



Week of November 6 – New Heaven and New Earth¹

Overview:

What happens after you die? Is hell real? What is heaven like? Does it even matter? The nature of heaven, hell, and everything in between have been the subject of intense debate within the church for millennia. In this series, we will discuss what the Bible says, how culture has led us so far from the truth, and how a correct understanding of eternity can give us not only hope for the future, but purpose for our lives in the here and now.

Group Objectives:

Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purpose of community groups

- Reflect on this past Sunday's message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- Have each person consider how viewing heaven as God's Eternal Kingdom, and Earth as part of that Kingdom, affects how we live our lives now.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We are contributors, not consumers*—We do not attend church; we are the church, and we exist in and for the world.
- *We are on mission to reach one more*—Every person matters to God, so every person matters to us. God invites every one of us to join him in his great mission to reach one more—one more coworker, neighbor, family member, and friend.

Conversation Starters:

- What are some common depictions of heaven in popular culture, i.e., movies, cartoons, books, music, etc.?

Listening to God

- Where did you see God at work last week? How were you able to join him?

Learning from God's Word: Bible Study Discussion

In the Bible, the word heaven is used both for the space above the land (skies and cosmos) and to describe the place where God resides. It is depicted as a beautiful garden and a grand city, a throne room and the future home of God's people. But while we are given hope of an ideal existence with God one day, the Bible is clear on God's goal: to unite heaven and earth. We are not here simply marking time until we get to escape. We are on mission to combat the darkness and spread the boundaries of heaven where we are today.

¹ This week's resource was written by Rachel Vaughn and edited by Dawn Gentry.

There are several references listed below. If, for time considerations, you need to focus on only a few, please make the complete list available to your group so they can study the passages on their own.

- **Read Revelation 21:1-14, 22:1-5**
 - How is our eternal dwelling described in these passages? While we can all see the need for a new earth, why do we need a “new” heaven?
 - When will all of this occur (look back to Revelation 20)?
- **Read Genesis 2:4-17**
 - How does the description of Eden compare with the New Heavens and New Earth?
 - What is the same? What is different?
 - What does this tell you about God and his intent for this world?
- **Read John 14:1-4, Acts 1:6-11, Romans 8:14-25, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58**
 - *What do these passages tell us about the future of those who follow Christ?*
 - *How do we secure this future?*
 - *What does this mean for our lives now? What purpose do we, the church, have in this world?*

Going deeper—if you would like to continue your study, here are a few additional passages: Isaiah 65:17, Daniel 2:44-45, Matthew 25:31-46, all of Revelation 21-22; for more on our eternal bodies, see the descriptions of Jesus in Luke 24 and John 20-21

Leaning into Obedience:

Heaven is God’s kingdom, a kingdom which is yet to come, but also is already here, in us. This earth is not an evil to escape, but the good creation of God in need of restoration.

- If heaven is so good, and God wants to be with us, why are we still here? Why doesn’t he take us to be with him now?
- How does viewing the world as a good part of our eternal home change our behavior today? How might it change our view of people and nature?
- How can we make the most of our “in the meantime?” How does the hope of the kingdom encourage you to persevere?
- How do you sense God calling you to respond to this passage?
 - Is there an example to follow? A command to obey?
- How can the group encourage you this week as you respond?

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of the group to share personal prayer requests.
- Allow time for silent reflection on the following question.
What is one way you can expand the borders of the kingdom this week?
- Option: Say the Lord’s Prayer together (Matthew 6:9-13). *Before you begin, reflect on what it means to ask God’s kingdom to come, and how his will might be done on earth.*
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from [evil]
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen