



LIFE GROUP NOTES

Week Beginning:



Ch 21-22 The new Jerusalem

Warm Up

Have you ever looked forward to a new start, a new phase in your life? Perhaps a change of career or a move to a new home, town even. Did you look forward to it? Was it exciting? Were you relieved to be leaving one phase of life behind? Perhaps it was relief that a long illness has ended and you are now in recovery. How did you feel about the prospect of a new beginning?

Background and context

In the final two chapters of this incredible book, John paints a vivid picture of the new heaven and new earth. The final act of God's redemptive plan when He will ultimately dwell with His people in a perfect world. The imagery and symbolism are clear. They are signposts pointing to the ultimate future. He describes what it is like but in reality it will be so much more! Heaven and earth are utterly transformed as God abolishes all corruption, death, pain and suffering; the tragic consequences of human sin.

God the Father finally speaks directly to John. Up until now, all communication was via an angel or Jesus. It is a powerful image. John's description of the city (about 1500 miles in each direction, including vertical) paints a picture of a Godly universe, a cube; which of course is the shape of the Holy of Holies at the heart of the ancient temple in Jerusalem, the place of God's dwelling! Here is an image of a place where God will dwell with His people in perfection. The description that John gives of the city is reminiscent of the description in Exodus of the Tabernacle, which of course was a shadow of God's heavenly dwelling. It is no surprise that John describes it in this way. He wants the reader to make the connection between the old imperfect tabernacle/temple and this ultimate dwelling place of God, a complete city, without a temple because God will be residing with His people and not separated from them.

In the later chapters of the book of Ezekiel, he has a vision of the restored temple with a river flowing from it, feeding and healing the land, like a new Eden. In chapter 22 of Revelation we see something similar. The healing and restorative power of the living water feeding and bringing healing. The Tree of Life, which Adam and Eve were prevented from enjoying because of their expulsion from Eden, is now flourishing at the heart of the city. All citizens benefit from it.

From the start of the book we are told that the Lamb's followers were to be a royal priesthood and now we finally see what it means. It is from the city, which is the bride, (the Lamb's followers) that healing, and restorative stewardship is to flow. This is how God will once and for all show that His creation was good and that He Himself is full of mercy.

What an amazing picture John has painted for us of the Church as the Bride of Christ, descending, bringing healing in the name of God. It must have given his readers tremendous hope as they faced persecution, torment and rejection by the Roman/pagan world in which they lived. They could be certain that God has the victory, that Satan is defeated and that those who have suffered and died will rise in glory and rule with Christ in a new and perfect place with God Himself at the centre. What a vision!

Thinking it through: Main discussion/activity

READ Revelation 21-22. *What are the surprising things in the passage? What is new? What don't you really understand? This could be a time to discuss and share reflections and ideas on the passage or watch a Bible project type video that helps explain things.*



1. **Read v1.** What is the symbolism of there being no sea?
2. **In v 2.** What does John see descending from heaven?
3. **In v 3.** What does it mean that God will “dwell” with His people? (where have we seen this word/idea used before in the Bible? Exodus 40:34-38, 2 Chronicles 7:1, John 1:14, Acts 2:2-4)
4. Which of the promises in ch 21:3-4 offers you the most hope right now? (If needed stop and pray with people)
5. **In v 5.** What does “make all things new” mean to you? What difference should it make to us now knowing that God will ultimately renew all things?
6. **Read v10-27.** What do you think is the significance of the detailed description of the Holy City? Is there symbolism and imagery here that we need to grasp?
7. Why is there no need of a temple, sun or moon?
8. In earlier chapters, the nations/ kings have been hostile to God's people and taken part in Babylon's sin. What is their role now? What does this reveal about God?
9. Why will the gates never shut? Why is there no night? (22:5) Is it literal or symbolic? How does it make you feel?
10. **Read 21:27.** How is this verse both a comfort and a warning? How does it link with v6-8?
11. **Read 22:1-5.** Who or what are the leaves and what is their purpose?
12. How can we prepare for life in this new world?
13. **Read 22:17.** Who is beckoning Jesus to come?
14. The Spirit and the bride (the church) work together. The Spirit empowering the Church. The Spirit goes out from God's throne and into the hearts and minds of believers from every nation. It causes them to praise and serve. How is the Spirit empowering you in your life as a follower of Christ?
15. How can we live in joyful expectation of the day when Christ returns to reign in person?

Well done you made it !

Try to leave 15-20 mins to talk about prayer needs of the group and to pray.



We want to encourage the development of prayer, to help everyone grow in confidence in praying. There are many creative ways of praying together: writing prayers, using candles as a focus, reading prayers or praying for each other in pairs.