

DISCIPLESHIP. LESSON 10

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] JOHN 4:23 – 7:52
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Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (John 4:23 – 7:52). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

3	MEMORISATION (20 minutes)	[ASSURANCES] (5) PROVERBS 3:5-6
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A. MOTIVATION

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Discover and discuss. Why is it important to memorise Bible verses (passages or chapters)?

Notes. Memorised Bible verse will enable you to build biblical convictions and habits in your family.

B. MEDITATION

(5)

Write the following memorisation verse on a white or blackboard as follows:

Assurance of God’s guidance Proverbs 3:5-6	Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6	

1. Trust God with all your heart.

To “trust” God means to make God the firm foundation of your life or to entrust your whole life into his care. It is to depend on God to save you, to build you up and to guide you. It is to respond to his Word!

It is not possible to build a building on half a foundation. It is also not possible to build a strong Christian life on half a faith in God. It is not possible to trust God with half a heart. We must continually refuse to depend on the human understanding of things and commit ourselves to lean on God’s understanding of things. Practise to see things on earth from God’s perspective in heaven (cf. Psalm 73:16-17).

2. Acknowledge God in all your ways.

How can we practically acknowledge God in all our ways?

- By not being ashamed to be a Christian or to do things in the Christian way (Matthew 10:32-33).
- By studying the Bible concerning any important issue before we act (Acts 17:11).
- By praying before we talk and act (Nehemiah 1:11).
- By seeking to please God and glorify God in everything we do (1 Corinthians 10:31).

3. God makes our paths straight.

- Sometimes God makes our plans succeed (Proverbs 16:3)
- Sometimes God causes our enemies to live at peace with us (Proverbs 16:7).
- Sometimes God opens closed doors and closed hearts (Colossians 4:2-4).

C. MEMORISATION AND REVIEW

1. Write. Write the Bible verse on a blank card or on one page of your small notebook.

2. Memorise. Memorise the Bible verse in the right way. (5) Assurance of God’s guidance: Proverbs 3:5-6.

3. Review. Divide into twos and review the first four memorised Bible verses.

Teach. The book of Revelation is an apocalypse, “an unveiling” or “revelation” of the message of Jesus Christ by means of visions that contain symbols and numbers. Jesus Christ himself gives us the keys to interpret the book of Revelation. He determines the rules by which the book of Revelation should be explained.

EIGHT KEYS OR RULES FOR INTERPRETING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

First key. The book of Revelation is a prophecy: the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Read Revelation 22:6-7; Revelation 19:10.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Mediator of all revelation in the Bible, also of the revelation in the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1). The Lord Jesus Christ is “the God of the spirits of the Old Testament prophets” (Revelation 22:6). The emphasis of Revelation 22:6 is: Jesus Christ is the God who spoke through all the prophets in the Bible and the God of whom they spoke.

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”¹ (Revelation 19:10). “The testimony of Jesus” is whatever Jesus has said in the Old Testament through his Spirit in the prophets (1 Peter 1:9-12) and in the New Testament through his Spirit in the apostles (John 16:13-15). The Author of the Old Testament and the New Testament is no one less than the Spirit of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:9-12; 2 Timothy 3:16). The emphasis of Revelation 19:10 is that the real essence and content of biblical prophecy is everything Jesus Christ said and did in the Old and New Testament! For example, about God, about himself as the coming Messiah, about God’s Old Testament people Israel, about Israel’s continuation and extension to include believers in him from all the nations in the world (Genesis 22:18; Matthew 28:19), about the kingdom and the worldwide Church.

“To prophesy” literally means “to speak forth”, “to proclaim” or “to preach”. The Old Testament warns against so-called prophets who speak visions from their own minds and not from the mouth of God (Jeremiah 23:16-32)! The New Testament warns against the many false prophets (Matthew 24:24). Real prophecy is proclaiming Jesus Christ and the contents of the New Testament. That is what Christians should proclaim! Christians should not go beyond what is written in the Bible (1 Corinthians 4:6). Never forget the warning of Christ in Revelation 22:18-19!

To put this in another way: the spiritual gift of prophecy is to proclaim what Jesus revealed about himself, his words and works in the Bible. Biblical prophecy is therefore not making arbitrary predictions about the future of people and nations (Israel and Gentiles), but proclaiming Jesus Christ and his message! The genuine content of the Old Testament prophets is revealed in the testimony of Jesus in the New Testament! Whoever Jesus is, what he said and did is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 5:17). All Jesus revealed, taught and commanded and that is now written in the New Testament is what the Old Testament prophets intended to say in their shadowy and preparatory proclamations (Matthew 5:17; Acts 3:18; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:6; 10:1; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

That is why the book of Revelation must be explained (interpreted) only in the light of the Bible. And that is why the Old Testament must be interpreted only in the light of the New Testament!

