

THE UNVEILING

Session 14

The Bride and the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21–22

A Fourteen-Session Inductive Study for Young Adults

Behold, I make all things new. (Revelation 21:5, RSV2CE)

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group arrives at the end the whole book has been unveiling: not a permanent escape from creation, but the holy city coming down; a city measured as a perfect cube, which they will discover is the shape of the Holy of Holies; Eden reopened with the tree of life; the beatific vision (they shall see his face); and the Bible's closing dialogue, which the Church has never stopped praying: Come, Lord Jesus.

Catholic Touchstone. The direction of the ending is the gospel itself: the city comes down out of heaven from God. Heaven is not humanity's escape from creation but God's arrival to renew it: a new heaven and a new earth, the universe itself renewed (CCC 1042–1047), and at its center the face of God, seen at last (CCC 1023, 1028).

What You Need to Know

The final vision opens with the greatest reversal in Scripture told in one direction word: John sees the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Where visions of salvation-as-escape climb away from creation, the gospel descends to renew it. The first creation's sea (often read as the book's reservoir of chaos: the beast rose from it) is no more; and a great voice announces the covenant's destination: Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people (21:3). The word for dwelling is the tabernacle word (*skene*): God tents with his people, as he did in the wilderness, as the Word did in the flesh (John 1:14 uses the same root: he tabernacled among us), now forever. The old covenant refrain (I will be your God, and you shall be my people: Leviticus 26:11–12; Ezekiel 37:27, tonight's discovery) reaches its address. Then the tenderest sentence in the book, promised at 7:17 and delivered here: he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more: the funeral of everything that ever made anyone cry. And the One on the throne speaks directly for almost the first time in the book: Behold, I make all things new. Not: I make all new things: the world is not discarded but transfigured; the resurrection of Jesus's own body (wounds glorified, not erased) is the pattern of the cosmos's future.

Then the city is measured, and the measurement is the session's great discovery: its length and breadth and height are equal (21:16): a cube, twelve thousand stadia each way. Scripture's clearest explicitly dimensioned cube before this is the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary of the temple, twenty cubits by twenty by twenty (1 Kings 6:20, tonight's central discovery; the tabernacle's inner room is commonly reconstructed as cubic too). The city's shape strongly suggests the whole city as the inner sanctuary: and the text gives the temple's absence its own reason, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (21:22), the geometry confirming in stone what the verse says in person: where God is all in all, a temple building is redundant. The space behind the veil, entered once a year by one man, has become everyone's home address. The rest of the architecture confesses the one people of God: twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes, twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles (21:12–14): Israel and the Church, one city (the arithmetic your group met in the 144,000 and the twenty-four elders, now in stone); the household of God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20), and the city's gates are never shut (21:25), with the nations walking by its light and kings bringing their glory into it: Isaiah 60 fulfilled almost line by line (open gates, no sun needed, the LORD your everlasting light: a discovery passage).

Chapter 22 reopens Eden. A river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Ezekiel 47's temple river, tonight's discovery: the water issuing from below the temple's threshold, south of the altar, that became a river no one could cross, making the salt sea fresh, with fruit trees on both banks whose leaves are for healing): and on either side of the river, the tree of life, barred since Genesis 3, now yielding its fruit each month, its leaves for the healing of the nations. The promise to the

first conquerors (2:7: to eat of the tree of life) is kept; the study's longest-range promise-thread closes. Nothing accursed remains (the curse of Genesis 3 formally lifted); his servants shall worship him, and (the summit of the whole Bible) they shall see his face: the beatific vision, the immediate sight of God that no one could survive under the old covenant (you cannot see my face... and live, Exodus 33:20), now the ordinary condition of the redeemed (CCC 1023, 1028): and his name shall be on their foreheads (22:4): the seal of Session 6, the Lamb's name of Session 9, arrived at its destination.

