

## Week 12 - Final Restoration

### *The Joy of Being In Christ, Forever!*

#### Learning Objectives

- Gain a better understanding of what we can hope to experience in Heaven.
- Process how we live our lives on Earth while holding onto the promises God shares about Heaven.

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**Pray for our time together.**

**?** What do you think of when you hear the words “Heaven” or “heavenly”?

*Possible Answers: I think about big gates, clouds, and harps. Death. Being with Jesus. Something that’s above normal satisfaction/standards. Food or drinks can be marketed as a taste of Heaven, a bath or lotion can feel heavenly.*

*Leader’s Note: If you want a representation of one way Heaven is portrayed in culture, check out this video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=74&v=hwWzHqipWug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=74&v=hwWzHqipWug)*

**Read Out Loud:** This is the final study in our Reformation series. We've spent a lot of time talking about who we are, who God is, and how He cares for us. In this study we're going to wrap things up by discussing the final restoration found in Heaven. The end times can be a controversial topic, much like the others we've discussed in this series. Our goal will be to focus on what God has promised and how that impacts us while we're still on Earth.

**?** Why is it helpful to think about Heaven when we need to live our lives as Christ followers now on Earth?

*Possible Answers: It helps us put our current struggles and realities in perspective. It gives us something more to hope for.*

*Leader’s Note: We encourage you to keep bunny trails to a minimum in this discussion, but if needed, here are some additional passages regarding Heaven. Please note that there are many different opinions on what the Bible says about the end times and what they will look like; they are not the priority of this study. The important thing to focus on is that we’ll be face to face with God!*

- *Philippians 1:21-24 (to be with Christ is better by far)*
- *Romans 8:22-24 (all creation groans)*
- *Titus 2:11-13 (live holy lives while you wait for Christ's return)*
- *1 Peter 1:3-9 (joy in the salvation of your souls)*
- *Matt 22:30, 22:23-28 (marriage in heaven)*
- *1 Corinthians 15:35-44 (about what kind of body we will have in heaven)*

- *Matthew 28:16-20 (Great Commission)*
- *1 Cor. 15:19 (if Christians only get this life, we are to be pitied)*

Optional Transition: In our first passage, the apostle Paul shares with the church in Corinth some of the “mystery” of the end times.

**Read Out Loud: 1 Corinthians 15:50-56 (NIV)**

<sup>50</sup> I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

<sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— <sup>52</sup>in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised

imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup>For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup>When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

<sup>55</sup>“Where, O death, is your victory?  
Where, O death, is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup>But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Leader’s Note: If it comes up, vs. 55 is referencing Hosea 13:14.*

**?** What imagery comes to mind when you read vs. 53? Why?

*Possible Answers: A crystal forming around a core of something alive, like a bee in amber; a person who is sick and dying suddenly changing to be strong and healthy and whole; a flower or leaf being dipped in gold and preserved perfectly but better than it was before.*

**?** In what way does the law allow sin to have power (vs. 56)?

*Possible Answers: You may want to see Romans 7:7-10 as well as Romans 5:12-14. The law defined what was righteous and what was sinful; because humans became aware of the law, they became aware of their sin. Because humans are fallen and broken, we choose sin instead of righteousness. For example, if there’s a wilderness, you can drive there as fast as you want and it doesn’t break the law. But if someone builds a road there and sets a speed limit, if you break the speed limit you are breaking the law, even though you wouldn’t have been if you had driven that same speed in that same place earlier.*

**Hope’s Elder Statement of Faith**

14.3

We believe that the end of all things in this age will be the beginning of a never-ending, ever-increasing happiness in the hearts of the redeemed, as God displays more and more of His infinite and inexhaustible greatness and glory for the enjoyment of His people (Ephesians 2:6-7; Psalm 16:11; 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2:9).

? What hope do we have despite the power of sin?

*Possible Answers: We have the victory through God and Jesus Christ! Sin owns us no longer, and will not touch us in Heaven.*

? Optional: What are you looking forward to most in life right now? How does that impact your desire for being with Christ in Heaven?

*Possible Answers: I'm looking forward to a promotion, a child, a boyfriend/girlfriend, a movie/game/TV show/concert, a personal project getting completed. Comparing that excitement and desire with my desire for Heaven makes me realize that I am more emotional about now, even though Heaven is way better than now ever could be!*

? Why is it difficult for us to let go of the “perishable”?

*Possible Answers: We struggle with believing that God actually desires (and knows) what's best for our lives. This is our only experience, and it's hard to imagine something better. As image bearers, we're made to love and care for those around us like Christ. We have an incorrect understanding of Heaven.*

Optional Transition: Though it may depend on your life and circumstances, it can sometimes be hard for us to believe that what awaits us in Heaven is actually better than what we can find on Earth. Sometimes the promises can feel elusive and intangible. We're going to look at two passages of Scripture next that highlight the differences between our experiences with God now and what it will be when we get to Heaven.

*Leader's Note: If needed, share the following background information on this passage with your group members.*

*In this passage we see Moses, during the Israelite period of wandering in the wilderness, in regular communion with God. “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend,” (Exodus 33:11) yet Moses still had a desire to interact with God even more.*

**Read Out Loud: Exodus 33:18-23, 34:4-7 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

<sup>19</sup> And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>20</sup> But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

<sup>21</sup> Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. <sup>22</sup> When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.” ...

