



The Heights Baptist Church

REVELATION 22:1-21 | 11/8/2020 •

MAIN POINT

Upon the establishment of a new Heaven and new Earth, God's people will serve Him, enjoy Him, and proclaim Him. In the meantime, Christians should live with urgency.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Are you a fan of any particular university or professional sports team? Which ones?
Why do you especially love these institutions or teams?**

**What are some of the more outrageous ways you've seen people show their
affections for these teams or schools?**

While some of us may simply don a t-shirt or ball cap to show our support for a school or team, some fans go a long way to identify with and show their affections for their favorite teams with body paint, wigs and even vehicles painted in school or team colors. Either way, there is no question with regard to where one's affections lie. Likewise, when Jesus returns, there will be no question where the affections of Christians lie. Revelation 22 teaches that God's people will serve Him, enjoy Him and proclaim Him into eternity. He will be the center of their affections.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 22:1-6.

What elements in these verses show God's dream for our world restored to its Eden-like state? (Refer back to Genesis 2).

The nearer John came to the center of the city, the more like a garden it became. It was like the garden of Eden, only better. A river watered Eden (Gen. 2:10); now a river gushed from the throne, a provision coming directly from God. Also as in the garden of Eden the tree of life is in the city. This tree of life mysteriously disappeared after being present in the first human home (Gen. 2:9; 3:22,24). Now it reappears in the final human home (Rev. 2:7; 22:2,14) wonderfully producing its fruit every month, unlike any tree now known. The tree's abundant harvest, as well as the healing effect of the leaves of the tree, show that heaven is filled with everything life-giving and glorious. Everyone there is healthy all the time.

How does John's description of heaven compare with your concepts of heaven or those you have heard from others?

Read verse 3. What is the final evil element missing from eternity? What does the removal of this element symbolize?

How is the new Jerusalem actually better than Eden?

The final evil element missing from the eternal state is any curse. The curse entered human experience at the fall into sin (Gen. 3:17). With the curse lifted, however, comes something better than Eden: the throne of God and of the Lamb is there. The final state surpasses the original state of humankind.

What blessings of eternity are listed in verses 3-4? Do any of these blessings surprise you?

In what ways might a life of service here on earth help prepare believers for heaven?

In what ways would having God's name permanently affixed be reassuring, appropriate, and a delight? How would your life be different if you now bore a mark identifying you as God's child?

With the curse removed, only blessing remains, and now three wonderful blessings of eternity are listed. First, God's servants will serve Him. The Greek verb translated "serve" often implies worship. In eternity God's people will be perfect in their worship. Second, they will see His face. Throughout Scripture, God's people, however holy, were never allowed to see His face, His direct presence (Ex. 33:20). In this life sometimes God seems to hide His presence from His people as they endure many sorrows. With the curse gone, His people will gladly enjoy His full presence. Third, His name will be on their foreheads. The name of God on persons shows that they are genuine and that God guarantees to protect them (Rev. 3:12). All the saints receive God's name to guarantee an eternity with Him (see Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

John's description of the new Eden concludes with the most important point. Read Revelation 22:5 again. What is the good news in this verse, and how does it change your life?

Revelation 22:5 concludes at the most exalted point possible. This verse repeats the truths of 21:22-24. There is an end to all the darkness of sin and evil, represented first by the banishment of night and second by the eternal presence of the light provided by the Lord God. Jesus, the Light of the world, is the perfect Light for eternity. That this reality awaits us should motivate us to live with a sense of urgency, unleashing compassion in the world to help God restore what is broken. This sense of urgency permeates the close of Revelation and the canon of Scripture.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 22:7-21.

Is it ever too late for people to change their ways and come to Christ? Why or why not?

When the end comes, neither the unrighteous nor the righteous will have opportunity to change their behavior. The swiftness of these events will catch people in their normal activities. This is a call to a proper lifestyle now because then we will have no opportunity to change. The suddenness of that time receives continued emphasis. Once the events are initiated, they will conclude swiftly, which means we have to be ready for Christ's return today.

