

ALL THINGS NEW
WEEK 2 DISCUSSION GUIDE
"HEAVEN & HELL"

READ

This week we continued in our "All things New" series and looked at what the Bible says about heaven and hell.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Heaven, or the heavens, is a part of God's creation. In the beginning there was shalom, peace, between heaven and earth. After the rebellion of God's creation, this peace and unity was fractured. With this came separation between God and people. Jesus came to restore the unity between heaven and earth and with God and people.

The afterlife is a developing concept in the Bible. Ancient Israelites believed that when a person died they went to Sheol, the place of silence. This is not like our concept of heaven or hell, not a place of reward or punishment, rather a place of gloom where all souls went when the body died.

Understanding of the afterlife changed in the later part of the Old Testament with the arrival of prophets, messengers of God, when they talked about a new idea. *"But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise – let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy – your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead" (Isaiah 26:19).*

With the idea of resurrection also came the understanding that it will be two sided. All will not go to one place. *"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).*

The Old Testament ends with the introduction of these concepts. In New Testament times, 400 years later, most believed that when people died they would go to one of two places. One would be paradise and the other a place of suffering.

When Jesus talked about God's final judgement he used Gehenna as a picture of where everything is going. Gehenna was a place of fire, death and suffering. All of God's creation is dying and hell is where everything is headed. But Jesus showed up to offer a new way.

John 11:25

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;"

When Jesus died and rose from the dead he conquered the power of sin and death. No longer would our future be death and despair, instead Jesus offers life.

Both heaven and hell exist right now on the earth. As part of a dying creation we will experience some kind of hell, pain and suffering. In Jesus we can begin to experience some of heaven now. Joy, peace and love, life the way God intended it.

Heaven and hell are not just a reality after we die, it's how we live now. We can choose to live as part of the world, a dying creation, or as part of the kingdom of God, with God in charge of our lives. Where we choose to live now is where we will live forever.

DISCUSS

How has your concept of heaven changed over time?

Describe a time in your life that felt like heaven.

Has there been a time in your life that felt like hell? What did this look like?

In Revelation 21:1 we are told "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth" for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away..."

Describe what you think the new heaven and earth will be like. What do you think our relationships will look like there?

How does knowing that we can experience some of heaven now when we live in the kingdom of God, with God in charge of our lives, affect how you live your life?

PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP

Pray that we would experience eternal life in Christ that begins now and lasts forever. That we would point others to Christ by the way we love.

PRAY FOR FCC

Pray that our guests would get a glimpse of heaven at FCC by the way they are welcomed and loved. That we would love others as Christ loves us.

PRAY FOR OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS

Please pray for one of the six churches in Ecuador planted by our global partner Ibero American Ministries in the city of El Eden. The church is planted within a rural community that in the best of times faces challenges in social, economic and health care needs. They have faced devastation from flooding in the region. This has made it difficult to get food, clean water and basic supplies. Many crops have been destroyed and the rivers have loosed the venomous snake population that are normally contained within its boundaries. Please pray for Pastor Gustavo, his wife Fanny and their three

children as they minister to their neighbors in this season of need and share the love and compassion of Jesus.