**34** <sup>4</sup> So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

**?** Scripture does not hide Moses’s imperfections nor the depth of his relationship with the Lord. What do you think compels Moses to make this request of God? What holds you back from making seemingly “big requests” of God?

*Possible Answers: Moses craved closeness with God and intimate understanding of who and what He is. He wanted to be special and really see and understand the one he was obeying and worshiping. We worry that God will say no and that will mean we are bad for wanting what we want, or that we are unloved, or that we are insufficient in some way and are being punished.*

**?** What does God’s protection of Moses in this passage say about human limitations compared to God’s incredible personhood? How does it affect our perception of why God sometimes tells us “no”?

*Possible Answers: God’s presence was something that He could grant to Moses, but like a kind and wise father He knew His child’s limitations. Moses needed to be protected, because he could not bear the full weight of the glory of God and survive. Likewise, we sometimes ask for things that are good but are beyond our ability to bear, or are not God’s best plan; we can trust that His nos are as kind as His yeses, and that He has our well-being always in His loving mind.*

**Read Out Loud:** Moses demonstrates a longing for something more in his relationship with the Lord—an intimacy that even as he’s shown God’s presence, he’s still unable to fully experience. This idea is often referred to as a sense of “holy discontentment.” It reflects the unrest in our hearts as they recognize there’s something more that we simply can’t find on this Earth.

**?** Where do you feel the most discontentment in your life? What is your response to those feelings?

*Leader’s Note: Depending on your group, this may be a hard question to ask. We encourage you to lead with vulnerability here to help others open up as well.*

Heaven is not here, it’s There. If we were given all we wanted here, our hearts would settle for this world rather than the next. God is forever luring us up and away from this one, wooing us to Himself and His still invisible Kingdom, where we will certainly find what we so keenly long for.  
~Elizabeth Elliot, *Keep A Quiet Heart*

**?** In what ways is holy discontentment a good thing? How can we discern the difference between holy discontentment and earthly discontentment?

*Possible Answers: See Romans 8:22-24. Holy discontentment reminds us that our eternal home and place is not here on Earth. Instead, we need to keep an eternal, Heaven-oriented mindset with a focus on sharing Christ's love and truth with those around us, so that they may join us in eternity with God! Holy discontentment often comes from a sense that things just aren't right. It's a feeling and knowledge that something is broken or missing, and that we see promised to be made whole in the Bible. Earthly discontentment often springs out of boredom, jealousy, bodily discomfort, and irritation. We need to be sure that we aren't grumbling, but instead keep our minds and hearts on the prize: Heaven.*

Optional Transition: The end of Revelation talks about Heaven: what to expect, what joy and life we will have there, and believers' relationship with God for eternity. It's not wrong to want something more, because we are made for something more.

**Read Out Loud: Revelation 21:1-5, 22-27 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> '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."

<sup>5</sup> 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."

...

<sup>22</sup> I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. <sup>27</sup> 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.

*Leader's Note: If desired, please feel free to read the rest of the passage.*

**?** How does this description of the way believers will interact with God contrast with how Moses could in Exodus 33-34?

*Possible Answers: We no longer need any sort of protection from God's presence. We get to fully know God in all His glory. God "dwells" with His people rather than being separate from them.*

**?** What are the promises to believers in this passage? Which of these promises excite you the most, and why?

*Possible Answers: There will be no more pain or suffering. We will be comforted. We will be fully in God's presence at last. We will experience a new reality that's different from all we've experienced up until this point.*

? What does the term "restoration" mean? How will that be reflected in Heaven?

*Possible Answers: Noun: **restoration**: the action of returning something to a former owner, place, or condition (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Things will return to the way that they were always intended to be in the Garden of Eden, before the Fall. We will be restored to a right relationship with God, and all other broken things will be made right and new as well.*

? Where do we see glimpses of restoration while still on Earth?

*Possible Answers: Seeing broken relationships reconciled. When people choose to put others above themselves. Recovering from illness. People coming to believe in Christ and His promises. We see glimpses of this in the way Jesus interacted with people in the Bible through healings (e.g. Luke 8), demonstrations of authority (Mark 4), comforting those around Him (John 11), etc.*

? Optional: Where do you wish for restoration in your life?

*Possible Answers: I wish for restoration of my current relationship that is struggling, for restoration of my failing health, for restoration of the relationship I had with loved ones I lost, for restoration of my ability to reach and use my gifts, etc. This question may make people feel vulnerable; leaders, please lead with honesty and gentleness.*

? How do we live in the tension between a longing for total restoration and the reality of brokenness on Earth?

*Possible Answers: Even though we hunger for Heaven and what will come, God did not make a mistake putting us here on Earth! He has a plan for all of our time spent here, and thus we live for and serve Him.*

? In what ways does having an understanding of Heaven and the restoration we will find there impact your desire to share this hope with those around you? What might that look like?

### **For Discussion And Accountability**

? What perishable thing do you feel called to release your hold on this week?

? How can we live intentionally with the hope and joy of Heaven in mind?