



Links Players

New Beginnings 2026 | Bookends

...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done....(Isaiah 46:8-11, ESV)

Every round is chock-full of unknowns. We ‘peg it’ on the first tee, always facing the uncertainty of what will happen. We hope—even pray—that things will go well.

By the time we walk off the eighteenth green, that round is over. Every round is ‘bookended’ by the first swing and the last putt—whatever we did between the fixed boundaries of pegging it and doffing our hats is in the books!

We can mentally review the round, rehearse a better swing, and even go home and pout, but one thing is certain—we can never get that round back; it is in the books.

Analogously, just as every round has a beginning and an end, life on Earth has a beginning and an end—whatever our lives have been about is decided between the fixed bookends of birth and death.

The larger question that tends to haunt humanity is this: “Is there life after death?” If so, what does that look like? N.T. Wright puts it this way: “Is there life after life after death?”

The prevailing approaches to this critical issue are either the naïve “We are all going to a better place” or, with a shrug of the shoulders, the agnostic “Who can know?”

The spectrum of beliefs about the “afterlife” ranges from annihilation to reincarnation to reabsorption to resurrection. Pause to consider.

Scientific Atheism, if consistent with its assumptions, holds that we live, we die, and that is it. According to this view, we are annihilated—fertilizing daisies is all that awaits us.

Reincarnation, while there are diverse views, holds that we are corrupt and that it will take an endless cycle of returning in different forms to purge us of our deficiencies—pay attention to the language of ‘karma’ in American culture.

Pantheism argues for reabsorption. This view holds that when we breathe our last, like a raindrop falling into the ocean, we merge into the oneness of an impersonal Cosmos—the idea that we have eternal individual identities is a myth.

Christianity’s infinitely better outlook offers the most beautiful ending of all for the person who bows the knee— when we go the way of all flesh, our gifted souls go to be with the Lord. But that is not the end! We go there to wait! Wait for what?

We wait until King Jesus returns to remove the curse from his creation (Romans 8:18-25), awaken those asleep in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), judge and punish all wickedness (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10), and transform the believer’s mortal body into one like his own, the immortal body that walked out of the tomb 2,000 years ago (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

How do we know? The historical/biblical answer is this: There is One who has been to the ‘other side’ and returned in an indestructible body to tell us the “end from the beginning.”

Prayer: Lord! Cause men and women everywhere to explore this weighty issue.

READING: Romans 8:18-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

1. What happens between the first swing and the last putt dictates the outcome. We can review it, learn from it, but we cannot change it. Discuss some implications of having the fixed boundaries of a beginning and an ending.

2. What do our texts teach us about the Christian’s ultimate ending? Is it heaven or a re-created heaven and earth?

3. Application: Why does having the right view about life after death and immortal physical life after Jesus’ return matter for life between the bookends?
