

The Return of the King

Summary and Goal

One day Jesus will return and all things will be restored. What sin and rebellion smashed in Eden, Jesus will put back together again better than new. Jesus will make all things new and separate all unbelievers from believers. Those who refused to trust in Christ will be judged, but those who have trusted in Him will live with God under His loving rule forever, according to God's plan in creation.

Main Passages

Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5,8-15

Session Outline

1. Christ will return to make all things new (Rev. 21:1-5).
2. Christ will separate believers from unbelievers (Rev. 21:6-8; 22:8-15).
3. God's people will be in God's place under God's rule forever (Rev. 22:1-5).

Theological Theme

The Christian's ultimate hope is God's presence in a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells.

Christ Connection

This present age will come to an end when Christ returns to fulfill His promises and reign with His people for all eternity. The relationship lost in the garden when Adam sinned will be gloriously restored when the garden city is unveiled and Jesus wipes away every tear from every eye. The way to be part of God's new world is to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb shed for our redemption.

Missional Application

God calls us to live in light of His promise to make all things new.

Session Plan

The Return of the King

Session 13

? For Further Discussion

Coming to the end of the storyline of Scripture, what threads and themes might you expect to see make their way into God's restoration of all things?

Point 1 Option

Prior to the group meeting, enlist a volunteer to recap the story of creation, the garden of Eden, and the fall of Adam and Eve as these stories relate to the conclusion of the story of the Bible.

Introduction

Establish the main focus of Revelation: the victorious return of Jesus to make all things new (leader p. 154; PSG p. 119).

? What do you long for most when you think of eternity?

Show how Revelation fits as the conclusion to the story of the Bible (leader p. 154). Then summarize this session on Jesus' return, when all things will be restored (leader p. 154; PSG p. 119).

1. Christ will return to make all things new (Rev. 21:1-5).

Ask a volunteer to read Revelation 21:1-5. Discuss how these verses point us back to the garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve's rebellion shattered the image of God in us (leader pp. 155-156; PSG p. 120).

? In what ways do people continue to try to be like God in their own efforts?

Explain that by understanding the past—the sin of Adam and Eve, the incarnation of God's Son, Jesus' ascension to the throne of the universe, and the sending of the Holy Spirit to us—we understand how and why God is renewing all things (leader p. 156; PSG p. 121).

Ask group members to fill in the blank for "A New Heaven and a New Earth..." on Pack Item 3: Handout from the list on Pack Item 2: Hearing the Old Testament in the New (answer: "A New Creation...").

? How should the future hope of restoration and eternity impact how we live today?

2. Christ will separate believers from unbelievers (Rev. 21:6-8; 22:8-15).

State that because God is good, loving, and just, one day sin, evil, and death will be no more. Then read Revelation 21:6-8 and 22:8-15 (leader p. 157; PSG p. 122).

Note that thinking about unbelievers being cast into a place of eternal torment causes us to recoil. But we can trust God’s justice and goodness and that we should look toward the final judgment soberly, being driven to the action of sharing the gospel (leader pp. 157-158; PSG p. 123).

? Why is it helpful to force ourselves to remember day-by-day that apart from Christ our sin deserves separation from God too?

Acknowledge that physical death should be mourned, and the second death should be grieved, but for those in Christ, it should also be a reason to long for Jesus’ return (leader p. 158; PSG pp. 123-124).

? Why is it significant that we will eat from the tree of life again in the new heavens and earth after Adam and Eve were barred from eating from it in Eden?

3. God’s people will be in God’s place under God’s rule forever (Rev. 22:1-5).

Read Revelation 22:1-5 (leader p. 159; PSG p. 124). *Ask group members to fill in the blank for “The Tree of Life...” on Pack Item 3: Handout from the list on Pack Item 2: Hearing the Old Testament in the New (answer: “The Tree of Life...”).*

Emphasize that our hope is not that we escape earth altogether one day and live somewhere in heaven but that we were designed to live *here*, on earth; we were supposed to live here in a place where heaven and earth are fused together (leader p. 159; PSG p. 124).

? What do you imagine living on the new earth will be like?

Talk about how Jesus’ life and teaching are all signposts for the new heavens and new earth (leader pp. 159-160; PSG p. 125).

? How can we express the seriousness and hope of Jesus’ return to others without scaring them off or giving them false hope?

? How can we live as ministers of reconciliation with one another and in our community?

Conclusion

End with discussing how the story has come full circle—what began with God has ended the same way, only much better than the beginning (leader p. 160; PSG p. 126). *Apply the truths of this session with “His Mission, Your Mission” (PSG p. 127).*

Pack Item 14: All Things New

Pack Item 15: All Things New Handout

As part of point 3, use this poster and handout about God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule to show how our design from the very beginning, broken by sin, is restored with the second coming of Christ and the restoration of all things. And ask the following questions:

- How has studying the storyline of Scripture helped you to see the centrality of Jesus Christ both in Scripture and for all of life?
- How does recognizing this truth of God’s creation and plan drive you to participating in the gospel mission with joy?

Christ Connection: This present age will come to an end when Christ returns to fulfill His promises and reign with His people for all eternity. The relationship lost in the garden when Adam sinned will be gloriously restored when the garden city is unveiled and Jesus wipes away every tear from every eye. The way to be part of God’s new world is to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb shed for our redemption.

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Missional Application: God calls us to live in light of His promise to make all things new.

Expanded Session Content

The Return of the King

Session 13

Voices from the Church

“We are longing for the place where there will be no more ‘not yet,’ but only an eternal ‘now.’”¹

—Philip Graham Ryken

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

99. *New Heavens and New Earth*

When Christ returns and the children of God are revealed, the creation itself will be made new. Like the resurrected bodies that Christians will one day receive, the physical world itself will undergo a similar transformation, so much so that the Scriptures describe it as a new heavens and a new earth (2 Pet. 3:13). Scripture describes the new earth as a city (Rev. 21:10–11, 21–26) and as a physical place that will include eating and drinking (Luke 22:18; Rev. 19:9). Best of all, Christ will be all and in all, and we shall see Him face to face.

Introduction

As we have seen in the last few sessions, Revelation is a book about the true, lasting hope we have in Christ Jesus. While there are some chilling scenes and images in the book, they are not the focus. We cannot discount God’s coming judgment on the world, but ultimately Revelation is not about that. Revelation is about the return of Jesus. Jesus is victorious in the end, and so are we. Jesus will return to make all things new. He will wipe away every tear from every eye, and He will put death to death once and for all. And we will be with Him forever.



What do you long for most when you think of eternity?

Because all things are broken, all things need to be unbroken by our victorious God. Sin has ravaged creation, separating us from God and introducing chaos into a once-ordered world. But it will not stay this way. God, the good Judge, will punish evildoers and He will reward His Son, the only innocent person to ever live. And through Jesus’ innocence and His sacrifice on the cross, we will stand with Him, pardoned by our divine Judge. God loves His people; sending Jesus shows us that, both in His incarnation and with His second coming. God did not leave us in our sin but worked through Christ and the Holy Spirit so we could spend eternity with Him—which has been His plan all along. That is the story of Revelation. That is the story of Jesus. That is the gospel.

Session Summary

Finally, we turn our attention to the return of Jesus and when all things will be restored. We will see in this session that what sin and rebellion smashed in Eden, Jesus will put back together again better than new. Jesus will make all things new and separate all unbelievers from believers. Those who refused to trust in Christ will be judged, but those who have trusted in Him will live with God under His loving rule forever, according to God’s plan in creation.

1. Christ will return to make all things new (Rev. 21:1-5).

Do you ever sense some kind of solidarity between people and statues made in their likeness? While a bronze statue is far from actually being the living human person it represents, we nonetheless detect a real connection between the two. Similarly, there is a real connection between God and ourselves. You and I are made in the image of God, yet we are far from actually being God. This is why God is making all things new—to get us back to a full, image-bearing relationship with Him.

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Sometimes we need to look to the past to understand the future. These verses in Revelation provide one of those times. Back in the garden of Eden, the serpent posed a question to Eve: “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1). To which Eve replied, “God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” (3:3). Satan proceeded to do what he does best—twist the words of God just enough to make us believe the lie ourselves. He told Eve, simply, that God did not want her to be like Him. A bold-faced lie. And she ate.

Eve, along with her husband, traded eternal freedom for the bondage found in that piece of fruit. Eve’s response to Satan should have been clear: “I am already more like God than anything in creation. I have everything in my hands. What you’re offering me is actually *less than* what I already have” (cf. Gen. 1:27-29). But in trying to be more like God, our first parents actually marred their God-likeness and became unlike Him in their sin.

