



# Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

**Behold the Wondrous Mystery - Christmas 2018**

**The Centrality of God in Eternity**

**Revelation 22:1-6**

**12/30/2018**

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## Main Point

Upon the establishment of a new Heaven and new Earth, God's people will serve Him, enjoy Him, and proclaim Him.

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## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Are you a fan of any particular university or professional sports team? Which ones? Why do you especially love these insitutions or teams?**

**What are some of the more outrageous ways you've seen people show their affections for these teams or schools?**

While some of us may simply don a t-shirt or ball cap to show our support for a school or team, some fans go a long way to identify with and show their affections for their favorite teams with body paint, wigs and even vehicles painted in school or team colors. Either way, there is no question with regard to where one's affections lie. Likewise, when Jesus returns, there will be no question where the affections of Christians lie. Revelation 22 teaches that God's people will serve Him, enjoy Him and proclaim Him into eternity. He will be the center of their affections.

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## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 22:1-6.**

**What elements in these verses show God's dream for our world restored to its Eden-like state? (Refer back to Genesis 2).**

The nearer John came to the center of the city, the more like a garden it became. It was like the garden of Eden, only better. A river watered Eden (Gen. 2:10); now a river gushed from the throne, a provision coming directly from God. Also as in the garden of Eden the tree of life is in the city. This tree of life mysteriously disappeared after being present in the first human home (Gen. 2:9; 3:22,24). Now it reappears in the final human home (Rev. 2:7; 22:2,14) wonderfully producing its fruit every month, unlike any tree now known. The tree's abundant harvest, as well as the healing effect of the leaves of the tree, show that heaven is filled with everything life-giving and glorious. Everyone there is healthy all the time.

**How does John's description of heaven compare with your concepts of heaven or those you have heard from others?**

**Read verse 3. What is the final evil element missing from eternity? What does the removal of this element symbolize?**

**How is the new Jerusalem actually better than Eden?**

The final evil element missing from the eternal state is any curse. The curse entered human experience at the fall into sin (Gen. 3:17). With the curse lifted, however, comes something better than Eden: the throne of God and of the Lamb is there. The final state surpasses the original state of humankind.

**What blessings of eternity are listed in verses 3-4? Do any of these blessings surprise you?**

**In what ways might a life of service here on earth help prepare believers for heaven?**

**In what ways would having God's name permanently affixed be reassuring, appropriate, and a delight? How would your life be different if you now bore a mark identifying you as God's child?**

With the curse removed, only blessing remains, and now three wonderful blessings of eternity are listed. First, God's servants will serve Him. The Greek verb translated "serve" often implies worship. In eternity God's people will be perfect in their worship. Second, they will see His face. Throughout Scripture, God's people, however holy, were never allowed to see His face, His direct presence (Ex. 33:20). In this life sometimes God seems to hide His presence from His people as they endure many sorrows. With the curse gone, His people will gladly enjoy His full presence. Third, His name will be on their foreheads. The name of God on persons shows that they are genuine and that God guarantees to protect them (Rev. 3:12). All the saints receive God's name to guarantee an eternity with Him (see Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

**John's description of the new Eden concludes with the most important point. Read Revelation 22:5 again. What is the good news in this verse, and how does it change your life?**

Revelation 22:5 concludes at the most exalted point possible. This verse repeats the truths of 21:22-24. There is an end to all the darkness of sin and evil, represented first by the banishment of night and second by the eternal presence of the light provided by the Lord God. Jesus, the Light of the world, is the perfect Light for eternity. That this reality awaits us should motivate us to live with a sense of urgency, unleashing compassion in the world to help God restore what is broken. This sense of urgency permeates the close of Revelation and the canon of Scripture.

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## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What does it mean to you that God sent His Son to earth to endure the suffering and pain of this world in order to save you and offer you eternity with Him?**

**How does the truth of the gospel make you know the wait for Jesus' return is worth it?**

**To what degree are you serving God? Enjoying? Proclaiming? Ask the Spirit to search your heart in each of these areas and empower you to improve in each of these areas.**

**Jesus didn't come to live for Himself. He came to serve others, meet their needs, show them love, and show them the way to God. What service opportunity do you sense God calling you to be a part of?**

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## Pray

Close in prayer, thanking God for the picture of hope that closes out the Bible. Pray that as we move forward in our daily lives, this hope will be on the forefront of our minds, motivating us to worship God wholeheartedly, live for Him daily, and share the gospel urgently.

