

Reflection Questions: Revelation 21:1-5

For the message, "The Marriage of Heaven and Earth" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on November 11, 2018

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read 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 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." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

A summary of the message: This passage contains two profound truths: (1) we were created for a person; and (2) we were created for a place. The person is our Creator God who desires to dwell with us, and the place is the new heavens and new earth—what Jesus spoke of as the renewal of all things and which was the central message he spoke about when he used the phrase, "The Kingdom of God."

Key Quotes:

- Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning," "But in contentment I still feel the need for an imperishable bliss."
- Paul Smith, "Homesick for Eden," "All of us are homesick for Eden. We year to return to a land we've never known. Deep is the need to go back to the garden, a burning so strong for a place we belong, a place that we know is home."
- CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."
- T. Desmond Alexander, *The City of God and the Goal of Creation*, "The New Jerusalem is a fitting climax to the entire biblical story.... New Jerusalem brings to completion what God intended when he first created the earth."
- King David, *Psalms 16:11*, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fulness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures evermore."

Bottom Line:

- Eternal life in God's kingdom—the kind of life that Jesus talks about with words 'the renewal of all things'—is a steadily increasing, always expanding, never ending experience of infinite joy and imperishable bliss in the presence of our Creator & Redeemer, where one moment of ecstasy breaks open to another even more breathtaking. Just when you think it cannot get any better—just when you think you can't stand it anymore—you are blown away with more wonder, love and praise, b/c as Psalm 16 tells us, not only in God's presence there is fulness of joy but at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- What grabs your attention in this text? How are you challenged, convicted, encouraged, or surprised by this text?
- The Apostle John tells us in the book of Revelation that all of history is heading toward the renewal of all things in the new heavens and new earth. How is this similar or dissimilar to what you have previously believed or been taught?
- How does this text help us to understand our personal stories in the light of God's story of redemption?

2. Let's think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus' followers.

- This text teaches that God longs to dwell with a renewed, redeemed, and restored humanity. How does this text help us to understand the kind of church we want MHC to be? In other words, if we took the truth of this passage seriously, what kinds of things would we as a community of faith stress? What might we need to change, refocus, or begin doing?
- If we were to forget the message of Revelation 21 and the renewal of all things, what wrong thoughts or actions might mark our community of faith?

3. Let's think about how this text applies to our city.

- How does this text challenge the thinking of our city in terms of its beliefs? its cynicism? its disappointment? Its search for an imperishable bliss?
- What does this mean for us as we live out our faith in the city? What might we be known for if we were to live in the present in BCS in light of the promised future for our world?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

- _____
- _____
- _____