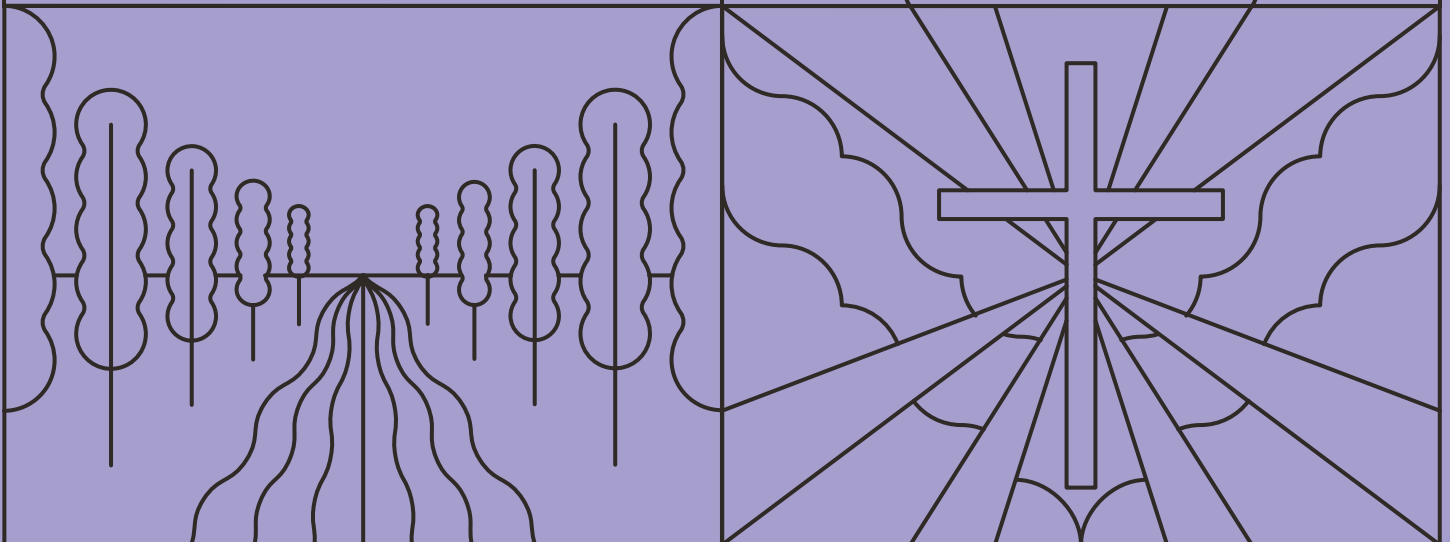


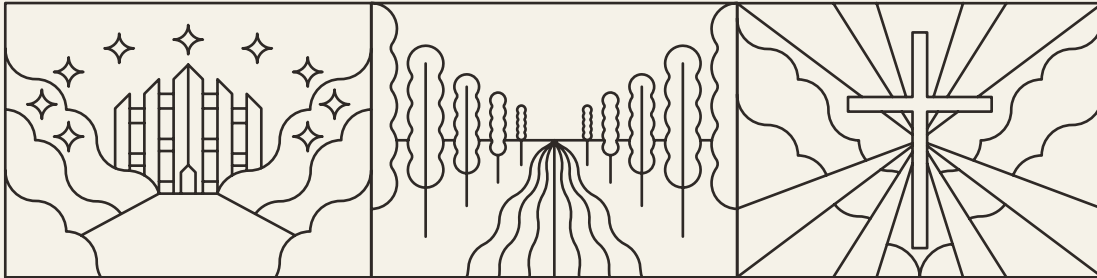
REVELATION

THE HOPE

ALL THINGS NEW

A THREE-WEEK STUDY





Welcome to our “All Things
New” mini-study, taken from
our 30-week course on
Revelation.

This mini-study is an opportunity for you to study
BSF content for yourself. Whether you are intending
to try a class or simply do the study on your own, we
hope God speaks to you through His Word.

What is BSF?

Bible Study Fellowship is a global community of 450,000 men, women, students, and kids studying God's Word together. Each year, BSF groups study for 30 weeks, either in person or online.

How does the Bible study work?

This sample study includes three lessons. Each lesson takes one week to complete.

To get started:

1. Read and answer the questions for the assigned passage each day.
2. If completing the study in a BSF group, discuss your answers collectively each week.
3. Listen to the weekly teaching on the week's passage (with your group or via the recorded audio lecture).
4. Read the notes with the passage's historical background and life application.

Repeat for each lesson!

How do I join BSF?

If a friend has invited you to join their group, simply attend with them. Otherwise, to find a class in your local area, or to join a BSF Online group, go to [join.bsfindernational.org](https://www.join.bsfindernational.org).

We hope you enjoy using this four-fold approach to exploring God's Word in community with others. Thanks for choosing to study with Bible Study Fellowship!

GOD'S HOLY CITY



Lesson Questions

Read and answer the questions for the assigned passage each day. If completing the mini-study in a BSF group, answer the questions before the group meets to discuss the answers.

First Day

The notes and lecture fortify the truth of the passage for understanding and application to daily life.

1. What points in the lecture helped you to worship God—even what you cannot fully understand?
2. How did the notes help you regarding God's judgment and the future awaiting God's people?

Second Day: Read Revelation 21:9-10.

John saw the new Jerusalem.

3. What did John experience?
4. a. Briefly describe each of the scenes in which John was "in the Spirit" and its importance.

Revelation 1:10-20

Revelation 4:1-11

Revelation 17:1-6

- b. What are the differences between the scenes in Revelation 17:1-6 and 21:9-14?
5. How does this scene offer a helpful perspective for God's people?

Third Day: Read Revelation 21:11-21.

John describes the details of the new Jerusalem.

6. a. List the various precious metals and jewels included in John's description of the Holy City.

b. Read Exodus 28:15-21 and 1 Peter 2:9. What is the significance of the jewels and inscribed names that adorned both the foundations of the Holy City and the high priest's breastplate?
7. How is the continuity between the Old and New Testaments portrayed in these verses?
8. How are glory, protection, security, and perfection—aspects of God and His eternal plan for His people—portrayed in the description of God's city? Why are these attributes important?

Fourth Day: Read Revelation 21:22-27.

John explains the city's light.

9. According to these verses, what will no longer be needed in the new Jerusalem? Why?
10. a. What do the following verses say about the temple, and what stands out to you?
1 Kings 8:1-21

John 2:19-22

1 Corinthians 6:19

- b. What do the following verses say about God's light, and what do you find most meaningful?

Exodus 13:21

Psalms 119:105

John 8:12

11. a. How does John describe the nature of God's eternal kingdom and its citizens?
- b. How have today's passages and your study of Revelation influenced your thinking about God's presence among His people in the past, present, and future?

Fifth Day: Read Revelation 22:1-5.

John writes about life in the new Jerusalem.

12. Describe the scene John saw around God's throne. What other Bible passages have a similar emphasis? (Include Scripture references with your answer.)
13. Read Genesis 2:9 and 3:1-24.
- a. Why were Adam, Eve, and all humanity banished from access to the Tree of Life?
- b. What do God's people regain in Revelation, and how does this encourage you?

Sixth Day: Review Revelation 21:9-22:5.

God's people will live with Him in eternal glory.

14. What does the promise of God's eternal reign, constant light, and continual presence with His people mean to you?

Next step: Listen to the lecture.

Lesson 27 Notes

Dig deeper into this week's passage by reading the lesson notes with the passage's historical background and life application.

Revelation 21:9–22:5

Focus Verse

"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." (Revelation 21:22-23)

Outline

- The City's Splendor – Revelation 21:9-21
- The City's Light and Life – Revelation 21:22–22:5

Engage

The future often looms mysteriously before us like a shadowy path beyond the limits of our understanding. We cannot see around corners or know exactly what the years ahead hold. While God's people await heaven's glories, they experience inevitable trouble in this life. How can we frame our expectations for the future? God knows and controls every unknown aspect ahead of us. **God's purposeful power over the present and future gives His people hope.**

God gave John a vision of the future that brings clarity to His people. Believers will inhabit the Lord's city and dwell in a place of security, perfect balance, and eternal renewal. God's resplendent glory will provide life and light as God's children actively serve Him alone. John's vision combines the flourishing peace of God's original garden with the breathtaking splendor of His consummate city. This glorious future awaits the people who find salvation in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. **God's people will live with Him in eternal glory.**

◆ The City's Splendor – Revelation 21:9-21

God's Spirit allowed John to see everything he wrote down. "In the Spirit" appears four times in Revelation¹ and possibly represents four distinct sections of the book. Here, John describes God's Holy City, an interesting parallel with the evil Babylon depicted in chapter 17. Similar words open both passages: "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls" full of the last seven plagues came to John. In chapter 17, John, carried away "in the Spirit," went into the desert. In chapter 21, he is taken to a great, high mountain. Biblical symbolism often depicts the wilderness or desert as a place of testing and evil,² while a mountain frequently represents the place God makes Himself known.³ The mountain setting also reflects a vision experienced by the prophet Ezekiel.⁴ **In John's vision of the Holy City, God, through his Son Jesus, fulfills many rich promises given to His people.**

1. **In the Spirit:** Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10

2. **Desert:** Numbers 14:26-35; Matthew 4:1-11

3. **Mountain revelations:** Exodus 3:1-6; 19:1-6; 1 Kings 19:7-18; Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 5:1-2; 17:1-8

4. **Ezekiel's vision:** Ezekiel 40–47

From Bride to City – 21:9-11

The angel carries John away to see “the bride, the wife of the Lamb,” also called “the Holy City.”

