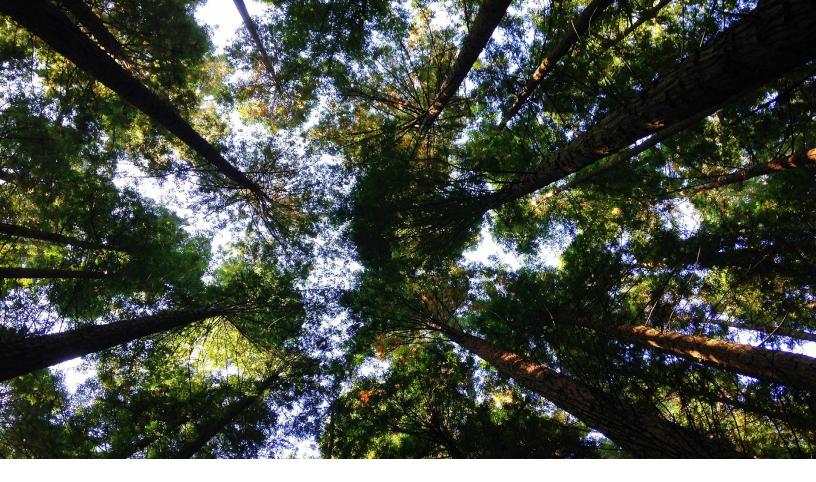


the catechism

# NEW CREATION





WHAT IS THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH?

ANSWER: THAT GOD WILL MAKE ALL THINGS RIGHT WHEN JESUS RETURNS TO DEFEAT EVIL AND RESURRECT HIS PEOPLE IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW FARTH.

# DAY 1

If someone asked you, "What is the ultimate hope of the Christian faith?", what would you say?

Would you say, "The ultimate hope of the Christian faith is that our souls are saved and we go to heaven?", or "The ultimate hope of the Christian faith is that Jesus provided a way to escape hell," or something else entirely?

Of course, both these answers have a measure of the truth. But they don't capture the big picture.

You might be surprised to hear the Bible's answer to the question. Of course, Jesus rescues us from judgment. Of course, Jesus "saves our souls" and gives us eternal life. But there's a bigger picture, and it's about the whole world.

The Bible teaches us that the great hope of the Christian faith is that God restores the world that was lost when Adam and Eve sinned. Now, that doesn't mean that every person who ever lived will be saved and enjoy eternal life. But it does mean that God intends to create a new heaven and earth for his people to enjoy.

God made this world. God loves this world. And God loves the human beings within it. And he intends not just to whisk a few souls away to heaven, but to restore the whole thing back to what he intended at the beginning.

God intends to raise his people from the dead and to restore his whole creation.

But, to benefit or even be a part of that rescue, you have to put your trust in Jesus.

Take some time today and consider God's plan to rescue the whole world. Thank God for his promises of redemption and restoration.



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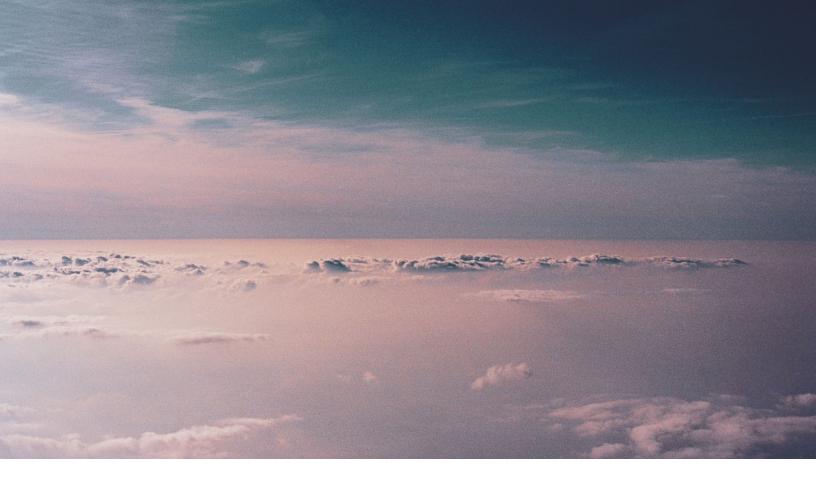
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### SCRIPTURE

- 1. We know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved. Romans 8:22-24
- 2. I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. John 17:20–23
- 3. And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth." Revelation 5:9–10
- 4. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. Revelation 21:1–4



# QUESTION: HOW WILL JESUS RETURN?

# ANSWER: JESUS WILL RETURN PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY IN POWER, THE SAME WAY THAT HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN.

