

# Session 4

## THE STORY OF RESTORATION

*John 1:10-13; Revelation 21:1-4*

### Memory Verse

*<sup>3</sup> Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God.*

– REVELATION 21:3-4, CSB

## The Story of Restoration

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** The incarnation, sinless life, and sacrificial death of God the Son is the only hope that sinners have to cling to. His work extends to the end of the age and beyond. It results in complete reconciliation between people and God. Furthermore, it allows the people of God to enjoy an everlasting existence free from the effects of sin's curse.

❓ Do you think internal values or external rewards are more effective motivational factors in people's lives?

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❓ What should motivate Christians to serve Christ?

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Christians are motivated people because their existence is saturated with meaning. Every conversation, every household chore, every family meal is meaningful because Christians are living for a God who is active in their lives and accomplishing his eternal purposes through them.

We may not always be aware of it, but we all have longings for deeper meaning. In one way or another, every person will spend time today seeking meaning and fulfillment. This meaning is what motivates them to do what they do. Money, power, possessions, and sex (among many other things) serve as motivating factors for many people, even Christians. Yet God has called believers to be moved, motivated, and transformed by something completely different.

## Session Summary

We live in a world filled with suffering, pain, conflict, and disease. The Bible promises it will not always be this way. Creation itself will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth. Every tear will be wiped away, grief and sickness and pain and conflict and even death will be defeated once and for all. Owen Strachan wrote, “We may sense our inadequacy and feel that our future is uncertain, but the Word of God assures us that the Lord is leading history to its rightful conclusion in Christ. He is in charge. He will keep his word. His promises will not fail.”<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Extent of Jesus’ Work (John 1:13; Revelation 21:1-2)

Jesus’ finished work on the cross is the essence of the Christian faith. Without it, Christians have no reason to hope, rejoice, or obey. With it, Christians should be the most hopeful, joyful, and sacrificial people on the face of the planet. After all, who could contain the joy produced by a true reception of the incredible promises of God’s word to His children? Who would be more hopeful in the face of such brokenness than those who have read the end of the story found in Revelation 21?

However, many Christians struggle to see the connection between what John wrote in the first chapter of his gospel and what is written at the end of Revelation. The astounding promises and description found in Revelation 21, however, can’t be properly taken hold of unless one first gets his or her arms around John 1.

#### What is the promise in John 1:12?

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As you study Scripture, it can be helpful to remember this acronym: SPECKA. It is a simple grid of questions that a student of the Bible can ask as he reads in order to think more carefully about how it applies today. The questions are:

- Is there a Sin to avoid?
- Is there a Promise to believe?
- Is there a good/bad Example to learn from?
- Is there a Command to obey?
- Is there Knowledge to gain?
- How does this Apply to my life today?

The Word of God promises in John 1:12 that those who receive Jesus and believe in His name will be given the right to become children of God. Here, John is referring to the moment when God saves someone and adopts them to be a part of His family. In this moment they are justified, which means they are declared righteous and not guilty of sin.

**?** How is God able to justify someone and declare them not guilty when they are, in fact, guilty of sin?

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Romans 3:26 says, “God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.” God is able to both justify (declare righteous) sinners while remaining just (righteous) because the punishment for the sinner’s sin was dealt with. The sin-debt on those He declared not guilty was paid off. Colossians 2:14 says, “He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.”

**?** What does Jesus’ work on the cross have to do with His second coming and the promises that we read about in Revelation 21 (new heaven and new earth, effects of sin erased)?

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First of all, Jesus’ work on the cross extends to all creation for all of time. This means that Jesus defeated sin and its curses on the cross, and although they still linger in this world as God the Father completes His work of saving souls, there will come

a time when the curse will be put away for good. It sounds like a fairy tale to us because we have only known the curse. We were born in sin and we are confronted with the bitter effects of sin at every turn. Our years are punctuated by funerals, sicknesses, and broken relationships. We experience sadness when all around seems to be well. Our souls long for a true home. An existence without these bitter herbs hardly makes sense to us. Yet, it is what God intends and has planned for His own.

Secondly, those who have been justified by God and adopted into His family will be kept by God until the end. They will persevere in the faith unto death no matter what storm or floods arise and beat against them. No trial will ever be able to move them from the rock to which their faith has been anchored. This is true because they are kept by the power of God for salvation. Not one of them will ever be snatched from the power of God's grip. In fact, the Scriptures say that God's children are engraved on the palms of His hands and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity. (Isaiah 49:16; Revelation 17:8)

**?** Application: Have you examined yourself to be assured that you are saved (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10)? If so, and you have assurance that you are a Christian, how does it make you feel to know that you are kept by God's power?

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## 2. God's Dwelling with Man (John 1:10a, 11a; Revelation 21:3)

One of John's primary objectives in chapter 1 of his gospel is to emphasize and affirm the fact that Jesus actually dwelt among us, that He really came in the flesh. He wrote, "He was in the world," (10a), "he came to his own," (11a), and "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (14a)

**?** Why is the incarnation so significant to the Christian faith?

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There is no gospel without the incarnation. If Jesus didn't take on flesh, then He didn't obey the law in our place as a man and He didn't suffer the penalty of sin in our place as a man. But there is another reason Jesus' coming to dwell among His creation is important. In Genesis 1 we read that God and man dwelled together in peace and harmony. That, of course, is lost in Genesis 3 with the entrance of the cancer of sin into the human heart. We don't see that kind of relationship between God and man again until Revelation 21. From Genesis 3 until the book of Revelation is the story of God's redemption of His creation in order to recover what was lost in Genesis 3. When Jesus came on the scene, His appearance was both a reminder of Genesis 1 and a foreshadowing of Revelation 21.