This passage seems to intentionally contrast the bride and the prostitute Babylon.⁵ Both are splendidly dressed. The utterly pure bride wears beautiful clothing, shining with God’s glory. The prostitute, full of evil abominations, seduction, and lies, presents herself in purple and scarlet robes dripping with gold, jewels, and pearls. The bride comes down out of heaven, from God. Babylon, from the world and ruined by sin, rides a beast in the wilderness.

John continues by describing the city’s transcendent beauty, which reflects the character of those who dwell there. It shines “with the glory of God” like crystal-clear jasper (which is usually opaque) and reflects the brilliance and purity of God’s presence. Earlier in Revelation, John described God on His throne as appearing like jasper.⁶ **The Holy City showcases the person of God together with His perfect craftsmanship—resplendent, glorious, and of infinite worth!**⁷ John’s picture of the Holy City’s radiance has inspired Christian songwriters and poets throughout history.

Whatever God creates reflects His character. God, who is light, created light.⁸ He formed mankind in His own image. God’s greatest revelation of Himself—His eternal Son, who was not created but has eternally existed—perfectly represents Him. Jesus is fully God, the radiance of His Father’s glory.⁹ **The exalted final home God prepares for those He loves also mirrors His brilliant, indescribable beauty.** The eternal city and the glorious future of God’s people reflect the brilliant perfection of God Himself.

Security in the City – 21:12-17

Walls and Gates (21:12-14) – An ancient city’s walls brought security and rest. The new Jerusalem and her inhabitants remain absolutely and eternally safe because no evil is present.¹⁰ A great, high wall surrounds the city, with 12 gates guarded by 12 angels and secured by 12 foundations. Isaiah recorded God’s prophecy: “I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night.”¹¹ **God creates a safe place for His people to inhabit forever.** The names of Israel’s 12 tribes are engraved on the 12 gates. The 12 foundations bear the names of Jesus’s 12 apostles. Inclusion of these names depicts the unity and continuity of the New Testament with the Old Testament, as well as Israel and the Church as God’s people.

Ezekiel’s prophecy of a renewed Jerusalem also revealed city gates named after Israel’s tribes.¹² In the New Testament, Paul illustrated the spiritual unity of God’s people in his letter to the Ephesians: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”¹³ John’s prophetic vision of the Holy City gathers these biblical images and reveals God’s fulfillment of all His promises to Israel and the Church. **The names on the city’s gates and foundations assure all God’s people of His love and protection for all eternity.**

5. **Prostitute Babylon:** Revelation 17:1-8, 18

6. **Jasper:** Revelation 4:2-3

7. **God’s glory:** Isaiah 60:1-2, 19

8. **Created light:** Genesis 1:3

9. **Radiance of God’s glory:** Hebrews 1:3

10. **Kept by God:** Psalm 121:6-8

11. **Jerusalem’s watchmen:** Isaiah 62:6

12. **Gates and tribes:** Ezekiel 48:31-34

13. **God’s household:** Ephesians 2:19-20

Symmetry and Splendor (21:15-17) – Next, John saw the angel measure the city with a golden measuring rod. These numbers are probably not architectural measurements but symbolize God’s vast and perfect eternal plan. The city forms a perfect cube, 12,000 stadia in length, width, and height—approximately 1,380 miles or 2,221 kilometers in each direction. John’s readers who knew the Old Testament would picture that cube and think of the holy of holies in the temple. This inner sanctuary, a place of God’s presence, was constructed in perfect symmetry and with pure gold.¹⁴ Only the high priest entered the holy of holies on one day each year. **This reflection of the holy of holies implies God’s people will dwell in God’s holy presence forever.**

The angel’s measurement of the city wall’s thickness using “human measurement” was 144 cubits (a multiple of 12, equating to 216 feet or 66 meters). Twelve is a number of completeness and wholeness, especially with regard to God’s people. **Repeated several times in Revelation, 144,000 appears as a significant multiple of 12, representing Israel’s tribes and those marked with the Lamb’s and the Father’s name.**¹⁵

Does John describe an actual city? **Interpreters differ about how literally to understand John’s description.** Because the city is characterized as a “bride,” representing God’s glorified people who have eternal life, some believe John’s words are mostly symbolic. Other Bible students understand the passage literally, seeing the city as approximately 1,400 miles (2,200 km) vertically and from side to side. Perhaps these grand dimensions present a perfect city large enough to contain all the saints of all ages from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The Holy City descends to a renewed earth, consummated and perfected. All who trust in Christ will certainly live in this perfect place. Human words seem inadequate to describe the grandeur of the city where Christ-followers will live forever.¹⁶

The overwhelming magnificence of the new Jerusalem reflects the indescribable beauty of the Lord God Himself.

Though understanding varies, John’s detailed description overflows with meaning. Rich yet simple language, drawn mainly from the Old Testament, pictures the magnificence of all John experienced. **The city’s awe-inspiring symmetrical shape and structure emphasize the perfection and stability of God Himself, our sure foundation.**¹⁷

Precious Jewels – 21:18-21

John describes the city as pure gold with a surrounding wall made of jasper. The foundation contains precious stones, almost all found in the breastplate of Israel’s high priest.¹⁸ Perhaps this relates to God’s priestly people.¹⁹ Unmistakably, John’s focus on identifying each gemstone is his attempt to describe the utter splendor he saw. **The new Jerusalem, a beautiful, brilliant dwelling, provides a place for a regal God and His beloved people.** Each of the 12 gates is a single pearl, immeasurable in size. The city streets are gold, “as pure as transparent glass.” How interesting that the gold valued so greatly on earth will merely line the city streets one day. The overwhelming magnificence of the new Jerusalem reflects the indescribable beauty of the Lord God Himself.

14. Holy of holies: 1 Kings 6:19-22; Hebrews 9:7

15. Tribes and holy name: Revelation 7:4; 14:1

16. Eternal dwelling: John 14:2

17. Sure foundation: Isaiah 33:6

18. Breastplate stones: Exodus 28:17-21; 39:10-14

19. Priestly people: Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

The Unspeakable Privilege of Knowing God

The Doctrine of Humanity's Creation and Purpose

The new Jerusalem represents an indescribable city God has planned for His people, where they will flourish forever. **God uniquely created humanity in His image; He designed people for fellowship with their creator.**¹ When sin marred Eden's perfection and brought separation from God, He prepared a way to repair humanity's tragic loss. Jesus Christ died on behalf of sinners.² Those who put their trust in Him begin to experience God's highest purpose for their lives. And on a coming day, God will deliver His people to a place where sin no longer taints the beauty of His creation. God will restore what sin corrupted and allow His people to fully experience all they were created to be.³ God's eternal city is balanced and full of splendor.

God's purpose for people is more than a nebulous truth about faceless humanity. God designed each person to know Him personally. He desires to enjoy an intimate relationship and rich communication with each one. **No higher pursuit exists than knowing and worshipping God.** For believers, the fellowship with God through Christ enjoyed in this life will only grow more amazing in eternity.

People seek meaning and purpose in so many ways that fail to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. Without awareness of God's unfailing love and constant presence, we are left with only fleeting pleasures as life passes swiftly by. Human love and relationships cannot deliver what only God can give. **Our intrinsic worth and highest purpose can only be found in God Himself.**

God knows everything about you. Nothing He knows about you limits His love for you. If you have trusted Christ for salvation, are you currently experiencing a relationship with the Lord that fulfills your highest purpose in life? If you have not received Christ as Savior, will you quit seeking this world's empty promises and find delight and security in Him? One day, all God's children will shed the remnants of sin's curse and thrive forever in a city too amazing to adequately describe. **Knowing God matters more than anything else.**

1. **Designed to know God:** 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:1-7

2. **Jesus died for sinners:** 1 Peter 3:18

3. **Highest purpose:** Isaiah 43:7; Acts 17:28

◆ The City's Light and Life – Revelation 21:22–22:5

The Light of the City – 21:22-27

No Temple and No Sun (21:22-23) – Ezekiel's vision of Israel's restoration included a new, unique temple that some interpret as the millennial temple. **John's vision contains no temple.** Historically, the temple served to connect the people with God through sacrifice and worship. Because of Jesus's completed sacrifice and God's unending presence with His people, the need for a temple has passed in the new heaven and new earth. Instead, "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are the temple.