# DAY 2

Have you ever wondered about the return of Jesus—what Christians have often called the Second Coming? What will it be like? A lot of people have different ideas, and there have been dozens and dozens of books written about it.

The Bible is actually pretty clear about the return of Jesus.

Acts 1 tells us, when Jesus ascended into heaven on a cloud, that he would return in the same way, but this time descending.

Chapters four and five in 1 Thessalonians and chapter 15 in 1 Corinthians tell us that Jesus will return and raise from the dead first those Christians who have died. Then Jesus will transform Christians who are alive so that they will be fit for God's new world.

Philippians 3 says something similar. It says that Jesus will return and transform the bodies of Christians who are alive. And Romans chapter 8 adds to this that we need transformed bodies to live in God's new world, when heaven and earth become one.

And Revelation says that Jesus will return and transform Christians into the kind

of beings they will need to be to inhabit God's new world, when heaven and earth come together once and for all and forever.

But what will all of this actually look like? Will Jesus literally descend upon a nimbus cloud, or is that just an image the Bible gives us?

What really matters is this: Jesus will return and rescue his people and make them fit for the new world that he's going to create, a world in which God and his people will live together forever.

Take some time to read through today's Bible verses for yourself. Next, spend some time reflecting upon the hope of Jesus' return.

### SCRIPTURE

- 1. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!" Acts 1:11
- 2. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control. Philippians 3:20–21
- 3. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17
- 4. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. Revelation 21:1–4



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WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN JESUS RETURNS?

ANSWER: WHEN JESUS RETURNS, HE WILL RAISE EVERYONE FROM THE DEAD, JUDGE US ALL PERFECTLY, AND RESTORE GOD'S CREATION.

# DAY 3

When Jesus returns, he will raise his people from the dead, transform those still alive, and place us in God's new world, where heaven and earth are one, just like the Garden of Eden where he originally placed Adam and Eve.

But what's God's new world going to be like? What will the redeemed be doing?

Basically, we will spend all day sitting on clouds, playing harps, singing worship songs, and listening to very, very long sermons...

Just kidding.

So what's it going to be like, then?

When Jesus returns, he will establish God's new world and place his people within it.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 that faith, hope, and love will endure into God's new world. In other words, just because God's new world will be perfect, doesn't mean that we will no longer need faith, hope, and love.

We're probably not that surprised by the need for love. Of course love will last into God's new world! But faith and hope? Why do we need those?

But perhaps that's part of the point. Perhaps Paul's giving us a clue, a hint about God's new world. There will be new tasks and challenges and opportunities. It certainly won't be boring! When you consider the complexity and variety of God's creation, we can hardly imagine what he has in store for us, but it will include faith and hope. And for that we'll need faith and hope, and not just love, because faith and hope look toward the new and unknown and trust in God.

Spend some time today dreaming about what heaven might be like. Then, thank God for the hope of spending eternity with him and with his people.

## SCRIPTURE

- 1. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
- 2. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back. After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his authority." (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God's authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. 1 Corinthians 15:23–28



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- 3. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control. Philippians 3:20–21
- 4. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." Revelation 21:1–4



WHAT WILL HAPPEN
TO UNBELIEVERS
AT THE FINAL

ANSWER: JESUS WILL JUDGE UNBELIEVERS OPENLY ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS, AND HE WILL CAST THEM INTO HELL WITH THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS AS AN EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

# DAY 4

As Christians, we usually don't enjoy talking about hell. It's scary and upsetting and sometimes concerns people we're very close to. But it's also necessary to talk about it.

The Bible uses many images and pictures to tell us about the future, both about heaven and hell. And the images of hell are horrific: fire and sulphur and punishment and pain. But the main point of these images and pictures is this:

God is a holy, consuming fire, and when Jesus returns God will pour out his presence upon the whole universe. And here's the scary part: God's holy, consuming presence will prove destructive and tormenting to those who aren't in Christ.

But don't misunderstand this. This hell, this destruction, doesn't happen because God isn't love. God is love; but God is also holy. He is the righteous judge of the world. Any sin, big or small, goes against God's holiness and therefore deserves punishment. Because he is holy, loving, righteous, all-wise, and all-knowing, God

is the only one who can judge people correctly. God bases his judgment on what people do or not do, say or not say, and think or not think. In that way, he is just. Those who are cast into hell will only be receiving the punishment they deserve.