In Adam and Eve’s singular act of rebellion, the image of God was shattered, and we live with that reality today (Rom. 5:12). Satan disguised himself as a creature that was under the rule of humankind—a serpent—and overthrew his masters by convincing them that they needed more than what they had already been given. And they lost it all.

Further Commentary

“In this powerful picture there are four figures: a river with the water of life, the throne of God, the Lamb, and the tree of life. Some of these pictures remind us of Ezekiel 47, but Revelation transforms them to be even greater by reminding us of the Garden of Eden and giving the picture of a restoration of paradise, complete with the tree of life. Throughout the Bible, water has symbolized abundance and life. In this image, the water flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, making its crystal purity even more significant. It gives life, brings purity and holiness, and produces fruitfulness through the mediation of Christ our Lord and Saviour.”²

—Africa Study Bible

Voices from Church History

“As Adam had a world made for him, so shall Jesus Christ, this second Adam—Adam being a type of him that was to come—have a world made for him. This world was not good enough for him; he hath a better appointed than that which old Adam had, a new heaven and a new earth, according to the promise [in Isa. 66:22] where the saints shall reign.”³

—Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)

Further Commentary

"The picture of God... wiping away all tears is overwhelming. It pictures the removal of four more enemies:

- 'death'—destroyed and sent to the fiery lake (20:14; 1 Cor. 15:26)
- 'mourning'—caused by death and sin, but also ironically the eternal experience of those who loved the prostitute (18:8)
- 'crying'—one result of the prostitute's cruelty to the saints (18:24)
- 'pain'—the first penalty inflicted on mankind at the Fall is finally lifted at last (Gen. 3:16)

All these belonged to 'the old order of things' where sin and death were present. The last thought could also be translated, 'The former things are gone.' No greater statement of the end of one kind of existence and the beginning of a new one can be found in Scripture."⁴

—Kendell H. Easley

Voices from the Church

"Disciples imitate the Son, who is the definitive image of God and dramatic representation of God's being (Heb. 1:3) when they too glorify God in their bodies by performing works of grateful obedience (1 Cor. 6:20)."⁵

—Kevin J. Vanhoozer

God gave the first humans the keys to creation, and they handed them over to Satan, and everything came undone. Only through a perfect man—the Messiah—could the image of God and the brokenness of humanity be redeemed and restored. That Messiah-King will rule one day over the earth as Adam and Eve were supposed to (e.g., Jer. 3:15; Zech. 9:9-13).

 In what ways do people continue to try to be like God in their own efforts?

In an eerily similar scene in Matthew 4, Satan approaches a man and issues a litany of challenges. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah-King, answers these temptations the way Eve should have: "God said to trust what He says. He has given Me authority over creation. Now go away." Satan, the serpent that he still is, slithers away in defeat.

The first verse of the chapter says that Jesus *was led* by the Spirit into the wilderness *to be tempted*. Jesus wasn't caught off guard by the devil's appearance. Satan didn't trap Jesus; Jesus trapped Satan. God the Son, the very image of God (Col. 1:15), stepped into human history as a man to restore the image and likeness of God in humankind that had been fractured by the fall of Adam and Eve. In the wilderness, Jesus snatched the keys to creation back from the enemy who had stolen them so long ago.

When Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit that we might be renewed in the image of God (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Jesus even tells His disciples (and us by extension) that through the Holy Spirit, they would do greater works than He did (John 14:12-17).

This all sounds astounding on the surface—and it is. But Jesus is merely reminding us that He came to destroy darkness and that we would take the gospel, the good news of redemption, to the world by His authority. As Jesus' emissary within believers, the Spirit empowers us to advance the gospel to the ends of the earth, pointing to the day when the King of kings will reign over the completely restored creation, where the effects of Adam and Eve's blunder are mere memories.

By understanding the past—the sin of Adam and Eve, the incarnation of God's Son, Jesus' ascension to the throne of the universe, and the sending of the Holy Spirit to us—we understand how and why God is renewing all things. More than that, we understand why it is important to live in light of eternity now. All things are broken, but one day God will make all things new.

 How should the future hope of restoration and eternity impact how we live today?