Neither does the eternal city need the sun or moon because “the glory of God gives it light,” as Isaiah predicted.²⁰ The light of God’s own presence, His Shekinah glory,²¹ provides light for the city. **The glory of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb outshines any light known to humankind.** His light will never yield to darkness.²²

The Splendor of the Nations (21:24-27) – All nations will walk in the light of God and the Lamb. Kings of the earth who have believed in Jesus Christ will enter and bring their diverse cultural splendor (*doxa*, the Greek word used for “splendor,” means “glory, honor, magnificence”) into God’s city in full submission to Him. As a result, the best of purified human civilization—art, music, government, loving human interaction—comes into His city. God will re-create the world, without the decay and disruption of sin. He is truly inclusive. **Through the Lord Jesus, kings and nations of the world will honor the Lamb through joy-filled diversity among His people.** Every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord, to the glory of the Father.²³

Only those with names recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life will enter this city. All who die choosing impurity, shame, and deceit in opposition to Christ will have no part of this world. The open gates of the Holy City will admit nothing impure and no one hostile to God and His purposes. **Nothing remains to threaten the shining new Jerusalem and her inhabitants.** What eternal security awaits those who live and die in the Lord!

The Life of the City – Revelation 22:1-5

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the garden, paradise was lost, and earth has groaned under sin’s weight ever since.²⁴ But God’s mercy brought Jesus to provide a remedy to sin. **History’s grand finale emerges even more magnificent than its beginning.** The delights of Eden’s paradise are captured as images from Genesis 1–3 and reappear here with even greater splendor.

The River of Life (22:1-2) – The angel shows John “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.” In Genesis, “a river watering the garden flowed from Eden,”²⁵ a name that means “delight.” Ezekiel saw a stream flowing from under the temple.²⁶ **Jesus offered living water to the woman at the well and described Himself as the way, the truth, and the life.**²⁷

In Scripture, “waters” and “living waters” symbolize blessings from God’s presence. The imagery here could also point to the life-giving Holy Spirit²⁸ or the promise of immortality. **God gives eternal life to all who find salvation and sustenance in Him.** God the Father and the Lamb share eternity’s throne. Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross proves Him worthy of all honor and all praise.²⁹

The Tree of Life (22:2) – John saw the Tree of Life on each side of the river. **God restores and even expands what humanity forfeited in Eden.** The Tree of Life grew alongside the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the center of the garden of Eden.³⁰ Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the

20. **Light of the Lord:** Isaiah 60:19

21. **Shekinah glory:** Exodus 13:20-22; 2 Chronicles 7:1

22. **No darkness:** Zechariah 14:7

23. **Every knee will bow:** Philippians 2:9-11

24. **Groaning:** Romans 8:19-22; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4

25. **Eden’s river:** Genesis 2:10; Psalm 46:4

26. **Ezekiel’s vision:** Ezekiel 47:1-12

27. **Jesus—living water and life:** John 4:10, 13-14; 14:6

28. **The Holy Spirit as living water:** John 7:37-39

29. **Worthy of praise:** Revelation 5:9-14

30. **Trees in Genesis:** Genesis 2:9

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Their act of defiance indicated their choice of self-reliance rather than choosing to find their sustenance in God. Consequently, God banished them from the garden, denying access to the Tree of Life.³¹

As in Ezekiel's vision, the Tree of Life (either a single great tree or many trees) lines the riverbanks of the Holy City. **Christ's redeemed people now fully experience God's gift of eternal life in a city overflowing with the fruit of God's life-giving power.** This Tree of Life, so full of vitality, produces 12 crops of fruit—one for each month—portraying the lavish abundance of God's provision. Through God's generous and beautiful provision, the leaves on the tree bring “the healing of the nations.” This does not mean nations exist outside the city but describes blessed eternal life with the turmoil of earth removed. The new city is complete—spiritually and physically perfect.

Just as God placed the first man and woman into a beautiful garden, so now a lavish, fruit-filled garden fills the center of God's city. Crystal-clear water, glistening leaves, and colorful ripe fruit growing on luscious trees provide a radiant atmosphere. The freshness and sustaining power of our life-giving God permeates this beautiful scene. The sound of the rushing river and rustle of the healing leaves are joyful praises to God in this glorious city. Eden has not only been regained on the renewed earth but is even better than the original.

In the Holy City, God's people serve Him personally and in His very presence. Sin has been annihilated and God reigns in righteousness.

No More Curse and No More Night (22:3-5) – Significantly, John adds that in this new world there is no longer any curse. After disobeying God, Adam and Eve left Eden with sin's curse hanging over them. Work would be hard. The earth would be filled with weeds and would be difficult to farm. Pain would accompany childbirth and strife would characterize human relationships. Above all, God withheld the Tree of Life from sinners. Every living thing, including every human being, would die. **Throughout human history, creation has groaned under the curse of the Fall.**³² At long last, this curse will end, and sin and death will be removed.

God the Father and the Lamb, who is His Son, equally share in the glory of this amazing scene. They sit on the same throne and are, in themselves, the same temple. All praise and glory and honor to God and to the Lamb forever and ever!

Sin's curse brought the devastating loss of idyllic communion with God that Adam and Eve first experienced. The entrance of sin resulted in a barrier between sinful humans and the perfectly holy God.³³ **In the Holy City, God's people serve Him personally and in His very presence.** Sin has been annihilated and God reigns in righteousness.

Moses and Israel's high priests could not see God's face, or they would die. Despite Moses's request, God allowed him to see only His back on Mount Sinai.³⁴ Now, the redeemed view God's full glory—they see His face. Jesus said only the pure in heart will see God; therefore, He purified His people for intimate communion with His Father.³⁵ When Jesus returns a second time, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”³⁶ **God's glory will radiate everywhere, overwhelm everything, and utterly transform His people.**

31. Access denied: Genesis 3:22

32. Creation groans: Romans 8:22

33. God's shared presence and man's barrier: Genesis 3:8; Habakkuk 1:13

34. Could not see God: Exodus 33:20, 23

35. Pure in heart: Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 1:3

36. See God as He is: 1 John 3:2

A final burst of light captures the whole scene. John declares that there will be no more night. The constant presence of the Lord God Himself illuminates His people and city. God will live within the community of His people in this setting of vigorous, eternally renewed life. God's people will have full access to Him and reign forever and ever with Him. God fulfills His promise and the song of the elders to the Lamb: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."³⁷ **God's people will live with Him in eternal glory!**

◆ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

God will bring His people to the amazing place He has prepared for them. Everyone who belongs to God through faith in Jesus has a future that reflects His magnificence. **God's design for His eternal community blends the first garden of delight with His promises of expansive life and complete peace and security.**³⁸ The new Jerusalem shines with God's light and life as His people experience His presence and purposes in increasingly satisfying ways.

One day, God's people will worship the high, pure, and holy God in His city, personally and in community. He has sealed His own and written His name on their foreheads. The consummated splendor of this magnificent eternal city is made possible by the blood of His Son. **God's people will forever enjoy life to the fullest in the brilliance of His eternal glory.**

Apply It

The certain future that awaits those who follow Christ gives joyful anticipation to believers today. Our current suffering is only temporary.³⁹ Heaven will come down and the earth will be renewed and restored, transformed by God living among His people. Life on this earth will soon be everything God created in the beginning and more! Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day." How does the anticipation of a renewed and perfectly delightful earth encourage you at this moment?

God's promises about the future of believers reflect His own character. **In an eternal city of vibrancy and joy, God's people will experience balance, stability, purity, and exaltation.** The city of God will reflect the splendor of God. Today, many people live with anxiety about the future. Our expectation of God's glorious culmination of history should give comfort and great hope when we are faced with doubt, temptation, or even persecution. Do you fear deprivation, loneliness, or the unknown? The darkness, pain, and tears that characterize life in this fallen world will be no more. Will you thank God for His promise of unlimited joy, fulfillment, and communion with Him forever?

37. **Song of the Lamb:** Revelation 5:9-10

38. **Peace, security:** Isaiah 9:6-7; Micah 5:4-5; John 14:27; 16:33

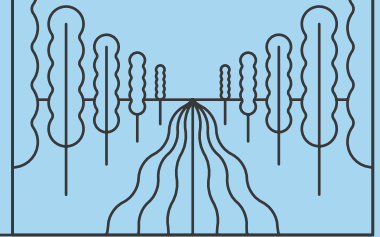
39. **Temporary suffering:** 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Where do you look for light while living in a dark world? In this modern age, words, images, information, and advice bombard us constantly. Where do you go for insight, understanding, and help? David wrote, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."⁴⁰ **God's Word has direction for you right now.** You can begin now to live in the light that will surround you forever. How will you conform your thinking and living to God's Word?

