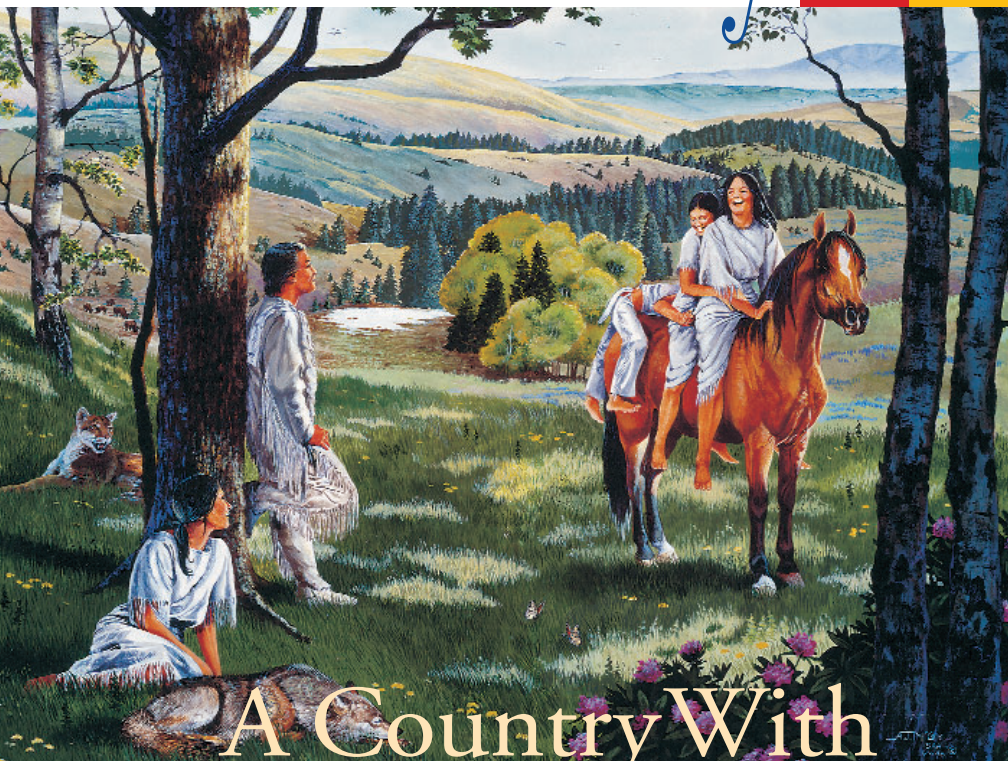


Native New Day

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A Country With No Fences: Heaven

Many people believe in Lady Luck. How many times have you thought about how you would spend a large windfall of money? Freelance writer Kay Rizzo, writing in the *Signs of the Times*® magazine, relates the experience of an acquaintance named Sue who won more than a million dollars from the Washington State Lottery. At the time Sue was working evenings at a local convenience store to supplement her husband's income from his job at the city's sanitation department.

The morning the lottery officials rang their doorbell, Sue was still asleep after an exhausting late night shift. Her hair was in a mess and her brain fuzzy from sleep. As she stumbled from bed, she threw on her husband's robe and opened the front door to cameras, cheering people, and utter chaos.



From here, the story should have had a “happily ever after” ending. But it followed the all-too-predictable script so many big money winners have experienced. At first friends and family made over Sue and her husband, asking for money. Then unknown family members appeared out of the woodwork like cockroaches asking for loans. But when the parties and gifts slowed, these unknown family members and friends drifted away as quickly as they had come.

The stress brought on by the problems that accompanied Sue and her husband's sudden wealth drove their marriage to the brink of divorce. Sue said she would give all the money back if she could undo the pain she had been through as a result of winning it. Statistics show there is very little “living happily ever after” for most people who experience sudden wealth. It seems that receiving a gift of great wealth has many hazards that can destroy any happiness a person might experience from receiving it.

When the parties and gifts slowed down, the new friends drifted away as quickly as they had come.

However, there is a gift that has been offered to each of us that is worth more than millions of dollars and that is guaranteed to give us true happiness and eternal security. It is the gift of eternal life with the unlimited wealth of security, peace, and reunion with our loved ones. And we can claim it today! Christ's death and resurrection guarantee the prize of eternal life for each of us. We can receive eternal life now by faith in Jesus. The gift of joy from this wonderful gift begins the moment you accept it. And at Jesus' second coming this gift of immortality will be a reality, which means we will never again be subject to death (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

Christ's death and resurrection secures the prize of eternal life for us. We can receive eternal life now by faith in Jesus.