Second key. The message of the book is a blessing for everyone who reads it.

Read Revelation 1:3.

The book of Revelation does not intend to drive people into fear. Jesus promises: “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy (proclamation), and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it” (Revelation 1:3; 22:7). The message of the book is about the fact that Christ is the Conqueror and that Christians are more than conquerors together with Christ (Revelation 17:14; Romans 8:37-39). The message intends to stimulate Christians to fight the good fight of the faith in their own generation. It reveals the final victory of Christ and the believers in Christ. It reveals the establishment of the kingdom of God in its present stage (the New Testament period) and in its final phase (the new heaven and the new earth). Therefore the message of the book is intended to bless every reader!

Third key. The message of the book is intended for readers from Christ’s first coming to his second coming.

Read Revelation 1:1,3; 22:6,10.

At the time of speaking to the apostle John Jesus said, “The revelation ... must soon take place.” “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near” (Revelation 1:1,3; 22:6,10). This means that what had been revealed in the visions in the book of Revelation begin to be realised immediately from Christ’s first coming. The message of the book of Revelation affects the whole present New Testament period, from Christ’s first coming to

¹ Greek: ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας.

Christ's second coming. The message of the book of Revelation is a message intended for all Christians in all generations!

Fourth key. The symbols in the book represent literal realities that are much higher and greater than the literal meaning of the symbols.

Read Revelation 1:1,20; Revelation 5:6. Jesus said that he “made his message known” (Revelation 1:1). The word “to make known” in the original Greek language means literally “to make known by means of symbols (signs, or figurative language or imagery)”²! That is why we find so many symbols and numbers in the book of Revelation. And that is why we must understand what each symbol refers to.

- For example, in Revelation 1:12-13,16 there is a symbol of **a man standing among seven lampstands** and holding seven stars in his right hand. In Revelation 1:20 Jesus himself explains the meaning of these symbols. The lampstands are not literal lampstands, but represent seven congregations (churches). The seven stars are also not literal stars, but represent the angels or representatives of the seven congregations.
- And for example, in Revelation 5:6 “**the Lamb looking as if it had been slaughtered** standing in the centre of the throne” is a symbol of Jesus Christ that had died on the cross and had been resurrected.

Fifth key. The numbers in the book also have symbolical meaning and represent literal realities that are much higher and greater than the literal numerical value of the numbers.

Read Revelation 5:6; 2:7.

The number “seven” is a sacred number. The number represents “divine perfection”. Genesis 2:1 says that God completed his work of creation by the seventh creation day. The number “seven” symbolises divine perfection in creation.

- In Revelation 5:6 “the Lamb with **seven horns and seven eyes**, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth”, is a symbol of Christ's omnipotence and omniscience through his Holy Spirit in this world.
- And in Revelation 2:7 the **seven lampstands** represent the seven historical congregations in Asia Minor, which in turn represent all the congregations in the world throughout salvation history.
- And in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 the **seven letters** to these seven congregations represent Christ's perfect personal writings to all the congregations in the world under all circumstances in history.

Sixth key. The whole book is divided into seven parallel sections and each section represents the whole New Testament period.

Read Revelation 12:5; 14:14-16.

Just as the four gospels are parallel proclamations of the life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so each of the seven sections of the book of Revelation represents parallel descriptions of events during the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to his second coming, each depicted from a different perspective. For example:

Section 1 (chapters 1 to 3)

- begins with the death, resurrection and enthronement of Jesus Christ at his first coming (Revelation 1:5)
- and ends with the realisation of the promises to those who overcome at his second coming (Revelation 2:7; 3:12).

This section depicts the establishment of the Militant Church throughout the whole New Testament period (throughout history).

Section 2 (chapters 4 to 7)

- begins with Christ's first coming when Christ received the authority to reveal and execute the great events in salvation history (Revelation 5:1-10)
- and ends with Christ's second coming when he comes for the final judgement (Revelation 6:12-17).

This section depicts the persecution of the Church by the world throughout history.

Section 4 (chapters 12 to 14)

- begins with Christ's first coming (his birth and his ascension) (Revelation 12:5)
- and ends with Christ's second coming (gathering the harvest of the righteous and the final judgement) (Revelation 14:14-20).