Only God gives life. Vibrant life permeates God's eternal city with the river of life, the Tree of Life, the throne of God and the Lamb, and a diverse community who celebrates eternal life forever. Have you received new life by believing in Jesus as your Savior? Now is the time. What could be a greater honor than carrying God's name? How thrilling to identify with God and belong to Him! God's promise of a glorious future offers hope and perspective for today. **People who are secure in Christ Jesus await an amazing future in God's glorious presence forever.**

40. **God's light:** Psalm 119:130

THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH: THE BELIEVER'S HOPE



Lesson Questions

First Day: Read Lesson 27 Notes.

The notes and lecture fortify the truth of the passage for understanding and application to daily life.

1. How did the lecture help you better understand and gain encouragement from John's vision of the new Jerusalem?
2. What truth from the notes regarding God's eternal reign in the new Jerusalem gave you help or hope for your life today?

Second Day

This week's lesson explores the glorious promises for God's redeemed people, who will dwell with Him forever in the new heaven and new earth.

3. When you think of heaven, what ideas, images, and words come to mind? How is heaven often portrayed in your culture?
4. What do the following Scriptures say about heaven, and what impact do they have on your thinking?
John 14:1-4

1 Corinthians 13:12

Third Day

Heaven represents the culmination of God's removal of sin's corruption.

5. a. How does the Bible describe the world's fall into sin and sin's impact on humanity?
(See Genesis 3; Romans 8:18-23; and any other Scriptures for help.)

b. Give words that come to mind to describe sin's impact on the world today.

6. In what ways does the contrast between heaven and earth move you to long for life with Christ in eternity? (See Ecclesiastes 3:11 and Revelation 22:20.)

Fourth Day

The Bible contains God's promises of heaven.

7. From the following passages, what does God promise His people in their eternal life, and how does this give you hope?

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

1 John 3:2

Revelation 22:1-5

8. Where are God's people who die while awaiting God's establishment of the new heaven and new earth? (See Luke 23:39-43; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; and Philippians 1:21-23.)

9. a. How might you share the truth about eternal life with someone who does not yet believe in Jesus Christ? (See John 1:9-13.)

- b. Who in your life needs to know this truth?

Fifth Day

God's calling for His people is given in the Bible.

10. From the passages below, what are God's people called to think, believe, or do while awaiting Jesus's return and eternal life with Him?

Matthew 28:19-20

John 13:34-36

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Hebrews 12:28

1 Peter 1:13-16; 2 Peter 3:10-14

11. a. How are you challenged by God's call to look forward to heaven's reality and Jesus's return?
- b. With what will you ask for God's help as you seek to follow His commands?

Sixth Day: Review the Scriptures you studied this week.

The certainty of the new heaven and new earth gives believers strength for today and hope for eternity.

12. What have you learned about God and heaven this week that gives you hope and impacts your life today?

Next step: Listen to the lecture.

Lesson 28 Notes

Various Scriptures

Focus Verse

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” (Revelation 21:3-4)

Outline

- God’s New Creation: Confusing Myths versus Majestic Reality
- Characteristics of God’s New Creation
- Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good

Engage

What is the new creation? Countless descriptions and concepts represent earthly attempts to express a heavenly reality. Thoughts and images emerge from movies, jokes, and books that likely confuse biblical truths. Even as we attempt to separate fact from fiction by carefully examining God’s Word, we crave greater understanding. **Although Scripture provides a taste of heaven, the full banquet remains behind a door we have yet to enter.**

Revelation portrays the bright future awaiting God’s children. Christ will liberate believers from the sting of sin and death. God promises to defeat evil, triumph over every enemy, deliver His people, and institute a glorious new heaven and earth. He will renew the present reality and live with His people forever. Our souls crave what our thoughts cannot capture. Heaven’s amazing realities far surpass this world’s fleeting charms. **The certainty of the new heaven and new earth gives believers strength for today and hope for eternity.**

◆ God’s New Creation: Confusing Myths versus Majestic Reality

Heaven in Today’s Culture

Over the centuries, art, music, literature, and film have tried to capture images of heaven. Perhaps this longing to envision heaven presents evidence that God planted eternity within the hearts of humankind.¹ Every culture somehow demonstrates some concept of paradise, or a form of heaven beyond this life. **Artistic license and human imagination construct common myths and misconceptions that shrink and distort the majestic reality of God’s eternal dwelling place with His people.**

1. Yearning for eternity: Ecclesiastes 3:11

Common depictions of heaven may contain a grain of biblical truth. For example, the Bible describes heaven as being beyond the clouds.² Revelation describes worship with harps and a new song.³ Could this explain the origin of images of cherubic children sitting on fluffy clouds playing harps? Scripture describes God as the Ancient of Days with hair as white as wool.⁴ Might this be the reason God is often depicted as an old man with a long and flowing white beard?

Frequently, artwork portrays human inhabitants of heaven as having wings. A popular sentiment for those mourning a loved one's death is that their loved one is now a "guardian angel" of sorts. Scripture, however, teaches that believers' resurrected bodies will be like Jesus's resurrected body.⁵ **Following His resurrection, people recognized the physical appearance of Jesus as a man.**⁶ Scripture clearly differentiates between angels and resurrected believers. Like angels, believers will no longer participate in marriage or give birth to children,⁷ but their bodies will appear as human. At the transfiguration, the invited disciples recognized Moses and Elijah as men, not angels.⁸ We know God assigns angels to missions on earth to help and protect His children.⁹ But no one knows how much God permits His redeemed people in heaven to witness activity on earth.

Heaven: A Real Place

When people refuse to believe in eternal judgment, they may accept false ideas about heaven or deny heaven's existence altogether. They might, for example, rationalize that heaven is nothing more than a crutch for the weak or those grieving. This wrong thinking about heaven masks a deeper rebellion against God's authority and His right to judge evil, thus rejecting His plan to save and dwell with His people. Scripture, however, confirms that heaven exists as God's dwelling place where His people hold citizenship.¹⁰

Jesus confirmed heaven's reality during His earthly ministry. Before His crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples His Father's house has many rooms. He promised to go and prepare a place for them and to return to take them to be with Him.¹¹ On the cross, Jesus promised the criminal crucified next to Him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."¹² Just as Jesus spoke of the reality of His death and resurrection,¹³ He spoke of heaven and the reality of the eternal dwelling place of God and His people.

In Revelation 5, John saw God gloriously seated on His throne. John described the magnificent beauty of the throne room alongside the endless and resounding praise expressed to Almighty God. After the final white throne judgment, John saw the first heaven and earth pass away;¹⁴ he then saw a vision of a new heaven and a new earth.¹⁵ **God will live with His people forever in the Holy City, a physical location.**

2. **Beyond the clouds:** Acts 1:9-11

3. **Heavenly worship:** Revelation 5:8-10

4. **Ancient of Days:** Daniel 7:9; Revelation 1:14

5. **Resurrected body:** 1 Corinthians 15:42-49

6. **Jesus after resurrection:** Luke 24:13-32

7. **Like angels:** Matthew 22:30

8. **Transfiguration:** Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36

9. **Angelic activity:** Hebrews 1:14

10. **Heavenly citizenship:** Philippians 3:20

11. **Preparing our place:** John 14:1-3

12. **Criminal on cross:** Luke 23:39-43

13. **Jesus spoke of His death:** Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34

14. **White throne judgment:** Revelation 20:11-15

15. **New heaven and new earth:** Revelation 21:1

Heaven: God's Plan

God knows we need Him and promises an eternal home where He will dwell with us as He intended. Isaiah wrote of new heavens and a new earth as places of great rejoicing.¹⁶ Speaking at Pentecost, Peter acknowledged Jesus's return to heaven until the time God appoints to restore everything, as He promised.¹⁷ The new heaven and new earth consummate God's plan, unfolded to His people throughout the Bible. **From Genesis to Revelation, God repeatedly promises to dwell among His people.**¹⁸

God's people dwelling with Him achieves His ultimate purpose for us. **God will accomplish His greatest glory and our greatest good when believers experience eternal life.** He created us to receive an inheritance and to reign with Him in His kingdom.¹⁹ God is not finished with His people yet—a wonderful, joyful, unimaginable eternity awaits!

◆ Characteristics of God's New Creation

What Is Heaven Like?

Describing heaven is like asking a child with chalk to create a replica of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. **The very few people in the Bible who received a glimpse of heavenly glory struggled to find language to adequately express what they witnessed.**²⁰ Paul summed up his experience as hearing "inexpressible things, things no one is permitted to tell."²¹ John's descriptions throughout Revelation offer myriad details but merely scratch the surface of what he saw.