The epilogue (22:6–21) is rapid, urgent, and liturgical. Three times: Behold, I am coming soon. The angel refuses John's worship, the second such refusal in the book (19:10; 22:8–9): worship God: the book's last word against idolatry, fencing even reverence for holy messengers. Jesus speaks his fullest self-identification: the Alpha and the Omega... the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star: the morning star promised to the conquerors of Thyatira (2:28) turns out, as the study suspected, to be Christ himself. The final beatitude: Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life (22:14: the washing of 7:14, ongoing). And then the Bible's closing dialogue: The Spirit and the Bride say, Come... He who testifies to these things says, Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The Aramaic of the earliest liturgies (Marana tha, 1 Corinthians 16:22) stands behind it; the Church's liturgy has never stopped praying it (CCC 1130, 2817: the Spirit and the Bride still saying Come). The book that began read aloud in the liturgy ends as liturgy: a dialogue between the Bridegroom who promises and the Bride who answers, with the reader's own voice enlisted in the answer.

Pastoral note. This is the last session: leave generous room for the Send questions and for people to name what the study has changed. Read 21:3–5 slowly enough for the grieving; every tear is not a figure of speech to someone in your room. And end the study the way the book ends: with the prayer on everyone's lips. The study closes, and the waiting, watching, worshiping life it described begins.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Leviticus 26:11–12 (I will make my abode among you) and Ezekiel 37:27 (my dwelling place shall be with them... I will be their God): the covenant refrain arriving home at 21:3. Discovery passage tonight.
- 1 Kings 6:20: the inner sanctuary, twenty cubits in length, breadth, and height: Scripture's only other cube; the key to 21:16. Central discovery tonight.
- Isaiah 60:1–3, 11, 19–20: gates open continually, nations coming to your light, the LORD your everlasting light: the city's public life (21:23–26) fulfilled from this chapter. Discovery passage tonight.
- Ezekiel 47:1–12: the river from the temple, deepening, healing, with fruit trees whose leaves are for healing: the source of 22:1–2. Discovery passage tonight.
- Genesis 2:9–10 and 3:22–24: the tree of life and the river of Eden, barred at the fall: reopened at 22:2, with the curse revoked (22:3).
- Isaiah 25:8 and 65:17–19: he will swallow up death for ever... wipe away tears... new heavens and a new earth, Jerusalem a rejoicing: the prophetic bedrock under 21:1–4.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Irenaeus of Lyons · *Against Heresies, Book 4*

The glory of God is living man; and the life of man is the vision of God. St. Irenaeus's most famous sentence is Revelation 22:4 in doctrinal form: they shall see his face. God's glory is not served by our diminishment but displayed in our being fully alive, and our life reaches its fullness in seeing him. The whole city is built for that seeing.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine · *City of God, Book 22*

St. Augustine ends his great work with the end itself: there we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. Behold what shall be in the end without end. Rest, sight, love, praise: four words for the life of the city; and end without end, his answer to every fear that eternity could be tedium. The study's meditation: the vision of infinite Beauty does not exhaust its Beloved.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux · *Story of a Soul*

Searching Scripture for her place in the Church, St. Thérèse found it: in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be love. The Bride of these chapters is not an abstraction; she is a communion of persons, and the least Doctor of the Church discovered that a hidden life of love is citizenship in the city. Whatever your group's vocations turn out to be, this is the residency requirement.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1042–1047: the renewal of the universe: a new heaven and a new earth, the visible universe itself transformed, the new Jerusalem as God's dwelling with men: the Catechism's own commentary on tonight's chapters (1044–1045 cite them directly).
- CCC 1023–1029: heaven as perfect life with the Trinity, the beatific vision: to see God face to face: the doctrine of 22:4.
- CCC 756–757: the Church as the holy city, the new Jerusalem, and the spotless Bride of the spotless Lamb: the images of these chapters in the Church's self-description.
- CCC 1130 and 2817: the Church's liturgy praying Marana tha: the Spirit and the Bride still saying Come, at every Eucharist, until he comes.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

FINAL RESOLUTIONS TONIGHT, walk each aloud as the group finds them: tree of life (2:7 – 22:2); morning star (2:28 – 22:16); new Jerusalem and the name (3:12 – 21:2, 10); seal and foreheads (7:3; 14:1 – 22:4); every tear (7:17 – 21:4); conqueror's heritage (21:7: he who conquers shall have this heritage... I will be his God and he shall be my son: the seven letters' promises consolidated); second death immunity (2:11 – 21:7–8 by contrast); Bride versus harlot completed (linen city versus fallen city); liturgy thread's coda: the Bible ends in the responsory the Church still prays (22:17, 20).

