

REVELATION

part four: heaven comes to earth

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BIBLE VERSES

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CLARIFICATION: *There has been some discussion about the use of the word “seal” in Revelation 7:1-8. The New Testament uses “seals” in various ways. Ephesians 1:13 says God “seals” all believers with his promised Spirit, who secures us in Christ for the final kingdom. A “seal” can also be used for specific circumstances, narrow in character and specific in purpose. In Revelation 7, the “seal” is granted to the 144,000 Jewish “servants of God” (who are “redeemed” and “follow the lamb” [Revelation 14:3–4]) to protect them and their testimony through the coming judgments in the latter part of the Tribulation.*

Any time you have questions over the material we offer, feel free to reach out to our team by emailing info@cccomaha.org.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Series Conclusion	6
Tribulation Timeline	8

WEEK THIRTEEN.....11

Message Notes	12
Millennium Q&A	14
Personal Devotionals	17
Discussion Guide	23

WEEK FOURTEEN 27

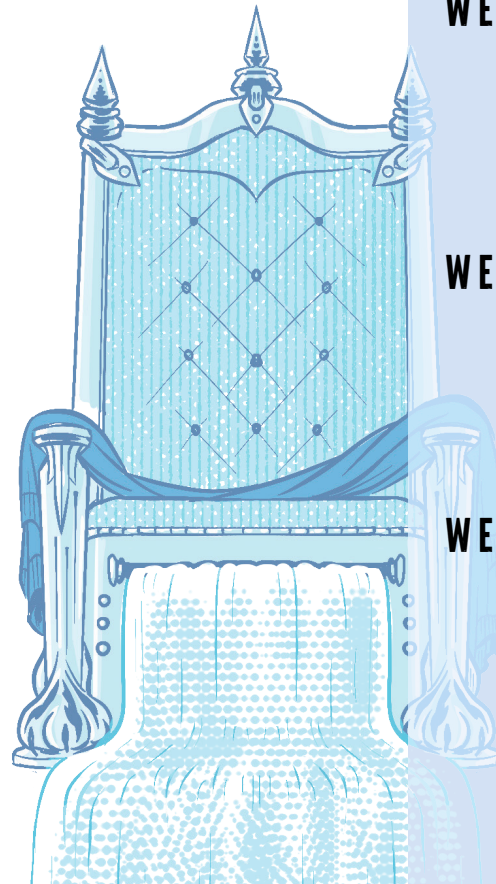
Message Notes	28
Visual Aid	30
Personal Devotionals	31
Discussion Guide	37

WEEK FIFTEEN 41

Message Notes	42
Visual Aid	44
Personal Devotionals	47
Discussion Guide	53

WEEK SIXTEEN 57

Message Notes	58
Visual Aid	60
Personal Devotionals	63
Discussion Guide	69





SERIES CONCLUSION

Revelation—“Sooner Than You Think,” “Worthy Is the Lamb,” “Triumph of the King,” “Heaven Comes to Earth.” Hopefully, these short sayings just burst with meaning at this juncture! It has been my prayer—*my dream*—that Revelation is more accessible and the Second Coming is more clear than it has ever been in your life.

THESE ARE MY DREAMS FOR YOUR GROWTH:

- I dream that your image of Jesus is bigger than it has ever been. I pray that when you worship, you see him with a fresh sense of power and vibrancy. He is the one with blazing eyes who walks among the seven lampstands. He is the Lion who *is* the Lamb. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the one who will triumph at Armageddon. He is the ruler of the Millennium and he is the centerpiece of the new heavens and new earth.
- I dream that your picture of heaven is bigger than it has ever been. It is the throne room where worship happens in concentric circles around the throne of God. It is the place where the seals, trumpets, and bowls are announced. It is the place where martyrs are rewarded. And in the future, heaven comes to earth to merge in a beautiful marriage that reflects the perfection of the temple and restores us to Eden.
- I dream that you understand the timeline of the end times like never before. I pray you know that the tribulation is coming, that you can endure the first half, and look forward

to the rapture. You can place your hope in the reality of that Satan will be locked up and Jesus will reign for 1000 years. You can look forward to Jesus recreating us and the universe in the new heavens and new earth to reign together forever!

- I dream that you can live without fear, with full confidence, and with hopeful expectation. When your home is in Jesus, you have no reason to fear the future—because Jesus wins and you are on his team. When you have trusted in Jesus, you know you will be in the Lamb’s Book of Life. You can confidently reach one more with the good news of Jesus because we know that Jesus is constantly redeeming new people.

And now, may the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead—that same power that will rapture all the saints—that same power that will bring the Millennial Kingdom along with the new heavens and new earth—may *that* power fill you, enlighten you, and give you hope in the promises of God and the strength of his kingdom.

Mark Ashton, Lead Minister

For more Revelation resources, to watch messages from this series, or to download the Revelation booklets, visit cccomaha.org/revelation.



VISUAL AID

A TIMELINE OF THE TRIBULATION AND BEYOND

THE MIDPOINT OF THE TRIBULATION

"In the middle of the 'seven'..." **Daniel 9:27**

"So when you see[...] 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken through the prophet Daniel..." **Matthew 24:15**





WEEK THIRTEEN

MILLENNIUM Q&A

The Christian and Missionary Alliance, CCC's denomination, takes a premillennial perspective on the end times. This means that after the second coming of Jesus, there will be a millennium of unprecedented peace. Jesus will rule in Jerusalem. People from around the world will return to Zion (the mountain on which Jerusalem was built), and the entire nation of Israel will physically bloom.

WHAT IS THE MILLENNIUM?

The Millennium is the 1000-year reign of Jesus on Earth while Satan is locked up—before the new heavens and new earth.

At the moment of the rapture, all believers will be taken to heaven and experience the Bema Seat judgment. We will then return with Jesus to Earth for the Battle of Armageddon. After that battle, Satan will be locked up for 1000 years, and we will reign with Jesus during that time (Revelation 20:4).

WILL IT BE A LITERAL 1000 YEARS?

Some believe it will be exactly 1000 years, while others think the term “1000” simply symbolizes a very long time. Both are legitimate perspectives. Revelation 20 uses the term “1000 years” six times, yet “1000 years” is not found in any other Bible passage that discusses this kingdom.

WHAT WILL THE WORLD BE LIKE?

It will be a world without war and without fear. Because there will be no war, there will be no need to train for battle and no standing military (Isaiah 2:4). Humans and animals alike will live in peace.

WILL ALL CHRISTIANS REIGN WITH JESUS DURING THE MILLENNIUM?

Revelation 20:4 says, “They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” In reading the whole passage, however, it is not clear as to whether this refers only to the martyrs who did not take the mark of the beast or whether it includes all believers.

WHAT PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE REFER TO THE MILLENNIUM?