In perhaps the most understated verse in the Bible, John sums up the indescribably glorious new heaven and new earth by saying, "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.'"²² **Both Paul and John were left stunned, gasping for breath, by their visions of heaven.**

So, what is heaven really like? Perhaps the best we can do on this side of eternity is to say what heaven is "like," knowing it is so much more! **Our loftiest imaginations and most glorious words cannot capture all that heaven is.**

The New Jerusalem

John saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, "coming down out of heaven from God,"²³ possibly referring to a literal descent. But his description may actually be of an eternal home on a newly redeemed earth. *Kainos*, the Greek word used for "new," means new in quality, or fresh. In Romans, Paul states that creation groans, eagerly anticipating God's liberation from bondage to decay.²⁴ The eternal home Jesus promised to prepare returns God's creation to the perfect, pristine, pure world described in Genesis.²⁵ God's redemptive plan reclaims paradise, where His people freely access the

16. Renewed creation: Isaiah 65:17-19

17. Jesus's return to heaven: Acts 3:21

18. God promises to dwell with His people: Exodus 25:8; Ezekiel 37:27

19. Eternal life and believers' inheritance: Isaiah 66:22; Matthew 25:34

20. Glimpses of glory: Isaiah 6:1-4; Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4

21. Inexpressible things: 2 Corinthians 12:2-4

22. John's heavenly vision: Revelation 21:2-3

23. New Jerusalem: Revelation 21:10-27

24. Creation's groaning: Romans 8:19-23

25. Perfect creation: Genesis 1:1-2:3

river of the water of life and the Tree of Life.²⁶ **Our eternal home comes down from heaven because only Almighty God can regenerate a planet and a people corrupted by sin, decay, and death.**

A look back at the garden of Eden, before the Fall, offers a few clues about the new creation God promises. God created everything good. With the sky, stars, rivers, oceans, plants, trees, fruit, vegetables, and a multiplicity of animals, the created world existed in perfect harmony with unspoiled beauty and purity—all created for God’s good pleasure. The new heaven and new earth will be all of this, yet more. Will animals live there? God promises the wolf will live with the lamb and a child may play with a viper.²⁷

Certainly, God’s people will enjoy God as they dwell in their eternal home, growing in knowledge of and love for Him. They will serve God and carry out meaningful work as they reign with Him.²⁸ They will dwell in perfect community in a place filled with the honor and glory of the nations, and there will be right love and relationships among all people, from every tribe, tongue, and nation.²⁹

There is much we do not know, yet we will undoubtedly worship God passionately and unashamedly. We will praise, sing, bow, applaud, and dance in His presence. We must not limit our understanding of worship. Everything we do in His holy presence is worship; offering all we are and do brings glory to Him.³⁰ Because our eternal home will be perfect, we can know what will be excluded. Every influence of sin will be gone forever. There will be no pollution, decay, disease, or death.³¹ Violence, crime, and injustice will never again disrupt and taint our lives.

Heaven’s Indescribable Beauty

This world’s beauty and splendor only scratch the surface of all that awaits us in God’s presence.³² **God’s new creation will provide a sense of familiarity, yet when sin’s blinders are removed, we will also experience something altogether fresh and awesome.** We understand what “warm” means, but the spoken or printed word cannot capture the experience of sitting on a beach, soaking in the sun’s heat, feeling the breeze on our skin, smelling the salty ocean, and hearing the calls of birds soaring overhead. To an infinite measure, the tangible experience of what God’s heavenly presence is and will be exceeds human articulation.

God created within all humans an appreciation of beauty to draw people to Himself. His glory defines the pinnacle of all beauty. Moses expressed the deepest longing of all God’s children, asking to see God’s glory.³³ Human vocabulary fails as our minds search for words to describe the glory, beauty, and majesty of our God. Meager attempts to praise Him seem like off-key notes as our hearts seek the infinite, harmonious orchestra perfectly tuned to the Savior. **God’s all-surpassing glory establishes the very atmosphere of heaven.** His matchless radiance and beauty will be the only light needed for all eternity.³⁴

26. **River, Tree of Life:** Revelation 22:1-2

27. **Animals:** Isaiah 11:6-9

28. **Eternal work:** Revelation 20:6

29. **Multicultural diversity:** Revelation 7:9

30. **Praise:** 1 Corinthians 10:31

31. **Purity:** Revelation 21:27

32. **Heaven’s beauty:** 1 Corinthians 2:9

33. **See God’s glory:** Exodus 33:18

34. **Light of glory:** Revelation 21:23

The Eternal Home for God's Redeemed People

The Doctrine of the New Heaven and New Earth

This week, we stop to marvel at all God has planned for His people. **After the final judgment, believers will enter the glorious new heaven and new earth, freed forever from sin's influence.** Will God totally re-create the heavens and earth or regenerate them to prepare a place for His people? No matter how God accomplishes this, the certain consummation of His eternal plan gives believers hope for today and forever.

When a believer dies, their soul—their very person and personality—immediately enters God's presence.¹ However, believers still await their final eternal home, resurrection bodies, and the coming of the new heaven and earth. **God's people will dwell with Him in a perfect, sinless environment—their eternal home.**

To fail to believe the truth about the new heaven and new earth means anticipating nothing beyond this life and eventual death. Many people assume almost everyone makes it heaven, not realizing the gravity of their sin and the necessity of salvation through Christ. **Only those who look to Jesus, the Lamb of God, for salvation will enter the sinless place God has prepared.** But for those who receive Christ, this world's peril will one day end. God will usher in His glorious kingdom, and eternity's praises will begin!

1. **Dying in Christ:** Luke 23:39-43; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23

Heaven Is Home for Believers

Human hearts long for home. **Heaven is the perfect, eternal home God intended for His people.** God created all His children in His image, with unique characteristics that reflect various aspects of His personality. The new heaven and new earth will be perfect for every inhabitant because God will make His home with His people and dwell among them.

Jesus is preparing a home for you far beyond your expectations and hopes. **Eternal life with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit provides belonging, acceptance, and complete wholeness for each one of God's children.** Each believer will receive unending, unconditional love, without fear of loss, rejection, shame, or exposure. Home with Jesus provides ultimate relief, joy, and rest. Reunion and reconciliation await every believer. This eternal home means perfect relationships with everyone, as hearts overflow with love and appreciation for others, without hesitation and as naturally as breathing.

God's Dwelling Place

God's very presence makes the new heaven and new earth the ultimate destination for every believer. His plan will be complete when He lives with His people face-to-face. John describes God Himself as the temple in the new heaven and new earth.³⁵ Jesus describes our intimate union with God, promising

35. **Heavenly temple:** Revelation 21:22

believers will be pillars in the temple of God. He will write on believers His new name, and they will never leave His dwelling place.³⁶

What is beyond comprehension now will be fully known when believers dwell with God.³⁷ What does the face of God look like? How does it feel to hold Jesus's hand and touch His scars? What does God's voice sound like? The Bible tells us God sings over us.³⁸ What, exactly, does He sing? The answer to every question and more will be fully known when we dwell with Him.

God will dwell with His people. He is the center of life now, though we often fail to recognize or acknowledge Him. **In eternity, God will dwell visibly in the center of His people.** He will never be out of sight, and we will never be beyond the sound of His voice or the touch of His hand. We will enjoy God purely with a delight to which nothing compares. God's dwelling place is where we are meant to be forever.

◆ Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good

Thinking about the eternal new heaven and new earth may seem a pleasant diversion, but what good does heaven bring now in a world filled with conflict, injustice, relational struggles, and suffering? **A right understanding of our eternal destination motivates us to live in a way that makes a difference.** Our eternal home shapes our earthly lives for God's glory and our good.³⁹

Eyes Fixed Toward Heaven

Peter summed up the importance of anticipating heaven in his second letter. He explained that because no one knows when the day of the Lord will come, we are to live holy and godly lives, looking forward to the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells.⁴⁰ However, going through the motions of life knowing we are on our way to a better place is simply not enough. **Heaven motivates wholehearted commitment to holy and godly living now.** God's

Word reveals that when Christ appears, believers will not only see Jesus, but they will also be like Him.⁴¹ Therefore, following God's command to pursue holiness is a logical goal for every believer.⁴²

God also commissioned His people to witness for Him.⁴³ Words, deeds, and attitudes that reflect God's character reveal Him to a watching world. Confession of faith in Jesus Christ, accompanied by the proof of a transformed life set apart to God, attracts those who are being drawn to the Savior while convicting those who reject Him.⁴⁴ Heaven's reality helps believers resist this world's poisonous enticements toward sin. **God uses His people to bless a world broken by sin while they await His glorious presence.** At His return, Jesus will perfectly reestablish justice in the world.

God's Word reveals that when Christ appears, believers will not only see Jesus, but they will also be like Him.

36. Temple's pillars, new name: Revelation 3:12

37. Heavenly knowledge: 1 Corinthians 13:12

38. God's song: Zephaniah 3:17

39. Heaven's current impact on believers: Colossians 3:1-9

40. Where righteousness dwells: 2 Peter 3:10-13

41. Like Jesus: 1 John 3:2

42. Pursue holiness: 1 Peter 1:15-16

43. Witness: Matthew 28:19-20

44. God's aroma: 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Perseverance While Waiting

Life's struggles often loom large. God's Word helps believers look beyond today's challenges with eyes toward heaven. Hebrews 11 records the stories of many heroes of the faith who persevered through suffering. Their hope and motivation to endure came from their longing for a heavenly country.⁴⁵ Because of sin's presence in this world, all people experience suffering during their lives. Believers may experience unique hardship due to their faith in Jesus. Persecution, ridicule, rejection, violence, physical harm, injustice, or even death commonly face God's people. Paul encountered agonizing affliction on his missionary journeys. He summarized his perspective on earthly suffering by saying, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."⁴⁶ **Remembering our eternal home puts temporary suffering in proper perspective, strengthening us to stand firm.**

Believers are destined for a new heaven and new earth. **Sacrifice and service now pale in comparison with the kingdom inheritance ahead.** Believers need not hoard treasures on earth, knowing Jesus has reserved His riches for them. When the world turns against us, we can stand with the faithful citizens of God's kingdom, awaiting our eternal home.