Numbers thread coda: twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates, twelve foundations, twelve fruits: the city is the 144,000's arithmetic in stone. One sentence.

This is the last session: the Thread Watch's final duty is celebration. Consider a simple closing ritual: read the memory verses of all fourteen sessions in order as a litany before the closing prayer. Furniture of Heaven, last words: no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (21:22); the river and the tree of life (22:1–2); and Come, Lord Jesus (22:20), the Church's oldest Eucharistic acclamation (1 Corinthians 16:22; Didache 10). Send them out with this: the study began on the Lord's Day and ends at the supper that day has always been. The next time they stand at Mass, they stand where this book left them: gates open, invitation standing, the Spirit and the Bride saying Come.

Session Goals

1. The group catches the direction of the ending (the city comes down) and can say why it matters.
2. The group discovers the cube of 1 Kings 6:20 and states what the city's shape means: all Holy of Holies, no temple needed.
3. The group traces Eden reopened (river, tree, curse revoked) and the beatific vision of 22:4 with the Catechism.
4. The group resolves the remaining threads aloud and names what the study has changed for them.
5. The group prays the book's own closing prayer, and means it: Come, Lord Jesus.

Timed Plan (75–90 minutes)

- Opening prayer: 5 min
- Win questions: 10 min
- Build (Revelation 21–22, with discovery passages): 45–50 min
- Send questions (extended for the final session): 12 min
- Live It, memory verse litany, closing prayer, distribute Take-Home 14: 8–10 min

Pre-chosen cuts if time runs short: drop the Dig Deeper box, and take the Isaiah 60 discovery (inside Question 3) as a leader reading rather than a group hunt.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you make all things new. As we open the last pages of your book, open our eyes to the city, our ears to the Bridegroom, and our hearts to the hope you have been unveiling all along. Let us end this study the way your word ends: watching, worshiping, and asking you to come. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

1. Fourteen weeks ago you told us what came to mind at the words Book of Revelation. What comes to mind now?
2. When you imagine heaven honestly, does it feel like going away from everything you love, or like everything you love being made right? Where did that picture come from?

Build

Read Revelation 21:1–8 aloud, slowly: verses 3–5 slowest of all.

3. Watch the direction of the vision: which way does the holy city move, and why is that direction the gospel in miniature? Discovery: open Leviticus 26:11–12 and Ezekiel 37:27: what ancient refrain arrives home in 21:3, and what does the tabernacle word tell us? Then sit with 21:4–5: what ends, and what exactly does the One on the throne say he makes?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

The city comes down out of heaven from God. Where salvation-as-escape climbs, the gospel descends: God has always been the one who comes down (to the garden, to Sinai, to Bethlehem, to the altar), and the ending is his final arrival, not our escape. The refrain arriving home is the covenant's oldest promise: my abode among you (Leviticus 26:11); my dwelling place with them, I their God, they my people (Ezekiel 37:27): and the dwelling word is the tabernacle word: God tents with his people, as in the wilderness, as in the Incarnation (John 1:14: the Word tabernacled among us), now forever. Then the funeral of grief itself: he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away (21:4; promised at 7:17, delivered here). Read that over whatever your group is carrying; it is not a figure of speech. And the sentence from the throne: Behold, I make all things new: not all new things: this creation is not discarded but transfigured, as the risen Jesus's own body (wounds glorified, not erased) already shows. The Church says it plainly: the universe itself will be renewed (CCC 1042–1047).

Read Revelation 21:9–27 aloud.