There are many passages from Old Testament prophets that refer to the Millennium, though none of them use the actual term “Millennium.” They are connected to this era because they depict a glorious future here on Earth, where the LORD reigns from Zion. This is one of the prominent themes in the book of Isaiah. This period of time is often referred to using terms like “Mount Zion” or “Mountain of the Lord.”

Reference passages:

- Isaiah 2:1–5, 11:1–16, 24:21–23, 27:13, 35:1–10, 41:17–20, 56:7, 57:13, 65:25, 66:20
- Zechariah 14:6–11
- Ezekiel 47:1–12
- Micah 4:1–3

PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by teresa baumbach

DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon[...], Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. —Revelation 20:1–2

REFLECTION

What a great day it will be when Satan is chained, bound, and unable to wreak havoc on the world for 1000 years! The only day that will be better is when Jesus throws him into the fiery lake for all eternity. Satan has been allowed to roam the earth for far too long, and he leaves such pain and destruction in his path. We see it in broken marriages and families, in addictions, in crimes committed against fellow humans, in the huge rifts and irreconcilable divisions between people. The list goes on.

Each day is a spiritual battle, and while I'm immensely thankful for the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11–18), I can grow weary with the daily battles and the fiery arrows Satan shoots to try to injure me. Even the ones that just nick me cause immense pain. The promise of one thousand years without Satan roaming the earth sounds wonderful. This period may or may not come in our lifetimes, but God has given us the most powerful weapon that Satan cannot stand against: the power of the precious blood of Jesus who died to set us free. When we are in a spiritual battle, we can speak the name of Jesus and claim the power of his blood, and Satan has to flee (Revelation 12:11). While we long for the time when Satan is locked away or thrown into the fiery lake for eternity, Jesus gives us all we need to fight.

QUESTIONS

1. Can you imagine a day when Satan is no longer allowed to roam the earth and wreak havoc? How does that make you feel?
2. Do you take up the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11–18) and declare the power of the blood of Christ in your spiritual battles?

PRAYER

God, thank you for your armor and the weapons you give us to fight our spiritual battles here on this earth. We long for the day when Satan no longer roams the earth in an effort to deceive, harm, and destroy. Until then, fill us with your strength to battle one more day. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20

And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. —Revelation 20:4b

REFLECTION

Each believer has his or her faith story, their journey to accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, including who he is, how he changed us, and who he is for us today: our testimony. We are called to share that testimony with others. Often, words alone are not enough to convince someone. They also need to see our actions—how we live out our belief and trust in the power of God's Word. Our actions can speak louder than our words. How do we live out the faith that we profess?

I think of the song I learned at youth group, "They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love" (written by Peter Scholtes). The best way to witness about Jesus is to love through both our words and actions. Jesus spoke this truth time and time again: "This is my command: love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). The first step to drawing someone closer to faith in Jesus is through our love for them and through the ways they see our love on display in how we live our lives.

The martyrs will judge and co-reign with Christ for 1000 years because they "had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God" (Revelation 20:4). I believe that part of their testimony involved the love they continued to show others every day. In the face of adversity, trials, pain, hardship, and rejection, will we continue to share our testimony by sharing the love of God with others? Hopefully, we can answer "yes" to that question because they will know we are Christians by our actions of love, perhaps far more than by the words that we speak.

QUESTIONS

1. Will people see God in me through the love that I show them and others?
2. How will I answer the Lord when he asks, "How well did you love others? How did you show my love for them?"

PRAYER

Father, we thank you for the example of your perfect love that you show us each and every day. May the love you pour into us overflow from us into the lives of each person we encounter. May they see you in us by how well we love. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20

They came to life and reigned with Christ for 1000 years. —Revelation 20:4c (CSB)

REFLECTION

“I have asked one thing from the Lord; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:4). Like David, my desire is to be with the Lord and to live with him all the days of my life. I want God’s presence with me in my daily walk here on Earth, but what I truly desire when I say I want to “dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” is that I want to live with him in his heavenly house for all eternity. Because my mind cannot fully grasp “eternity,” for me, “all the days of my life” means all the time I have and will ever have. Jesus told his disciples that he had to leave so he could prepare a place for them in his Father’s house. He has prepared a place for us too. This is where I want to live eternally, and if I believe in Jesus and place my trust in him, the Lord will grant my desire.

To live with Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit forever seems like more than enough. But Revelation 20:4 declares that some will not only live with God, but will “reign with Christ for a thousand years.” Can you imagine—sitting next to Christ on the throne and being allowed to reign and judge with him? Who could be worthy of such an honor? It is “those who had been beheaded because of their testimony... and who had not worshiped the beast... and who had not accepted the mark of the beast on their foreheads or hands” (Revelation 20:4). Because of the strength of their faith and willingness to testify about Jesus, they were martyred. As their reward, they will reign with Christ for 1000 years. What a gift, honor, and privilege for those who stood strong against trials and persecution. They are rewarded because they continued to testify and share the Word of God in order to reach one more.

QUESTIONS

1. What is your heart’s desire?
2. What are you willing to sacrifice to reach one more with your testimony?

PRAYER

Lord, we desire to dwell with you in your house for all eternity. May we stand strong in our faith against the trials we face. May we share our testimony and the truth from your Word so that we can reach one more. Fill us with your strength and grace. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20

(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. —Revelation 20:5–6a

REFLECTION

Resurrection—it all comes back to Jesus. God loves us so much that he gave his only Son, Jesus, so that if we believe in him, we will not perish but will have eternal life (John 3:16). What love, what sacrifice, what promise! Because of God’s love and Christ’s sacrifice and atonement for our sins, we have the hope of resurrection and eternal life.

I don’t want those I love to miss out on the precious gift of forgiveness, atonement, and living with God eternally. When a loved one who has followed Christ dies, we grieve but also celebrate because they’ve gone to be with Jesus. We will see them again one day. What about those we love who aren’t following Jesus? Are we concerned for their eternal future? If not, we should be.

Our first step is to pray before we speak. The Holy Spirit is more powerful in changing hearts and lives than we are, so we need to constantly pray for those we love. Second, we need to show them love—pure love (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)—before we talk to them about Jesus. If we speak without love, we are a “noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1, NASB). It just sounds like noise. However, if we have established a relationship in love and acceptance, then we may receive permission from the person to speak the truth in love to them. This is the third step. Let us first pray, then love, then speak when prompted by the Holy Spirit. Finally, we must trust God with the results.

QUESTIONS

1. Have I accepted God’s perfect gift, Jesus, and eternal life in him?
2. Who might I need to share this gift with, knowing I must first pray, then love, then speak?