2. Christ will separate believers from unbelievers (Rev. 21:6-8; 22:8-15).

Because God is good, loving, and just, one day sin, evil, and death will be no more. God will eradicate all ungodliness from creation, and we will live for eternity with Him without any fear of slipping back into sin or losing a loved one to cancer or war. The end of Revelation gives us a clear picture of this:

⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

.....
⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹ but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

When thinking about Christ separating believers from unbelievers for eternity, we cannot help but think of the terrifying D-word: *death*. Death is inevitable, but it is never easy. Even in the lengthy, expected death of a loved one, it still hits us like a truck when it arrives. So we dive into Scripture. We pray. We seek comfort from other believers we are in community with. Or we create coping mechanisms to comfort our souls. Denial. Detachment. Distraction. Sometimes the death of a loved one is too painful to deal with, even if we know our loved one trusted in Christ and is with Him now.

Further Commentary

“The final beatitude (‘blessed’) of the Apocalypse is an elegant presentation of the gospel, using the imagery of the ‘new Eden’ (‘the tree of life’) and the eternal city (‘enter the city by the gates’). ‘Wash their robes’ means faith in the shed blood of Christ. ‘The right to the tree of life’ is what Adam and Eve were cut off from by their sin. The gates of the city and access to the tree of life are made available to those who believe in Jesus, but all unbelievers, with their various sinful lifestyles, are excluded. With the repeated invitation to ‘come’ and ‘take the water’ of life ‘as a gift’ (i.e., free grace; see Eph. 2:8-9), Revelation ends with passionate evangelistic appeal. Though Jews referred to Gentiles as ‘dogs,’ in this case it more likely refers to false teachers, whatever their ethnicity, as in Philippians 3:2.”⁶

—A. Boyd Luter

Further Commentary

“The angel does not desire that sinners perish. He rather warns those who do iniquity so that hearing the sound of a celestial threat, they might wish to abstain from evil works... He says this that they might realize the imminent coming of the Lord and that they might more easily keep themselves from sin and from that time forward always devote themselves to holiness and righteousness.”⁷

—Aspringus of Beja



Voices from Church History

“I take it that our view of our own death is one of the readiest tokens by which we may judge of our own spiritual condition.”⁸

—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)



Voices from the Church

“In the day that we stand before our Master and Maker, it will not matter how many people on earth knew our name, how many called us great, and how many considered us fools. It will not matter whether schools and hospitals were named after us, whether our estate was large or small, whether our funeral drew ten thousand or no one. It will not matter what the newspapers or history books said or didn’t say. What will matter is one thing and one thing only—what the Master thinks of us.”⁹

—Randy Alcorn

So when we think of Jesus separating believers from unbelievers and those unbelievers being cast into a place of eternal torment—of eternal separation from God and all that is good—we recoil in horror. We don’t want to think about that, so we use some of the same coping mechanisms as with physical death. We deny, detach, and distract.

The eternal separation of people we love—of anyone for that matter, even those we struggle to love or those we don’t know—should break our hearts. We trust in God’s justice and goodness, and we know that judgment is what all sin deserves, even ours. Yet we should look toward this day soberly, being driven to action as we pour our lives into sharing the hope of the gospel—the good news of Jesus, the only reason we will not be numbered among those cast away from God’s presence—with the unbelieving world around us.



Why is it helpful to force ourselves to remember day-by-day that apart from Christ our sin deserves separation from God too?

Physical death should be mourned, and the second death should be grieved, but for those in Christ, it should also be a reason to long for Jesus’ return. Yes, we mourn, and it’s right and acceptable to do so. But we do not mourn like those without hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Death does not have the last word—not for those who love Christ.

Paul told the Philippians, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Because Christ sent death to the grave, it no longer holds power over us. Death is inevitable, but through Christ, so is life. His resurrection leads to our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Paul knew that if he lived, he would live for God’s glory. And if he died, he’d be with him for eternity.

God is a God of life. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, he didn’t leave them for dead. Expulsion from the garden was the consequence, death was inevitable, but in His grace, He still clothed them (Gen. 3:21). When Jesus died, He was resurrected to secure His people’s final resurrection to life with Him. But because God is a righteous and good Judge, everyone will be resurrected, but not everyone will be resurrected to eternal life with Him.