This section depicts the victory of Christ and his Church over the dragon and his helpers.

Note also that **the one and only final “battle”** is described in:

- section 3 (Revelation 11:7)
- section 4 (Revelation 13:7)
- section 5 (Revelation 16:12-16)

² Greek: *sémainó* (indicative, aorist, active)

- section 6 (Revelation 19:17-19)
- section 7 (Revelation 20:7-9).

Seventh key. The seven sections of the book are arranged in an ascending, climatic order.

Read Revelation 2:27; 6:12-17; 16:17-21; 20:11-15.

Although the seven sections of the book of Revelation run parallel and span the entire period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming, there is nevertheless a progression in emphasis on those events that occur just before the second coming of Christ.

- For example: There is a progressive emphasis on **the final judgement day**. Section 1 announces the final judgement day (2:27), section 2 (6:12-17) and 3 (11:18) introduce the final judgement day, section 4 (14:14-20), 5 (16:17-21) and 6 (18:1-24) describe the final judgement in symbols and section 7 (20:11-15) describes the final judgement day by dropping most of the symbolism.
- There is also a progressive emphasis on **the final state of the Church** (3:12-13; 7:9-17; 11:15; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 19:1-10; 21:1 to 22:5).
- And there is a progression of **the message of each section** of the book.

Eighth key. Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 reveals the ideal reality of the Church on earth at the present time before Christ's second coming in the light of the perfect reality of the Church on the new earth after Christ's second coming.

Read Revelation 21:2.

"The heavenly Jerusalem" is a symbol that represents all God's people in heaven and on earth in the present time before Christ's second coming (Galatians 4:24-26; Hebrews 12:22-24). The use of the present continuous tense in some verbs in Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 means that these actions are still taking place at the present time: the New Jerusalem is coming down; Christ is making everything new and genuine; and Christians are overcoming (Revelation 21:2,5,7).

"The New Jerusalem" is therefore:

- a symbol of **the ideal reality** of God's people on the present earth **before** Christ's second coming
- and a symbol that represents **the perfect reality** of God's people on the new earth **after** Christ's second coming (Revelation 21:9-10).

The Bible Study.

Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study Revelation 21:1 to 22:6 together.

STEP 1. READ.

GOD'S WORD

Read. LET US READ Revelation 21:1 - 22:6 together.

Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.

STEP 2. DISCOVER.

OBSERVATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?

Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share).

Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered.

(The following are examples of people sharing what they have discovered. Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things, not necessarily these things)

21:3-4

Discovery 1. The future relationship with God.

Before Christ's second coming

Before the second coming of Christ, God's dwelling is in heaven while we people are on earth. Although God is approachable through faith in Christ, he is still invisible!

After Christ's second coming

After the second coming of Christ God's dwelling will be right in the midst of his people! At his first coming God revealed himself visibly in and through Jesus Christ. From the second coming onwards believers will see Christ (1 John 3:1-3)! In Christ God will be visible and approachable. On the new earth, the relationship with God will be the most important event! The relationship with God will be very personal and intimate. He will remove every scar and memory of sin and suffering on the present earth. He will wipe away every tear from my eyes. He will heal the scars of my sin and misery. He will give me continued experience of the fullness of life. He will let me walk in the light of knowledge, joy and holiness. And I will see his face.

22:3-5

Discovery 2. The future tasks for God.

On the new earth, the people of God will be occupied with very meaningful activities. They will not only inherit the new Paradise (a garden), but the whole new earth. They will serve God on the new earth and reign over the new earth. "Eternal life" is not an eternal doing nothing, but an eternal doing the most significant things! Together with all other believers in Christ, I will inherit the kingdom of God, now in its final form, namely the new heaven on the new earth. We will reign with God in this kingdom, that is, over the new earth. We will serve under God. All trouble and difficulty of work will have been removed. We will bring the splendour, glory and honour of every nation from where we come into the kingdom.

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Revelation 21:1 - 22:6 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

21:1

Question 1. Where will Christians live after the second coming of Christ? In heaven or on earth?

Notes.

Before Christ's second coming

The spirits of all believers who die physically go to heaven, which is the place where God dwells (2 Samuel 12:23; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 20:4). "Heaven" is then symbolically called "paradise" (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:3-4; Revelation 2:7).

After Christ's second coming

The final destiny of Christians is not "paradise". The popular belief that paradise is a place of (carnal) pleasure in heaven is not true. The final destiny of Christians is the new earth, which will be far more than paradise!

