

As we look back at the amazing Story of Faith and the thread of God's redemption and salvation traced throughout the bible, we hope you have seen that this was no accident. God intended for us to see His Glory through His plan to save sinful humanity through the sacrificial death of His own Son. The covenants and promises in the Old Testament, and everything the prophets spoke about, came true in Jesus. In fact, the original promise to Abraham to bless the world (Genesis 12:1-3) narrowed down to one nation, one family, and eventually one person.

And we finally see the full scope of God's worldwide promise here in the closing chapters of Revelation.

The Story of Faith did not end with Christ's death and resurrection 2,000 years ago. You and I are still very much a part of the story, as we are called to continue sharing the gospel and making disciples until the day Jesus returns. When that occurs, sin will be judged and both death and Hades will finally and fully disappear (Revelation 20:14). Then, God's people will live with Him forever (Revelation 21:3).

Until we get there, however, we won't really understand what it means to live with God in the new heaven and new earth. It promises to be far greater than anything you and I can imagine, which means we won't be sitting around on clouds playing harps for all eternity! There will be no more sin, pain, sorrow, or death. And the comment about there being no more sea could be about the new geography, but it might also be a reference to no more danger, fear, and anxiety either, since the sea was thought of as something threatening and perilous in the ancient world.

Ultimately, thanks to Jesus, our Messiah and King, we will finally live as God intended, under His perfect rule, in the place He prepared for us, living with Him forever. Here, finally, the covenants with Abraham, Judah, Israel, and David will see their fulfillments as the royal offspring reigns forever over God's redeemed people.

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REVELATION 20:11 - 21:4 (ESV)

Judgment Before the Great White Throne

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTIONS

on your own, with family, or with your small group

Revelation 20:11-15 is about judgment. Compare and contrast this passage with Matthew 25:31-46. Are believers going to face judgment? If so, how will it differ from what unbelievers face?

How does Revelation 21:1-4 give you hope right now to faithfully follow Jesus? In what ways have you misplaced your hope for the future?

Revelation 21:3 speaks of God dwelling among humanity and wiping away every tear. How does this promise offer comfort and hope in our current world of suffering and loss?

How does Revelation 21:3 shape your understanding of God's presence in your life?

How should we act knowing that the God of the universe wants to live with us?