Key Thought. One of the greatest events of all time will be the second coming of Christ. What makes it so wonderful is that when Jesus comes He will take us to heaven (John 14:1-3). The Bible says He is preparing this place for us now, and it is very specific in describing what heaven is like. Its capital is the New Jerusalem, a city of dreams where we will live.

The Bible goes on to explain that 1,000 years after Christ's coming, this Holy City will come down from heaven, and will be relocated on this earth (Revelation

21:2). The earth will be cleansed from sin by fire, and then God will recreate a beautiful land for us to live in, a land which no one can take from us (Revelation 21:1-3; 2 Peter 3:9-13). It will be our home throughout eternity.

The restored earth will become the center of the universe because God will live with us there. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard” what we will experience and see in this place Jesus is preparing for us (1 Corinthians 2:9).

BIBLE ANSWERS

What will heaven be like? What will we experience in the new earth that we don't experience here? Most of all, how can we be sure of receiving this inheritance that God has promised to all of us?

1. When does this experience of heaven begin?

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. (*Circle one.*) (1) When Jesus comes. (2) At the resurrection of the righteous. (3) At the trumpet call of God. (4)

All of these. (*All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.*)

Note. When Christ comes we will experience the space trip of the ages! There will be no need for oxygen tanks or space suits. Gravity will be powerless when Jesus lifts His people into the sky





The second coming of Christ will be a spectacular event, including the trumpet call of God and the resurrection of the righteous.

and takes us to this wonderful “place” that He has prepared. (John 14:2–3).

2. How long will the saints reign with Christ in the Holy City before it is relocated on the earth? Revelation 20:4, last part. (Circle one.) (1) 1,000 years. (2) 100 years. (3) forever.

Note. The Scriptures tell us that after 1,000 years the Holy City will descend from heaven to this earth (Revelation 21:2). At that time God will cleanse the whole earth with fire. Even Satan and his angels will be destroyed in that fire.

Out of the ashes of this fire God will recreate this world into a beautiful country where we will have complete freedom to roam securely with confidence that pain and heartache will never rise again (Malachi 4:3; Nahum 1:9). God Himself will live with us in this beautiful new world (Revelation 21:3).

Many ask why we will spend 1,000 years in heaven. Why doesn't God immediately set up His kingdom and the Holy City on earth at the Second Coming? It is because God has planned to set aside 1,000 years for us to study and see for ourselves how He has worked out the sin problem. We will have time to understand the plan He designed for getting rid of sin forever. We will be able to see accurate records of people whom we thought to be good people, but whom God wasn't able to save because of secret sins we didn't see on earth. We will have all our questions answered concerning events that happened to us before His second coming.

As a result we will rejoice, for all that has confused us will be made plain. Things hard to understand now

We will have our questions answered concerning events that happened to us before His second coming.



God offers us abundant life and a new beginning.

will then be explained. Where our finite minds now see only confusion and broken promises, then we will see how God has been working today in the most beautiful and perfect harmony. One of the greatest gifts of heaven will be to have all our questions answered.

3. What great gift will God give to us at Jesus' second coming? 1 Corinthians 15:42. "The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in _____." A clearer translation of this is: "Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for we will never die. . . . In this way our heavenly bodies will be just like Christ's" (1 Corinthians 15:42, 48 last part, *New Living Translation* [NLT]).

Note. No one likes to think of death. This is probably why we do so many things to prevent thoughts of death and funerals from entering our minds. But in this life we will all eventually die unless Jesus should come in our lifetime. Won't it be wonderful to have bodies that are





A Land With No Fences



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here is a gift offered to us that is bigger than any lottery—the priceless gift of life eternal in Christ.

not subject to death? Like Christ, our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die (1 Corinthians 15:53). Won't it be wonderful to be able to make plans for eternity?

4. What will happen to our memory of sorrow, unhappiness, and tragedy that we have experienced here on the earth? Isaiah 65:17, 19; Revelation 21:4. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be _____ or come to mind. . . . I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.”

Note. It is an encouraging thought that our former disappointments, sorrows, and troubles will fade away. They will be replaced by peace and joy (Revelation 21:4).

5. Will we know each other in heaven? John 20:19–20; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 15:48. (*Circle one.*)
(1) Yes. (2) No.

Note. After Christ was resurrected, His disciples recognized Him. And when we are resurrected it will be the same with us. (1 Corinthians 15:48, last part, NLT). Yes, we will know each other in heaven. We will experience the joy of associating with our children, our neighbors, and our friends for eternity, because there we will not age and change but live forever (Revelation 21:4).