The old paradise on earth was a small garden with fruit trees somewhere in the Middle East, but the new earth will be this whole completely renewed earth (Romans 4:13; 8:19-21)! In the old paradise Satan could enter, human beings could sin and they could die spiritually, physically and eternally! But the new earth will be the home of righteousness and nothing impure will ever enter it (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:27)! On the new earth there will no more be Satan, sin or death (Revelation 21:4)!

Through the final judgement day the angels of Christ will weed out his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil (Matthew 13:41-42). Fire will disintegrate the elements and all man's achievements will be laid bare (exposed). The old heaven (universe) and old earth will be renewed to become the new heaven (universe) and the new earth (2 Peter 3:10-13).

21:1

Question 2. Why will there no longer be any sea?

Notes.

Before Christ's second coming

"The sea" is the symbol of the evil nations that are restless, in conflict and chaos (Isaiah 8:7; 17:12). It is the picture of the evil powers of chaos that threatens life. It stands for the countries, nations and tribes who worship the beast "out of the sea" (the antichrist, Revelation 13:1; cf. Daniel 7:2-7) and the great prostitute who sits "on many waters" (Babylon, Revelation 17:15).

After Christ's second coming

There will no longer be any "sea". This symbol does not say that there will no longer be oceans of water on the new earth, but that there will no longer be any godless and anti-Christian nations or any evil and chaotic forces on the new earth! There will be no more war! Only peace which only the God of the Bible can give!

21:2,9-11

Question 3. What does the Holy City, the New Jerusalem that comes out of heaven, represent?

Notes.

(1) Babylon and Jerusalem.

While “the city of Babylon” is a symbol of the unbelieving and unholy people and the old order on earth (Revelation 17:1-2,5,18), “the holy city, the New Jerusalem” is a symbol of God’s believing and holy people and the new order (Hebrews 11:9-10,13-16).

(2) The heavenly Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem.

The heavenly Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem are not literal cities. They are a symbol of the community of all believers (the Church). After the final judgement in the sky, the heavenly Jerusalem (Christ and the Church consisting of all believers) will descend onto the new earth as the New Jerusalem (Revelation 20:11 – 21:2). And God in Christ will dwell with believers on the new earth (Revelation 21:3).

Before Christ’s second coming

All believers are especially called “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Galatians 4:21-31; Hebrews 12:22-24; 13:14). Already during the Old Testament period they are symbolically called “the bride of God” (Isaiah 62:5) and “the wife of God” (Isaiah 54:1,5-6,11). In the New Testament they are symbolically called “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:9-10; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3; Ephesians 5:25-32).

After Christ’s second coming

All believers are especially called “the New Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:1-2,9-11). The New Jerusalem is a symbol for the final phase of the kingdom of God on the new earth after Christ’s second coming. The New Jerusalem is described in glorious terms, because nothing in the entire universe is as glorious as people that fellowship with the Living God.

(3) The New Jerusalem is at the same time the perfect ideal and the completed reality.

Before Christ’s second coming

New Jerusalem is the perfect ideal of what the people of God should be on this present earth! That is why some verbs are in the present continuous tense:

- Revelation 21:1. The New Jerusalem *is already all the time* coming down from heaven onto this earth (cf. “your kingdom come”, Matthew 6:10)
- Revelation 21:5. Christ *is already all the time* making people and things new (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17);
- Revelation 21:6. Christ *is already all the time* giving the water of life to those who are thirsty (cf. John 7:37-39)
- Revelation 22:2. The leaves of the tree of life are *already all the time* healing the nations (cf. Matthew 8:16-17).

After Christ’s second coming

The New Jerusalem is the complete and perfect reality of what the people of God will be on the new earth! That is why other verbs are in the past tense:

- Revelation 21:1. The first heaven and the first earth had passed away
- Revelation 21:4; Revelation 22:3. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and there will no longer be any curse
- Revelation 21:6. Everything written in the Bible “is done/ has come to pass”. The perfect tense emphasises that all these perfect results will continue for ever. The eternal God in Christ, “the Alpha and the Omega”, the Beginning and the End, guarantees that this perfect reality will continue for ever.

21:7-8

Question 4. What does it mean “to overcome”?

Notes.