You see, hell is what happens when God's anger is finally poured out and consumes wickedness. The only hope is to be in Christ when that happens. Anyone who accepts Jesus' sacrifice as payment for their sins and who receive Jesus' righteousness will not be consumed because he has taken the punishment for their sin upon himself. The choice is straightforward but it is also the most important decision anyone will make.

Spend some time today thanking God for his gift of salvation. Pray for the chance to answer questions or share your experience with anyone who might not have chosen to follow Jesus. Each of us have been in the position and we can be encouraged by how grateful we are that we learned about Jesus.

## SCRIPTURE

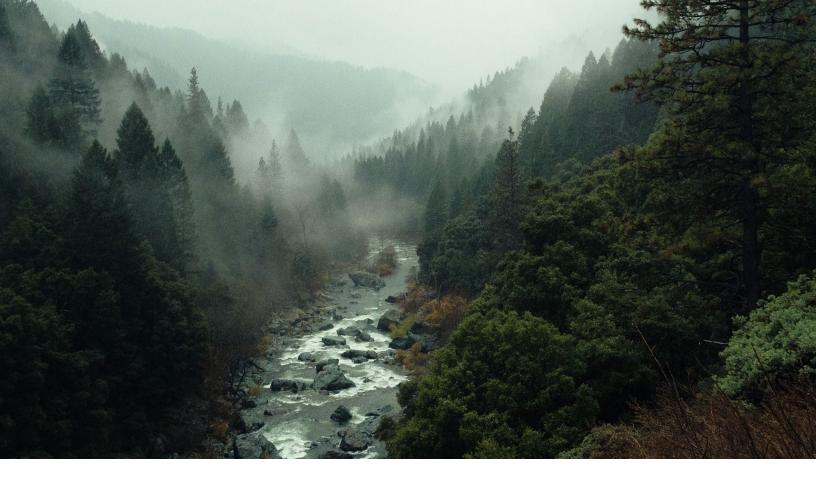
- 1 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:12-15
- 2. Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10
- In his justice he will pay back those who persecute you. And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power. When he comes on that day, he will receive glory from his holy people—praise from all who believe. And this includes you, for you believed what we told you about him. 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10



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WILL THERE BE ANY SIN OR DEATH IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND FARTH?

ANSWER: NO. IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH THERE WILL BE NO MORE SIN OR DEATH. GOD WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM OUR EYES AND MAKE HIS HOME WITH US FOREVER.

# DAY 5

It's very hard for us, on this side of heaven, to imagine God's new world but the Bible gives us several pictures and images. There will be transformed human beings. There will be harmony between God and humans, humans and humans, and humans and the animal kingdom. God and humans will live together. It will be a place of beauty and creativity. And it will be a place without corruption.

Think about it for a minute. What would it be like to live in a world where plants, animals, and humans didn't decay; where nothing bad ever happened?

It's so hard to imagine, but that's what the Bible promises us.

Here we meet two extremes that can lead us astray.

On the one hand, many people imagine that God's new world will be just like this one but without the sin. In a sense, that's true. But the problem with putting it this way is that it's impossible for us to imagine a world without sin, as every aspect of our world is infected by sin.

On the other hand, many people imagine that heaven will be nothing like this world. But the problem with this is two-fold. If you're not careful, you'll end up saying that God made a mistake the first time or that this world wasn't created as good, as Genesis 1 says it was. And secondly, if you're not careful, you'll end up saying that heaven is so different from this world that it can't really be this world rescued from sin.



So, as hard as it is to grasp the Bible's vision of heaven, we have to try. God's new world, what we often call heaven, will be this world transformed out of its sinfulness and corruption. But, at the same time, this new world will be so different from this one—because this one's so infected by sin—that it's still impossible to imagine.

Reflect on how the chance to spend eternity with God and his people in heaven transforms your life. Then ask God to give you the opportunity to share the promise of heaven with someone else.

## SCRIPTURE

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- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." Revelation 21:1-4
- 2. Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10
- 3 I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Revelation 21:22–27



HOW SHOULD WE PREPARE FOR JESUS' RETURN?

ANSWER: WE SHOULD BE READY FOR JESUS' RETURN BY LOVING GOD AND LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR THROUGH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT, SHARING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS IN EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

# DAY 6

Are you ready for Jesus to come back? It's a huge question, and, if you're willing to take it seriously, it can even be disruptive. On the one hand, we can't wait for the end of things like pain and brokenness and death. Those are terrible things and we can't wait for Jesus to put an end to them. We're also excited for the life of heaven, where we will experience endless joy.

But, on the other hand, are we ready to meet Holiness itself? Are we the kind of people, the kind of Christians, that are ready for that day, when holiness floods the whole universe?