PRAYER

Jesus, we thank you for loving us enough to die on the cross for us so that we would not perish, but have eternal life with you and the Father. We grieve for our loved ones who do not know you and we desire to share your truth with them. May your Holy Spirit guide us in prayer, love, and action, and may we trust you with the results. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. –Revelation 20:6 (CSB)

REFLECTION

In Revelation 20:1–6, John paints a picture of a triumphant God reigning with his resurrected saints. No matter what name the devil goes by (dragon, ancient serpent, Satan, lawless one, evil one, accuser), he can never undo God’s redemption. This is good news! As believers in Christ, we triumph over Satan because “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31). And Jesus, who died for our sins and is seated at the right hand of God, intercedes for us continually (Romans 8:34). We are blessed and holy. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:37). No matter how hard daily life can be, we must hold fast to the good news. God’s presence and the power of the Holy Spirit are with us every day, and we can cling to the truth of God’s Word and the promises it contains.

As I read through Revelation 20:1–6, the song lyric, “Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere” (Matt Redman, “Better is One Day”) keeps going through my mind. While I am not living in the heavenly courts of Revelation 20, I am living in God’s earthly realm. When I invite God into my day, then he lives within me and I walk with him, and it is a good day filled with his grace and love. Instead of focusing on tomorrow’s problems, I press into God and who he is.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that God is for you? Why?
2. Do you claim the victory that you have in Christ Jesus? If not, why not?

PRAYER

Let us pray like the psalmist in Psalm 84:10–12 (CSB):

Better a day in your courts than a thousand anywhere else[...]. The LORD grants favor and honor; he does not withhold the good from those who live with integrity. Happy is the person who trusts in you, LORD of Armies!

Amen.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

written by dawn gentry

THE MILLENNIUM

(Revelation 20:1–6)

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:

Isaiah 24:21–23, 35:1–10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

INTRODUCTION

Revelation 20 describes a 1000-year reign of Jesus on earth (the Millennium) where Jesus-followers will co-reign with him as “priests of God.”¹ This week we will look at two other passages that relate our responsibilities as people of God with our rewards at the second coming. Isaiah reminds those in exile that a time is coming when Israel will bloom again and “the Lord will reign.” Paul reminds us to “encourage one another” with the truth of Jesus’ return, and to “be sober... [as we are] children of the light” (1 Thessalonians 5:5–8). Both authors look forward to a great return (possibly to Zion) and connect our way of life with the ability to face that return with hope and not fear.

CONVERSATION STARTER

- Who is the most encouraging person you’ve ever known? What words or actions made them so encouraging?
- What questions or reflections do you have about this week’s sermon?

READ ISAIAH 24:21–23 & 35:1–10

There are three “events” prophesied in scripture that must occur before the second return of Jesus: the “Mountain of the Lord” will be established, the exiles (all nations) will return to Israel, and Israel will bloom again.² Many passages in the Hebrew Bible refer to Mount Zion and a restored Israel.³ Commentators disagree on whether the “restored Israel” is symbolic or literal, but many visual images in these texts could refer to the period of the Millennium. These passages refer to the reign of the Lord on “Mount Zion” (which some believe refers to a new Jerusalem).

Discussion questions

- What language in Isaiah 24 reminds you of the events of Revelation 20?
- Identify some of the language in Isaiah 35 that refers to the physical flourishing of the land. Where do you see echoes of God’s perfect garden, his earliest creation?
- Where do you notice contrast between God’s retribution and God’s healing? Why are both important to the people of God?
- Isaiah 35 refers to a “Way of Holiness” (vs 8–10). Who is able to walk there? Does it seem that Isaiah has our “behavior” or our “standing” in view? Why do you think so?

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1–11

While “the Day of the Lord” in the Thessalonian letter likely refers more to the rapture, not the Millennium, knowing that the end will come without warning should impact the choices we make while on Earth. Paul’s letter encourages us to live as “children of the light” because of the reality of Jesus’ return, reign, and judgment.

Discussion questions

- Reflect on what it means to grieve with hope. How might this affect daily choices?
- In your life, what does it look like to live as “children of the light,” especially with the rapture and second coming in view?
- What are some of the foundational beliefs in this text that help us “encourage one another”?

PRAYER POINTS

- Pray through some of these phrases from today’s text:
 - » Thank you for showing us how to grieve with hope, with the restoration of all things in view.
 - » Help us know how to “put on faith and love as a breastplate” and to live as children of light.
 - » Thank you for not appointing us to suffer wrath but offering us salvation through Jesus.
- If your group meets before Wednesday, pray for the upcoming elections with these points in mind:
 - » For safety, integrity, and wisdom for the candidates
 - » For intentionality, graciousness, and discernment for the voters
 - » For God’s will to be done in all times and in all circumstances

¹ For more on serving as “priests of God,” see 1 Peter 2:1–12.

² Thanks to Mark Ashton for the contextual help with this week’s lesson.

³ See also Isaiah 2, 11, 35:1–10, 47:17–20, 60, Zechariah 14:6–11, Ezekiel 47:1–12, and Micah 4.



WEEK FOURTEEN

THE BEMA SEAT OF JESUS	KEY QUESTION	THE GREAT WHITE THRONE
Romans 14:10–12, 1 Corinthians 3:10–15, 2 Corinthians 5:9–10	Where do I find it in the Bible?	Revelation 20:11–15, Hebrews 9:27
Believers in Jesus	Who will be judged?	People who don't believe
Jesus	Who will be the judge?	Jesus
The rewarding of God's people for faith and service	What will be the focus?	Justice for those who have rebelled against God
After the rapture, before the Millennium	When will it happen?	Immediately after the Millennium
No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus	What will the judgment look like?	No defense, no appeal, and no hope for those who rejected Jesus
Good works are rewarded, crowns are passed out for those who are victorious	What will be the result?	The spiritually dead will be thrown into the lake of fire, separated forever from God's presence
No—there will be varying rewards for varying levels of faithfulness and motives will be taken into consideration; 1 Corinthians 3:11–15	Will the judgment be equal?	No—all will be equally condemned, but judgment will be more severe for some; Luke 12:47, Romans 2:6, Revelation 20:13
No—the nature of Jesus' sacrifice and God's grace is that we are judged based on Jesus' righteousness, not our sin; Romans 6:23	Will the judgment be fair?	Yes—anyone who has rejected God's gift through Jesus will receive their just penalty for sin; John 3:18–20
Love God, love your neighbor, trust in Jesus, act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God	What does that mean for me now?	Trust in the Lamb of God who holds the Book of Life; believe in his provision for you in the cross and resurrection; Romans 10:9–10



DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20:7-15

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison[...] to deceive the nations...” –Revelation 20:7–8a

REFLECTION

Nothing points to the depth of human rebellion more than the final revolt in Revelation 20:7–9. Just how serious is the problem of sin? Imagine Jesus ruling on the earth physically and visibly. What would it be like for the Prince of Peace to rule in our presence for 1000 years? The simple thought of this thrills the heart of those who have bowed the knee to him already.

However, the final state is not yet present, and sin’s eradication is not complete. At the end of 1000 years, the Deceiver can still deceive. He is not reformed in the least. Humans are still deceivable. And one last time, “the four corners of the earth” (Gog and Magog) will attempt to overcome God’s people.