One day, death will not be inevitable. Those who repent and place their faith in Christ will be born again, with no need to die again. Death will be defeated once and for all. It will be tossed into a lake of fire with its father, Satan. And through Christ, we will stand in the new heavens and new earth with the tree of life, feasting on its life-giving fruit forever (Rev. 19–22).



Why is it significant that we will eat from the tree of life again in the new heavens and earth after Adam and Eve were barred from eating from it in Eden?



3. God's people will be in God's place under God's rule forever (Rev. 22:1-5).

Forever. That is a long time, isn't it? In fact, when the Bible speaks of "forever" it transcends time. "Forever," more or less, means "no time." This is what Revelation is promising—forever.

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Our hope is not that we escape earth altogether one day and live somewhere in heaven. We were not designed for that; we were designed to live *here*, on earth, but not the way we currently experience earth. We were supposed to live here in a place where heaven and earth are fused together. If we were sent out of the world forever, it would mean Satan won at least a partial victory and that God failed and had to come up with a Plan B. But God is sovereign and good and works out all things for His glory and our good (Rom. 8). So Edenic perfection will be restored one day, only it will be even better—the world will look like it was eventually supposed to, covered in image-bearers who bask in the rays of God's glory for eternity. This is not something to fear; it's something to rejoice in.

 What do you imagine living on the new earth will be like?

Jesus' model prayer, His words in the Sermon on the Mount, His transfiguration, His call for multiplying disciples of all nations, and so much more are all signposts for the new heavens and new earth. Jesus sends us out to mirror what the end of Revelation promises. Our lives should shout eternity to the world around us.

The disciples in Acts 2 weren't preaching and merely living out good morals; rather, they were proclaiming the gospel and painting a picture with their lives that this broken world doesn't have the final word. They were pointing to something bigger. This is still our call today. We are ministers of reconciliation. God uses His people to show the world what redemption looks like.

Further Commentary

"The 'river of the water of life' looks back to Ezekiel 47, as well as to Jesus's promise about the Holy Spirit flowing as 'streams of living water' (John 7:37-39) from those who believe in him. The 'tree of life' was in the center of the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:3). After the fall of mankind into sin, God denied humanity access to the tree (Gen. 3:24). Ezekiel 47:12 speaks of trees that bear fruit with medicinal value. The wording here pictures the new Jerusalem as the new and permanent 'Eden,' where 'there will no longer be any curse' (see Gen. 3:14-19). As Adam and Eve enjoyed unbroken fellowship with the Lord in the garden prior to the fall (Gen. 3:8), how much more will God's servants enjoy his constant presence in the new 'Eden.' All inhabitants will have 'his name' on 'their foreheads,' as was the case with the 144,000 (14:1)."¹⁰

—A. Boyd Luter

Voices from the Church

“The triune mission carried out in the person of Jesus is our hope. We are forgiven because of Jesus. We are made new because of Jesus. We will be resurrected because of Jesus. We will live on the New Earth because of Jesus. We’ll live faithful on this earth, waiting for the clouds to roll back with Jesus sitting on a white horse, ready to make temporary war in exchange for eternal peace. Let’s look to him.”¹¹

—J. A. Medders and Brandon D. Smith

Voices from Church History

“As often as this life’s idle show tries to charm you; as often as you see in the world some vain pomp, transport yourself in mind to Paradise, essay to be now what you will be hereafter.”¹²

—Jerome (circa 345–420)

Living faithfully to God, we anticipate and practice the future every day, particularly when we gather together as the church. For example, the Lord’s Supper is a tangible picture of our entry into the new heavens and new earth. It reminds us that (1) Jesus died for our sins, and (2) that we are all one family because of it. When we gather around the Lord’s table, our eating and drinking is a recommitment to one another as a family, and in this, we proclaim to one another and to others what Christ has done, until He returns and we sit with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (1 Cor. 11:17–34; Rev. 19:7–10).

We cannot forget to preach this truth to those near and far from us: the “end times” are not something to be afraid of but rather good news to shout from the rooftops.

-  How can we express the seriousness and hope of Jesus’ return to others without scaring them off or giving them false hope?
-  How can we live as ministers of reconciliation with one another and in our community?

Conclusion

And with that, the story has come full circle. What began with God—creating everything good and making humanity as the pinnacle of creation ruling under His sovereignty, enjoying relationship with Him and one another, and enjoying rhythms of work and rest for His glory—has ended the same way. Well, nearly the same way; the ending is much better than the beginning.

