Strength for the Journey

"New City People"

Rev. 21-22:6



"New City People"

Lesson 1

Lesson 2 Lesson 3

Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you to watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell observes that life without heaven is like the referees calling the game at halftime when your favorite football team is playing terrible and losing, even though there is no question that they are going to come back and win.

- What is the most amazing come-from-behind victory you can remember?
- What does Joe mean when he says that heaven is what takes the question marks and turns them into exclamation points?

Strength through Scripture:

Read Revelation 21:1-22:3.

- 1. Joe talks about the Forbes magazine 75th anniversary issue, which examined the question, "Why do we feel so bad when we have it so good?" How would you answer that question?
- 2. Do you agree with Peggy Noonan, who wrote in her response that happiness, and in a way life itself, is overrated, and that we are the first generation to actually expect to find happiness here on earth—even though our search for it has caused such unhappiness?
- 3. How guilty are you of tipping your hat to heaven but then living as though this is the only world that you have?

Notes:

"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."

Rev. 21:1

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Notes:

- 4. In this segment Joe outlines 12 stunning descriptions of heaven found in Revelation 21:1–22:3. Heaven is . . .
- 1. holy; a pure, perfect, unique place—like nothing you have ever experienced (21:1-2)
- 2. beautiful, like a bride (21:2)
- 3. a place of unhindered, eternal fellowship and relationship with the Almighty God (21:3)
- 4. a place of no sorrow, no disappointment, no brokenness—for ever and ever (21:4)
- 5. incredibly roomy (21:12-16)
- 6. extravagant in its abundant beauty (21:18-21)
- 7. forever illumined by the radiant light flowing from the Almighty God (21:22-23)
- 8. a place of continual parades, where the kings of the nations present their honor before the true King of kings (21:24,26)
- 9. a safe place, where the gates stay open all the time (21:25)
- 10. a place with no people problems or crime, as the only people there will be redeemed and bestowed with absolute righteous (21:27)
- 11. a place of constant healing and refreshing life (22:1-2)
- 12. a place where the curse on this broken world is no more (21:3)

Do you find any of these points to be new or particularly striking?

5. What is the cumulative effect of reflecting on all these descriptions?

Digging Deeper:

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

- 1. How do you respond to Joe's statement that nearly every spiritual dysfunction in our lives is somehow related to the fact that heaven does not have a hold on us?
- 2. What did C. S. Lewis mean when he said, "Aim at heaven and you'll get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you'll get neither"?
- 3. Do you think the church today needs more sermons on hell or more sermons on heaven?

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Notes:

Strength through Reflection:

- 1. How often do you think about heaven?
- 2. Do your values and lifestyle reflect a belief that we are but "strangers and aliens" on this earth and that this world is not our home?

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Thank God for making you a part of His "new city people.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Thank You, Father, for the reality of these stunning descriptions of heaven found in Your Word. Thank You for the gift of redemption through Your Son Jesus, which qualifies me to be one of Your 'new city people.' Help me to turn my thoughts toward heaven each day—and to translate those thoughts into an attitude of hope, confidence, and courage."

Closing Call to Action:

How much time do you spend thinking about heaven each day? Create a way in which you can keep heaven on your mind—like a little sign or note on a mirror, on your dashboard, or in your wallet. Then ask God to help you translate that symbol into thoughts of hope and confidence and courage that ultimately heaven is where God is taking us.

Let it be a visual reminder that in the midst of disappointment this world is not the only world we have and that, in the midst of confusion or a tragic event, the best is yet to come. We'll find that our spirits will step up on the platform where we can gaze ahead and see the gates.