

**Coming Full Circle**  
Small Group Discussion  
Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5, 20-21

**Intro questions**

- Pastor Josh began this week’s message by asking people to think about a place from their childhood or young adult years that is a kind of “paradise” in their memory—where everything is right with the world. **What place is like that in your mind?** (Have everyone share)
- The premise for this week’s sermon was the following:  
*The reason we have this kind of longing deep in our souls is that we were created for such a place, and we (humanity) once had it, but lost it. It’s still there in our collective human memory and it lingers over all of life as if it may still be a possibility. We feel it as kind of a homesickness in our hearts.... In Revelation 21 and 22, we see that what we’ve been longing for is what God originally intended for us, and it will be restored beyond our imagination in the end.*
- Remind your group that Revelation is written in the style called “**apocalyptic**,” which means it uses wild, graphic symbols and images to convey ideas, which can often be multi-dimensional. It is important to not get lost in the minutia of the detailed images, but instead, to step back and try to see the broader message that they convey.

1. Review:

- a. What aspects of our original existence (Genesis 1-2) did we lose through sin and the curse (Genesis 3)?
- b. Recall John’s message to his original readers from last week’s study of the earlier chapters in Revelation: “Things will get worse before they get better.” What experiences were they about to undergo, for which John was writing to prepare them?

2. **Read** Rev. 21:1-8, then discuss the following.

- a. When Jesus gives John this vision of our future, at the culmination of all history, what does John see with respect to the earth? How does this relate to God’s original intent for creation?
- b. What all is contained in the image of the “bride beautifully dressed for her husband?”
- c. How do the words of v. 3 fulfill a long-standing promise of God, which has run throughout the Big Story? How has it been partially fulfilled in the Holy Spirit? What is different about our present status in this regard and what we will enjoy in the future?
- d. How do you feel about the promise in v. 4? Is this more of an abstract reality for you, or does it have immediate, personal meaning?
- e. Why do you think that Jesus tells John, in v. 5, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true”? A similar theme is repeated several times in these chapters. What’s the point?

3. **Read** Rev. 22:1-5 and 20-21, then discuss the following.

- a. What allusions do you see here to the creation story, from Genesis 1-2? Why do you think these references are here? What’s the connection between the beginning and the end?
- b. What other aspects of these verses catch your attention? Why?
- c. If you have extra time, read Isaiah 65:17-25, and note the similarities between Isaiah’s prophecy (probably 800 years prior to the writing of Revelation). How does Isaiah’s prophecy shed light on our ultimate future?

4. Pastor Josh described the following aspects of our eternal future, to which we can look forward. **Spend some time discussing each one.** What excites you most about each? What questions do you have? How is this the fulfillment of some deep desire that you have?
  - a. A perfect earth (21:1-2)
  - b. Healed relationships (21:2)
  - c. Unhindered access to God (21:3, 22:4)
  - d. Elimination of every effect of the curse (21:4, 22:3)
  - e. All your thirsts will be quenched (21:6, 22:1-2)
  - f. You'll get the job you've always wanted (22:3, 22:5)
5. What makes this wonderful future possible? (Note the frequent, recurrent use of the term, "The Lamb." John has previously "seen," throughout Revelation, that Jesus, the "slain" Lamb, has made it possible by his blood.)
6. **Application.** Pastor Josh said that the point of this concluding vision is for us to "Let the wonder of the future shape the way that we live in the mean time."
  - a. Why would this vision have meant so much to John's original readers? How did it help them in what they were about to face?
  - b. What are some ways that this future hope could shape the way that you live now?
  - c. Pastor Josh suggested that this principle should affect how we view the "other" in our communities—people who are politically or ideologically different, or who come from different religious backgrounds, or who seem to pose some kind of potential danger. There is a tendency to gather ourselves into safe little bubbles where we can't be "contaminated" or harmed. How does this concluding vision in Revelation changes the way that we approach this current issue?
7. This study concludes our "Big Story" sermon series. What aspects of this series have been most helpful for you? Have you come to appreciate the Bible in any new ways?

### **Prayer**

- Pray about whatever may have surfaced in your preceding discussion, with regard to letting your present be shaped by this vision of your future.
- Share and pray about whatever other needs and concerns are weighing on your minds.