Look at verses 13-17. What are the characteristics of the One who extends the invitation to "Come!" (v. 17)?

What are the characteristics of those who receive the invitation? What are the characteristics of the invitation itself?

Christ identifies Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He began creation; He observes events as they happen; and He will bring history to a just completion. John ends his book with a final invitation—let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. Once again salvation is offered to anyone who will take it. It is a gift. It cannot be earned; it only may be received. This great book predicts the end of history as we know it. Even though the course of the age will be against God, until Christ comes all people are offered salvation. Christians should diligently warn unbelievers of their future without Christ. Unbelievers should repent and accept Christ while they can. A time is coming beyond which they will have no hope.

What is the significance of God's invitation in your own life?

What urgency do you feel to warn unbelievers of their need to accept Christ's free gift of salvation while there is still time?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Have you been putting off getting serious about some aspect of your spiritual life? If so, what is one practice that you need to integrate in your life this week instead of waiting?

What are some practical ways you can remind yourself of the urgency of the gospel? How can we also remind each other?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for the picture of hope that closes out the Bible. Pray that as we move forward in our daily lives, this hope will be on the forefront of our minds, motivating us to worship God wholeheartedly, live for Him daily, and share the gospel urgently.

COMMENTARY

| REVELATION 22

22:1-5. The river of living water looks back to Ezekiel 47, as well as to Jesus' 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 (Gen. 3:14-19). As Adam and Eve walked with the Lord periodically in the garden, His presence will be constant. All inhabitants will have His name on their foreheads, as was the case with the 144,000 (14:1).

22:6-7. The sixth beatitude of the book (blessed) repeats the emphases on the imminence of the events in Revelation and the need for application of its prophecies seen in the first beatitude in 1:3, but here those elements are in reverse order.

22:8-9. John repeats his mistake of false worship of an angel. Apparently the reader is to understand that worship of angels (who are majestic) is an easy mistake to make, even for a mature Christian like John.

22:10-12. The Book of Daniel was “sealed until the time of the end” (Dan. 12:9) to conceal its contents. In clear contrast, and in light of the imminence of the events (“the time is near”) portrayed in Revelation, John was commanded not to seal the prophetic words of this book. Until the events of the book are fulfilled, people will continue to act in keeping with their fallen spiritual nature (“unrighteous... filthy” or “righteous... holy”), but when the Lord comes, He will render to each person according to his deeds (20:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

22:14-15,17. 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 living water 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 Phil. 3:2.

22:16. Jesus is the offspring of David in the sense of being a blood descendant of King David. This also serves as a messianic title (see Matt. 1:1 and the family tree in Luke 3:23-31).

22:18-19. It is doubtful that the wording here directly refers to closing the canon of the Bible (this book). The book that is not to be tampered with is the book of Revelation, but the wording does imply that all Scripture should be guarded as sacred—never tampered with. The immediate context in Revelation is of a “new Eden” (vv. 1-5). Also, in Genesis 3, Eve added to the Word of God (Gen. 3:3) and the Serpent took away from what the Lord had said (Gen. 3:4). As a result, this “biblical bookends” effect of Rev. 22:18-19 and Gen. 3:3-4 infers that, just as Genesis is the first book in the Bible, Revelation is the last.

22:20. Jesus promised that He is coming quickly, but it has been well over 1,900 years since He uttered these words. John prayed for Jesus to come soon. God’s patience toward the unbelieving world is a cause of Jesus’ delay.

22:21. The Book of Revelation, though made up largely of apocalyptic (1:1) and prophetic (1:3) literary forms, begins (1:4) and ends (with its concluding grace) like a letter. In spite of all the works of the Devil and the judgment and wrath of God detailed in between, the Apocalypse starts

with grace and ends with grace, making a full circle from grace to grace. This is a fitting symmetry for a book that foretells the ultimate victory of “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10).