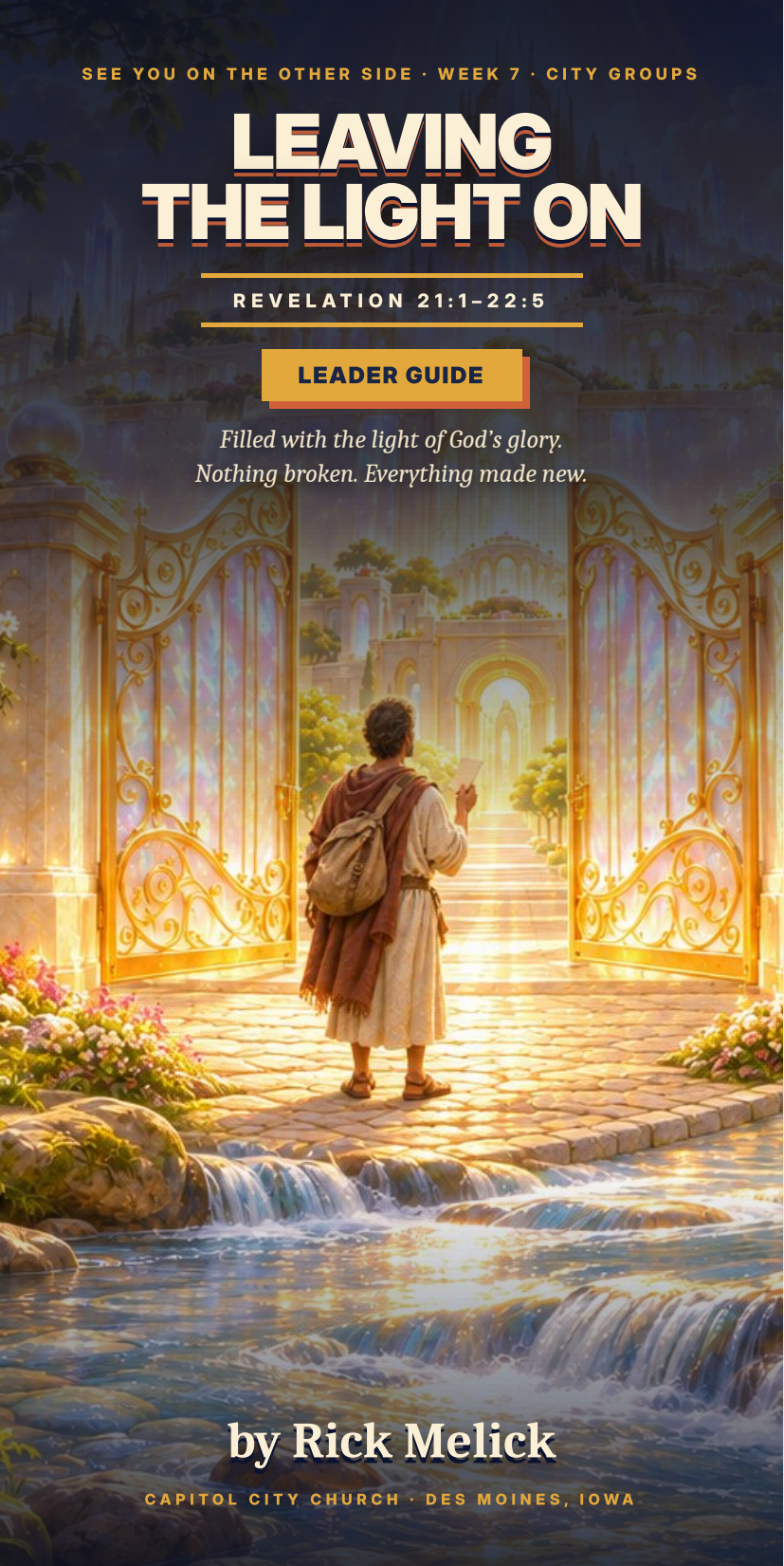
SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE · WEEK 7 · CITY GROUPS

LEAVING THE LIGHT ON

REVELATION 21:1–22:5

LEADER GUIDE

Filled with the light of God's glory.
Nothing broken. Everything made new.



by Rick Melick

CAPITOL CITY CHURCH · DES MOINES, IOWA

A CONVERSATION ABOUT OUR FOREVER HOME

Start Here

Read the passages together. Ask questions, share your thoughts, and listen to one another.