Through the course of our journey through the Bible, we have seen God’s glory deeper and more clearly with every turn of the page. What we ruined in our sinful rebellion, God has redeemed in Christ Jesus, who will one day return and restore all things as they should have been. Our God is a pursuing God who came after us to bring salvation from sin, and He continues to pursue others until the end.

As we have seen, our hope rests in what Christ has done *and* what He will do one day. Until then, though, we don’t just sit and wait—we join in on God’s mission to continue to extend the gospel to the entire world. We take the hope that we have and we share it with all who will listen so that they too will join with us in worship and praise of Jesus at His return.

CHRIST CONNECTION: This present age will come to an end when Christ returns to fulfill His promises and reign with His people for all eternity. The relationship lost in the garden when Adam sinned will be gloriously restored when the garden city is unveiled and Jesus wipes away every tear from every eye. The way to be part of God’s new world is to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb shed for our redemption.

Additional Resources

The Return of the King



Get expert insights on weekly studies through Ministry Grid at MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject. Grow with other group leaders at the Group Ministry blog at LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry.

Study Material

- “Heaven, I”—From *Great Joy: Comprising Sermons and Prayer-Meeting Talks Delivered at the Chicago Tabernacle* by D.L. Moody
- “4 Ways Jesus’s Second Coming Changes Us Now”—Article by J. D. Greear; find a link to this article at GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including “Alpha and Omega,” can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator. Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

Sermon

Darryl Williamson: “Reunion with God for the First Time”

Find a link to this at GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

Tip of the Week

Let People Tell Their Stories

“Often if I’m leading a group in which people seem to be shy or have trouble participating in discussion, I’ll ask the group for a personal example of something that relates to the larger point, then use that personal experience to springboard into a larger discussion:

- “What is one time on a vacation when your plans didn’t go exactly right?” (for moving into a discussion of patience)
- “Tell us about a time when your children did something that genuinely made you happy.” (for moving into a discussion about obedience and love)

Using these stories fosters the kind of open atmosphere you’re looking for and, at the same time, makes people more willing and confident in contributing.”¹³

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3. Thomas Goodwin, Sermon XXXIII, in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D.*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), 499.
4. Kendall H. Easley, *Revelation*, in *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville: B&H, 2005) [WORDsearch].
5. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 30.
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WHAT'S NEXT? THE JOURNEY BEGINS AGAIN!

Fall 2018	<i>In the Beginning</i>	Creation and the Fall (Genesis, Job) God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis) God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)
Winter 2018-19	<i>Out of Egypt</i>	God Redeems His People (Genesis, Exodus) God Provides for His People (Exodus) God Receives Worship from His People (Exodus, Leviticus)
Spring 2019	<i>Into the Promised Land</i>	God Guides His People (Numbers, Deuteronomy) God Gives His People a Home (Joshua) God Delivers His People (Judges, Ruth)
Summer 2019	<i>A Kingdom Provided</i>	God Provides a King (1 Samuel) God Provides a Godly King (1–2 Samuel, Psalms) God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings, Ecclesiastes)
Fall 2019	<i>A Nation Divided</i>	God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings) God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings, Prophets) God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chronicles, Prophets)
Winter 2019-20	<i>A People Restored</i>	God Sustains His People (Daniel) God Restores His People (Ezra, Prophets) God Prepares His People (Esther, Nehemiah, Malachi)
Spring 2020	<i>Jesus the Messiah</i>	Jesus Comes into the World (Luke) Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels) Jesus Among the People (Gospels)
Summer 2020	<i>Jesus the Servant</i>	Jesus the Healer (Gospels) Jesus the Teacher (Gospels) Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)
Fall 2020	<i>Jesus the Savior</i>	Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels) Jesus the Savior (Gospels) Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)
Winter 2020-21	<i>The Mission Begins</i>	The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts, Epistles) Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts, Epistles) New Life in Christ (Acts, Epistles)
Spring 2021	<i>The Church United</i>	Living Like Jesus (Acts, Epistles) The Sent Church (Acts, Epistles) Don't Forget (Acts, Epistles)
Summer 2021	<i>All Things New</i>	Paul in Prison (Acts, Epistles) Facing Adversity (Acts, Epistles) Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)

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