

Small Group Guide

"We Look for the Resurrection of the Dead and the Life of the World to Come"

Based on the Nicene Creed Series — Final Week

OVERVIEW

This week's sermon concluded the series on the Nicene Creed by focusing on its final line: "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." Pastor Shawn explored what Christians are actually looking forward to, what that hope means for how we live right now, and what it reveals about the character of God.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. We look, not just believe. The final line of the Creed shifts from "we believe" to "we look." Christian hope is not passive. It is an active, forward-facing posture of expectation.
2. Resurrection is bodily, not an escape. The Christian hope is not that the soul floats away from the body. God fully intends to redeem and glorify the body, just as he raised and glorified Jesus' body. Bodies matter to God.
3. New creation is not a different world — it is this world completed, perfected, and transformed. The ultimate promise of Scripture is not that we go up to heaven, but that God comes down to dwell with his people. We are not going back to Eden; we are going forward into new creation.
4. We are to live now as it will be then. Because we belong to God's coming kingdom, we are called to adjust our lives — our appetites, priorities, and practices — to that future reality, not the one we are leaving behind.
5. God does not break his promises, scrap his projects, or abandon his people. Throughout all of Scripture, and in our own lives, God remains faithful even when we do not. His ultimate answer is always more.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening (Choose one to get the conversation started)

- What is one thing from this sermon that surprised you, challenged you, or stuck with you?
 - When you were growing up, what did you imagine heaven or the afterlife to be like? Where did that image come from?
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Exploring the Word

1. Pastor Shawn noted that the creed shifts from "we believe" to "we look" in its final line. What do you think is the significance of that shift? How is looking for something different from simply believing in it?
 2. The sermon described the resurrection of the body as the redemption and glorification of what God created, not an escape from it. How does that change or expand the way you think about your own body and its value?
 3. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul uses the image of a seed to describe the resurrection body — something that dies and is raised as something new and greater. What questions does that image raise for you? What does it help clarify?
 4. The sermon described new creation not as us going up to God, but as God coming down to dwell with us — this world completed, perfected, and transformed. How does that vision compare to what you have typically heard or believed about the afterlife?
 5. Pastor Shawn described a framework of creed, doctrine, and conviction — with the creed at the center, representing non-negotiable beliefs, and doctrine and conviction being areas where Christians can differ with humility. How does that framework help you navigate disagreements within the church?
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Going Deeper

6. The sermon used the image of jet lag and mealtimes to illustrate what it means to live in the kingdom's time zone. In your own words, what does it mean to "eat according to the time zone you are going to, not the one you are coming from"? What would that look like in a practical area of your life this week?
7. Pastor Shawn listed several ways that future hope shapes present action:
 - If reconciliation is God's future, we reconcile now.
 - If God will dwell with his people, we practice his presence now.
 - If resurrection is God's future, we pray for healing now — not as an exception, but as a foretaste.

- If justice is God's future, we work for justice now.
- 8. Which of these resonates most with you right now, and why? Is there one that feels most difficult or costly to act on?
- 9. N.T. Wright suggested that when we finally see new creation, we will say, "Of course. I couldn't have imagined it, but of course this makes perfect sense." What do you make of that? Does it bring you comfort, frustration, or something else?
- 10. Pastor Shawn shared a deeply personal memory of losing his father at age six and how that loss has shaped his questions about life, death, and what comes next. Is there a loss or a question in your own life that makes the promise of resurrection and new creation feel either more urgent or harder to hold onto?
- 11. At the end of the sermon, Jesus' words in John 11 were referenced — where he asks, "Do you believe this?" Pastor Shawn offered three honest postures: "I believe," "I want to believe," and "I want to want to believe." Which of those three most honestly describes where you are right now, and what would it mean for you to take one step forward from that place?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one of the following to practice individually or as a group before you meet again:

1. Adjust one appetite. Identify one habit, routine, or pattern in your daily life that is shaped more by the values of the present age than by the kingdom that is coming. Name it specifically, and take one concrete step this week to reorient it toward where you are going.
2. Pray for healing as a foretaste. This week, pray for healing for someone — yourself or another person — not as a request for an exception, but as a request for a foretaste of resurrection life. Notice how that reframing changes the way you pray.
3. Practice one act of justice or reconciliation. Because justice and reconciliation are part of God's future, identify one relationship or situation in your life where you can bend things, even slightly, back toward their intended shape. Take one step in that direction this week.
4. Sit with the question. Set aside fifteen minutes this week to sit quietly with the question Jesus asks in John 11: "Do you believe this?" Write down your honest response. Bring it to God in prayer, whatever it is.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together by praying the final lines of the Nicene Creed aloud as a group:

"We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

Then invite someone to pray the following, or use it as a guide:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, set this hope in us. Give us eyes to see beyond the immediate horizon. Where we believe, strengthen our faith. Where we want to believe, draw us closer. Where we are struggling to hold on, meet us there. Expand our imaginations, refine our ears, and let our lives sing with yours. In the name of Jesus, amen.