Before Christ’s second coming

“To overcome” is the responsible task and challenge of every believer on earth! To overcome is to believe in Jesus Christ under all circumstances (1 John 5:5) and to remain in Jesus Christ (John 15:5). You overcome when you exclude the devil and the sinful world (1 John 2:15-17), because they try pull you away from fellowship and service of God. You overcome when you fight to the end against slackening and backsliding. You overcome when you continually oppose unrighteousness. People who fail to overcome are unbelievers, because they prefer the power, fame and pleasures of this earth above the salvation in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). Those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God will overcome the world (1 John 5:5) and the evil one (1 John 2:14). Christians will overcome Satan and his demons by the blood of the Lamb (i.e. on the basis of Christ’s death on the cross) and by the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11). And they will be *conquerors* that overcome those who make war on them (Revelation 17:14).

After Christ’s second coming

The believers will be “more than conquerors” through Jesus Christ (Romans 8:37)!

21:10

Question 5. What is the meaning of every part of the holy city, the New Jerusalem?

Notes. When the apostle John describes his vision of the New Jerusalem, he describes the wall, the gates, the foundations and the streets of the city. These parts of the city are symbols that describe the New Jerusalem as the community of believers (the Church) from different viewpoints.

21:12,15,17

Question 6. What does the wall symbolise?

Notes. The great and high wall is for protection, safety and security of the community of believers (the Church). The wall is 144 cubits (about 65 metres by a man's measurement) thick. Three chariots could ride abreast on it! The number 144 is symbolic: the number 3 represents God, the number 4 represents the world, the number 12 represents all the believers in the Old Testament period (Revelation 21:12) and all the believers in the New Testament period (Revelation 21:14) and the number 12x12 (=144) represents "completion and perfection". Thus the number 144 could be a symbol represents God's work of salvation throughout the history of the world that remains unassailable and secure!

Before Christ's second coming

All genuine Christians are secure and remain absolutely secure in their possession of fellowship with the Living God. Jesus already said that it is not possible to deceive the elect (Matthew 24:24). He promised, "No one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28) and "Not one has been lost" (John 17:12)!

After Christ's second coming

All genuine believers in the Bible will forever remain secure in their possession of fellowship with God in Christ. They "will not be condemned" (John 5:24). "They shall never perish" (John 10:28). "They will have everlasting life (Matthew 25:46).

21:12,13,25

Question 7. What do the twelve gates symbolise?

Notes. The gates symbolise "the entrance to the community of the people who have fellowship with God (the Church)". The names of the 12 tribes of Israel that are written on the gates indicate that only those who belong to the people of God (believers, Galatians 6:14-16; James 1:1) will live in this city.

Before Christ's second coming

The gates are never shut and there is abundant opportunity to enter by faith into the community of believers. The gates face all directions and they gather people from every nation in the world (cf. Isaiah 43:5-7; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:9). Angels guard the gates, so that no evil, ungodly unbeliever is able to enter the city (Revelation 21:27). Old Testament people like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, Daniel and many others have already entered by faith (Genesis 15:6; Luke 20:37-38; Hebrews chapter 11). All New Testament believers who have washed their clothes in the blood of the Lamb have the right to enter into the city (Revelation 7:14; Revelation 22:14)! Before one's death or Christ's second coming there is opportunity to enter into the community of believers (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-30).

At Christ's second coming

The gates will be shut and there will be no longer any opportunity to be saved (Matthew 25:10-13; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2; 2 Corinthians 13:5)! It means that only those whose names are written in the book of life of Jesus Christ will enter the city (Revelation 21:27).

After Christ's second coming

The gates will never be shut again and symbolises "uninhibited fellowship with the Living God on the new earth".

21:14,19-21

Question 8. What do the twelve foundations symbolise?

Notes. The foundations symbolise "the foundation of the community of believers". The names of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ that are written on the foundations indicate that they founded the historical Christian Church (Matthew 16:18-19, Acts 1:8; Ephesians 2:20; Ephesians 3:5-6; Revelation 21:14). They are the eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses of Jesus Christ (who is the real foundation of the Christian Church (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Before Christ's second coming

The apostles laid the foundation of the historical Church by their proclamation and writing of the New Testament Books. They brought people from the three important groups of people (Jews, half-Jews and non-Jews) to Jesus Christ and into the heavenly Jerusalem (the Church)(Galatians 4:26). The precious stones, which adorn the foundations (Isaiah

54:11-12; Revelation 21:19-21), *symbolise* the manifold wisdom and virtues of God, which the apostles proclaimed (Ephesians 3:10).

After Christ's second coming

The community of believers (the kingdom of God) will never be shaken, because God Himself is the architect and builder of the city (Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 11:10; Hebrews 12:28)!

21:16

Question 9. Why is the city shaped like a cube?

Notes.

(1) The shape of a cube.

