaven – “I will put you in charge of many things”. There is work we will be given in heaven. We’ll be put in charge even of whole cities according to Luke!

B. Responsibility
Second, this same phrase shows clearly that we will be given great responsibility. God assigns us this work and we are responsible for making it happen to the honor and glory of God. We won’t be robots & God doesn’t do everything.

C. Joy
Third, there is joy. “Come and share your master’s happiness.” It is not all work and no play – but we will also share in God’s happiness. There is an incredible amount of joy and laughter in heaven.

D. Recreation
Fourth, there is recreation. Again from that same phrase, the Master’s happiness also refers to those fun things masters got to do after hard work that slaves and servants didn’t get to do. There is recreation in heaven.

III. Additional questions
With these thoughts in mind, let’s quickly answer 4 simple questions and then conclude.

A. Will there be dancing and music in heaven?
(Ps 104:33; Rev 14:2-3; Ex 15:20-21; 2 Sam 6:16; Luke 15:25; Jer 31:4-5)
Ps 104:33 says “I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” The 144,000 who are redeemed from the earth in the final tribulation are said to sing a new song before God’s throne in Rev 14. There will be a richness & creativity in music in heaven that we can’t even comprehend now – even though we live in a culture with a great variety of music in it. Ex 15 tells of Miriam & the women of Israel dancing after their deliverance through the Red Sea. II Sam 6 speaks of King David’s dancing in praise before the Lord. Luke 15:25 points out that when the wayward son returned home after his disobedience, the Father’s house was filled with music and dancing. Jer 31:4-5 speaks of a future time when the people “will again take up their tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful.” It is God, not satan who made us to dance – satan has spent all his time trying to corrupt it. Sure, there is dancing that dishonors God, just like there is eating, drinking, prayer and religious activities that dishonor God. That doesn’t negate that God has placed inside of us an instinctive physical response to music, of which there will be much more in heaven.
B. Will there be art, drama, entertainment?

No there will only be music and dancing! Musicians are good and artists & actors are bad - Only kidding!!! We aren’t told directly, but our use of the arts to communicate great truths originates in the character & communication of God Himself, so there is no reason to suppose we won’t express truths and ideas in these ways in the future. The false idea of heaven as a place where we already know everything really stifles our proper imagination. I hope you can picture books being written in heaven & dramas being done – after all there is much we still need to learn there. You never know, I may even come to appreciate poetry in heaven which rarely excites me now.

C. Will we laugh and play?

(Luke 6:21, 23; Mark 10:14-15)

Guess who said “If you’re not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don’t want to go there?” No, it wasn’t some American comedian, it was Martin Luther the great reformer. Humor originated in God, not humans or the demonic. Jesus promised it for our future. In Luke 6:21 Jesus said, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” Carry a heavy burden now because of your faith in Jesus and heaven will be a place of hilarity – guaranteed by Jesus Himself. One of the great lies of satan is that God is joyless and humorless – actually it is satan who is humorless. Sin doesn’t bring joy, it brings long term pain & slavery.

D. Will there be sports – thrills?

(I Cor 9:24-27, II Tim 2:5; Rev 21:4, 22:2)

I Cor 9 and II Tim 5 both show how the Christian life compares to sports. Since sports aren’t inherently evil, nor were they the result of the Fall, there is every reason to believe some kind of games, activities, and sports will be in heaven; plus many new ones. Some argue that it won’t be any challenge to do sports because we’ll all be the same in heaven and we’ll always be perfect – what fun is a hole-in-one every time? That is a misunderstanding of heaven – we aren’t going to have the same abilities and no one will get a hole-in-one every time – sorry golfers. That also means it would be wise for everyone in America to get ready for cricket because there are more people in the world play that crazy game than the sports we Americans are used to.

One of the clear messages of Jesus about the future is that there will be a hierarchy among the redeemed humans in the new heaven and new earth. That is, you and I will be under some and over others – all for the purpose of rightly running the Universe for God Himself. Have you let Jesus’ words that the first will be last and the last will be first grip your imagination? That means, the dedicated, sacrificial, Christ honoring house cleaners, janitors, & stay-at-home-moms have a much better chance of leading huge areas of God’s creation than we pastors do. I love a story Randy Alcorn tells in his great book Heaven because it describes what I think of some of you here. One time, he was speaking at a conference held at a fancy hotel. He heard the bellman was a committed Christian who was praying for God to work powerfully in that conference, so he gave the bellman his book on “Heaven”. But the more he thought about it, the more amazed Alcorn was that some hotel employees were praying for his conference’s success.
So he got another gift for the bellman – a small, rough, wooden cross. The bellman genuinely seemed stunned and overwhelmed. He got tears in his eyes and said “You didn’t need to do that. I’m only a bellman.” Now I quote Randy Alcorn, “The moment he said it, I realized that this brother had spent his life serving. It will likely be someone like him that I’ll have the privilege of serving under in God’s Kingdom. He was ‘only a bellman’ who spoke with warmth and love, who served, who quietly prayed in the background for the success of a conference in his hotel. I saw Jesus in that bellman and there was no ‘only’ about him. Who will be the kings of the new earth? I think that bellman will be one of them. And I’ll be honored to carry his bags.” Don’t stop quietly, sacrificially & freely serving Jesus Christ in school, at your work, in your home, in your neighborhood and in your extended family – God has something real special for you – and I personally will be honored to serve under you!!! Keep overcoming in the power of Jesus! Amen!