The perverse and paradoxical rebellion at the end of a 1000-year idyllic reign of Jesus shows how right it is that God will finally remove evil, completely and forever, from the “good” world he created. We don’t know why God will allow this final rebellion at the end of a messianic rule. Yet human susceptibility to the influence of the Deceiver amidst the best of circumstances shows why Satan’s final consignment to judgment is necessary. God plans to cleanse the world from all evil, remove all death, and then “throw away” death and Hades itself—finally.

QUESTIONS

1. Are you ever tempted to minimize sin in your life? When? Why?
2. Why do you think God chose to have a 1000-year rule of Jesus on the Earth? And why a final rebellion before he sets up the new heavens and new earth?

PRAYER

Oh Lord, how we long for the day when sin is removed from our experience! Thank you that we can experience forgiveness now; comfort our hearts amidst the continued impact of sin in this life. Thank you for the assurance that you will finally heal the universe from the impact of sin. Make it soon, Lord! Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20:7-15

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings...” –Revelation 19:17–18a

REFLECTION

For many movie buffs, the world is divided between BSW (Before Star Wars) and ASW (After Star Wars). The original series (1977, 1980, 1983) gave wide exposure in western culture to the “power” of the “Force.” A well-known philosopher and theologian once quipped that he fully expected some “fools” to conclude it was the Force that resurrected Jesus. Uh-huh.

Scripture never presents a universe with light and darkness in balance. Any and all opposition to God (and his people) is emphatically not on equal footing with God and his realm: “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides me! [...] Is there any God besides me[...] I know of none” (Isaiah 44:6b, 8b).

Satan’s former losses (cf. chapters 12, 13, and 19) bring no change to him. One thousand years of solitary confinement does not reform the Deceiver. He promptly returns to luring nations to rebel. Opposing God after 1000 years of righteousness certainly prompts our astonishment. It says much about us. Any human affairs short of new creation will be vulnerable to evil.

Yet for all the commotion Satan creates, Gog and Magog will barely last a moment. As with Elijah’s fire from heaven, challengers will be consumed instantly... God has no rivals whatsoever. There will be no opposition to God. No good/evil balance in God’s universe—period!

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for us to know and believe that God has no opposition in the universe?
2. When are you tempted to forget that God is powerful beyond all posers of opposition (perhaps even in the best of times)?

PRAYER

Father, remind us no one is like you! We know that you will, in the end, win against evil. But we forget you have no true rivals. Give us this confidence as we serve you. Give us the boldness that comes from such confidence. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20:7-15

And the devil[...] was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. —Revelation 20:10

REFLECTION

Parasailing 900 feet behind a boat off the coast of North Carolina, it is both quiet and beautiful. From above, one can glimpse how good God's creation is. But come back to Earth and we know how crushingly chaotic and noisy the world really is. Reality can be so harsh. But just how bad is it?

One of the most pervasive—and difficult—teachings of the Bible relates to judgment. In Revelation, John speaks of the lake of fire (or “burning sulfur”). Truthfully, details about the lake of fire are few. But make no mistake: the powers behind evil in the universe deserve this outcome. The “Beast” and the “False Prophet” were sent to this lake prior to the Millennium in 20:1–6, and now Satan himself, the Accuser and Deceiver, will finally join them.¹

Perhaps the toughest element of all comes in Revelation 20:10: they “will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” There is more to say about this lake. But verse 10 assures us that the powers that fuel evil in our world—not just individuals, but whole systems—will finally be judged and removed, with prejudice, completely, decisively, eternally, and endlessly. Thank you, God! Are you ready? I am.

QUESTIONS

1. Are you ever distracted or tempted to forget about the consequences of evil in the world? When? Why?
2. Do you find comfort in knowing that all evil powers in the universe will finally be eliminated from God's good world? Why?

PRAYER

Father, we look forward to a time when all evil and darkness will be eliminated from our experience. We know you are far more offended by evil than we could ever be, and so we simply pray and trust that you will soon deal with evil in a way that reflects your holy and loving character. Come soon, Lord Jesus. Amen.

¹ While a burning lake only occurs in Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 14–15, and 21:8, the link between fire and God's judgment is found throughout the Bible. See Genesis 19:24; Exodus 9:23–24; Leviticus 10:1–2; Numbers 11:1; Isaiah 66:15–16; Matthew 7:19, 13:40, 18:9, 25:41; and Hebrews 10:27 and 12:29.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20:7-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence[...] and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged... —Revelation 20:11–12

REFLECTION

Some events shape an era. One only needs to say “9/11” and we know the referent. For an earlier generation, November 23, 1963. Before that, December 7, 1941. Today, COVID-19. Which do you remember? These events shape and shake our worldviews instantly. Hebrews 12:26–27 (cf. Exodus 10:18; Haggai 2:6) speaks of a worldwide “shaking” yet to come. A shake no one will miss. In Revelation 20, this shaking has begun.

Shaking is due to the presence of God seated on a “Great White Throne” (cf. Revelation 4–5), signifying the occupant's authority and righteousness. His powerful presence causes the heavens and earth to flee—not to disappear—but to make room for its renewal (Revelation 21:1–5). Yet first must come final judgments.

All remaining dead, “great and small,” will be resurrected to render account. Books will be opened (cf. Daniel 7:10) and judgment decreed “according to what they had done” (20:12–13). Just as the Son of Man will separate sheep from goats based upon their actions (Matthew 25:31ff), so the omniscient God will assess the true character of all hearts (changed and unchanged) with total accuracy (cf. Romans 2:6–11). Those not in the Book of Life will not experience the first resurrection (20:6) but will experience a second death (20:14; 21:8). This can be avoided!

This warning need not drive us to despair, for as long as it is today (Hebrews 3:13) one can avoid disaster. Those in the Book of Life, who do not bow to the beast (Revelation 13:8) but bow to the Son, will find entrance into the new Jerusalem. To whom do you bow? This decision will shape your eternity.

QUESTIONS

1. What events shape your past? What shapes your future?
2. A final shaking is coming. Do you know if you are in the Book of Life, or will you be judged “according to what you have done”? Why?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you declare, “I am making everything new!” I know I can rely on you to secure me for what is to come. It can be “a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” but I trust you. I want to be in the Book of Life. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 20:7-15

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. —Revelation 20:14a

REFLECTION

Revelation 20 declares both good news and bad. First the bad: the “resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29) is a “sting” that can never be overcome. Can we fathom the tragedy of so many? Francis Chan¹ is right: we are talking about the fate of real people. We simply cannot become numb to such realities. This should propel us toward God’s concerns and not simply our personal comfort.

Yet the good news is wholly comforting. The “sting of death” is finally resolved. All corruption and decay is finally reversed. “The last enemy[...] death” has an enemy of its own: life. Jesus declares the death of death! Can we fathom that? Martyrdom—even gruesome beheading for faithfulness to God—is tragic, but death does not have the final say. Death, both its certainty and its power, dies. And Hades, the place from which none escape without a powerful work of God, will disappear into the lake of fire, never to threaten again. We never have to be afraid again!