**?** What does Revelation 21:3 say? Is the promise of God dwelling among us a big deal? Why or why not?

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Christians receive the promise that “God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and will be their God” (Revelation 21:4) perhaps with mixed feelings. This ought to be one of the most comforting, joyous promises in all of Scripture, but some believers aren’t sure how to take it. Here is the problem—if a person doesn’t have a proper view of God and the gospel, the prospect of being in God’s presence could be unsettling or terrifying. Ligon Duncan wrote, “Hell is eternity in the presence of God without a mediator. Heaven is eternity in the presence of God, with a mediator.”<sup>2</sup>

For the stained sinner, the idea of being in the presence of the one true and most holy God is nightmarish, as it should be. But those that have been born again have been made clean by the blood of Christ. A person who truly understands the gospel will realize that there is no longer anything to fear in God’s presence. To the contrary, true believers will recognize that God’s presence is their home. The restless longing for home and the unexplained sadness is done away with in God’s presence because God is the source and aim of those deep yearnings for a true place of rest. That’s why Jesus said, “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).


 Application: Does the idea of being in the presence of God give you a sense of relief or dread? Why?

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### 3. The Effects of Sin Banished (Revelation 21:4)

The fourth verse in Revelation describes something that we can try to imagine: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.” Jesus’ work on the cross not only made a way for us to dwell again with our Creator, but it also defeated and did away with the curse of sin. It is true that we still toil in a sin-infected world, but it is passing away, and those who are in Christ look toward a home that is free from these horrors.

 What is heaven like according to this verse? What ideas have you picked up about heaven (biblical or not)?

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If we are going to keep heaven in view to help us walk by faith, in the Spirit, and with the Lord now, we should have an accurate vision. Revelation 21:4 describes a place and existence that is free from sin and its effects. Holiness will characterize heaven (Jude 1:24; 1 John 3:2). We will be holy as God is holy. Holiness means set apart from the mundane, especially that which is sinful. The Bible says that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1). We will be completely free from and separated from sin and our sin nature in heaven.

Our bodies will also be different. Death will be a distant memory. 2 Corinthians 5:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:4 indicate that our physical bodies become something different. This is often referred to a “glorified body.” People often think in terms of superhero-type powers when they think of what sort of bodies we will have in heaven. After all, Jesus was able to appear out of thin air after His resurrection. Will we be able to do the same? Maybe. But that’s not the main thing. The wonder and glory of our

physical bodies in heaven is that they will be untouched by sin. All of the ways that our bodies betray us now will no longer plague us in heaven. Our bodies won't wear out, they won't become diseased, they won't die.

A Christian's time in heaven will have no end. It will be an eternal existence. That's impossible for us to fully comprehend, and it may even scare some of us. But remember, all of the things that make us want to roll the clock forward here on earth won't exist in heaven. It may be helpful to think about the hours or days in your life when you wish time would stop because it was so wonderful. That's what heaven will be like every moment. There won't be any ticking clock that we wish would speed up. Our hearts will be so full of joy, love, and peace that time will be irrelevant.

One of the curses of sin is our constant effort to hide sin from those around us. We cut ourselves off from those closest to us because of the darkness that we still battle against. In heaven, when all that darkness is banished, we will be fully known by fellow children of God and by God himself. It's true that we are fully known by God here and now, but the intimacy and immediacy of that relationship in heaven will be without compare. Similarly, our fellowship with other believers in heaven will be much greater than what experience now.



**Application:** Is there any idea about heaven that you have that is inaccurate or unbiblical? Does it have a negative effect on your walk with Christ now?

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## Conclusion

The gospel of Jesus Christ has to do with today, tomorrow, and all eternity. Jesus' shed blood on the cross gives Christians the relief of forgiven sins today and the joy of an eternity with God forever.



**?** What is your understanding of the work of Jesus? Why did he come and what does it have to do with you?

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**?** What sorts of feelings does the nature of Christ's work cause in you? Do you feel worried, repentant? Sad? Angry? Why?

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**?** Do you have a deep longing to know and dwell with God? How is it possible that we might dwell with God? Do you look forward with joy and expectation toward eternity in heaven? Why or why not?

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**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Jesus is our Savior and Rescuer. Not only did he earn for Christians righteousness through a perfectly obedient life and pay the penalty for sin through a perfectly obedient death, but He has secured a future characterized by complete reconciliation with God.

**MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** Christians are called to tell others about how Jesus Christ has come to save and rescue sinners and call people to repent of sin and believe in the good news.



# FOR NEXT WEEK

## Father, Forgive Them

### Main Passages

- Luke 23:34 (Matthew 18:21-35)

### Session Outline

1. Forgiving an Impossible Debt (Matthew 18:21-27)
2. Forgetting Desperation Leads to Ingratitude (Matthew 18:28-30)
3. Forgiveness Modeled Leads to Forgiveness Offered (Matt 18:31-35; Luke 23:34)

### Memorize

*<sup>3</sup> Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God.*

- Revelation 21:3-4, CSB

### Daily Readings

- Monday - Revelation 21:5-8
- Tuesday - Revelation 21:9-27
- Wednesday - Revelation 22:1-5
- Thursday - Revelation 22:6-21
- Friday - 1 Peter 5:1-10
- Saturday - Hebrews 9:28

### References

<sup>1</sup>Strachan, Owen. Always in Gods Hands. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Duncan, J. Ligon. Fear Not! Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008.