

**Big Idea:** Eternity starts with us.

**Primary Scripture:** Revelation 21:1-5

**Supporting Scripture:** Leviticus 26:11-12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:18

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### **CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)**

- You know that first day at a new school? New year, fresh start, finally a chance to not embarrass yourself in front of that *special someone* you've been thinking about all summer.
- Picture this: You're about to arrive at school, and everything is going exactly as planned. Outfit? Planned and executed. Hair? It's... cooperating. Lunch? Packed, and your mom even sprang for the good snacks! It's like you've thought of everything and given yourself the best chance for an epic start to a new school year.
- But the second you step through those doors, all that confidence just vanishes.
- Everyone else seems to know exactly where they're going, so why are you wandering around like you just landed on a different planet?
- Then lunch hits. You walk into the cafeteria and it's like a game of musical chairs, except there's no music and **way** more judgment.
- You spot one open seat at a table, sit down, and immediately realize why no one else took it.
- Every time you shift your weight, the chair makes the most embarrassing sound imaginable.
- In that moment, it feels like the biggest deal in the world as if where you sit right now is going to determine your entire social life forever.
- And maybe it could because what if that random group of people you end up sitting with become your new friend group?
  - What if they're the only people who talk to you for the rest of the year?
  - What if one awkward lunch, sitting on one unfortunately loud chair, somehow shaped your entire school year?
- Small moments have a way of shaping big outcomes.
- That's exactly what we've been talking about these past few weeks in our series called ***The Sacred Timeline***.

- God's big story (and how we fit into it) all started at creation, but things went horribly wrong when one decision changed the rest of history.
- In final week of our series, we're zooming all the way out and looking into the future.
- Just like Adam and Eve's decision to eat the fruit changed every single event in human history, there's something coming, that will finally make things right—forever.

### **SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)**

- Revelation was written by the Apostle John decades after Jesus' death and resurrection.
- If you've read (or tried to read) Revelation at all, then you know that it's filled with visions that John received from God.
- These visions are remarkably vivid but also incredibly difficult to understand.
- Right from the beginning of the book, John made two things **very** clear:
  - God is in control.
  - Jesus is coming back.
- John wanted his readers (including us!) to know that no matter how chaotic things might seem, God's plan is still perfectly on track because we have something incredible to look forward to.

*<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (Revelation 21:1-2 – NLT)*

- John's goal was to help us understand what's coming.
- As hard as life can be now, as much as we might struggle or suffer, there is a day coming when **everything** will be made new.

*<sup>3</sup> I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” (Revelation 21:3-4 – NLT)*

- God's home will be **with** His people.

- We often picture heaven (or eternity) as somewhere far away, somewhere we go **to**, but John's vision seems to paint a somewhat different picture.
- As John saw it, eternity includes God coming to us.
- Think back to what it was like in the Garden, when God would walk with Adam and Eve before the fall.
- This idea has actually always been God's heart for His people.

***<sup>11</sup> I will live among you, and I will not despise you. <sup>12</sup> I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people. (Leviticus 26:11-12 – NLT)***

- That's the hope—God walking with us, living in a restored creation.

***<sup>5</sup> And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” (Revelation 21:5 – NLT)***

- God tells John, “Write this down” because we need to know what's coming. He wants us all to know what's coming because we need that hope.
- Revelation can feel overwhelming and difficult to wrap our heads around everything that John wrote.
- There's so much we don't know, but here's what we **do** know:
  - There will be a day when God makes everything new.
  - The curse will be broken. Creation will be restored.
  - God will live with His people. That's not just speculation. That's a promise.
- Believing in that promise could change everything about how we live right now.

### **INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)**

#### **1. This is a promise, not just wishful thinking.**

- What exactly is God promising to do?
- His plan is to take everything that's broken, worn out, or messy in our lives and restore it into something new and beautiful.

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- That's where this is headed. And that sounds amazing!

## 2. God's plan has already started.

- God's restoration plan isn't on hold until some future date. It's already in motion—and you can be part of it.

*<sup>17</sup> This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17 – NLT)*

- When you follow Jesus, God starts reshaping you from the inside out.
  - Your heart begins to care about what He cares about.
  - Your life starts reflecting His new creation—right now.
  - Your past no longer has to determine your future.
  - Your guilt, fear, and shame begin to be replaced by faith, hope, and love.
- Each time that we choose to embrace forgiveness over bitterness, acceptance over intolerance, and love over hate, we're giving our world a preview of what's to come.
- God's plan is something we get to participate in, starting today.

## 3. Knowing the future gives us hope for today.

- When you know where the story ends, it changes how you handle the middle.
- Knowing God's promise doesn't erase the hard stuff, but it puts it in perspective.
- Every time you choose forgiveness when bitterness feels easier, every time you show love when hate seems justified, every time you trust God when everything feels uncertain—you're living like someone who knows how the story ends.

*<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18 – NLT)*

- The suffering Paul wrote about was very real.
- Following Jesus isn't always easy, and often it involves making significant sacrifices.
- You're not just sacrificing because you hope things might work out someday.
- You're choosing forgiveness, love, and hope because you **know** where this is all headed—and that changes everything.

## **ACTION (How could we live this out?)**

### **1. Look for moments that point toward eternity.**

- This week, look for hints of God's Kingdom breaking through in our world.
- If you're willing to slow down and be patient, you will start to see little hints that you might have missed otherwise.
- Make a list of these moments and add at least one thing to it every day. Don't just write "the sunset."
- Write something like, "The way the sky lit up with orange and gold made me think about how creative God is."
- By the end of the week, you'll have seven reminders that eternity isn't as far away as it feels.
- Consider taking it a step further by making a list as a small group by starting a group text where everyone shares their moment each day for the whole week.

### **2. Write a letter to your future self.**

- At some point this week, take 15 minutes and **write a letter to yourself**—the version of you six months from now.
- Write about one or two things God is doing in you or around you.
- Tell yourself about why those moments mattered and how they remind you that God is constantly working to bring us closer to Him.
- You can write it on paper or type it in your notes app or even use a site like **FutureMe.org** to automatically email it to yourself in the future.
- There's a really good chance your future self will have days where they wonder if God's promises are real, and your own words just might be the powerful reminder that you'll need.

### **3. Give your world a preview of what's to come.**

- This week, commit to help our world catch glimpses of eternity right now.
- Maybe it's inviting the new kid to sit with you at lunch. Maybe it's sending an encouraging text to someone who's been struggling. Maybe it's apologizing when you know you were wrong.
- Ask yourself: "If I really believed eternity was real, how would I treat this person or respond in this situation?"
- **Then, go do that thing.**

- Go beyond something generic like, “I guess I could have been nicer.” This is more like, “Instead of joining in when my friends were making fun of that person, I could have stood up for them.”
- Doing the right thing isn’t easy and sometimes comes at a real significant cost.
- It’s the choice we should make because it’s the choice that Jesus made for us.