Gratitude and Worship Overflowing

Reflecting on the great salvation, eternal security, and glorious destiny Jesus purchased with His own blood produces humble gratitude in believers' hearts. The living God will dwell face-to-face with His children. God's people will reign with Him in the fullness of His kingdom. We will live with God in the center of our existence, free of sin's curse, as He intended. There will be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more sin, and no more darkness.⁴⁷ God's children are highly favored and greatly blessed.

Gratitude and praise for God fill the soundtrack of life on the way to heaven. The writer of Hebrews said, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe."⁴⁸ We need not wait for everything to go our way, for goals to be met, bills to be paid, or happiness to be achieved before we whisper our thanks to God. Believers can be thankful in all things now.⁴⁹ We are in Christ and will dwell with Him for eternity. Whether you prefer to worship with the volume at maximum or silently with tears on your cheeks, worship is due to our great God every moment. What are you waiting for? Though God is unseen today, one day we will worship with no desire to ever take our eyes off His face. **The certainty of the new heaven and new earth gives believers strength for today and hope for eternity.**

◆ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

For God's children, the hope of heaven puts daily life in this world into perspective. The reality of eternal life—living free from sin in God's undiminished presence—defies human description but instills confidence this world cannot steal away. Jesus saved us not to muddle through life with sporadic

45. Heavenly country: Hebrews 11:16

46. Paul's suffering and glory to come: Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

47. No more darkness: Revelation 22:3-5

48. Life of gratitude: Hebrews 12:28

49. Be thankful: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

victory but to reign with Him forever. When life is hard and sin's grip seems daunting, we can stand for Christ even as our hearts long for heaven, our eternal home.

The resounding worship that will fill heaven echoes now in the hearts of God's people. **God's greatness and His shocking love for us both quiet and excite our hearts to worship.** We can assume heaven's posture now, joyfully praising God for who He is and what He has done.

Apply It

Only when believers see God's unveiled glory and worship Him face-to-face will they experience the full joy God has planned for them. Our purpose will be finally and fully complete when we are bathed in His holy love forever, without the threat of sin and sting of death. This can only happen in heaven, where sin will be removed and every tear wiped away. God's people will perfectly reflect the image of their creator.

Will you dwell in God's presence alongside His people? **Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father.**⁵⁰ The essence of eternal life, which begins for believers the moment they come to salvation through Christ, is to know the Father and the Son.⁵¹ Come to Jesus through faith, ask for His forgiveness, and receive the eternal life He freely offers.

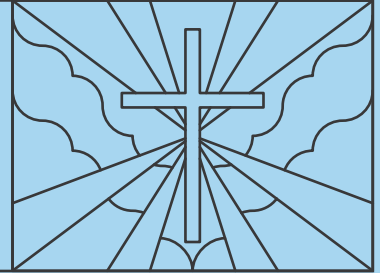
God has prepared a home for all His children in His presence forever. **Believers' present lives prepare and train them to dwell with God for eternity.** Where is God calling you to serve Him now? He graciously offers responsibilities in your family and community and gives you gifts and talents to use for the good of others and to build up His kingdom. Faithful living and service equip you to reign with Christ in eternity. How are you preparing for the glorious eternity ahead?

Jesus surrendered His life that we might dwell with God in the new heaven and new earth. **Glorify God by living in complete surrender and utter abandon to His will.** Jesus's blood testifies that we were bought at a costly price. Good choices do not achieve a life well lived. The surrendered life that glorifies Christ and witnesses to others makes only one choice—to say yes to God. Will you say yes to the King of eternity?

50. **Only way:** John 14:6

51. **The essence of eternal life:** John 17:3

COME, LORD JESUS!



Lesson Questions

First Day: Read Lesson 28 Notes.

The notes and lecture fortify the truth of the passage for understanding and application to daily life.

1. How did the lecture impact your thoughts about heaven and eternity with God?
2. In what ways did the notes challenge or encourage you to trust God or share the gospel?

Second Day: Read Revelation 22:6-11.

John heard truth from the angel and from Jesus.

3. a. What makes the words of Revelation and the entire Bible “trustworthy and true”?
(See also Revelation 19:11.)

b. How might you explain to others the trustworthiness and truth of Revelation and the entirety of the Bible and why this is important? (You may use any Scripture references for your answer.)
4. In what ways are people blessed when they “keep the words” of this prophecy, and how have you experienced this blessing?

5.
 - a. Describe John's reaction to all he saw and heard. Why might he have responded as he did?
 - b. How did the angel respond?
 - c. What tempts you to worship things or people other than God in your thoughts, words, or actions?
 - d. What helps you recognize and resist this temptation?

Third Day: Read Revelation 22:12-16.

Jesus spoke, confirming His return and proclaiming His deity.

6.
 - a. From verses 12-13, what does the Lord Jesus Christ reveal about Himself, and what does this communicate about His person and plan?
 - b. How might these truths offer perspective on this world and your life?
7.
 - a. Explain in your own words the differences between the two groups of people in verses 14-15.
 - b. To which group do you belong? How do you know?
8. Because Jesus says He is coming soon with His reward, how will you ask Him to help you prepare for that time?

Fourth Day: Read Revelation 22:17-21.

John heard an invitation and extended a warning.

9.
 - a. Describe the invitation in this passage. What details do you see?

b. As you come to the end of Revelation, how is the Lord changing what you thirst for and seek?

10. Why is it important to follow the Lord's admonition that nothing be added to or taken from the words of this prophecy?

11. What were Jesus's final words in Revelation, and how did John respond? How does John's answer impact you personally?

Fifth Day: Reread Revelation 22:6-21.

Jesus is coming soon!

12. The Lord declares three times in this passage that He is coming soon. How does this heighten your sense of urgency to share His Word with others, and how do you plan to put that sense of urgency into action?

13. In what ways does this passage and the book of Revelation inspire, encourage, or challenge you today?

Sixth Day: Review Revelation 22:6-21.

God's people are to live with eyes and hearts focused on Jesus and His return.

14. What have you learned about God in this week's study? How may your group pray for you as you make this truth a part of your life?

Next step: Listen to the lecture.

Lesson 29 Notes

Revelation 22:6-21

Focus Verse

“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.” (Revelation 22:7)

Outline

- John and the Angel – Revelation 22:6-11
- Jesus and His Return– Revelation 22:12-21
- Reflections on Revelation

Engage

When we read a book, we long to know how it ends. We certainly prefer a happy ending, or at least a conclusion that resolves lingering questions. Revelation, the Bible’s final book, offers us the grand finale we long for. God presents comforting truth for His people alongside the harsh reality awaiting those who oppose Him. The seeming chaos of world history will not merely repeat meaningless cycles or fade away. **God will conclude humanity’s story with resolute finality that accomplishes His eternal plan.**

Everyone who trusts in Christ awaits a secure future of boundless joy. God’s people can live with this great promise informing their choices, energizing their wills, and motivating their actions. Jesus gave His people the book of Revelation to strengthen them until He suddenly returns in amazing splendor and power. **God’s people are to live with eyes and hearts focused on Jesus and His return.**

◆ John and the Angel – Revelation 22:6-11

Revelation opens and closes with words of blessing. Remarkable harmony exists between Revelation’s first and final verses. Similarly, the first chapters of Genesis and Revelation’s final chapters reflect the Bible’s unified message. **John’s Spirit-inspired message, like the entire Bible, holds together from beginning to end, inspiring trust in God and His Word.**

Jesus Will Return – 22:6-7

The angel who showed John the new Jerusalem now confirms that John’s written testimony carries God’s authority, saying, “These words are trustworthy and true.” In Greek, this identical pair of words appears twice in Revelation to describe the Lord Jesus Christ. First, Jesus identified Himself to the lukewarm Laodicean church as the faithful (trustworthy, reliable) and true (honest) witness.¹ Later,

1. Laodicea: Revelation 3:14

John called the rider on the white horse “Faithful and True.”² Jesus’s character and words remain trustworthy and accurate. **Jesus, the living Word, assures the truthfulness of God’s written Word.**

The angel leaves no doubt that God authored this prophecy, saying, “The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.” **John penned the book, but the trustworthy and true words come from God.** All biblical prophecy comes to us through people, but God’s Holy Spirit is the source of every word.³

Jesus underscores the urgency of the angel’s announcement by saying, “Look, I am coming soon!” Throughout Revelation, John describes Jesus’s people willingly enduring persecution as they wait and yearn for Him.⁴ Jesus answers their cry, proclaiming His imminent return. God’s promise of life in His presence runs throughout the entire Bible, as God continually extends grace to the sinful and wayward. Again and again, God’s people grievously rebelled, yet He sent prophets to warn them of coming judgment and offer salvation as their beacon of hope.