This week: What will our forever home be like? Next week: What will we be doing?

Find your place

Leader background
1. Why is it different?
2. How will it look?
3. Who makes it great?
Closing conversation
Optional: What about animals?
Sources and reading notes

How to use the readings

The Bible passages are included with each question. NIV and The Message appear side by side. The Message sometimes groups several verses together; the verse range is shown. Short excerpts are labeled.

A simple 60-minute plan

5 min	Welcome and the opening question
10 min	Read the main Revelation sections
30 min	Choose two questions from each point
10 min	Closing responses

5 min Pray and offer private follow-up

Prepare to listen

Twelve questions are a menu, not a checklist. Readings reappear where needed so nobody needs a separate Bible. Choose NIV or The Message to read aloud; both are available for comparison. The notes explain the Bible passages and give you background for the discussion. Listen first; use the notes when an explanation would help.

Opening question

> **When you picture heaven, what comes to mind? Where did that picture come from - Scripture, something you were taught, movies, or your own imagination? It's okay if you aren't sure.**

LEADERS ONLY · BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

The Background That Helps

Where this scene fits

Revelation is addressed to seven churches (1:4, 11). John describes visions that call people to remain faithful to Jesus. In the sequence of Revelation 20:7-21:5, Satan's final defeat and final judgment precede the new heaven and earth. This series teaches a future thousand-year reign before that final home; Christians differ about the millennium. Keep this group focused on the final home rather than reopening the whole timeline.

Heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem

In 21:1-3, John sees a new heaven and earth and a city coming down from God. God lives with his people. The New Jerusalem is the Holy City in that new-creation vision, not a separate competing destination. This final hope should be distinguished from a believer's being with Christ after death before bodily resurrection.

What the pictures do

John uses comparison, numbers, a bride, a city, light, a river and a tree. Read what he says before filling gaps with imagination. Some evangelicals expect more literal architectural details; others emphasize the imagery's theological meaning. Either way, God's presence, the end of death and evil, and lasting life are explicit promises.

Words to explain simply

The Lamb: Jesus, who gave his life for our sins and rose again. Glory: God's greatness and splendor made known. Curse: the judgment and brokenness associated with human rebellion. Trinity: one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Jesus is fully God. Revelation's focus on God and the Lamb does not exclude the Spirit.

Stay close to what the Bible says

Use the passages to guide your answers. Explain which conclusions the Bible states directly and which are interpretations. Listen before responding to someone's fear or doubt. The source links are there so you can check the explanations. If the Bible does not answer a question, it is fine to say, "We don't know."

Background checks. Revelation 21–22 commentary, Bible.org ; Matthew 28:19 (NIV text verification) ; Philippians 1:23 (NIV text verification) ; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 (NIV text verification) .

READ TOGETHER · REVELATION 21:1-8

1 Why is it different?

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 1

God promises an end to death, tears, and pain. Which of those means the most to you right now?

NIV / REVELATION 21:1-5

1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the
first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and
there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the
new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.
3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look!
God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he
will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God
himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will
wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more
death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of
things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the
throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he
said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy
and true."

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:1

I saw Heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first
Heaven, gone the first earth, gone the sea.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:2

I saw Holy Jerusalem, new-created, descending
resplendent out of Heaven, as ready for God as a bride for

her husband.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:3-5

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: “Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They’re his people, he’s their God. He’ll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good - tears gone, crying gone, pain gone - all the first order of things gone.” The Enthroned continued, “Look! I’m making everything new. Write it all down - each word dependable and accurate.”

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 1

Text and background. Revelation 21:1-5 names a new creation, God living with his people, and the end of death, mourning, crying and pain. Verse 5 grounds hope in God’s promise to make everything new. These are promises about the final home; they do not say that faithful people avoid suffering now.

Listen for. People may choose different promises because their losses differ. A useful response points to an actual phrase in the reading and explains why it matters. There is no required emotional answer.

Careful here. Do not suggest that a person who still fears death has failed the discussion. Invite them to name what is difficult, or simply listen.

If helpful, ask. Is there a word here you would want to carry into a hard week?

Check the sources. NET Bible translators, Revelation 21 notes .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 2

When you think about being with Jesus, do you feel hopeful, anxious, or both? What do these verses show us about his love and how he will care for us?