The city has symbolically the form of a great cube, 12 000 x 12 000 x 12 000 stadia big. Literally 12 000 stadia is about 2 200 kilometres, but the city is not a literal city and also its shape is not literally a cube! Both the form and its measurements are symbols.

The form of a cube was foreshadowed by the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle and temple of Solomon, which was 20x20x20 cubits (1 Kings 6:20). During the Old Testament period this Most Holy Place, containing the ark, was regarded as the dwelling of God with all his glory (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Kings 8:10-11). In the New Testament the Most Holy Place is a symbol of "heaven", the dwelling of God, itself (Hebrews 9:12,24).

(2) The New Jerusalem in the form of a cube.

Before Christ's second coming

The heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26) as the temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:22) and as the New Jerusalem in the shape of the Most Holy Place in the temple (Revelation 21:16) are symbols of the community of believers (the Church) in its ideal form as the dwelling of God on the present earth. The Church is regarded as the dwelling of God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22)!

The number 12 000 is the product of 3 times 4 times 10 times 10 times 10. The number 3 represents "God" (Matthew 28:19). The number 4 represents "the world" with its four wind directions (Revelation 7:1). The number 12 represents "God's people" (Revelation 21:12,14), the result of God's work of salvation in the world. The number 10 is "the complete number on earth". The 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1) or 10 servants (Luke 19:13) represent "all people". And the number 10x10x10 represents "the absolute and divine complete number on earth" (Exodus 20:6; Isaiah 60:21-22). Thus the number 12 000 x 12 000 x 12 000 is a symbol and could represent "the complete and perfect result of the work of salvation of the Triune God among all the nations on earth in every generation"! A complete number of saved people is reached in every generation (cf. Romans 11:4-5). Not one of the elect in history will be deceived (Matthew 24:24) and not one of the elect will be lost (John 10:28; John 17:12)!

After Christ's second coming

"The New Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:1-2) in the shape of a cube (Revelation 21:16) is a symbol of the community of believers (the Church) in its final perfect form as the dwelling of God on the new earth. She will for ever shine with the brilliant light of God's glory (Revelation 21:3,11).

The number 12 000 x 12 000 x 12 000 is a symbol and could represent the complete and perfect result of the work of salvation of the Triune God among all the nations on earth throughout the history of this world! The number could represent all the elect believers from the creation of the world to the renewal of the world. It can symbolise "the fullness of Israel" and "the fullness of the Gentiles" and will be reached just before Christ's second coming (Romans 11:12,25-26; 2 Timothy 2:19).

21:22

Question 10. Why is there no temple in the new city?

Notes.

Before Christ's first coming

During the Old Testament period the temple building was regarded as the dwelling of God. The glory of God in the cloud by day and in the fire by night was regarded to dwell above the cherubim above the ark in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle or temple (Exodus 25:22; 40:34-38; 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Kings 19:15). In the Old Testament the radiance of the glory of God was limited to the Most Holy Place in the temple building. But already the prophet Isaiah prophesied that God Himself would be the sanctuary for those who feared (trusted in and obeyed) God. He would be "a stone that causes men to stumble" and "a trap and snare" (Isaiah 8:13-14).

After Christ's first coming

The temple building ceased to be the visible symbol of God's dwelling (John 2:19; Acts 7:44-50; 17:24-25). The curtain of the temple in Jerusalem had been torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51) in order to symbolise that from then on everyone who believes in Jesus Christ has direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18; 3:12;

Hebrews 4:14-16). From the Christian point of view there are no longer specific holy places or holy buildings in the whole world!

After Christ's first coming the community of believers (the Church) are called "the temple of God". "God dwells in them through his Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5). And the radiance of the glory of God now becomes visible in the Church (2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 5:16).

After Christ's second coming

After the second coming the situation will be reversed: God in Jesus Christ will be the visible temple of the New Jerusalem. The community of Christ (the Church) will dwell in the God who revealed himself in Christ. Then Colossians 3:3-4 is no longer a hidden reality. What the prophet Isaiah prophesied is then completely fulfilled: "God will be a sanctuary for both houses of Israel" (Isaiah 8:14), the place where believers will dwell and shelter forever, the place where they will worship and serve God forever. Then what Paul said would no longer be an invisible reality: "Your life is now hidden with Christ in God. You also will appear with Christ in glory" (Colossians 3:3-4). And the radiance of the glory of God will dominate the whole new earth (verse 23).

21:23; 22:5

Question 11. Why is there no sun, moon or lights in the New Jerusalem?

Notes. There will be no sun, moon or lights in the city, because God in Christ will be its "light". Christ is specifically called "the lamp of the city".

