

LifeGroup Discussion Questions
Revelation 21
August 22, 2020

Overview

Bart Millard from Mercy Me wrote a song in 1999 called "I Can Only Imagine." It describes the hope of one day being in heaven and what it will be like. Here are some of the lyrics: "Surrounded by Your glory; What will my heart feel; Will I dance for you Jesus; Or in awe of You be still; Will I stand in your presence; Or to my knees will I fall; Will I sing hallelujah; Will I be able to speak at all; I can only imagine." I thoroughly enjoy this song and it has withstood the test of time in terms of popularity, but is Heaven something we can only imagine? There are numerous passages in the Bible giving us a glimpse of what it will be like in Heaven. John 14:2-3 states: "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." We learn from this passage that Jesus is preparing rooms for all believers and that one day He will take us to be with Him.

Heaven is also described in Revelation 21:1-4 which reads: "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. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And 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." This passage can bring you peace for today knowing you have hope for in the future. There are two different types of "new" in the Bible. One is used in Genesis when God was making all this new out of nothing. The "new" in this passage is referring to God renewing all of creation back to the way it was meant to be. In the midst of all this newness there won't be any mourning, crying, pain or death.

Why did God put passages about Heaven in the Bible? I think it is so we can get a glimpse of what it will be like one day to be in His presence. When writing this lesson I kept having this question come to mind: Do we have to wait till Heaven to experience the presence of Jesus? I believe these pictures of Heaven should motivate us to pursue God with all we have now so we can fully experience Him both now and later. For many believers their only goal is to go to Heaven. For them Heaven is the trophy of a life well lived, but they are missing out on so much. They are so entrenched in this world that if God offered them Heaven

without Him they would be inclined to take the offer. Jesus didn't just endure the pain of the cross so you would have some future hope of being in His presence. He went through the cross so you can experience His presence now and then one day in Heaven.

Think of how amazing it is going to be when we get to Heaven. In Romans 8 the Apostle Paul wrote about a deep yearning for Heaven within each of us. This yearning for everything to be made new is not only within us but also within creation. Romans 8:22-23 states: "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." There is an eagerness wired within each of us to be in the presence of Jesus. Toward the end of Jesus' ministry He told His disciples He was going to die. In John 16 He told them it was to their advantage that He went away so the comforter could come. Basically Jesus was saying to the disciples; they are better off with the Holy Spirit inside of them than they are with Him beside them. We have the same promise to us today.

One reason we don't experience the presence of Jesus today is too many of us have a casual Christianity. We casually seek God once a week on Sunday morning. We casually read about God infrequently in His Word. We casually say short prayers only before meals. If we approached any other relationship in our life the way we casually approached God the relationship wouldn't last. As the poet once said "We want a pound of the eternal in a paper-sack." We really don't want the heart pounding, soul fulfilling experience of Jesus today. This type of relationship would be too disruptive to our daily lives. This relationship would require more than a casual approach. It would require us seeking God daily in His word not just for information but for transformation. It would require us seeking Him daily in prayer not just for our own needs to be met, but to hear from our Father. It would require us seeking Him in Christian community not solely for social connection, but so we can be a living, active, contributing member of His body.

If you are not fully experiencing the presence of Jesus in your life today, don't wait till Heaven. Make today the turning point where you fully commit yourself to Him.

Bible Study

1. What comes to mind when you think of Heaven?
2. Are you experiencing being in the presence of Jesus now? Why or Why not?
3. How does Heaven bring you hope today?
4. What do you consider the best part of Heaven?
5. How can you help those around you experience the presence of Jesus?