6. Will we actively do things during all the years of eternity like we do now? 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1, 24; see also Isaiah 65:21-23; 66:22-23. (Circle one.) (1) Yes. (2) No.



Heaven is not going to be some imaginary place where we sit on a cloud, strumming a harp.

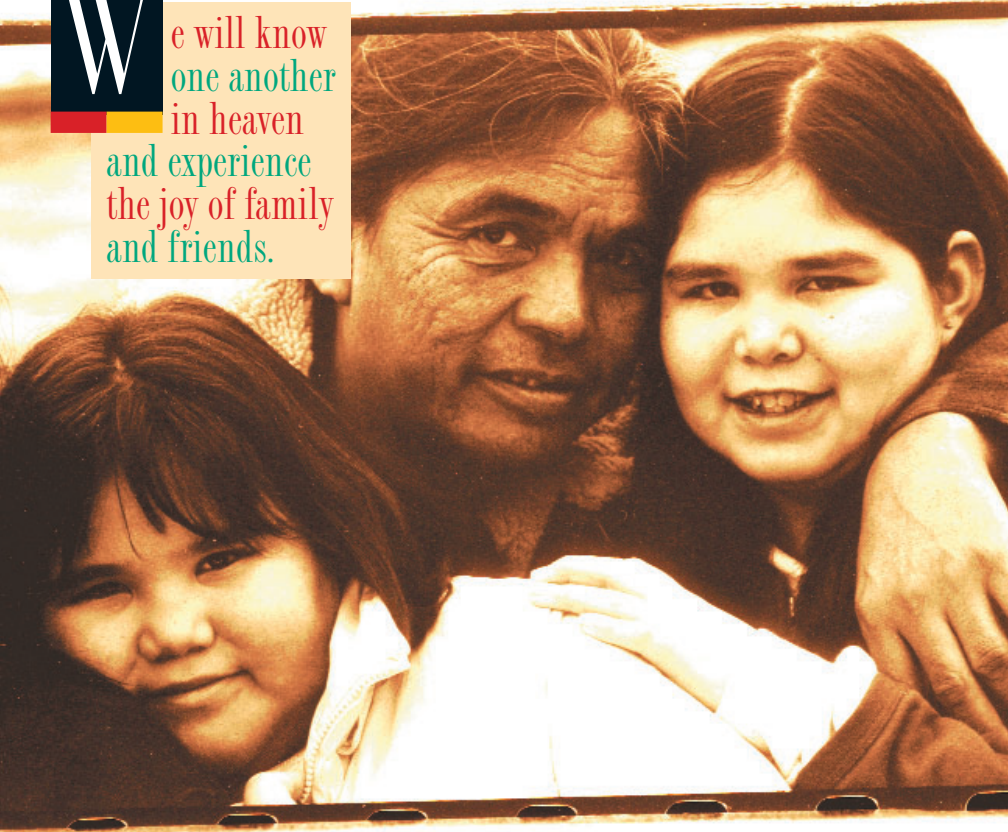
Note. The new earth is not going to be some imaginary place where we just sit on a cloud strumming a harp. It will be much like what we enjoy today, but with all the disappointments of sin removed. We may even experience the satisfaction of building a home, working with our hands, and raising our own gardens for food. We will all be able to fully enjoy life and fulfill the plans that we have always hoped to accomplish. We won't be held back by handicaps that many experience now.

Blindness will be taken away and lameness will be healed. We will never again know sickness or old age like we do today, so we can always be active (Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 33:24; 35:5-6).

7. How can we be sure of the inheritance of the new country God has promised? John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever _____ in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Note. This is one of the most wonderful texts of Scripture. It tells us that eternal life is ours if we will only to believe and accept this gift God offers us. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by the gift of God’s grace through faith. We need to trust Him and accept His