*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me[...]
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.*

—John Donne (d. 1631)

QUESTIONS

1. How does Revelation 20 encourage you to engage those around you for the cause of the kingdom? How does this kind of life motivate you?
2. Are there people in your life and memory about whom this passage brings great joy, comfort, or peace? Who are they? Why?

PRAYER

Lord, there is nothing we can offer more than our gratitude for your assurance of life. Help us with our fear of death; give us confidence that you will make all things new. Encourage us to be instruments by which others might find themselves in the Book of Life. For the sake of your Son and your honor, Amen.

¹ Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle. *Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity, and the Things We've Made Up*. David C Cook, 2011.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

written by dawn gentry

INTRODUCTION

As we study the book of Revelation, I continue to reflect on Mark’s first sermon in the series, “Revelation: Sooner Than You Think.” How might my life be different if I honestly believed that? What are some practices that keep me focused on eternity? What disciplines do I need to develop? What habits need to change? Revelation 20:13 reminds us that “each person was judged according to what they had done.” How we live on this earth matters. This week’s supplementary text reminds us of the priorities Jesus had for us and inspires us to pay attention to those around us whose needs we can meet in Jesus’ name.

CONVERSATION STARTER

- What’s the most interesting or surprising thing you’ve learned about the book of Revelation since we started this series?
- What is convicting you most about these lessons from Revelation?

READ MATTHEW 25:31–46

This is one of three parables about Jesus’ second coming within the Olivet Discourse, one of Jesus’ sermons in the book of Matthew. All these parables remind us that we should live our lives as if the Master will return soon. They also call attention to the reality that our choices—our behaviors—matter. “[Good] works are the fruit [read: evidence] that demonstrates the reality of the conversion of one’s heart.” It is not sufficient to simply “say” we believe in Jesus, or that we “trust” Jesus will return someday. This belief should make a difference in how we live daily.¹

Discussion questions

- Notice the behaviors for which the group is affirmed (vs 34–40) and the behaviors for which the group is condemned (vs 41–46). What do they have in common?
Often, we focus on judging or correcting **wrong** behaviors—immoral or unkind actions. But note that the king’s condemnation for the “goats” relates to something they left undone. They weren’t “brutal” toward the “least of these.” They only failed to meet basic needs when it was in their power to do so.
- What are some modern examples of the actions the king expected his subjects to take? How and where might you apply these expectations in your own life? Be specific.

- Our Christianity is not to be lived out in a vacuum as solo participants, but rather in community with one another (note the “we” language in the prayer of confession below). What are some specific steps our group might take **together** to meet needs for the “least of these?”
- Discuss this quote from Miss Maudie found in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee:

Sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of (another)... There are some kind of men who’re so busy worrying about the next world they’ve never learned to live in this one, and you can look down the street and see the results.

PRAYER POINTS

The prayer of confession from the Book of Common Prayer notes the importance of asking forgiveness “for what we have left undone.” Consider sharing this text with your group and praying it aloud together.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

- Pray for discernment regarding our day-to-day responses to those who lack basic necessities.
- Pray for those who serve these clients in the community.
- Ask God to open your eyes to ways you might meet needs of hunger, homelessness, or loneliness in the lives of others.

¹ The quote and some of these ideas are from Hampton Keathley IV, <https://bible.org/article/parables-olivet-discourse-matthew-25>.



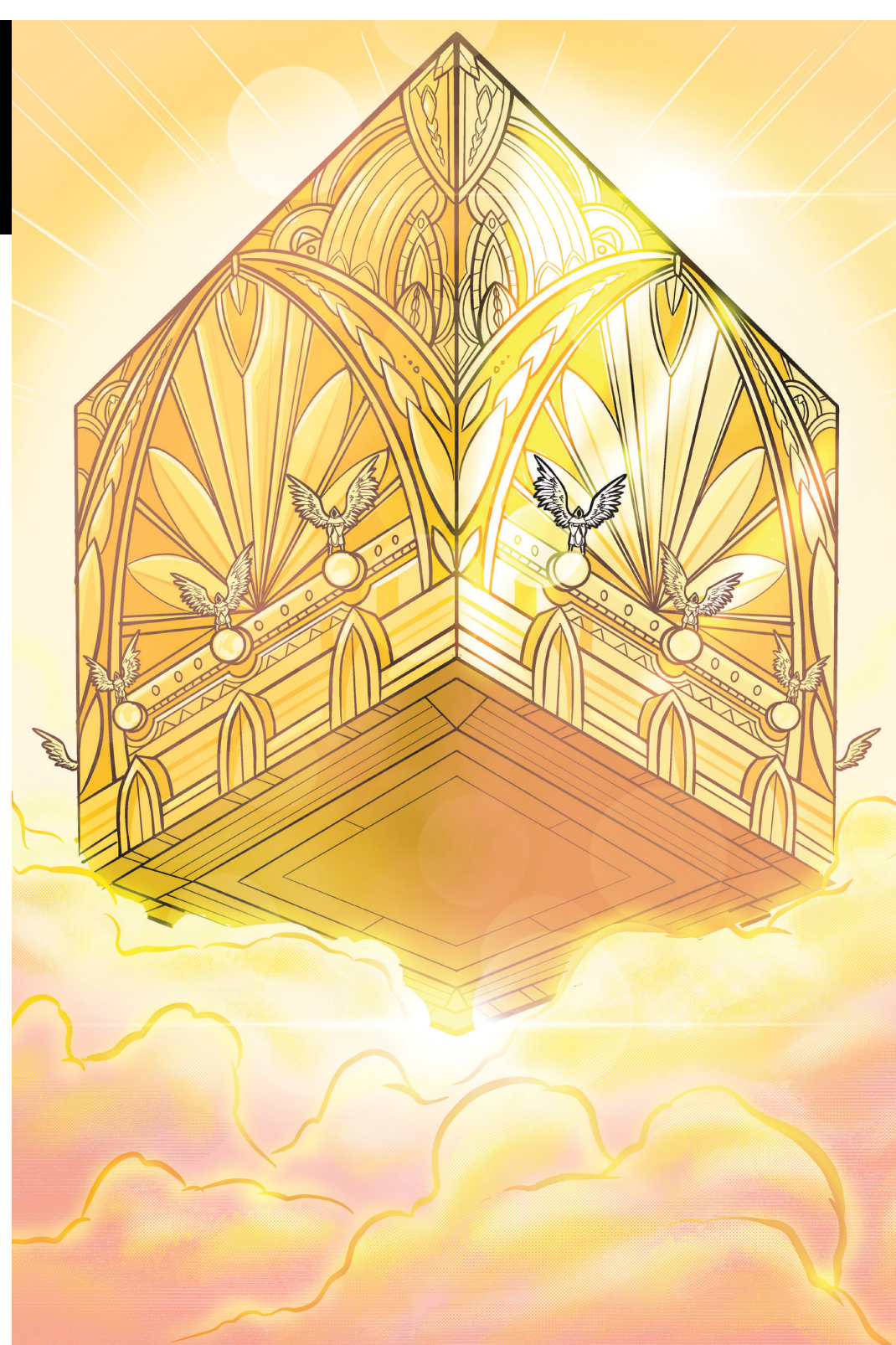
**WEEK
FIFTEEN**

VISUAL AID

NEW JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATION & SYMBOLS

The symbols below are used to describe John's vision of the new Jerusalem as it descends from Heaven. Look up the verses after each symbol to read where the new Jerusalem is described in these ways.