4. The angel measures the city: read 21:16 again. What shape is it? Central discovery: open 1 Kings 6:20. Where is Scripture's clearest other cube, and how does the match illuminate 21:22 (why no temple)? And what do the twelve gates and twelve foundations (21:12–14) confess in stone?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Length, breadth, and height equal: a cube. And Scripture's clearest other cube is the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, twenty cubits by twenty by twenty (1 Kings 6:20): the room behind the veil where God's glory dwelt, entered once a year by one man with blood. The city's shape strongly suggests that room scaled to the world; and the text names the deeper reason there is no temple: its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb: the geometry confirms what the

Presence explains. The deepest exclusion in the old covenant becomes everyone's home address; the veil torn on Good Friday was the first crack in the wall. And the architecture confesses the one people of God: twelve gates named for the twelve tribes, twelve foundations named for the twelve apostles: Israel and the Church, one city (the arithmetic of the 144,000 and the twenty-four elders, now in stone; the household of God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Ephesians 2:20). Then its public life, fulfilled from Isaiah 60 (open it and hear the echoes): gates never shut, no sun needed, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb, and the nations walk by that light, kings carrying their glory in. The city is not a bunker; it is the world's open, lit, hospitable center.

Read Revelation 22:1–5 aloud.

5. A river, a tree, a revoked curse, and a face. Discovery: open Ezekiel 47:1–12 (skim for the river's path and the trees), and recall Genesis 2–3. What is being reopened here, which promise from the beginning of our study is being kept (look back at 2:7), and what is the summit of 22:4: what do the servants finally do, and what does the Church call it?

ANSWER · *share after the discussion*

Ezekiel's temple river arrives: the water from below the temple's threshold that became an uncrossable river, freshening the salt sea, with trees on both banks whose leaves are for healing: now flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the city's street. And Eden is reopened: the tree of life, barred with a flaming sword since Genesis 3, stands on either side of the river, fruiting every month, its leaves for the healing of the nations, and nothing accursed remains: the curse of the fall formally revoked. The very first promise to the conquerors in this study (to him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, 2:7) is kept on the Bible's last page. Then the summit of the whole of Scripture: they shall see his face. Under the old covenant, no one could see God's face and live (Exodus 33:20); in the city, seeing his face is the citizens' ordinary life. The Church calls it the beatific vision (CCC 1023, 1028): the immediate sight of God, which is what every human longing was ever aiming at. And his name shall be on their foreheads: the seal of Session 6 and the Lamb's name of Session 9, arrived at their destination. St. Irenaeus said it in one line: the life of man is the vision of God.

Read Revelation 22:6–21 aloud, ending together on verse 20.

6. The epilogue: gather its urgencies. What does Jesus say three times; what does the angel refuse (for the second time in the book), and why does the book end on that note; which promise from the seven letters is finally decoded at 22:16; and what is the very last exchange of the Bible: who says Come, and who answers? Where does the Church still pray this?

ANSWER · *share after the discussion*

Three times: Behold, I am coming soon: the book ends leaning forward. The angel refuses John's worship, as at 19:10 (You must not do that!... Worship God): after twenty-two chapters against idolatry, the last fence is placed around even holy reverence: angels, saints, and images are honored; God alone is adored: the Church's exact distinction. At 22:16 Jesus signs the book with his fullest name (the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star), and the morning star promised to Thyatira's conquerors (2:28) is decoded at last: this promise was always himself; and every promise in the seven letters, walked back through tonight, is fulfilled in and through him. The final beatitude blesses those who wash their robes (the washing of 7:14, present tense, ongoing: Catholics may hear the font, and every confession since): and then the Bible's last dialogue: The Spirit and the Bride say, Come... Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! It is the Marana tha of the first liturgies (1 Corinthians 16:22), and the Church has never stopped praying it: at every

Mass she proclaims the Lord's death until he comes, and the Spirit and the Bride still say Come (CCC 1130, 2817). The Bible does not end with a period but with an invitation answered by a promise: and the reader's voice is enlisted. So end the study by joining it: this prayer is now yours.

BUILD, THEN PRESS: IS THIS ENDING ESCAPISM?

Present this at full strength before answering. A serious critic (and a quiet worry inside many believers) says: this is pie in the sky. Promising a golden city later teaches people to tolerate injustice now; heaven-talk has been the opiate excusing every abandoned slum and unfought evil. And even on its own terms, an eternity of worship sounds less like joy than like a church service that never ends: endless, static, boring. Honest people should invest in the world that exists.

