

**RECAP****This week's focus: What you believe about eternity.**

Yes, I am coming soon. —Jesus. Of the original apostles, only John remained to hear these words. He had experienced the climax of salvation history, but God was not yet finished. He had one more message to share with John and the growing churches to show His servants what must soon take place.

John was exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus. It was here that the glorified Christ appeared to John with a message of His second coming. John looked to see someone “like a son of man” dressed in a priestly robe and ready to judge. He fell like a dead man at His feet. This John, who had leaned against Jesus’ breast (Jn. 13:25), could not even stand before Christ’s unveiled glory. Jesus presented Himself as the resurrected ONE who has authority over life and death.

John then saw the throne room of heaven where he was shown visions of future events. God sat upon His throne in unimaginable splendor and beauty. He was surrounded by living creatures and elders who worshiped Him without ceasing. He held a scroll that no one was found worthy of opening, causing John to weep. But John’s hope was restored when he saw the Lamb standing as if slain. For the Lamb was worthy to open the scroll to receive power and glory and honor and praise!

Shortly thereafter, the bride, who symbolizes all faithful believers, was ready wearing clean linen and prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then John saw heaven opened, and Jesus descended in full glory on a white horse ready to wage war and judge mankind. The King of kings was ready to rule with blazing eyes and a blood drenched robe, a sharp sword and filled with the fury of God’s wrath. He was accompanied by the armies of heaven. His appearance is a dramatic reminder of the awfulness of God’s coming judgment upon those who reject the Lord. God’s final judgment from His great white throne is the final event of human history as we know it. The dead stand before Him in judgment. Those not found in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire, a place outside of God’s presence and unimaginable eternal torment.

Then John saw the New Heaven, New Earth, and the New Jerusalem. In this future recreation, God dwells among His people where He wipes away every tear. Many themes from His redemptive story find their culmination in this place where all things are made new. The majestic and glorious New Jerusalem will be home to all the redeemed. Nothing impure will ever enter it. This place is the hope of every believer, for it is where God’s ONE story of redeeming mankind culminates into a final homecoming celebration. As Jesus concluded His message to John, three times He said, “Look, I am coming soon!” No wonder we are called blessed! Our King is coming! Come, Lord Jesus, come!

## Revelation 21-22

**SHARE (5-10 min)**

1. Icebreaker Question: What are you most looking forward to this Christmas? What are you least excited about during the Christmas season?

**STUDY (about 30 min) Read Revelation 21-22**

2. When you think of heaven, what comes to mind? What about when you think of hell?
3. Notice the description of the throne room of heaven (Rev. 4:1-6). Look up Ezekiel 1:26-28, Exodus 19:16, 20:18, Job 37:4, and John 12:27-28. What do these images communicate about God?
4. Read Matthew 24:29-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, and Titus 2:11-14. How should you live in anticipation of Christ's return?
5. From what you have learned in this chapter about the great white throne of judgment and the lake of fire, how might you respond to the person who does not believe that a loving God could ever sentence anyone to hell (Rev. 20:11-15, 21:8)? See also Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41 for further insight.
6. Find at least three similarities between the original creation (Gen. 1-2) and the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21-22). How do these sections of Scripture contribute to our understanding of God's ONE Story and what would we be missing without them?
7. A biblical view of eternity describes hell as a real place of eternal torment and the default destination for everyone apart from Christ. In contrast, heaven is the place of unfathomable joy, beauty, and complete peace reserved for those who have received God's free gift of grace. How does the reality of heaven and hell impact your worship of God and your witness for God?
8. Who in your life today do you want to see in heaven? What are you doing to communicate to them the saving grace of Jesus?

**SUPPORT (15 min)**

Spend some time praying together for those individuals in your life that have yet to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. Ask God for opportunities to share with them this Christmas season and pray that God will open their eyes and hearts to the reality of heaven.

\*Invite neighbors, friends, and family to our Christmas Eve service at 4pm.