- A new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1)
- Coming down out of heaven (21:2, 10)
- As a bride (21:2, 9)
- The new Jerusalem (21:2)
- A huge cube (21:16)
- Twelve foundations of precious jewels—one for each disciple (21:14, 18–20)
- Twelve gates of pearl—three per side—with angels at each gate, one for each tribe (21:12–13, 21)
- No temple—God is the temple (21:22)
- No sun or moon—the glory of God gives light (21:23)
- Kings of the earth bring splendor into it (21:24)



The original illustration and many other illustrations from this series are available to download for free at cccomaha.org/revelation.

PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by caleb baumann

DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 21

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. —Revelation 21:2 (ESV)

REFLECTION

Some know what it is like to be engaged, waiting in anticipation for the wedding day to come. Some know what it is like to be single, hoping and waiting to meet someone with whom to walk through life. Some know what it is like to miss someone who has been away for a long time on business, at college, in the military, or because of a divorce. All of us, in one way or another, know what it is like to miss someone we deeply love, longing for the time when we can see them again.

In this loving, longing, missing, and waiting, we find the heart of God. No one knows what it is like to deeply miss and long for the one they love more than God. He has been waiting since the very beginning of time to enjoy a pure, unhindered relationship with humanity—his most dearly beloved creation. To be fully known by us and to let us know that we are fully known by him is the reality God has eternally anticipated. Yet in his sovereignty and relentless love, God is patient. Being patient means faithfully persevering as we wait, knowing it is worth any suffering endured. God's love is displayed in the way he has patiently endured the slowly unfolding timeline of human history without compromise, longing to receive the new Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS

1. What does God desire most?
2. In what ways is God patient? Why do you think God is patient?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you are not slow to fulfill your promises, but are instead patient toward us, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. Thank you that you faithfully endure all things—even death—knowing that the wait is worth any suffering experienced. Thank you that you created us to be patient like you. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

DAILY READING: REVELATION 21

And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. —Revelation 21:4 (NASB)

REFLECTION

When we look at the heavens and the earth God created in the beginning and the new heavens and new earth God has destined as the final form of creation, it gives us a window into the truest expression of God's will. The temporary, present condition of this broken and fallen world is not an accurate expression of God's nature and will (although in God's wisdom and grace, he can still reveal himself through a world that has been subjected to futility). Instead, we look to the perfect beginning and the perfect completion of God's will to know our perfect God who is the Alpha and Omega.

The fully reconciled, redeemed, and glorious creation that John witnessed in Revelation 21–22 is God's long-awaited expression of his will in a perfectly and wholly realized state. Based on the revelation of his will accomplished, we know the heart of God. In this passage, God is tenderly attentive to the people with whom he dwells. If we ever wonder what God's good and perfect will is for our lives, we can look at the new heavens and new earth and know that God's will for us is himself. God's will for our lives is to fill us with his love and righteousness from a place of intimacy.

QUESTIONS

1. Ask God what he desires for your relationship with him.
2. In what ways can you live in the fulfillment of God's will right now?

PRAYER

God, thank you that your will is good and perfect. Thank you that all you desire shall be accomplished. Thank you for giving me the grace to gratify the desires of your Spirit who is at work reconciling all things to you. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 21

To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious[...] will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving[...] will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur... –Revelation 21:6–8

REFLECTION

The night before Jesus was nailed to the cross, he told his disciples to take heart because he had overcome the world (John 16:33). In the midst of tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, and even as sheep to be slaughtered, Paul asserts that we overwhelmingly conquer (Romans 8:35–37). The heavenly pronouncement in Revelation 12:11 declares that God’s people conquered Satan, even though they faced death.

We typically think of conquering or overcoming or victory in terms of military triumph and imperial occupation, but the New Testament uses this language differently. 1 John 5:4–5 (ESV) says, “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” According to John, being God’s child on account of the faith we have in the work of Christ is all that is required to be a conqueror. The conquerors of Revelation are those who have maintained faith in the work of Christ and abided in their identity as God’s children, no matter what life or death threw at them. They have not let sin or fear define them. The finished work of Christ has spoken a good and powerful truth about who they are, and they have yielded to that truth.

QUESTIONS

1. Would you consider yourself a conqueror according to 1 John 5:4–5?
2. What is your inheritance according to Revelation 21:5–7?

PRAYER

God, thank you for victory. Thank you that you overcame sin, death, and the devil and have promised us this same victory. Thank you that whether we live in luxury and pleasure, poverty and suffering, or die and leave our earthly bodies, we can trust that we are your children and that you have given us all we need to live and die and live again like Jesus. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

DAILY READING: REVELATION 21

[The angel...] showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. –Revelation 21:10b

REFLECTION

Ever since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, the earth has lacked a place worthy for God and his people to dwell together. The people of Israel entered the Promised Land that God gave them after they had wandered the desert for forty years. However, even in that Promised Land, the people of Israel were not immune to the fallen nature of this world. The land was supposed to be flowing with milk and honey, but there was still corruption, idolatry, wars, division of kingdoms, rebellion, murder, adultery, famines, conquests, racism, sickness, exiles, poverty, theft, lawlessness, and death. Even the best this earth has to offer falls desperately short of the God-breathed perfection of creation. Everyone who entered Israel’s Promised Land eventually died. The earth and its provision are unable to protect God’s people from the effects of sin and death. We find ourselves longing for something more than this world.

The good news is that God is making all things new! Jesus has gone and prepared a place for us to be with him. It is a place worthy to host God’s people. It is a place permeated by God’s glory. There is no scarcity and there is no poverty. There is no sin and there is no death. There is only God and his people in gloriously perfect love and fellowship.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do the systems and conditions of this world seem imperfect?
2. How and why will the new Jerusalem be different?

PRAYER

God, we long for something more. Thank you that you have not intended for us to settle for the futility of this world. Thank you that you have destined us to dwell in your perfection. Thank you for perseverance and hearts full of hope. Thank you for helping us fix our eyes on you and our destiny with you. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 21

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
—Revelation 21:22 (NASB)

REFLECTION

The tabernacle, Ark of the Covenant, and temple were all built as dwelling places for God among his people. Though these structures were meant to give God's people assurance of his presence with them, in many ways they missed the point. Worship, sacrifice, and ministry were centered around the temple, making it easy for someone to believe that if they were far from the temple, they were far from God. In addition, only high priests were able to enter the most holy part of the temple where the fullest manifestation of God's presence dwelt. Twice the temple was destroyed, the latter time occurring in 70 AD, and it has not been rebuilt since.