Before Jesus went to the cross, He told His disciples He would prepare a place for them.⁵ Jesus rose from the dead, guaranteeing His power to accomplish all He promised.⁶ Believers from every generation have staked their lives on Jesus and His trustworthy promises. We can live confidently today, knowing that the faithful and true Savior will come back, just as He said. Everyone who loves Jesus will be with Him physically in the renewed world.⁷ At last, all will be as God designed! This truth provides sure and solid hope for God’s people. **Though not yet seen with human eyes, the reality of Jesus’s return stands firmer than the ground we walk on.**⁸ Jesus’s first coming is the central event of human history. His return will bring the great climax of history. “Look,” Jesus said, “I am coming soon!”

Revelation’s first verses promise blessings to all who read this prophecy aloud or listen and take it to heart.⁹ Now, Jesus proclaims, “Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.” In response to Christ’s faithfulness, His people appropriately receive this prophecy. **Promised blessing comes to all who continue to affirm and guard the truthfulness of this prophecy.** Jesus strengthens His people with joy, even amid suffering, as they watch for His glorious return.

Worship God Alone – 22:8-9

Overwhelmed by all he saw and heard, John falls at the angel’s feet in worship. Like the response in Revelation 19:10, the angel’s rebuke comes immediately: “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!” The angel identifies himself as a fellow servant with prophets such as John and also as a fellow servant with those who obey this prophecy. **All who love God are His servants, operating under His orders.**

The angel’s rebuke extends to God’s servants today. **God alone is worthy of worship.**¹⁰ Regardless of our desire to worship God in purity, our feeble minds often stray. Worship must suit our holy God, giving Him the love, honor, and glory that He alone deserves. Worship belongs only to the worthy One to whom the message points.

2. **Faithful and True:** Revelation 19:11-13

3. **God’s words:** 2 Peter 1:20-21

4. **Yearning and endurance:** Revelation 2:25; 3:11; 7:16-17; 11:7-14; 13:8-10; 14:1-13; 16:12-15; 19:11-18; 20:4

5. **Promised return:** John 14:3

6. **Resurrection power:** 1 Thessalonians 4:14

7. **Reunion with the Lord:** 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

8. **Our hope:** Romans 8:24-25

9. **Blessing:** Revelation 1:3

10. **Worship God alone:** Exodus 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 5:6-10

Do Not Seal the Prophecy – 22:10-11

The prophet Daniel received visions of the end times and received instruction to “seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”¹¹ **John received an opposite command: “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near.”** It is critically dangerous to assume an indefinite amount of time to understand this prophecy or delay repentance to a more convenient date. Sin’s terrible consequences recorded in this book warn people to confront the truth immediately and not forget this message.

Unless people repent, their choice in this life will remain forever. The angel warns, “Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.” Ultimately, people live out who they are inside. Those determined to do wrong will continue down the path they choose. All people await a settled and final outcome of their lives. Eternal life awaits all people, but for some eternity will bring greater and greater wickedness and abounding evil.

Only repentance and faith bring lasting transformation. God’s plan to restore the universe begins with individual lives today. Paul wrote, “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come!”¹² When God forgives sin for Jesus’s sake, His grace immediately unfolds life’s new reality. The Holy Spirit gives redeemed people a desire for holiness and new strength to obey God. Christians fight indwelling sin until they die or Jesus returns, but seeking holiness becomes their enduring goal.

◆ Jesus and His Return – Revelation 22:12-21

The Testimony of Jesus – 22:12-16

The Confirmation of Jesus’s Return (22:12-13) – A second time, Jesus announces, “Look, I am coming soon!” **Jesus will come again and bring His reward, giving “to each person according to what they have done.”** This promise affirms Jesus’s full deity and echoes Isaiah’s promise: “See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.”¹³

Christ applies names to Himself that exemplify His ability and commitment to fulfill His every promise. There is no doubt He will save His people and reward them for deeds done on His behalf.¹⁴ Jesus is the Alpha and Omega,¹⁵ who knows all things and will reward accordingly. He is “the First and the Last,” who will make all things right and fulfill every promise. Ultimately, Jesus Himself is His people’s greatest reward. Jesus is “the Beginning and the End.”¹⁶ In this sense, the “End” is the matchless person of Jesus Himself, who holds time, eternity, and His people in His powerful hands.

In verse 14, Jesus pronounces a blessing on all “who wash their robes.” They “have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” Both the right to eat of the Tree of Life and to enter the city picture salvation and eternal life. In chapter 7, John saw countless people “from every nation, tribe, people and language” standing before God and the Lamb, having “washed their robes

11. Seal the words: Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9-10

12. New creation: 2 Corinthians 5:17

13. Reward in Isaiah: Isaiah 40:10

14. Saved through Christ: Hebrews 7:25

15. Alpha, Omega: Revelation 1:8

16. Beginning and End: 1 Samuel 3:12; Isaiah 46:10; Ecclesiastes 3:11

Unmerited Favor to the Undeserving

The Doctrine of Grace

The contrast between the eternal blessings of people redeemed by Jesus and the judgment awaiting unbelievers resonates throughout Revelation. Are believers more deserving of salvation than those who cling to their sin? No, all people are born deeply inclined to seek their own way and rebel against God. Why do believers turn to Christ? How could they deserve the blessings we read about here? Only by God's grace. **God's grace is His generous response that gives sinful people blessings and honor they do not deserve and have not earned.**

The blessed people wearing blood-washed robes have been purified by God's grace, through Christ's sacrifice. They love and worship God alone. **The salvation of God's people and their eternal blessings are possible by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.**¹

People who fail to respond to God's grace will be left with only His wrath and just judgement upon their sin. People who choose not to go God's way receive what they desire. To know God as He truly is, we must recognize that by nature He is gracious. He longs to redeem people from sin's slavery and eternal punishment. However, God's justice will prevail if His grace is rejected.

No one who understands God's grace can boast about their salvation. God's lavish compassion toward sinners, evidenced by the gift of His Son, ignites humble worship and gratitude, not pride, in a believer's heart. **Not only are God's people saved by grace, but God's amazing grace buoys and sustains every aspect of their present and future with Him.** John wrote in John 1:16, "Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given."

1. **Power of God's grace:** Romans 5:20-21; Ephesians 2:4-9; 1 John 3:1-3

and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."¹⁷ Washed robes represent experiencing God's grace through forgiveness of sin. Such powerful cleansing comes only through Jesus and His atoning death on the cross. God is gathering His people permanently.

People who refuse to wash their robes will not enter God's eternal city. They are called "dogs," a derogatory word in both Israel and the early Church.¹⁸ Here, "dogs" refers to people who have chosen to shut God out of their lives and reject His righteousness. A representative list of sins follows with examples. Basically, all who fail to repent will be barred from the city.

The Angel's Testimony Confirmed (22:16) – Jesus verifies that the angel delivered this testimony for the churches. **God designed everything John saw and recorded for the benefit of God's people.** Seven churches in the province of Asia received John's letter, but this amazing book stands as Jesus's gift to His Church in every time and place.

17. **God's diverse and purified people:** Revelation 7:9, 14

18. **Dogs:** 1 Samuel 17:43; 24:14; 2 Samuel 3:8; 9:8; 16:9; Psalm 22:16, 20; Mark 7:25-30; Philippians 3:2

In another burst of self-revelation, Jesus proclaims Himself “the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” Isaiah foretold, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.”¹⁹ **As Jesse’s shoot, Jesus entered the world as David’s physical descendant, representing his royal lineage.** Jesus also came as David’s root, the one who gave David spiritual life. David called the Messiah, his promised descendant, “my lord.”²⁰ Jesus once asked His opponents how the Messiah could be both David’s Lord and David’s son.²¹ Jesus is David’s Lord because He is the creator God. He is David’s son because the Messiah was born of David’s lineage.

“The bright Morning Star,” another messianic title, reaches even farther back in Israel’s history.

Israel had not yet reached the promised land when God gave this pledge: “A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”²² This prophecy foretold that a king would arise from Israel to defeat the enemies of God’s people. The rabbis believed this verse referred to the Messiah.

Isaiah wrote that the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the nations.²³ King Jesus wields the ruler’s scepter and gloriously completes God’s promises to His people. The Lord Jesus Christ is the “light of the world”; whoever follows Him “will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”²⁴ This promise has no end, for Jesus is the “lamp” of the new Jerusalem and the “bright Morning Star.”²⁵ **Only those who live in Jesus’s light now will enjoy His future kingdom when He openly and visibly rules the world.**

The Invitation and Warning – Revelation 22:17-21

A Final Invitation (22:17) – Throughout Revelation, the invitation to repent and turn to God has been proclaimed and continues, even as we read this today. **The Spirit and the bride express yearning for Jesus and invite the whole world to turn to their beloved.** Their cry of “Come!” calls all people everywhere to repent and place their faith in the Savior. God’s people, those who hear these words, are told to add their voices to the urgent invitation and say, “Come!” There is only one qualification to this urgent summons—spiritual thirst. Jesus gives “the free gift of the water of life” to any who come. The invitation to come to Jesus must continue to be announced by all those who love their Savior and desire for others to turn to Him.