NIV / REVELATION 21:3-4

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:3-5

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good - tears gone, crying gone, pain gone - all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down - each word dependable and accurate."

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 2

Text and background. In Revelation 21:3-4, God comes to live with his people and personally removes their tears. For someone afraid of being unwanted, John 6:37 presents Jesus as receiving those who come to him. Romans 8:1 places the believer's assurance in Christ; Romans 8:31-39

connects it with his death, resurrection and continuing care.

Listen for. Help the group connect God's presence with the tenderness in verse 4. Christian assurance rests on Jesus and his promises, not on how confident a person feels tonight. These promises concern life in Christ; they are not a statement that everyone is saved regardless of faith.

Careful here. Ask what makes meeting Jesus feel frightening before offering an explanation. Shame, grief and past experiences may be involved. Do not diagnose someone's faith publicly.

If helpful, ask. Which part of the way God treats his people here is hardest for you to believe?

Check the sources. John 6:37 (NIV text verification) ; Romans 8:1 (NIV text verification) ; Romans 8:31-39 (NIV text verification) .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 3

If a friend were grieving, how could you share this hope without making them feel they should stop being sad?

NIV / REVELATION 21:4

4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

NIV / ISAIAH 25:8 / EXCERPT

he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:3-5

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: “Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They’re his people, he’s their God. He’ll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good - tears gone, crying gone, pain gone - all the first order of things gone.” The Enthroned continued, “Look! I’m making everything new. Write it all down - each word dependable and accurate.”

THE MESSAGE / ISAIAH 25:6-8 / EXCERPT

Yes, he’ll banish death forever. And God will wipe the tears from every face.

Context in our own words. *Isaiah anticipates the end of death, tears, and the disgrace of God’s people.*

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 3

Text and background. Isaiah 25:8 anticipates the removal of death and tears; Revelation 21:4 echoes that hope. Jesus himself weeps at Lazarus’s death (John 11:33-36). Paul speaks of grieving with hope rather than forbidding grief (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Listen for. Look for practical care: listen, acknowledge the loss, offer company or help, and share the promise gently when welcome. The future end of grief does not make a present loss small.

Careful here. Do not promise the final destiny of a particular deceased person from this passage, or use a quick religious answer to end someone’s tears. Do not require personal stories.

If helpful, ask. What could you say - or do - that would help your friend feel less alone?

Check the sources. Revelation 21–22 commentary, Bible.org ; John 11:33-36 (NIV text verification) ; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NIV text verification) .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 4

God offers life as a gift, but he also warns that evil will be judged. What do you find reassuring - or hard to understand - about seeing those side by side?

NIV / REVELATION 21:6-8

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the
Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will
give water without cost from the spring of the water of
life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I
will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But the
cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the
sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the
idolaters and all liars - they will be consigned to the fiery
lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

NIV / EPHESIANS 2:8-9 / EXCERPT

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:6-8

Then he said, "It's happened. I'm A to Z. I'm the
Beginning, I'm the Conclusion. From Water-of-Life Well I
give freely to the thirsty. Conquerors inherit all this. I'll
be God to them, they'll be sons and daughters to me. But
for the rest - the feckless and faithless, degenerates and
murderers, sex peddlers and sorcerers, idolaters and all
liars - for them it's Lake Fire and Brimstone. Second
death!"

THE MESSAGE / EPHESIANS 2:7-10 / EXCERPT

Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it.

Context in our own words. *Paul describes salvation as God's gift rather than an achievement we can boast about. Good works follow God's saving work.*

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 4

Text and background. Revelation 21:6 offers life freely; verse 7 describes belonging and inheritance; verse 8 excludes evil from the final home. Ephesians 2:8-9 explains salvation as God's gift received through faith rather than something earned. Revelation 7:14 describes people made clean through the Lamb. The warning does not mean that anyone with a sinful past is beyond forgiveness.

Listen for. Grace and judgment address different questions: how God welcomes sinners, and whether evil will be allowed to continue. Receiving God's gift does not make evil harmless. Neither does the warning turn salvation into earning enough good points.

Careful here. Do not use "cowardly" in verse 8 to pronounce judgment on an anxious person. Utley relates this warning to unfaithfulness under pressure; that contextual interpretation is different from treating every experience of fear as rejection of Christ.

