

God's Strength in our weakness: Future Hope

discussion guide



based on **Revelation 21** (Linked to sermon of 25/07/21)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks

This was part of a series: God's strength in weakness

Intro: What do you think the difference is between hope and expectation? For Christians our hope is both present and future. The Christian hope is both now and not yet. We experience many of the blessings of God's salvation, forgiveness and love in the now but we hope and expect the fulfilment of God's promises in the future and that is what we are going to look at in this passage.

How does this passage speak to our desire to be a God-dependent, grace-filled, Bible-based, mission-focused, authentic community?

Up (Go deeper with God):

Begin by praising God using either Psalm 104:1-13 or using the song "Behold I make all things new" https://youtu.be/aCDs_mCFLZo which is based on the passage we are going to look at. Praise God for the now of creation and the not yet of the kingdom to come.

Begin with these questions:

How would you define hope?

What is the difference between Christian hope and worldly hope/optimism?

Read Revelation 21 together. Then each spend some time reading through it again. Either make a list of all the wonderful promises of what the new heaven and earth will be like or, if you are feeling particularly creative, draw a picture of the new heaven and earth. Compare your notes/drawings.

Now discuss the following questions and anything else that arises from your reading of the passage:

1. What are you most looking forward to from reading Revelation 21?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 21:4. How can a Christian understanding of the temporary nature of death help us and help others?
3. How often do you consider your future hope as a Christian? How might it change our perspective if we did? (Read 2 Peter 3:3-13 as an addition to this discussion)

4. Was there anything in Revelation 21 that surprised or puzzled you? Discuss together. (you may need a commentary to help with some of the trickier questions! <https://biblehub.com/> has some useful ones)

In (Grow closer to each other):

You'll notice that the new heaven and new earth are inhabited by communities of believers, living in communion with God. Jesus, through many parables, tells us to be prepared for this new kingdom in community. How do you think we can encourage one another to do this? (2 Peter 4:14-18 and 1 Corinthians 15: 50-58 might help the discussion).

Out (Reach further with the good news):

Thinking about future hope inevitably makes us think of those who don't yet know God or His salvation. How can we reach out to our friends, family and neighbours with the good news of a future hope without scaring them in "fire and sulphur" (Revelation 21:8)? Pray for wisdom and boldness in sharing the hope to which we are called with those who so desperately need hope. Pray for individuals who you know need Christ that you will have the grace and wisdom to share faith with them.

"Optimism is a wish without warrant; Christian hope is a certainty, guaranteed by God himself. Optimism reflects ignorance as to whether good things will ever actually come. Christian hope expresses knowledge that every day of his life, and every moment beyond it, the believer can say with truth, on the basis of God's own commitment, that the best is yet to come."

J. I. Packer