

## The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John the Apostle (21-22)

Finally: the judgment, restoration, and culmination of all things. After almost 20 chapters of judgment upon the nations we have arrived at the end, or should we say, the beginning. The people God had chosen before the foundations of the world are finally all together, in one place, worshipping Him for all of eternity. Everything that was broken in Eden has been healed. After thousands of years, God's people will finally see His face. There will be no more pain or suffering, only the pure joy of full and clear worship of the One True God, forever and ever. As Matthew Henry describes, "...the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment...now, at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away; a new world now appears, the former having passed away."

### Study the Text . . . (Read Revelation 20:11-21:8)

These verses are some of the most terrifying in all of Scripture. God is not being patient with sinners for a moment longer. He has gathered all who have ever lived to Himself for judgment and the books have been opened. All who have rejected Him in direct rebellion or by waiting to turn to Him perish under His wrath in the lake of fire. The weight of the reality of eternal suffering for many is almost too much to bear here. But from a heavenly perspective, God is glorified greatly in His justice. This can humble and awaken our slumbering human minds. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says, "...in flaming fire, [He will inflict] vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...." Many times this year we have seen the joy of obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now we see the ramifications of refusing obedience.

### Group Discussion . . .

- One day, we and everyone we have ever known will be judged by God. We will be judged for every thought and every act. Consider together the weight of this truth. Take time to pray and confess together to God our lack of merit before His holy law. Then praise God together for His eternal love for us, shown most brightly in the gospel of His Son, Jesus.
- As you ponder eternity, consider this truth from CS Lewis' "The Weight of Glory": "...Remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to will one day either be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations...There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." If we truly believe this, it will change everything about how we interact with people.

- Based on Rev. 20:15, talk together about what the image of a “lake of fire” brings to your mind. What would existence in a place like this be like? Discuss together about how burdened your hearts are for the eternal destinies of the people around you. If you find that they are not burdened, spend time in prayer together asking God to stir up your hearts affections for His glory among the lost.
- Based on Rev. 21:4, have people in the group share the specific burdens they carry today that cause them tears, mourning, and pain. Then have people meditate on the fact that each of those specific burdens will be fully lifted when Jesus returns. Think through and have people process how the return of Christ specifically addresses each one of the burdens that they have just shared. Help shepherd the hearts of the people in the group to find their hope, joy, healing, and peace in Christ and His return.

### Study the Text... (Read Revelation 22:1-17)

We now transition from some of the scariest verses in the Bible to some of the most overwhelmingly beautiful. God has removed evil from the earth and His redemption is complete. Consider the promises in this passage. There will be no darkness. He will write His name on us. We will reign with Him forever. We will see His face. Here the gospel is likened to streams of living water for washing our garments and quenching our thirst. As it closes, there is a sobering but exciting transition back to the present. Jesus has not come yet, but He will. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly indeed. We long to be with you.

### Group Discussion...

- Consider verse 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.” What does it mean that they will “have the right” to eat of the tree of life? Have they earned the right to live forever? If not, discuss how anyone would have “the right” to be clean.
- The New Testament is full of encouragements and commands to place our hope in the return of Christ. As we embark on a new year, we must remember that we will be tempted to allow our lives to get busier and busier with insignificant things. Ask this question of yourself: do you truly and daily long for the return of Jesus? Is your hope placed firmly in the end of all things? Or do you find your satisfaction largely in this world? Consider and discuss together the implications of your hearts affections. If your hope is not found completely in the return of a triumphant Christ, take time to ask where your hope is found.
- Have your group notice in Rev. 21:2 that the healing at the end of human history will be for “the nations”. Discuss what implications this verse has on how we, as those who have already been redeemed, should think, feel, and live for all nations (people groups). Discuss the fact that the ultimate healing for the nations will be when Christ returns. Help your people to process the fact that Jesus is the healer of the nations, and that only He can accomplish this.

- It is fitting for us to remember what God has done in us over the past year. Take some time to talk through the highlights of your time together as a small group in 2010. What were your favorite discussions? What has stuck with you the most? What was your greatest challenge as a group? What was your greatest joy as a group? What should the group be praying for and doing this next year?