7. What is right in the critique? And what do these two chapters, read closely, do to it?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

What is right: heaven-talk can be abused exactly that way, and Christians have sometimes abused it; any spirituality that shrugs at present injustice because glory is coming deserves the rebuke, and the prophets delivered it first. The boredom worry is also honest: it takes eternity seriously enough to ask what we would do with it.

But the text is the opposite of escapism, starting with its direction: nobody escapes up; the city comes down, to a new earth: creation is not evacuated but renewed (CCC 1042–1047); and none of this denies that the souls of the just already live with Christ in heaven (CCC 1023): the contrast is with permanent disembodied escape, not with heaven, which makes matter, bodies, and this world's wounds eternally significant rather than disposable. The city's details are civic, not wispy: gates open to the nations, kings bringing in their cultures' glory, leaves for the healing of the nations: healed politics, healed peoples, purposeful life. And history complicates the opiate charge: believers in this ending built hospitals, ransomed captives, buried the plague dead, and powered abolition (even as other Christians shamefully tolerated or defended the evils): where the hope has been believed concretely, it has worked as engine, not anesthetic, of the world's repair, because a person certain that every tear will be wiped finds tears intolerable now. As for boredom: the vision is of infinite Beauty seen face to face by minds finally awake: St. Augustine's end without end: we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise: not unending drudgery but a love that never exhausts its Beloved. The truly static option is Babylon: the same appetites on repeat until the music stops. The city is where everything finally begins.

DIG DEEPER

The Bible as one story, told in its bookends. Genesis 1–3 and Revelation 20–22 mirror each other point for point: first heavens and earth, new heavens and earth; darkness and sea, no night and no sea; the tree barred, the tree restored; the serpent enters, the serpent destroyed; the curse pronounced, nothing accursed; God walking with man in the garden, God dwelling with men in the city; exile east of Eden, gates never shut. Read the two side by side this month and you will have read the Bible's plot: everything between the bookends is the story of how the garden became the city, at the price of the Lamb.

Send

8. Fourteen sessions: what is the one discovery from this study that has actually changed how you pray, worship, or live: and who in your life needs to hear it from you?
9. They shall see his face. If you let that be true (really true, of you), what fear shrinks, and what choice this month gets simpler?

10. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Can you pray that honestly tonight? If something in you hesitates, what is it: and what would you need from God to want his coming?

Live It This Week (and after)

- Pray Come, Lord Jesus once each day, and at the eucharistic acclamation at Mass, mean it as this book's closing prayer.
- Read Genesis 1–3 and Revelation 20–22 side by side once this month: the Bible's bookends.
- Pass the study on: invite someone to the next group, or lead one. The one who reads aloud is blessed (1:3); you are now equipped to be that reader.
- Memorize the memory verse below, and keep the litany of all fourteen with your Bible.

Memory Verse

And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5, RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Leader: (If time allows, first read the fourteen memory verses of the study in order, one voice per verse, as a litany.) Then: Father, you have unveiled your Son to us: the First and the Last, the Lamb standing as though slain, the Rider faithful and true, the Bridegroom of the city where you will wipe away every tear. Keep us sealed, keep us singing, keep us at the supper, until we see your face. The Spirit and the Bride say: Come. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Distribute Take-Home 14. The study is complete.

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 14, in order:

- Revelation 21:1–8 (read aloud)
- Leviticus 26:11–12 and Ezekiel 37:27 (discovery)
- Revelation 21:9–27 (read aloud)
- 1 Kings 6:20 (central discovery)
- Isaiah 60:1–3, 11, 19–20 (discovery)
- Ephesians 2:20 (leader background, apostolic foundations)
- Revelation 22:1–5 (read aloud)
- Ezekiel 47:1–12 (discovery)
- Genesis 2:9–10 and 3:22–24 (leader background, Eden reopened)
- Exodus 33:20 (leader background, the face)
- Revelation 22:6–21 (read aloud, ending together on v. 20)
- 1 Corinthians 16:22 (leader background, Marana tha)
- Isaiah 25:8 and 65:17–19 (leader background)
- Memory verse: Revelation 21:5