

# Christianity: The Basics

## Our Future Hope

# TALKINGPOINTS

# WALKINGPOINTS

2020-10-22&25



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Karl Marx famously claimed: "*Religion is the opium of the people*"—in other words, the promise of future, heavenly relief is simply a tool of oppression used to numb the downtrodden and maintain the *status quo*, to the benefit of the powerful. What do **you** think about Marx's claim—**and why?**

C. S. Lewis claimed that Christianity is "*the true myth*"—in other words, all of those stories that end with "*...and they lived happily ever-after*" exist **because** humans universally long for eternity, and this is an evidence of the reality of life beyond the grave. What do you think about **Lewis'** claim—**and why?**

- How have you seen hope help you endure hardship? Would you be willing to tell us about it?
- Review the five elements of "the hope they received" (see the **bullet points** in the **Sermon Summary**).

Which one is **most** attractive to you personally—**and why?**

Which one is **least** attractive to you personally—**and why?** What could change your mind about it?

- Read Proverbs 18:10-11. Note all of the **contrasts** between these two "life orientations".

Note all of the points of **similarity** between the two "life orientations" described here.

What are some examples of the delusion of v. 11 that you've seen in yourself? Be honest!

Does v. 10 strike you as "just settling" or as "attractive and refreshing"? Explain.

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## Application-Challenge

- If you have not yet accepted God's invitation to life in the New Jerusalem, RSVP today! Do this by trusting Christ alone for salvation. Do not delay.
- For those who have accepted God's invitation to eternal life, allow the certain hope of heaven to strengthen you through life's trials and temptations. When times get tough, say along with the Spirit and the Bride, "**Come!**"

# Sermon Summary (Key Text: Revelation 21:1–6; 22:1–5)

For two months we have been studying basic Christian doctrine as summarized in The Apostles' Creed. It closes with "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting"—a statement which not only brings us to the end of the Creed but also to the end of the Bible (Revelation 21:1-6 and 22:1-5). There we learn about the end of time, the hope that they needed and received—and how we can receive and benefit from that same hope. But we won't understand what it means for us until we first understand what it meant for them. This is a basic principle of biblical interpretation.

**[1] The hope they needed.** Throughout January and February 2019 we did a series on the Book of Revelation; you may want to listen to it in order to understand the persecution, poverty, temptations and heresies they were facing. During difficult times, hope is needed! And even though this hope is located in the future, if it is sufficiently transcendent it enables us to handle present difficulties. A few years back a young man in our church experienced the kind of difficulty that none of us wants to face: traumatic brain injury. His wife remembered her marriage vows, committed to loving and caring for her husband no matter what, and leans on Philippians 4:19 to make it through this trial. She has a transcendent hope—a new resurrection body awaits! Whether in biblical times or today, when Christians handle difficulty with confident hope we gain tremendous cultural credibility. Non-Christians wonder, "How are these people able to handle this kind of difficulty and suffering? What is their secret?" Just wondering...What difficulties are you facing today—and what is your hope?

**[2] The hope they received.** The book of Revelation, as "apocalyptic literature", uses vivid images and symbols to communicate the richness and multidimensionality of the hope that awaits us. But remember this: the **reality** of heaven is **greater than** the **symbols!** So, what symbolic imagery does the Bible use?

- **The New Jerusalem** (Revelation 21:2-4). Adam and Eve walked with God in a beautiful garden; we will walk with him in a glorious city! God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will be no more pain, death, or mourning. This magnificent city is described as a cube, constructed of pure gold, 1,500 miles on each side. Its foundations are precious stones; its streets, transparent! Most importantly, God himself is its temple (21:22). There will be no atheists, false teachers or spiritual confusion in this city! No religious wars, no divided loyalties. The triune God will be the focus and center of our lives. Everything will revolve around him, as it should. Can you imagine living in such a place? There will be no riots, no racism, no poverty.
- **A river of the Water of Life** (22:1) flows from God's throne—just as was prophesied 2,500 years ago (Ezekiel 47:1-3; Zechariah 14:8). Jesus will guide all who thirst to these springs of the water of life (Revelation 7:17; 21:6). What was lost in the Garden of Eden will be restored in the New Jerusalem! These life-giving, health-restoring waters undo the damage that occurred in Genesis 3.
- **The Tree of Life** (22:2-3 cf. Genesis 3:22). In the New Jerusalem, the tree from which Adam and Eve were banned will be freely available to all who live there. Its leaves are for the "healing of the nations." In this perfect environment, everyone will have unhindered access to the triune God!
- **No night** (22:5 cf. 21:23–27). We currently live in a dangerous, dark world. A world of sin and temptation, of deception and persecution, of greed, pride and arrogance. There will be none of that in the New Jerusalem. There will be no darkness, physically, spiritually or interpersonally. We will walk by the light of God's presence. It is a city of abundance—there will be no rolling blackouts, no famines, no deprivation of any kind. In this city there will be both relational peace and moral purity. Justice and righteousness will prevail. It will be very, very different from the world in which we live.
- **Service to God and reigning with him forever** (22:3, 5). God, the ultimate King, has delegated sovereignty to his son, Jesus Christ, who in turn gladly shares his dominion with the us—his redeemed siblings—as co-heirs of the Father's throne! Jesus served and reigns, and since we will join him in this role, let's start practicing now! Look for opportunities in your family, neighborhood, and workplace to lead by taking on the role of a servant.