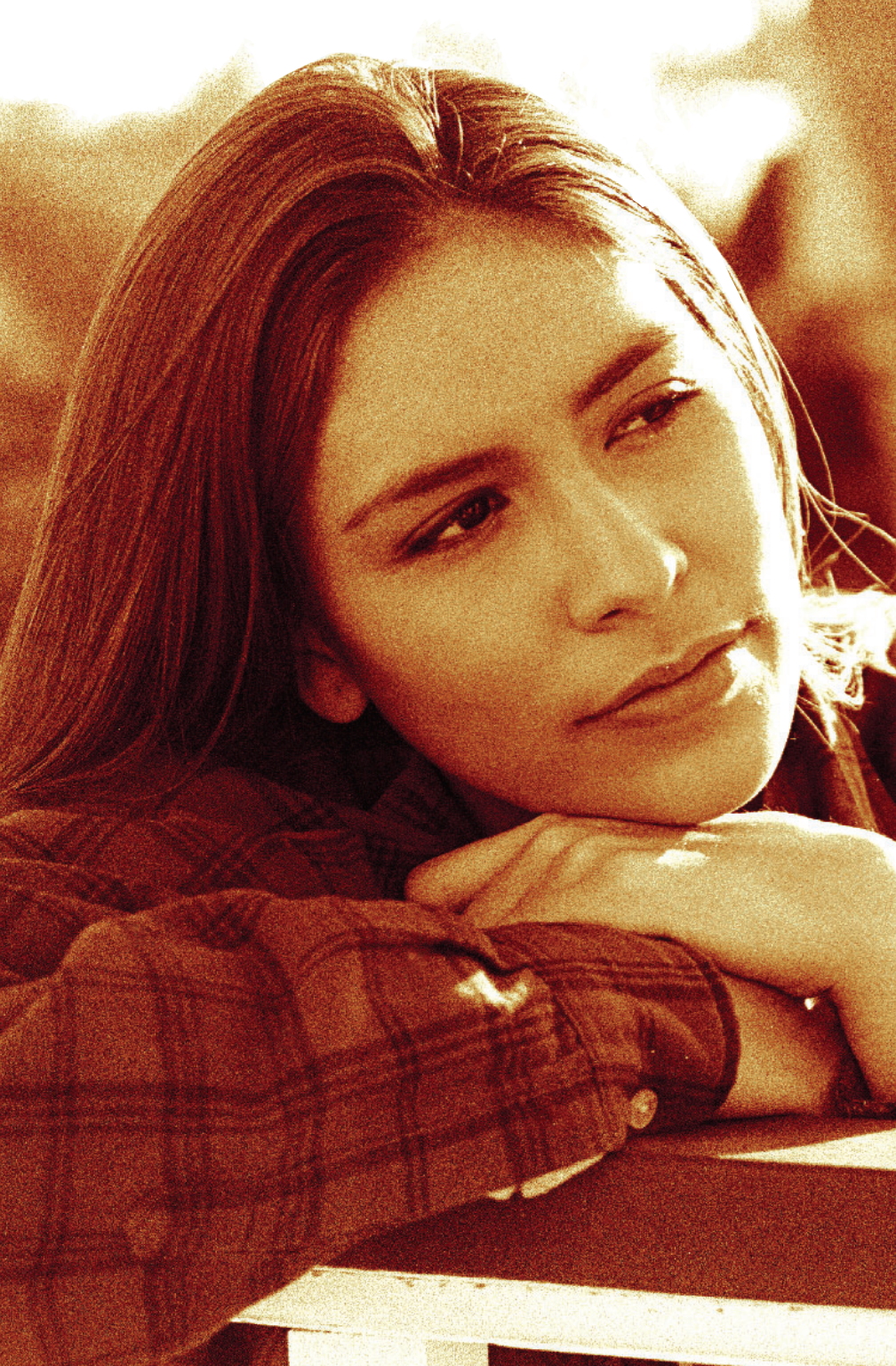
We will know
one another
in heaven
and experience
the joy of family
and friends.





wonderful gift of salvation and eternal life. When we do this the Bible promises that He will give us the certainty and joy of knowing this inheritance is ours. Our part is to accept His promises and link our lives by faith with Christ in submission to His will (1 John 5:12–13).

God can wash away the pain and guilt of the past. Christ's death on the cross turns forgiveness into a free gift. He offers us new life today.





The most precious
promise in Scripture
is God's offer to us today:
"For God so loved the
world that He gave His
only begotten Son, that
whoever believes in Him
should not perish but
have everlasting life"
(John 3:16).

◆ P R A Y E R ◆

Dear Father in heaven, thank You for Your free gift of salvation in Jesus and a new beginning. Thank You for creating such a beautiful place as heaven for me and making it possible for me to be there. I want to invite Jesus into my life to be my Savior. Thank You for coming into my heart and for forgiving my sins. Help me to always keep my heart open to Your leadership. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Next Lesson. What happens to people when they die? There are many beliefs today about what actually takes place when we die. Some believe a person goes right to heaven; others don't. Some believe an individual becomes another person or another living animal, bird, or insect after death. But the Bible tells of a wonderful plan for each of us, even if we should die.



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P. O. Box 53055, Los Angeles, CA 90053-0055

EDITORS: NATIVE MINISTRIES NORTHWEST EDITORIAL COMMITTEE;

RUSSELL HOLT

ILLUSTRATIONS: A. J. McCOY

DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY: ED GUTHERO DESIGN: MICHELLE C. PETZ

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