

"New Jerusalem?"

Trilacoochee July 23, 2023		
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### **Slide: Sweetwater, Tennessee**

Sweetwater, Tennessee, is in a valley that is surrounded by the Great Smokey Mountains.

### **Slide: church of Christ; Athens, Tennessee**

Less than 30 minutes south is Athens, Tennessee, where I attend the church of Christ when heading to Indiana.

Introductions.

### **Slide: 500 pages...**

**(Hold Up Bible)**

**(Hold Up Book)**

This book—Heaven--has sold over one million copies at \$25.00 each. That's \$1.5 million in profits for somebody!

One review said: "This is the best book on Heaven I've ever read."

That's from Rick Warren—the American Southern Baptist who was pastor for President Obama during his first administration.

Another review said: “Other than the Bible itself, this may be the single most life-changing book you’ll ever read.”

That's from Stu Weber— an American pastor and author of several books on Christian living.

### **Slide: Randy Alcorn**

Randy Alcorn is a New York Times best-selling author of over 60 books and ebooks.

His writings have been translated into over 70 languages and have sold over 12 million copies.

### **Slide: List of Celebrities**

Look at this list of people whose writings or publications are included in this book.

**Animation:** Famous authors like C. L. Lewis; John Updike; T.S. Eliot; and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Also, Issacs Watts—the English Congregational minister who was a popular hymn writer--credited with some 750 hymns.

Then there's D.L Moody; Thomas Aquinas; and John Wesley.

Even Helen Keller.

### **Slide: 1 Corinthians 2:9**

Alcorn is writing about Heaven.

In his book he quotes the Apostle Paul:

**Animation:** (Read Off Screen)

But he says most people do not include the next verse:

**Animation:** 1 Corinthians 2:10

(Read Off Screen)

So, Alcorn is interpreting what Heaven will look like to us in his book.

But in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians—he was actually describing the differences between human wisdom and God's wisdom.

Human wisdom is limited to what can be observed and worked out with human reason.

God's wisdom has existed before time began.

## **Slide: Test the Book by Scripture**

Randy Alcorn writes:

**(Read Off Screen)**

I took him up on this—I read his book this summer-- and I read my Bible.

## **Slide: New Jerusalem**

Alcorn writes:

**Animation: (Read Off Screen)**

**Animation: (New Jerusalem?)**

I agree.

But is Randy Alcorn writing about the New Jerusalem?

What does the Bible say?

Revelation chapters 21 and 22 has John's visions—which records for the hope of all who long for Christ's coming-- the heavenly glories that will one day overtake us and become the only reality.

The words "New Jerusalem," appears only twice in the Bible.

It is a symbolic city that represents the group of Jesus' followers who go to heaven to rule with him in God's Kingdom.

The Bible tells us the New Jerusalem can also be called the Bride of Christ.

John uses language we can understand to describe this city--precious jasper as clear as crystal.

Streets made of pure and transparent gold.

The Old Jerusalem was the most important city in the world because it was home to the temple of God.

The New Jerusalem is the most important city for eternity.

Alcorn agrees that John's visions are about Heaven:

**Animation:** (Read Off Screen)

But what does Randy Alcorn write about Heaven?

**Slide: Heaven Relocated on Earth**

**Animation: One Line**

(Read Off Screen)

It turns out the reader is not discovering heaven--but a kingdom of God on earth.

This theme is carried throughout Alcorn's book—and refers to our eternal destiny.

As one review said: "...therein lies the problem!

### **Slide: Human Bodies at the Resurrection**

The New Jerusalem-- will have males and females:

#### **Animation: Two Lines**

**(Read Off Screen)**

### **Slide: Coffee in Heaven**

We will still have our morning rituals to look forward to in Heaven:

#### **Animation: Two Lines**

**(Read Off Screen)**

### **Slide: Pets in Heaven**

We will share Heaven with our pets:

#### **Animation: One Line**

**(Read Off Screen)**: where mankind and animals will enjoy a redeemed earth.

## **Slide: Arts in Heaven**

We will never be bored in Heaven:

**(Read Off Screen)**

## **Slide: Grand Canyon**

Alcorn also writes:

**(Read Off Screen)**

## **Slide: (United Nations)**

Alcorn writes--The New Jerusalem will come down out of the present heaven.

But how can heaven end up on earth?

Alcorn states repeatedly that there will be "nations" in heaven.

**Animation:** One Reviewer writes:

## **Slide: (Stars, Earth, Sun)**

**(Read Off Screen)**

In his book Randy Alcorn writes there will be stars, plants, and the sun—in the New Jerusalem.