The world Revelation describes certainly is not the one we're living in now—but it's coming! Will **you** be there? It belongs to all who are rightly related to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), bearing the complete guilt of our sin on the cross (21:6 cf. John 19:30). While the New Jerusalem is a free gift to us, procuring it wasn't cheap; it cost Jesus his life. Are **you** thirsty for all that God offers? Do **you** long to live in this New Jerusalem? If so...

***"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.'  
And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life—without cost!"***

Revelation 22:17

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn about the Christian's future hope...**

**Monday**—Sin produced death (Genesis 2:17); what are its three **types**? (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Ephesians 2:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)

**Tuesday**—**Which of those** three deaths will Christians avoid? (John 11:21-27; Revelation 2:9-11, 20:6 and 21:5-8)

**Wednesday**—What happens **the moment a Christian dies**? (Luke 23:39-43; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8)

**Thursday**—What happens **on Resurrection Day**? (Job 19:25-26; Isaiah 26:19; 1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

**Friday**—**What will we be like** in heaven (Romans 8:30)—and therefore **what should we be doing now**? (1 John 3:1-3)

**Saturday**—**In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord with your church family, study Philippians 3:19c-20 & Colossians 3:1-4.**

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]

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Leaders' Guide

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  - Review the five elements of "the hope they received" (see the **bullet points** in the **Sermon Summary**).
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1 Typically you want to start off with a “soft ball” question. This question is philosophically challenging, but since it does not require personal disclosure, it’s not as “threatening” as it could have been! If folks are comfortable, however, it could lead to some good, open discussion (you may have some who agree with it). Mostly this is an ice-breaker; make sure that no one “hijacks” it or else your entire meeting will remain merely on the intellectual level.

2 Although this question “mirrors” the first, it actually accomplishes something else: it can help you uncover if there are any folks in your group who lack confidence in the foundational claims of Christianity. Encourage (and model) open honesty—and keep your ears open for things you should follow up with individually after the group meeting. This could lead to a great coffee or lunch with a group member.

3 This question flows from the overall content of the sermon. If folks appear foggy on the sermon’s content, take time to read the Sermon Summary aloud as a group. Ask for a volunteer to read the first paragraph, then paragraph by paragraph let other group members volunteer. Then, re-ask the question and wait for a volunteer. Don’t jump in too quickly with your own answer (but do be ready with one).

4 If the previous question did not require re-reading the sermon, then do so now. Then, you could ask this question in the following way: “Who finds ‘the New Jerusalem’ to be the most attractive element of the Christian’s hope?” “Who finds ‘the River of the Water of Life’ to be...” (etc.). And don’t forget to ask the “why” question! It uncovers very interesting and helpful info.

Don’t belabor this one—simply ask for 2-3 volunteers to respond.  
If only your extroverts pipe in, consider calling upon a godly introvert to answer it as well.

#### 6 Contrasts:

- “the name of the Lord” vs. “wealth” [Note: “the name of the Lord” simply means “the Lord himself”]
- the rich man **considers** his wealth to be a refuge, but the Lord **truly is** a refuge (note the difference between “is **his** strong city” vs. “the name of the Lord **is** a strong tower”. Wealth’s help is imaginary.)
- the righteous man **actually is** safe vs. the rich man’s safety is **imaginary**.
- Did you catch that “a rich man” is contrasted with “the righteous”?! A rich man **can** be righteous, but **generally** in Scripture riches are linked with pride and humility with godliness (see v. 12).

#### 7 Similarities:

- **both** the rich and the righteous **know that they need** and **do indeed seek** shelter
- **both** the rich and the righteous **trust in something outside themselves** for security

8 This will take a bunch of vulnerability! Ask for volunteers.  
A fun way to “prime the pump” is to say, “Nobody likes going first, so who’d like to go second—and we’ll just skip the first?!” (Then, it still may take time for someone to volunteer.  
Don’t you jump in too soon or skip over this question. This is where the rubber meets the road!

9 To some, needing the Lord is viewed as a “crutch for the weak”. Fact is, we’re **all** vulnerable (or else the rich wouldn’t be viewing his wealth as a strong city/high wall).  
If you have a particularly mature believer in your group, ask them to share their response.  
It will be instructive, and a blessing and an encouragement to the rest.

10 As you close, read to the group Revelation 22:17 (at the end of the Sermon Summary).  
Together explore the winsomeness of this offer. (Note too that the first line is a **command!**)  
The points of Application-Challenge and the offer of free biblical counseling really go together.  
Urge folks to respond to this message in one or the other of those two concrete points of application, and if they need help doing either, point them to our biblical counseling team.