

Growth Group Discussion – Quick Tour of the Bible

Discussion 6 – The New Heaven and Earth

Reading 21 Summary: Revelation Chapter 21-22 John writes about a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. John wrote that he witnessed a new heaven and a new earth because the old ones had passed away. He saw a river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. This place was for the healing of all nations. The curse has been lifted from this land and from all humankind. The throne of God will be in the city and everyone around Him will worship Him and be His servant. They will see His face and know His name.

Warm-Up

1. What was a defining characteristic of your hometown growing up? (Something that uniquely stands out in your mind).
2. If you could live anywhere in the world for a year, where would it be and why?

Talk it Over

3. What from this week's readings stood out to you?
4. Read Revelation 21:1-5, 22-27. Heaven is presented as a physical place very similar to this earth but without the distorting effects of sin. What part of this image sparks your imagination of eternity?

Leader Note: Heaven is completion, not escape. It is not merely relief from the pain and struggles of this life. Everything, even our bodies, will be new and we will be completely satisfied and fulfilled. Admittedly, because of our current experiences, this is tough to fully grasp.

Rev 21:1-5, 22-27 NIV] 1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 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. 4 '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.'" 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ... 22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 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. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

5. What do the following passages reveal about our lives as Christians on this earth?

Leader Note: Briefly discuss each passage after reading it. All of these have plenty of insights.

Philippians 3:18-21 *For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Hebrews 11:13-16 *¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

1 Peter 2:11-12 *Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us*

- Imagine a friend from church was facing an important decision (career change, moving, marriage) and asked for your input. How should the perspective of these verses impact how they make their decision? What questions or categories would you want to help them consider?

Leader Note: Christians can, and often do, make decisions from an earthly mindset, pursuing instant gratification or pain avoidance. As citizens of heaven here on earth, the #1 consideration is what God says to do. It might be fun for the group to do a case study. Give them a hypothetical decision and have them talk it out. What Bible verses do we know that speak to this decision? What might be some of the hidden motivations that could push us one way or the other on the decision? Looking at this from eternity, and not just here and now, would that change the decision that is made.

- Is there an example in your life where you made a decision with heaven in view?

Take It Home

6. What is your biggest takeaway from the Quick Tour through the Bible?

- What specific part of the study are you most looking forward to going back and diving deeper into?