**Animation:** Revelation says this:

**(Read Off Screen)**

There is no need for the Sun or the Moon in the New Jerusalem.

**Slide: (Dogs, Cats in Heaven)**

Since dogs, cats—which are beloved pets—have such a special bond with us—Alcorn writes that God will allow dogs, cats, goldfish-- all pets will be present in the New Jerusalem.

But Revelation 21:27 tells us only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter the city.

**Slide: Tree of Life**

Additionally, Revelation 22:14 states that only those who do God's commandments have the right to the tree of life and to enter the city.

**Slide: Pseudoscience**

Randy Alcorn writes:

**(Read Off Screen)**

That includes earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and volcanoes.

Alcorn continues: Quote, "These may be aberrations due to the Curse, unquote.

He is referring to the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

But any competent meteorologist will tell you all of these phenomena are on the planet earth.

Not in Heaven.

**Animation:** God's kingdom is described as one that cannot be shaken—and the Hebrew writer is not referring to earthquakes!

On page 149, Alcorn seems not to know that God has already fulfilled his promises to Abraham:

**Animation: One Line**

**(Read Off Screen)**

**Animation:** Genesis chapter 12 says the land promise was fulfilled as was the nation promise.

And through Christ and the true seed of Abraham, it is a spiritual promise that has been fulfilled for us.

**Slide: Inconsistent literalization.**

Revelation says this:

**(Read Off Screen)**

## **Slide: Streets of Gold**

Because of Paul's fascination with the English language, he will particularly like this.

Based on Revelation 5:6, Alcorn writes:

**(Read Off Screen)**

## **Slide: Lamb**

One reviewer wrote that Randy Alcorn lacks common sense:

**(Read Off Screen)**

## **Slide: Disregard for Context.**

Another reviewer writes:

**(Read Off Screen)**

## **Slide: Sentimentality.**

One point in Alcorn's book: Nothing good will ever be truly lost, whether our children's kindergarten finger paintings or the works of the great masters.

Everything worthwhile on earth will reappear in the New Jerusalem!

I like what this reviewer said:

**Animation:** (**Read Off Screen**)

**Slide: Errors**

When I read this slide, I have to exclaim: No kidding!

**Slide: International Bible Teaching Ministry**

Another review:

(**Read Off Screen**)

**Slide: American Baptist Churches**

Even the Baptists have their complaints:

(**Read Off Screen**)

**Slide: Old Illinois Bible (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:37)**

During the lifetime of Christ—there were false prophets. Paul writes about this:

**Animation:** (**Read Off Screen**)

**Slide: Barnes and Noble Bookstore**

In their day, the Bereans searched the scriptures daily to see what Paul was preaching-- was it indeed the Gospel of Christ?

Earlier this year Pat and I visited Barnes and Noble Booksellers in Wesley Chapel to see what is selling in the name of God's Word.

### **Slide: Second Floor**

On the second floor we found hundreds of books on philosophy, social studies, history, and psychology.

### **Slide: God on Race**

Yes!

We found plenty of books on the Bible.

But so many to choose and read!

Where to begin?

### **Slide: God So Close**

In the year 2022, religious book sales reached a total revenue of 757.7 million dollars.

Sales revenue of religious books increased by nearly eight percent--compared to 2021--and had increased for the third consecutive year.

That's according to a non-commercial group called WordsRated—a non-profit, international research data and analytics group.

## **Slide: The Revised New Jerusalem Bible**

I wonder how much money the apostles and the prophets made—when writing the Word of God?

## **Slide: “X” For Heaven**

Despite his many sources and the many pages in his book—Randy Alcorn is not writing about Heaven.

Because no one can describe it in human terms.

**Animation:** No one can describe Heaven!

Numbering in the back of this building Paul has in his library—567 books.

That does not include the books at his home-- and the books in boxes that have not been opened since he moved to Florida.

**(Pause)**

None of them have a description of Heaven.

## **Slide: North Florida Swamp**

Just because we cannot describe the New Jerusalem does not mean it is not real.

**Animation:** All are invited.

**(Read Off Screen)** (Revelation 22:17)

**Slide: (Photo of Tensley at Stake & Shake)**

The New Jerusalem will be very beautiful.

How do we know that?

Just look at the faces of our grandchildren.

The same God who created them is the same God John describes for us in the book of Revelation.

But the joy of Heaven is also indescribable.

**Animation:** (**Read Off Screen**) (Revelation 21:4)

**Slide: The Life That is to Come**

(**Invitation**)