We might think that the temple would be present in the new Jerusalem as a restoration of that which was lost. However, according to John, this is not the case. A physical temple has been rendered unnecessary in the new Holy City because "the Lord God and the Lamb are its temple." God's essence so fully pervades the people and the city that the visible light of his presence is inescapable. Night no longer exists. The perspective of striving to reach God will be fully eradicated in this place because God will have fully reached his people. Even now, though it can feel as though God is near one moment and far the next, we are told that we are temples of God in whom he has made his permanent residence. One day, God will have his way and we will fully know that God has come near. Until then, let us grow in awareness of God with us.

QUESTIONS

1. How can you become more aware of God with you?
2. If you are God's temple, what effect might that have on you and the people around you?

PRAYER

God, thank you for being close. Help me to have a deep awareness of you. I am so excited for the day when I will see you face to face. Help me to be increasingly aware of your presence until that day. Thank you for faith to be sure of what I do not yet see. Amen.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

written by caleb baumann

INTRODUCTION

“Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). God is making all things new. God is making a new people by giving us new hearts that renew our minds and transform our lives. God is making a new heavens and new earth in which he will dwell eternally with his new people. In this new creation, all sin, death, and evil will be completely gone, enabling a new and perfect way of life. The final form of creation revealed in Revelation 21–22 fulfills God’s will to renew, restore, and reconcile all things to himself. This new creation is what we hope for and what Jesus tells us to pray to experience even now on this earth (Matthew 6:10).

CONVERSATION STARTER

- Share a story about someone who introduced you to something that you had never experienced before (e.g., using new technology, traveling to a new place, meeting new people, listening to a new song, eating new food, etc.). How do you respond to new things?

READ GENESIS 1:1–2:3

By God’s Word, the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them were created. God’s Word is Spirit and truth.

Discussion questions

God’s resting on the seventh day of creation indicated his absolute satisfaction with the perfect execution of his will.

- Why was the Garden of Eden so pleasing to God?
- What would have been special and unique about the relationship between Adam and Eve and God in the garden (pre-fall)?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14–21

Paul is talking to the Corinthian church about the effects of the work of Christ.

Discussion questions

All things are made new in Revelation 21–22 because of the way God permeates every aspect of creation. The word of God calls **us** “new creations” because we have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ. For this reason, we

should consider our flesh (old sinful nature) gone and powerless because God has given us new life by reconciling us to himself through Christ.

- What does it mean to be the righteousness of God (reconciled to him)? What effect does this have on us?
- What does it mean to be a new creation?
- How does **being** a new creation now frame our understanding of new creation (Revelation 21–22)?

Think back to our conversation starter. In some cases, these new things may have been very new to you and not at all new to someone else. God has known his plan for the new heavens and new earth since the beginning.

- How is God introducing us to the new kingdom/new relationship he has always wanted for us?
- What might it look like to be an ambassador of this new kingdom and to minister reconciliation to others?

PRAYER POINTS

- Ask God to show you the reality of the righteousness and reconciliation that is ours because of Christ.
- Thank God for giving you eyes to see God’s heart for all things to be made new.
- Ask God to give you confidence through the Spirit to walk in newness of life.
- Praise God for the hope he has given us that guarantees the things to come.



**WEEK
SIXTEEN**

VISUAL AID

EDEN RESTORED ILLUSTRATION & SYMBOLS

These key Old Testament images deeply inform the visual imagery of John. All that was predicted in the future visions in the Old Testament is wrapped into a beautiful package in Revelation 21–22.

IMAGE	GENESIS	EZEKIEL	REVELATION
River of life	2:6, 10–14	47:1–6	22:1
Tree of life	2:9, 3:24	47:7, 12	22:2
No more curse	3:14–20	47:8–9	22:3
God's direct presence	2:16–17, 3:8	43:1–5	22:3–4
Named by God, not people	3:20		22:4
Reign with God	1:28, 2:15		22:5

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PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by debbie raymond and caleb baumann

DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 22

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life... –Revelation 22:1–2a

REFLECTION

The pandemic has brought not only sickness, masks, and fear, but also a rise in depression and anxiety. The pandemic leaves people feeling out of control and anxious, worried about protecting loved ones, keeping their jobs, and having enough money to get by. The isolation and loneliness can fuel depression. How can we as Christians combat this?

Reading Revelation 22 and imagining heaven can give us hope. C. S. Lewis said, “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next.” We need to ask God to help us imagine heaven. What will be the first thing you do when you get there? Will you fall at Jesus’ feet and worship? Will you look for the loved ones you finally get to see again? Will you just sit and stare at all of the beauty of new colors, new smells, and God with you? Imagine just staring at the face of God and Jesus. Ask God to help you “see” his throne and Jesus’ throne. Ask him to help you imagine the river of life flowing from those thrones. Imagine swimming in that clear, refreshing river of life. Imagine tasting the fruit from the tree of life. It has to be more delicious than anything we have ever eaten. Imagine serving God with his name inscribed on our foreheads. Imagine God’s brilliance so bright that there is no need for the sun or lamps.

When loss and disappointment occur, we need to remind ourselves of what is to come. We can be sure that death, cancer, loneliness, and sickness will pass away. God is making all things new. We have hope for the future and for now. Remember that heaven is our true home.

QUESTIONS

1. How can you set your heart on things above (Colossians 3:2) and begin meditating on heaven?
2. How do you think this will change your perspective?

PRAYER

Lord, we thank you for the gift of imagination. We ask that you give us visions of heaven, lift our spirits, and help us long for our true home. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

DAILY READING: REVELATION 22

Behold, I make all things new! –Revelation 21:5

REFLECTION

An old, rusted, metal star was found bent in half and misshapen. A loving soul repaired the star. Most of the star was bent back in place with the exception of a few dents. After it was washed off, its intricate beauty with many cutouts and designs were visible. Finally, the star was sprayed with a beautiful color of gold.

Jesus loves us and is the ultimate restorer of all things. He found us bent in all the wrong ways but still chose us. He washed us off, bent us back into shape, but left a few dents, which will ultimately be restored in heaven. He sees all of the beauty in us, even while we are still dirty. He washes us with his own blood and makes us righteous so one day we will see Eden restored.

