



The Story of Scripture

LIFEGROUP STUDY

SESSION FOUR: THE STORY OF RESTORATION (8/28/2022)

JOHN 1:10-13; REVELATION 21:1-4

MAIN POINT

God is directing history to a specific and glorious end in which sin and its effects will be undone, nullified, extinguished; and all of God's redeemed creation will exist in perfect harmony and union with the Triune God.

INTRODUCTION

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

Do you think internal values or external rewards are more effective motivational factors in people's lives?

What should motivate Christians to serve Christ?

Christians are motivated people because their existence is saturated with meaning. Every conversation, every household chore, every family meal is meaningful because Christians are living for a God who is active in their lives and accomplishing His eternal purposes through them.

We live in a world filled with suffering, pain, conflict, and disease. The Bible promises it will not always be this way. Creation itself will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth. Every tear will be wiped away, grief and sickness and pain and conflict and even death will be defeated once and for all.

UNDERSTANDING

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

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:13 AND REVELATION 21:1-2.

What is the promise in John 1:12? How is God able to justify someone and declare them not guilty when they are, in fact, guilty of sin?

What does Jesus' work on the cross have to do with His second coming and the promises that we read about in Revelation 21 (new heaven and new earth, effects of sin erased)?

Jesus' finished work on the cross is the essence of the Christian faith. Without it, Christians have no reason to hope, rejoice, or obey. With it, Christians should be the most hopeful, joyful, and sacrificial people on the face of the planet. After all, who could contain the joy produced by a true reception of the incredible promises of God's word to His children? Who would be more hopeful in the face of such brokenness than those who have read the end of the story found in Revelation 21?

Have you examined yourself to be assured that you are saved (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10)? If so, and you have assurance that you are a Christian, how does it make you feel to know that you are kept by God's power?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:10A, 11A, AND REVELATION 21:3.

Why is the incarnation so significant to the Christian faith?

What does Revelation 21:3 say? Is the promise of God dwelling among us a big deal? Why or why not?

For the stained sinner, the idea of being in the presence of the one true and most holy God is nightmarish, as it should be. But those that have been born again have been made clean by the blood of Christ. A person who truly understands the gospel will realize that there is no longer anything to fear in God's presence. To the contrary, true believers will recognize that God's presence is their home. The restless longing for home and the unexplained sadness is done away with in God's presence because God is the source and aim of those deep yearnings for a true place of rest. That's why Jesus said, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).

Does the idea of being in the presence of God give you a sense of relief or dread? Why?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 21:4.

What is heaven like according to this verse? What ideas have you picked up about heaven (biblical or not)?

Is there any idea about heaven that you have that is inaccurate or unbiblical? Does it have a negative effect on your walk with Christ now?

The fourth verse in Revelation describes something that we can try to imagine: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." Jesus' work on the cross not only made a way for us to dwell again with our Creator, but it also defeated and did away with the curse of sin. It is true that we still toil in a sin-infected world, but it is passing away, and those who are in Christ look toward a home that is free from these horrors.

APPLICATION

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

What is your understanding of the work of Jesus? Why did He come and what does it have to do with you?

What sorts of feelings does the nature of Christ's work cause in you? Do you feel worried, repentant? Sad? Angry? Why?

Do you have a deep longing to know and dwell with God? How is it possible that we might dwell with God? Do you look forward with joy and expectation toward eternity in heaven? Why or why not?

PRAYER

Pray with thanksgiving for what Christ has done to make it possible for Christians to dwell with God and experience a sin-free existence. Ask the Lord to give you the ability to live with eternity in mind, knowing that Christians are not yet home.

COMMENTARY

| JOHN 1:10-13

1:10-11. Immediately after describing the announcement, John tells us about apathy toward the message of regeneration. The world (kosmos) is another of John's theme words; he used it seventy-seven times. With the device of repetition, John taught incarnation, creation, and

rejection all in one verse (v. 10). Depravity and blindness thwarted God's efforts to reach out to his own creation—and still do.

In verse 11, the first appearance of the word *own* appears in the neuter gender and the second is masculine. What significance could such a distinction have for interpretation? One possibility is that Jesus came to earth, the place he had created, and the second tells us that the people who lived there turned him away. He was not welcomed or accepted.

1:12-13. Early in his book, John established the heart of the gospel, still two chapters away from the famous John 3:16. From the announcement of regeneration followed by apathy the apostle introduces the acceptance of regeneration.

Like most things in life, there is a right way and a wrong way to respond to God. The right way (and the only meaningful way) is to believe the gospel, receive the Savior and accept new birth as a result. The wrong way somehow links a relationship to God with human qualities such as physical birth, self-determination, or the choice of another person. In John's theological vocabulary, *believed* and *received* are synonymous when it comes to the gospel.

| REVELATION 21:1-4

21:1 While like the present creation in some ways, the new heaven and a new earth will be much different. For example, there will be no sea. However, some believe that "sea" is symbolic for the wickedness of the current created order.

21:2 The bride of the Lamb, introduced in 19:7-9, is now pictured as the holy city, the new Jerusalem. The expression coming down out of heaven is used in all three references to the new Jerusalem (see note at 3:12). Prepared . . . adorned may mean that the bride will be just as beautiful—and will be for eternity—as she was during the wedding festivities (19:7-8).

21:3-4 God's presence (dwelling is with humanity) will do away with all death . . . grief, crying, and pain.