If helpful, ask. Does it help to see the invitation and the promise that evil will end together?

Check the sources. Revelation 7:14 (NIV text verification) ; Revelation 21–22 commentary, Bible.org .

READ TOGETHER · REVELATION 21:9-21

2 How will it look?

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 5

What catches your eye in John's description of the city? Is it different from the heaven you pictured growing up?

NIV / REVELATION 21:18-21

18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold,
as pure as glass. 19 The foundations of the city walls were
decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first
foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third
agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth
ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth
topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the
twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls,
each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the
city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:15-21

The Angel speaking with me had a gold measuring stick to measure the City, its gates, and its wall. The City was laid out in a perfect square. He measured the City with the measuring stick: fifteen hundred miles, its length, width, and height all equal. Using the standard measure, the Angel measured the thickness of its wall: seventy-two yards. The wall was jasper, the color of Glory, and the City was pure gold, translucent as glass. The foundations of the City walls were garnished with every precious gem imaginable: the first foundation jasper, the second

sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate a single pearl.

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 5

Text and background. John describes the city's brightness, enormous dimensions, gold, gemstones and pearl gates (Revelation 21:9-21). He also calls it the bride, so the vision communicates belonging as well as beauty. The city comes down from God into the new creation; it is not a picture of people existing forever as bodiless figures on clouds.

Listen for. Let people notice what is actually described before comparing it with inherited pictures of heaven. John repeatedly uses comparisons. A comparison can reveal something true without answering every question about the materials or architecture.

Careful here. Do not force a choice between a real promised future and meaningful imagery. Evangelical interpreters differ about how literally to read the measurements. The text's clear emphasis is God's glory and a home suited to his people.

If helpful, ask. Which part of the description would you most like to see?

Check the sources. Revelation 21–22 commentary, Bible.org .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 6

The names on the gates and foundations recall people from long before John's time. What does it mean to you that God has not forgotten them?

NIV / REVELATION 21:12-14

12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:12-14

The City shimmered like a precious gem, light-filled, pulsing light. She had a wall majestic and high with twelve gates. At each gate stood an Angel, and on the gates were inscribed the names of the Twelve Tribes of the sons of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, three gates on the west. The wall was set on twelve foundations, the names of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb inscribed on them.

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 6

Text and background. Revelation 21:12-14 puts Israel's tribal names on the gates and the apostles' names on the foundations. Ezekiel 48:30-35 already describes tribal gates and a city identified with the Lord's presence. John's vision connects the promised home with God's people across the biblical story.

Listen for. God remembering his people is a reasonable pastoral application of these names. Label it as a connection we draw, rather than a sentence the passage states verbatim. The picture encourages belonging across generations.

Careful here. Do not use this question to settle all debates about Israel and the church, identify which apostle replaces Judas, or claim that every person named in Israel's history is saved.

If helpful, ask. Does it change the picture for you to think of people from many generations sharing this home?

Check the sources. Ezekiel 48:30-35 (NIV text verification) ; Revelation 21–22 commentary, Bible.org .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 7

Have you heard that everyone gets a mansion in heaven? Jesus promises a place with him. What does that promise give us to look forward to, even without knowing what our homes will look like?

NIV / JOHN 14:1-3 / EXCERPT

My Father's house has many rooms

THE MESSAGE / JOHN 14:1-4 / EXCERPT

There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home.

Context in our own words. *Jesus comforts his troubled followers, calls them to trust him, and promises to prepare a place and bring them to be with him.*

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 7

Text and background. Jesus speaks to distressed disciples before his death (John 14:1-3). The NET translators explain that the Greek mone, plural monai, concerns a dwelling place, with a lasting relationship in view. The older English "mansion" did not necessarily mean a luxury estate. The central promise is a place with Jesus.

Listen for. Correct the oversized-house assumption gently: the verse does not promise every believer a private palace. It also does not rule out individual homes. John 14 and Revelation share the hope of being with God; John 14 does not give a street plan or fully explain the sequence from death to resurrection and the final new creation.

Careful here. Do not mock a childhood picture or tell someone there will be no homes. Read the promise positively: Jesus intends his people to be with him.

If helpful, ask. What changes when the emphasis moves from the size of a house to being wanted there?