Throughout the Bible, we see Jesus restoring people to health, life, and freedom from sin. In Genesis 1–2, the earth was without sin, death, or pain. But in Genesis 3, sin entered and Adam and Eve were banished from the garden. Revelation 21–22 reveals the newly-restored heaven and earth; sin, suffering, and death are conquered. In Genesis, the tree of knowledge of good and evil introduced sin and brought about the curse on the serpent, Adam, and Eve. In Revelation, the tree of life brings blessing and healing. Ultimately, God the Father will make this newly-remade earth his home, and we will have a completely restored relationship with him. Jesus said, “Behold, I make all things new!” (Revelation 21:5)

I can’t wait! I’m looking forward to spending all of eternity with Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. Are you yearning to be restored? How might Jesus restore you?
2. How might your story of restoration help someone else? Share your story with someone today.

PRAYER

Lord, we long for your restoration and to be made new. We long to live in the new Eden with our restored bodies, but mostly we long to live with you. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 22

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. —Revelation 22:14–15

REFLECTION

Brant Hansen, author of *Unoffendable*, tells the story of a pastor who, before the internet, had a problem with looking at pornography. When his wife left town, he unpacked all of his magazines, but then, disgusted with himself, dropped them all in a nearby dumpster. The day his wife was returning, he decided he wanted them back. So he climbed into the dumpster, slipped, broke his arm, and his wife found him there, surrounded by all of his magazines. Brant tells the story not to condemn the pastor, but to say, “What if we knew what was in everyone’s dumpster?” He describes it as a totally freeing experience to realize that each of us has our own dumpsters of sin. If our sins were visible for all to see, we would definitely be more humble, less critical of others, and more compassionate. And that is how God sees us every day.

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life” (Revelation 22:14). We all need to have the garbage from our personal dumpster washed off of us. The blood of the Lamb washes us clean so that we are white as snow. When we realize that Jesus has washed us clean, we become so grateful—even awestruck. On top of that, we are given access to the tree of life (eternal life). Because the Holy Spirit opened our eyes, we are now able to enter through the open gates into the city and be welcomed by angels! Without Jesus’ grace, we would be outside as dogs, with those who are sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and all who practice magical arts or any type of falsehood—basically, what we once were.

QUESTIONS

1. What’s in your dumpster? Do you believe Jesus can make you clean from all of your sin and filth? Why?
2. Have you praised God that he rescued you from your dumpster?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you that you loved me even when I was in my dumpster. Thank you, Jesus, for rescuing me and washing me off, so now I have the right to go through the gates to heaven. Thank you for clothing me with your righteous robes. Lord, I am so grateful. Thank you!

DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

DAILY READING: REVELATION 22

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. —Revelation 22:17 (NASB)

REFLECTION

After providing a window into the reality of God and his unfolding will throughout the letter of Revelation, John concludes by commissioning the Church with a message of invitation and hope. God has appointed his Spirit and bride to say, “Come,” in the midst of a broken and sinful world approaching inevitable judgment. The role of the bride—God’s people—on this earth is to seek and welcome anyone who desires God and his kingdom, so that they may freely experience that which they seek.

God has not left us to make this invitation alone. God’s Spirit is at work with and in his people. The Holy Spirit moves and acts in perfect accordance with God’s will. God has placed that same Spirit in his people so that we may be moved to walk in perfect accordance with his will. When we look at the people around us who are hurting, broken, and hopeless, do we see God inviting them to be made whole through the ministry of reconciliation? Do we see God inviting all people to drink the water of life—to experience lives empowered by God’s Spirit and truth—without cost? Let us partner with and embrace the Spirit as he draws all people to relationship with the true, loving, and living God.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you see the people around you? How does the Spirit see them?
2. How can you recognize and be in agreement with the Spirit?

PRAYER

God, thank you for the water of life. You are rich in mercy and compassion and always gracious towards me. May I desire others to know and experience all that you are and may I be obedient to your Spirit. May I be a fountain of your living water to the people around me. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 22

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. –Revelation 22:20 (NASB)

REFLECTION

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10, NASB). As we get to know God, we see that his will is supremely good and supremely wise and that Christ is the supreme fulfillment of God’s will. When we realize that God’s ways are higher and better than our own, we will start to hope for and live as the fulfillment of his will on this earth.

Because Christ is the supreme fulfillment of God’s will, we can be sure that everything accomplished in Jesus’ second coming will be supremely good and supremely wise. Good will have its decisive victory. Evil will be punished permanently. All that is broken will be mended. All that is promised will be fulfilled. All that is lost will be found. And every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord of all.

We long for, live toward, and are sure of Jesus’ return. God wants his will accomplished more than we do and has given us the testimony of his Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit as guarantees of things to come. As God allows us to understand the reality of Christ’s return, we also know that Jesus taught us to pray for and live according to the way of the future kingdom right now. We get to live as lights in the darkness and as glimpses of the coming kingdom here on this earth. We are invited and equipped to be the “already” in a world that has not yet known God.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you want Jesus to come back? Why can you be sure that he will come back?
2. How can you experience God’s kingdom now and be a light pointing to Christ’s return?

PRAYER

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

written by dawn gentry

HOPE FOR YOUR FUTURE

(Revelation 22)

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:
Isaiah 66:12–22, Psalm 33:16–22, Romans 13:11–14

INTRODUCTION

Building on last week's theme of new creation, this week we look toward the hope we have in Jesus. While we base our hope on God's free gift of salvation, we also acknowledge our need to "behave decently" in light of that gift (Romans 13:13). We recognize the "day is almost here" when God's judgment will be revealed. Our only hope for the future is in the **one** God who is our help and shield (Psalm 33:20), the same Alpha and Omega that John reminds us to worship (Revelation 22:9). We are always, only, all for Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus!

CONVERSATION STARTER

- In this difficult pandemic season, what has given you the most hope? Where have you seen hope expressed in the lives of others?
- What stood out to you from this past week's sermon?

READ ISAIAH 66:12–22

Discussion questions

- Contrast God's treatment of the wicked with God's promises to the faithful.
 - » What words or phrases are most comforting to you?
 - » Which words or phrases cause you the most concern for those who are lost? How should this impact our willingness to share the gospel with others?
- Read verse 18 again in light of Revelation 7:9–12. What are some ways we can reach out to "every nation, tribe, people, and language," even in our suburban American context?

READ ROMANS 13:11–14

Discussion questions

- What do you think the phrase "our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" means?
- In the lesson from November 1, we discussed "living as children of light." In order to reflect that reality, what are some attributes in these verses that you need to put aside? What do you need to put on?

READ PSALM 33:16–22

Discussion questions

- What are some of the things/people we are tempted to hope or place our trust in our world today? How do we know they will always fall short? Share an experience you have had with misguided hope.
- What are some of the promises of this text that you are clinging to?

PRAYER POINTS FROM PSALM 33

- Praise God for his righteous word (v 4), his justice (v 5), and his amazing creation (vs 6–9).
- Ask God to make his plans and purposes clear to us (vs 10–11).
- Thank God for the way he watches over us (vs 12–15) and for his unfailing love (vs 5, 18, 22).
- Praise God for the hope he gives us that guarantees the things to come (vs 20–22).



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