Before Christ's second coming

Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12), because he visibly revealed God to man (John 1:4-5; John 14:9; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 1:15) and now imparts the true and saving knowledge of God to believers (Matthew 11:27; John 8:19). Jesus Christ (according to his glorified human nature) is now in heaven and believers see him with their spiritual eyes.

After Christ's second coming

Christ will be the light and lamp of the New Jerusalem on the new earth (Revelation 21:23), because he will continually and visibly reveal the face and perfect characteristics of God to believers. God is Spirit and lives visibly through Jesus Christ among believers on the new earth (Revelation 21:3). Then believers will also be able to see Jesus Christ according to his glorified human nature with the physical eyes of their resurrected bodies (Revelation 22:4)³

21:24-27

Question 12. Who are the nations in the New Jerusalem and what do they bring into the New Jerusalem?

Notes.

Before Christ's second coming

Many people in every nation and language on earth will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (cf. Matthew 24:15; Revelation 5:9-10). They will enter the narrow gate and walk on the narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14). They will bring the wealth of their nation into the New Jerusalem (the worldwide Church) (cf. Isaiah 60:11) and become a part of the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:9-10). They will worship God through Jesus Christ by means of all the things that are good and moral in their science and its application (in the medical, agricultural and social, etc. projects), in their specific culture (poetry, writings, music and dance) and in their personal lives (character, talents, spiritual gifts, good deeds, etc) – things that have stood the test of fire. God has purposed "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 2:8).

After Christ's second coming

When the heavenly Jerusalem has descended as the New Jerusalem on the new earth, people from every tribe, language and nation will forever be a part of the believing people of God (the Church) on the new earth. But the believing people of God are not all the same and will never be the same. There is and will be a great variety of people and a great variety of splendour on the new earth! Whatever in their earthly sojourn and culture stood the test of the fire of judgement (Matthew 3:11-12; Matthew 13:40-43; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Peter 3:10) will enter with them into the New Jerusalem. "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8), whatever deeds that were done "from God, through God and for God and his glory" (Romans 11:36; John 15:5) will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58) and will follow them into the New Jerusalem (Revelation 14:13)! Think of the many lost people that have been saved from every people, tribe, language and nation (Revelation 5:9-10). Think of the uncountable number of beautiful characters of individuals. Think of the science, skills, music, songs, art, writings and all kinds of work that glorify God. Nothing that is evil or ungodly will ever enter the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27). Only those whose names are written in Christ's book of life, will enter the New Jerusalem (Revelation 20:15).

³ The present human bodies of believers in Jesus Christ will be transformed and become like the glorious resurrected body of Christ (Philippians 3:21) and their present human spirits will be transformed to be like the human spirit of Jesus Christ, because they shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1-3).

22:1**Question 13. What does the river of the water of life symbolise?**

Notes. The present physical heaven, earth and sea as they now are will be completely changed (Romans 8:21; 2 Peter 3:10). The universe is going to be gloriously renewed. Instead of the “sea” that threatens, there will be “the river of life” (Revelation 22:1) and this change symbolises that on the new earth also the relationship of man to nature will be completely restored (Isaiah 11:6-9; Ezekiel 47:9)! The physical creation or nature will absolutely be what God purposed it to be (Acts 3:21)! However, the river of life here has primarily a symbolical or spiritual significance.

Before Christ's second coming

“The river of life” symbolises the preaching of the gospel of salvation all over the world, bringing eternal life to those who drink it (John 4:10,14; 7:38). It flows from the throne of God in Christ and this is a symbol that salvation is God’s work of grace and love (Ephesians 2:8-9). The present continuous tense indicates that it is a work of God in the present time before Christ’s second coming.

After Christ's second coming

“The river of life” symbolises the fullness and perfection of the never ending salvation that God has given to his people on the new earth (John 10:28).

22:2**Question 14. What does the street in the new Jerusalem symbolise?**

Notes. The terms for “river”, “street” and “tree” in the original language are singular, but they could also have collective meaning: rivers, streets and trees! Thus the vision shows not just one river, one street and one tree, but parks consisting of rows and rows of trees between many rivers and many streets!

Before Christ's second coming

“The streets” are a symbol for easy access to the throne of God, to the rivers of life and to the trees of life. Through faith in the Mediator Christ (1 Timothy 2:5) and his Spirit (Ephesians 2:18) everyone who thirsts has a complete open door to come by faith without money and without cost and drink (Isaiah 55:1-2). Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

The streets are of pure gold, like transparent glass, which symbolises the perfect and open character of people’s approach to God (John 3:19-21; 8:12) and their perfect and transparent fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7). The Bible is greatly opposed to esoteric (secret, mystic, only for initiated) approach to the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ in the Bible!