Check the sources. NET Bible translators, John 14 notes 3-4 .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 8

Is it hard to imagine enjoying a place you can't fully picture? What would help you trust God with the parts you don't understand?

NIV / REVELATION 21:10-11

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem,

coming down out of heaven from God. [11] It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:9-12

One of the Seven Angels who had carried the bowls filled with the seven final disasters spoke to me: "Come here. I'll show you the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb." He took me away in the Spirit to an enormous, high mountain and showed me Holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God, resplendent in the bright glory of God.

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 8

Text and background. Revelation 21:10-11 shows a city coming from God and filled with his glory. The surrounding verses describe its beauty through comparisons; 21:5 calls God's words trustworthy. Scripture gives real promises without answering every question a reader can imagine.

Listen for. There is no need to manufacture certainty about the exact appearance of clear gold, the physics of light or every future experience. Invite people to distinguish what John says from what they are trying to fill in.

Careful here. Do not say that someone's difficulty imagining heaven proves weak faith. Do not use "beyond understanding" to avoid the concrete promises the passage does give.

If helpful, ask. What do we already know about God here that makes the unknown feel less unsettling?

> **Check the sources.** NET Bible translators, Revelation 21 notes .

READ TOGETHER · REVELATION 21:22-22:5

3 Who makes it great?

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 9

John says there is no temple building because God himself is there with his people. How do you think being close to God then will be different from what we experience now?

NIV / REVELATION 21:22-23

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:21-27

The main street of the City was pure gold, translucent as glass. But there was no sign of a Temple, for the Lord God - the Sovereign-Strong - and the Lamb are the Temple. The City doesn't need sun or moon for light. God's Glory is its light, the Lamb its lamp! The nations will walk in its light and earth's kings bring in their splendor. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there won't be any night. They'll bring the glory and honor of the nations into the City. Nothing dirty or defiled will get into the City, and no one who defiles or deceives. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will get in.

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 9

Text and background. Revelation 21:22 explicitly identifies the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb as the city's temple. Verse 23 makes God's glory and the Lamb its light. The city's equal dimensions in 21:16 also recall the cubic inner sanctuary in 1 Kings 6:20; that connection is an interpretation supported by the similar shape.

Listen for. The absence of a temple building means no separate sanctuary is needed in this city. God's people live in his presence. This does not imply that believers have no relationship with him now, or that Christian gathering is pointless.

Careful here. Jesus is fully God. Christians confess one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Matthew 28:19 names all three. This vision's focus on God and the Lamb does not mean the Holy Spirit is absent.

If helpful, ask. What might it be like never to wonder whether God is near?

Check the sources. 1 Kings 6:20 (NIV text verification) ; Matthew 28:19 (NIV text verification) ; John 1:1 (NIV text verification) .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 10

John calls Jesus "the Lamb" - the one who gave his life for us. How does that shape the way you picture the person at the center of this city?

NIV / REVELATION 21:22-23

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God
Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does
not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory
of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:21-27

The main street of the City was pure gold, translucent as glass. But there was no sign of a Temple, for the Lord God - the Sovereign-Strong - and the Lamb are the Temple. The City doesn't need sun or moon for light. God's Glory is its light, the Lamb its lamp! The nations will walk in its light and earth's kings bring in their splendor. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there won't be any night. They'll bring the glory and honor of the nations into the City. Nothing dirty or defiled will get into the City, and no one who defiles or deceives. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will get in.

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 10

Text and background. Revelation 5:6-10 shows a Lamb who was slain and yet stands alive. The song explains his death as purchasing people for God from many peoples and nations. That earlier scene explains the repeated title in Revelation 21. Jesus is not a literal animal or a lesser divine being.

Listen for. The one at the center of the final home is the same Jesus who gave himself for people and rose again. His authority and his self-giving love belong together. The title is part of the reason Christians can trust his welcome.

Careful here. Explain the title before asking for a response. Avoid assuming that everyone knows sacrifice language or has already understood why Jesus died.

If helpful, ask. What does that tell you about the kind of ruler Jesus is?

Check the sources. Revelation 5:6-10 (NIV text verification) .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 11

What would it be like to live somewhere you never had to worry about being hurt or deceived?

