CoreGroup Guide | Afterlife - Part 4
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Welcome

Thanks for participating in these CoreGroup conversations about the *Afterlife* series. The topics we've discussed (Paradise, Resurrection, and Judgment Day) have taken us out of our comfort zone, but each week we've seen the theme of hope. As we wrap up this week, we tackle a similarly challenging topic: The New Creation.

Opening Prayer

God, in this season of gratitude we give you thanks. You know us intimately as our Creator. You know each of our circumstances and thoughts in ways that no one else does. You know the number of our days and our future beyond this earth. Bless our conversation today; help us to know and trust you more as we discuss the New Creation that you have promised. Amen.

Ice Breaker

Thanksgiving week is a time filled with favorite traditions but also the possibility of trying something new. What are you most looking forward to this Thanksgiving?

The Head

Both the Old and New Testaments include hints about the New Creation that God will establish. This has not happened yet! Like other elements of this series, we can look forward to this New Creation with hope. But learning more about what to expect can help us feel more hopeful. This week's sermon focuses on two descriptions of the New Creation from the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2]I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3]I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. [4]He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." [5]Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look! I'm making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 22:1-3

Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, shining like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb [2] through the middle of the city's main street. On each side of the river is the tree of life, which produces twelve crops of fruit, bearing its fruit each month. The tree's leaves are for the healing of the nations. [3] There will no longer be any curse.

- Unlike artistic depictions, these texts don't mention anything about sitting in the clouds worshipping God. What do we learn about the New Creation based on these scriptures?
- Share one or two elements from these passages that are new or surprising to you. What encourages you?
- What parts of God's creation will be redeemed or restored in this process of making all things new? What feels the most relevant in today's world?

The Heart

It may feel safer to talk about the New Creation in the abstract or keep it distant rather than trying to envision being part of that New Creation ourselves. But these verses invite us to follow John (the author of Revelation) as though we are tagging along on the angel's guided tour.

- These passages describe heaven as an actual new creation, not just a spiritual realm. What's the difference and how does that impact your attitude towards the New Creation?
- Heaven is a place to be active and participate, filled with meaningful, fulfilling, healthy relationships plus worship and more. What part of this vision feels most hopeful to you?
- These descriptions in Revelation may remind us of the garden of Eden from the book of Genesis. In both places, people live in harmony with God, in the presence of the tree of life, near a river flowing with life-giving water. What is the significance of these parallels?

The Hands

God's promise for a New Creation feels like an invitation towards acts of renewal, peace, and hopes of neighborly goodwill while we are still alive. The thought of a world that is absolutely beautiful with food for all and without any pain is something truly special and inspirational. The New Creation has not yet come, but we look towards it with hope.

- How do we faithfully live in the "liminal" or in-between space between the here and now and this New Creation?
- How have your beliefs about the afterlife changed as a result of this series? What questions will you continue to wrestle with in the weeks and months to come?
- How can the Holy Spirit guide your prayers as this series comes to an end?

Closing Prayer

God, in your great love you have created us.

With that same love you redeem us
and abide with us.

Lord, may we rejoice this day in your love
and seek to serve you all our days.

1000 Prayers for Public Worship by David Adam

Going Deeper

As we prepare for the Christmas season ahead, reflect on these words from the gospel of John:

> **John 1:1-5**
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> *[1]In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. [2]He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being [4] in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. [5]The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.*

In church circles we often think about Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Jesus, and Easter as a celebration of his death and resurrection. But how do these two pivotal points come together as we hope for the New Creation?

Additional Resources

Surprised by Hope: *Rethinking Heaven, Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, by NT Wright

From Pastor Charity

Advent is the 4-week season in the church calendar that leads up to Christmas. It is a time of preparation, waiting, and remembering what (and who) we celebrate during the chaos of the holiday season. This year, Advent begins on Sunday, November 29 and our daily devotional will follow the themes of our upcoming sermon series *His Name Shall Be Called.*

Click HERE to subscribe to The Gathering's 2026 Advent devotional.