A Final Warning (22:18-19) – Revelation begins with an offer of blessing. **Now, at the conclusion, all who read this letter receive a strong warning against adding or taking away from the words of the prophecy.** This dire warning pertains to this book, yet the principle applies to all of Scripture.²⁶ The Bible, God’s living Word, speaks to all people. Scripture is authentic and complete, wielding life-giving authority. This warning preserves the blessing of this book and all of Scripture.

A Closing Promise and Prayer (22:20-21) – Jesus testifies that His return is certain and imminent. **For a third time, Jesus announces that He is coming soon.**²⁷ This message does not merely convey John’s thinking but comes from God Himself.

19. Branch: Isaiah 11:1

20. My Lord: Psalm 110:1

21. David’s king and son: Matthew 22:41-46

22. Star of Jacob: Numbers 24:17

23. Root of Jesse: Isaiah 11:10

24. Light of the world: John 8:12

25. Lamp of new Jerusalem: Revelation 21:23

26. Keep the commands: Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32

27. Three announcements: Revelation 22:7, 12, 20

John answers Jesus's triple announcement with an excited shout and prayer of rejoicing: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." The early Church included these deeply joyful words in their liturgy, as a prayer at the close of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. This prayer, a Greek transliteration for the Aramaic expression *maranatha*, means "Our Lord, come."²⁸ This phrase expresses hope and intense longing for God to establish His kingdom.

Revelation is a letter to God's people. Just as Paul concluded his letters, John wrote a benediction asking God to pour grace on His people. The word "grace" appears only in the introduction and close of Revelation, but the concept underlies the whole book. **Grace describes God's work in this book and in the world that the Lamb came to seek and to save.** God loves us and has freed His children by Jesus's blood. He has made His people a kingdom and priests to serve God the Father. We long for the fullness of His grace that is yet to be realized. How God's children will worship the triune God when they experience the consummation of His grace in the eternal kingdom! To Him be glory forever and ever!

◆ Reflections on Revelation

Jesus loves His people! His purposes are always good, drawing His people close even when they suffer. **God intended the book of Revelation to strengthen believers.** The glimpses of heaven and God's just judgment encourage all God's people, especially those who must persevere when persecuted or rejected. The Spirit of God speaks to Jesus's Church, giving His Word, His comfort, His strength, and His call to reach out to the lost. The Spirit invites all who are thirsty to come and drink of the water of life.

Revelation's visions fearfully depict the just and terrible penalty imposed by a holy God against those who oppose Him. Human values shift and change, but God and His justice never will. **Revelation offers God's gracious and merciful warning about a coming day of judgment against sin and sinners.** Those who refuse to accept God's gracious gift of salvation await His wrath. On that day, everyone will stand before God without excuse. Only Christ's blood can sufficiently pay for an individual's debt of sin. After Satan and his forces are thrown into the burning lake, unbelievers will meet the same destiny. Those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life will die the second death, eternally separated from God. His perfect justice will prevail in His world.

Redemption and glorious renewal soar throughout Revelation. The Lamb of God purchased a people for God with His own blood. God's people refuse the mark of the beast and stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, singing a new song. Like the river of the water of life, new life and restoration joyfully flow through Revelation because God makes everything new!

Like the whole Bible, Revelation exalts God, the great three-in-one, majestically supreme in holiness, purity, and power. There is none like Him! Seated on His throne and resplendent in glory, He rules over heaven and earth. **Revelation shines with brilliant sights and sounds of God's wonder that John could scarcely describe.** The fragrant incense of His people's prayers rises before God, and praise rings out continuously in His throne room.

28. Come, Lord: 1 Corinthians 16:22

Revelation proclaims God's certain victory. Individuals and nations may pursue power and seem to succeed, but the slain yet triumphant Lamb assures the victory of God's people. Jesus—faithful and true, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords—will ride out in victory over all who oppose His righteousness. Nothing can stop Jesus Christ from reigning with His people on the earth.

The Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah, has redeemed His people and will destroy His enemies with the sharp sword in His mouth. The victorious King, the Alpha and Omega, the bright Morning Star, will come again to end human history and bring His people to their eternal home. Jesus Christ Himself stands at the beginning and the end of time to make history His story. He holds the destiny of the whole world in His hands. Soon, the proclamation will be heard: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."²⁹ Today is the day to proclaim the saving name of Jesus Christ throughout the earth that people may turn to Him and be saved! **God's people are to live with eyes and hearts focused on Jesus and His return.**

"Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him.'"³⁰

◆ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

Revelation concludes with a glorious, resolute finale. Jesus will return. God's revealed prophecy must be proclaimed, not sealed away. The Alpha and Omega, the Root of David and bright Morning Star who rules eternity, guarantees that the testimony within Revelation remains immovably certain. Those who reject God's truth face His judgment. But to those who believe in Christ, He says, "I am coming soon!" **The people of God across the ages joyfully and expectantly proclaim, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."**

Apply It

In what specific ways have you taken the book of Revelation to heart? What blessings have you experienced? Consider the ways the Lord has challenged you to love and speak the truth to the people in your life, wherever you live. The eternal destiny of all people hinges on their response to the gospel of Christ. Has your confidence in Jesus and His victory grown? He calls you to allow this prophecy to renew your mind and heart and give you hope and peace. How has the entirety of God's Word and the urgency of Revelation moved you to join the evangelistic cry—"Come!"—delegated to God's people? **Only faith in Jesus Christ offers the hope of salvation from the promised destruction that awaits humankind.** Who in your life needs to know God's glorious promise?

John wrote the hope-filled book of Revelation to suffering Christians. Jesus's powerful love holds His people secure through suffering and persecution. How have you internalized the hope within this glorious book? **No matter what or who stands against you or how strong sin's lure seems, eternal joy lies ahead if you belong to Jesus.** Therefore, whatever your situation, wherever you are, standing with Jesus is always right. Will you ask Him for His promised power to be His witness?

29. Proclamation: Revelation 11:15

30. He is coming: Revelation 1:7

Have the images of sin and judgment in this book shocked or frightened you? We often struggle to process the reality of sin's penalty. However, God will not and cannot overlook rebellion against Him. **The danger of turning a deaf ear to God and His Word represents peril few people understand.** While believers do not face condemnation, failure to repent brings confusion, conflict, and unneeded distance from God. How will you seek God's power to turn from sin and seek the character of Jesus in its place?

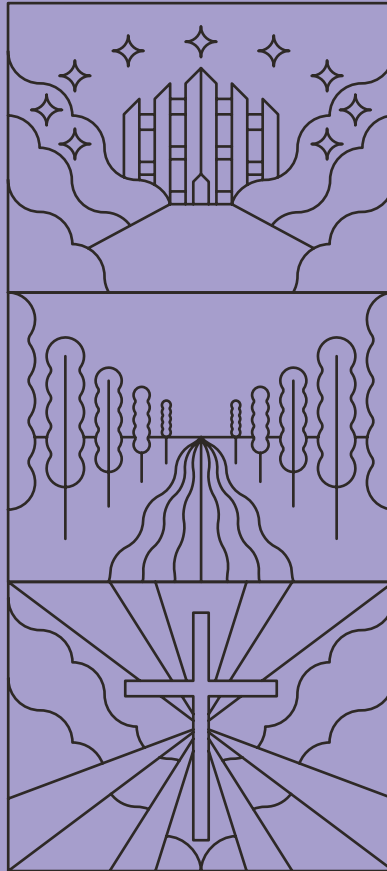
How do you feel dry, empty, or thirsty deep within your spirit? **No matter how hard you try, pleasure, possessions, and people cannot satisfy the eternal thirst within you.** Jesus invites you to come and drink His living water. If you know you are a sinner and an outsider to God's wonderful city, trust in Christ as your redeemer from sin. If you know Christ as Savior, seek constant refreshment from His streams of living water, which can satisfy you now and forever.

As we finish our study of Revelation, what heartfelt praise for God rises within you? **Revelation reveals the joy and necessity of responding to God in worship.** The elders, the living creatures, countless angels, multitudes from every nation on earth, and all of creation sing together: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"³¹ Eternity's praises cannot and will not exhaust the reasons God and His Son deserve our worship. How will you start singing eternity's hymns today?

Jesus taught His people to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."³² God's eternal kingdom defies description but will envelop God's people with resplendent glory for all eternity. **Until He comes, our prayer must be, "Come, Lord Jesus."**

31. **Praise and honor:** Revelation 5:13

32. **Your kingdom come:** Matthew 6:10



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