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# Commentary

## REVELATION 22:1-6

22:1-2. After the opening prologue (1:1-8), John received his first vision. In that first scene he saw the risen Lord walking among the lampstands (churches) during the present age (1:9-20). Now we come at last to the final scene of John's final vision. It perfectly balances the opening scene, for it shows the reigning Lord present with His people throughout all eternity.

At the heart of the New Jerusalem John saw the river of the water of life, no doubt flowing from "the spring of the water of life" (21:6) that gushed from the throne of God. In Eden a life-giving river had nourished the garden (Gen. 2:10); now a life-giving river nourishes New Jerusalem. The river, flowing as it does from God's throne, can only portray that eternal life is entirely due to God's gracious gift. The water is as clear as crystal, indicating its absolute purity.

We also see again the Tree of Life. Here is the only vegetation specifically mentioned as part of the eternal state, and a feature that deliberately reminds us of the garden of Eden. In Revelation 2:7, Christ had pledged, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." Here is the fulfillment. This symbolizes the complete undoing of the curse in the garden. Eating the fruit symbolizes all the divine blessings of the eternal state.

22:3-4. The garden of Eden had its river and its tree, but it did not contain the throne of God and of the Lamb. For this reason the city surpasses the original paradise. The throne equally belongs to the Father and the Son—God and the Lamb. Further, the garden had been the place where the curse entered (Gen. 3:14,17). Now, the city is the place where no longer will there be any more curse. Here at last is the seventh and greatest of the seven things that will no longer exist in eternity (sea, death, mourning, crying, pain, and night are the others; 21:1,4,25). Where the curse has been banished, only blessing remains. Three of the greatest specific blessings of eternity now follow.

His servants will serve Him. The word servants can be rendered “slaves,” and the verb serve usually means religious worship. Eternity will never be boring. We cannot imagine exactly what it will mean for us to serve and worship God throughout eternity or even that He would desire such. The implication, however, is of great activity, not passive lethargy. In this life, His servants truly served Him, though sometimes halfheartedly and often with incomplete obedience. In eternity this will change to perfect service. The first blessing is faultless active usefulness.

They will see His face. One of the truths embedded almost from the beginning of biblical revelation is that no human can see God face-to-face. Moses’ experience with the Lord was the model (Ex. 33:20). In the Christian era, God’s face is glimpsed through Christ. Sometimes, however, the way seems dark, and God’s face has appeared hidden even to the greatest of saints. In eternity with the curse removed, all God’s servants will see Him face-to-face. The second blessing is immediate divine presence.

His name will be on their foreheads. To bear God’s name was a privilege, but it also provided protection. The seal or name of God on someone authenticates that person as genuine, guarantees God’s protection, and is a token of His reward to the overcomers. The third blessing is eternally guaranteed reward.

22:5. This verse concludes the vision at the highest possible level. It repeats and summarizes the teaching of Revelation 21:22-24. No more night pictures the complete end of all the darkness that sin and evil brought. This can happen only because of the direct personal presence of the Lord God who will give them light. Just as Jesus is the “Light of the World” during the present age (John 8:12; 9:5), so in eternity He is the everlasting light. So neither the light of a lamp (to illumine the night) or the light of the sun (to illumine the day) can add anything to the light of God’s presence. The concluding promise is that the city’s citizens will reign for ever and ever. Exactly what this means is not clear, but it is evidently part of their service to God.

22:6. The glory now fades. John is back on Patmos. Little more does he see, but several voices speak. The first voice John hears is the angel who guided him through the fourth vision. John had been commanded earlier to write down the contents of the third vision because it was trustworthy and true (21:5). Now he receives a similar command for the fourth vision. The words are reliable because they issue from the same Lord who has always been the God of the spirits of the prophets. The message will show His servants the things that must soon take place. These words are identical to those in the opening verse of Revelation. Since all Christians are God’s servants, then the message is for them all, not just a select few. The

events must take place because of God's settled determination. All days are "soon," for Christ may return at any time.