For this idea, Paul uses an interesting image in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians. He says that, when Jesus returns, the earth will be consumed by fire. Now, this is not so that the earth will be destroyed, but so that it will be purified from its sinfulness and corruption. Corruption will, in a sense, be burned up. And the image makes perfect sense because Scripture often talks about God as a consuming fire.

So, the idea is that, one day, when Jesus returns, God will flood the universe with his holiness. But how do we prepare for that day?

Paul uses another image. He says that we're building a temple for God's new world and that we had better use strong materials—gold, silver, and precious stones—which can endure the fire. If not, then the parts of the temple which we have built with weak materials will be burned up.



But what does this image mean? The temple signifies the Church and its mission in the world. So Paul is saying this: in view of Jesus' return, when God will purify the whole universe with holy fire, anytime you spend growing in holiness and strengthening the Church will withstand that day. Only the things done for Jesus will endure.

God gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit not only as a seal or a reminder that we will be able to withstand that day but also to equip us to live with eternal values.

Ask God for wisdom as you consider your life in light of eternity. Are you forming relationships, making decisions and having conversations that will endure?

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- 1. Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
- 2. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:6
- $oldsymbol{3}$  . God's will is for you to be holy. 1 Thessalonians 4:3
- 4 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape. But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clear headed. 1 Thessalonians 5:2–6



HOW CAN
OUR FAITH BE
SUMMARIZED?

# DAY 7

ANSWER: "WE BELIEVE IN GOD THE

**FATHER ALMIGHTY** 

MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH;

AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD.

WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT,

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY,

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE,

WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED.

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL.

THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN,

AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

THE FATHER ALMIGHTY;

FROM THERE HE WILL COME TO JUDGE THE

LIVING AND THE DEAD.

WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT,

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH,
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS,
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS,
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,
AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING.
AMEN."

If you were asked to write a short paragraph summarizing the Christian faith, what would you write?

There are several ways of doing it, but here's the key: Jesus is the center of it all.

You could say: "God loves you and sent his Son to die for you." Or, you could say: "Because of Jesus, you can have eternal life." Both would be accurate and true.

The ancient Apostles' Creed also gives a helpful summary. Essentially, it makes these points:

- 1. We believe in a good creator God who loves this world.
- 2. We believe in his good, eternal, and divine Son, Jesus.
- 3. We believe that Jesus' death and resurrection rescues those who put their faith in him.
- 4. We believe that those who put their faith in Jesus have the hope of an eternal, joyous life.

Spend some time today reading and reflecting on the Apostles' Creed:

"We believe in God the Father almighty Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate. was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints. the forgiveness of sins,

There seem to be a lot of questions today among Christians about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Why are we given these gifts? Were we all called to prophesy? Were we all called to exercise the gift of miraculous healing? And what were these gifts for anyway? After all, as Christians, it's easy to get down on ourselves and to wonder whether or not we have any gifts at all.

Paul talks about this issue especially in his first letter to the churches in Corinth. It looks as though some of the members of the church were looking down on others because they thought that their spiritual gifts were better than others. Some of those who exercised the gift of speaking in tongues before the whole congregation looked down on those who didn't. Others who prophesied before everyone or performed a healing miracle before everyone looked down on those who didn't.

So Paul wrote two long chapters about the issue to make three fundamental points. The first point being that every Christian has spiritual gifts. And to illustrate this point, Paul lists several of the spiritual gifts: the gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith, of healing, of miracles, of prophecy, of discernment, of speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. Secondly, this list isn't meant to cover every gift, but to illustrate the point that every Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve and to strengthen the Church. Thirdly, Paul wants Christians to know that the point of spiritual gifts is to serve and to strengthen the Church.

So, it works like this: (1) There are many gifts, no one better than another. (2) Every Christian is gifted by the Holy Spirit. (3) The point of spiritual gifts is to serve and to strengthen the Church.

But how can we know what our spiritual gifts are? Remember, God gave you your spiritual gift to serve within the Church. So, the more time you spend around other Christians looking for ways to serve, the more likely it is that you will discover your spiritual gift.

Spend some time today asking God to fill you with Spirit and to empower you to serve his Church. This week, look for ways to begin serving others with your spiritual gifts. If you don't know how, consider asking someone from your church for guidance.

## SCRIPTURE

1. Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. - Jude 1:3



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- 2. For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16–17
- 3. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. 1 Corinthians 15:3–4
- 4 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Ephesians 1:10



#### the catechism

# NEW CREATION

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