NIV / REVELATION 21:25-27

25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be
no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will
be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it,
nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful,
but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's
book of life.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:21-27

The main street of the City was pure gold, translucent as glass. But there was no sign of a Temple, for the Lord God - the Sovereign-Strong - and the Lamb are the Temple. The City doesn't need sun or moon for light. God's Glory is its light, the Lamb its lamp! The nations will walk in its light and earth's kings bring in their splendor. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there won't be any night. They'll bring the glory and honor of the nations into the City. Nothing dirty or defiled will get into the City, and no one who defiles or deceives. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will get in.

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 11

Text and background. Revelation 21:25-27 holds two things together: the gates are never shut, and nothing impure or deceitful enters. There is no night. Verse 27 also identifies the inhabitants with the Lamb's book of life. The welcome is secure because evil cannot corrupt it.

Listen for. The open gates picture safety rather than the possibility that harm may slip through. The text promises an end to impurity and deception, not better security procedures for managing continuing evil.

Careful here. Let people speak generally. Do not invite public descriptions of abuse or pressure anyone to explain why safety matters. Do not turn "unclean" into a label for a hurting person; Revelation 7:14 points to cleansing through Jesus.

If helpful, ask. Which everyday worry would disappear in a place like that?

Check the sources. Revelation 7:14 (NIV text verification) .

LET'S TALK / QUESTION 12

In Genesis, people are shut out of the garden. Here, the curse is gone and God's people see his face. What do you like about the Bible's story ending this way?

NIV / REVELATION 22:1-4

[1] Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb [2] down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life,

bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. [3] No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. [4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

NIV / GENESIS 3:22-24 / EXCERPT

to guard the way to the tree of life.

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 22:1-5

Then the Angel showed me Water-of-Life River, crystal bright. It flowed from the Throne of God and the Lamb, right down the middle of the street. The Tree of Life was planted on each side of the River, producing twelve kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit each month. The leaves of the Tree are for healing the nations. Never again will anything be cursed. The Throne of God and of the Lamb is at the center. His servants will offer God service - worshiping, they'll look on his face, their foreheads mirroring God. Never again will there be any night. No one will need lamplight or sunlight. The shining of God, the Master, is all the light anyone needs. And they will rule with him age after age after age.

THE MESSAGE / GENESIS 3:23-24 / EXCERPT

guarding the path to the Tree-of-Life.

Context in our own words. *After human disobedience, God sends the people from Eden and guards access to the tree of life. Compare that exclusion with Revelation's restored access and the removal of the curse.*

LEADER HELP · QUESTION 12

Text and background. Genesis 3:22-24 describes people sent out of Eden and the guarded way to the tree of life.

Revelation 22:1-4 shows the river, tree of life, the end of the curse and people seeing God's face. Compare Exodus 33:20, where Moses cannot see God's face and live. The contrast underlines a transformed relationship with God.

Listen for. The ending includes restored life, belonging and direct fellowship, not merely attractive scenery. The river comes from God and the Lamb; God remains the source of life. The leaves' healing imagery does not cancel 21:4 by requiring continuing disease.

Careful here. Do not invent a medical process or a schedule for how the nations are healed. Service and reigning appear in the text, but next week develops what we will do.

If helpful, ask. Which part of that ending would you want a worried friend to hear?

Check the sources. Exodus 33:20 (NIV text verification) ; NET Bible translators, Revelation 22 notes .

CLOSE WITH HOPE, WITHOUT RUSHING PEOPLE

One Thing to Take With You

What does this passage teach us that can help us face death without fear?

It's okay if fear is still part of your answer. You can share, listen, or ask to talk privately.

READ AGAIN / REVELATION 21:3-4

NIV / REVELATION 21:3-4

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

THE MESSAGE / REVELATION 21:3-5

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good - tears gone, crying gone, pain gone - all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down - each word dependable and accurate."

Pray together

Thank God for one promise from the reading. Make room to pray for people facing grief, fear or uncertainty. Nobody needs to share more than they want to.

When someone is not sure God wants them

Ask what they mean before answering. John 6:37 presents Jesus as welcoming those who come to him; Romans 8:1 speaks of no condemnation in Christ. Offer to read and talk privately. Avoid either declaring someone unsaved because they are anxious or offering assurance with no reference to Jesus.

Check. John 6:37 (NIV text verification) ; Romans 8:1 (NIV text verification) .

OPTIONAL · SUPPORTING CONVERSATION

What About Animals?

Would the possibility of animals make you look forward to this home more? Some Bible teachers think there are good biblical reasons to expect them, but the Bible doesn't promise that a particular pet will be there. How do you feel about that?

LEADER HELP · OPTIONAL CONVERSATION

What the supporting passages say

Romans 8:19-23 describes creation's future liberation from decay. Isaiah 65:25 pictures peaceful animals. Isaiah 65:20 also speaks of death, while Revelation 21:4 excludes death from the final home. These are context summaries, not Scripture quotations.

Why some expect animals

Some teachers connect the liberation of creation in Romans 8 with animals as part of that creation, and draw on Isaiah's peaceable animals and the restoration of Eden. Others note that Isaiah 11 and 65 name animals and that their variety belongs to God's good creation. Most distinguish human redemption from animal life.

What we can responsibly say

There are biblical reasons for expecting animals. Christians differ about how Isaiah's animal pictures relate to the millennium, the final new earth, and symbolic peace. Revelation 21:1-22:5 does not settle specific species

or the return of a particular pet. Do not treat anyone's expectation as a new promise.

A gracious response

Someone may be grieving an animal they loved. Acknowledge the loss. You can say, "The Bible gives us reasons to expect animals, but I can't promise what it doesn't tell us about a particular pet." Avoid minimizing either their grief or the central promise of life with God.

CHECK THE TEXT · FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE

Sources and Reading Notes

Scripture is the basis of this guide. The research sources below are Protestant evangelical works used for language, background and identified interpretations. Their conclusions must be checked against the biblical text. No one's opinion creates an additional promise.

NET Bible translators, John 14 notes 3-4

Greek meaning and translation history of mone / monai; permanent dwelling and relationship with Jesus.

NET Bible translators, Revelation 21 notes

Translation notes, including the dwelling-place language of 21:3. Use as a linguistic aid.

NET Bible translators, Revelation 22 notes

Notes on the river, tree, monthly fruit and removal of anything accursed.

Revelation 21–22 commentary, Bible.org

Old Testament connections and interpretive alternatives. Its symbolic readings are interpretations, not the only evangelical view.

John 1:1 (NIV text verification)

The Word is identified as God.

Philippians 1:23 (NIV text verification)

Being with Christ after death.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 (NIV text verification)

Those who belong to Christ are raised at his coming.

John 6:37 (NIV text verification)

Jesus promises to receive those who come to him.

Romans 8:1 (NIV text verification)

No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:31-39 (NIV text verification)

Christ died, rose and intercedes; death cannot sever the love of God in Christ.

John 11:33-36 (NIV text verification)

Jesus grieves at Lazarus's death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NIV text verification)

Christian hope does not remove present grief.

Revelation 5:6-10 (NIV text verification)

The living Lamb was slain and purchased people for God.

Revelation 7:14 (NIV text verification)

The Lamb makes his people clean.

1 Kings 6:20 (NIV text verification)

The inner sanctuary has equal length, width and height.

Ezekiel 48:30-35 (NIV text verification)

Tribal names on gates; the city is associated with the Lord's presence.

Exodus 33:20 (NIV text verification)

Moses cannot see God's face and live; compare Revelation 22:4.

Matthew 28:19 (NIV text verification)

Father, Son and Holy Spirit named together.

Romans 8:19-23 (NIV text verification)

Creation's liberation from decay.

Isaiah 65:20-25 (NIV text verification)

Peaceful animals, but also a reference to death; do not transfer every detail unqualified into Revelation 21.

Supporting Bible passages

Isaiah 25:8 / NIV

Isaiah 25:8 / The Message

Ephesians 2:8-9 / NIV

Ephesians 2:8-9 / The Message

John 14:1-3 / NIV

John 14:1-3 / The Message

Genesis 3:22-24 / NIV

Genesis 3:22-24 / The Message

About the supplied primary readings

Quoted Revelation text is taken from the material supplied for Rick's teaching packet. The NIV verse numbers and The Message's grouped ranges are retained. Readings beside a question may include a wider Message range. Supplemental quotations are clearly marked as short excerpts; summaries are labeled as our own words. They are not substitutes silently presented as full passages.

NIV © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 Biblica, Inc. The Message © 1993, 2002, 2018 Eugene H. Peterson. Cover art is an artistic interpretation, not an architectural reconstruction.