After Christ's second coming

“The streets” are still a symbol for easy access to the throne of God, to the rivers of life and the trees of life. But now the faith of God’s people in the Invisible One who sits on the throne has been changed into a reality they can see! Now their faith in the water of eternal life has changed into a reality they experience!

22:2-3a**Question 15. What does the tree of life symbolise?**

Notes.

Before Christ's first coming

The tree of life was a real tree in paradise (the garden) somewhere in the Middle East. Adam and Eve possessed eternal life under condition that they continued to obey God. The tree of life would maintain their eternal life.

But after they sinned, God drove them out of paradise so that they would not be able to eat from the tree of life that would cause them to be slaves of sin and death forever (Genesis 2:9; 3:22,24).

On this present earth man cannot enter paradise (the garden). All people have sinned (Romans 3:23), are by nature spiritually dead, will one day die physically and also eternally, unless they are saved by Jesus Christ! Thus, before the first coming of Jesus Christ to the earth, no man has admittance to the tree of life that stood in Paradise.

Before Christ's second coming

The tree of life and its leaves symbolise the wholesome influence of the gospel, the superabundance of the salvation of God and the healing it brings to body and soul now in the present time in the ideal reality of the Church. Before Christ’s second coming all people need healing: spiritual, physical, emotional and eternal healing!

After Christ's second coming

The tree of life symbolises the complete and perfect healing in body and soul which all believers will possess on the new earth. They will no longer need leaves for healing. All believers will continually be blessed by God, their soul will be perfectly satisfied, all their needs will be met and they will be filled with unspeakable joy.

On the new earth the paradise (the garden) will be inside the New Jerusalem! And the tree of life will be in paradise. And everyone who overcomes on the present earth will have the right to eat from the tree of life for ever (Revelation 2:7). The believer will be spiritually, physically, emotionally and eternally alive (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)! The monthly fruitfulness of the tree of life guarantees the continual abundance of blessings and the perfect eternal life on the new earth. “No longer will there be any curse” (Revelation 22:3)

22:3b

Question 16. Who sits on God’s throne?

Notes.

Before Christ’s second coming

God’s kingdom is the kingship or sovereign rule/reign of God over everyone and everything, from eternity to eternity (Psalm 93:1-2; Psalm 145:13; Psalm 146:10; 1 Timothy 6:15). God’s kingdom in particular is the kingship or sovereign rule/reign of God through Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16). The kingdom is based on the completed work of salvation of Christ (Matthew 21:39,42-43; Acts 2:36) and the application of that work in believers through the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). The kingdom is recognised in the hearts of believers and operative in their lives (Luke 17:20-21; Matthew 25:34-40).

The kingship of God results in four visible areas:

- The complete salvation of believers from beginning to end (Mark 10:25-26; John 3:3-8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11);
- The constitution of believers as one Church on earth (Matthew 16:18-19; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 2:4-5,9-10);
- The good works (influence) of believers in every aspect of human society (Matthew 25:34-36; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 14:17);
- And finally, the redeemed universe or the new heaven and new earth at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15).

After Christ’s second coming

God’s kingdom on the new earth will reach its perfection and be God’s kingdom in its final perfect phase (Matthew 25:34; John 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 11:15-18). The expression: “The Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him so that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28) means that the work of Jesus Christ as Mediator within salvation history on earth has been completed and he will hand his entrusted task as Mediator back to God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11 denotes *the beginning* and 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 *the end* of the work of Jesus Christ as Mediator on this present earth. At his second coming Jesus Christ has completed his reign as Mediator on this present earth.

The eternal kingdom or kingship of (the Triune) God begins beyond Christ’s second coming. However, Jesus Christ continues to reign together with God the Father on his throne for all eternity (2 Samuel 7:13; Isaiah 9:7; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 22:1,3)! Only the distinction between the functions of God the Father and God the Son has then come to an end. From then on the Bible speaks only of the complete unity of God the Father and God the Son: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). “The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). “God and the Lamb is its light” (Revelation 21:23). “And the throne of God and of the Lamb” will be in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1,3).

22:4

Question 17. How will believers see God’s face?

Notes. The glory of God becomes visible in Jesus Christ.

At Christ’s first coming

Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being (Hebrews 1:3; cf. John 1:14). Whoever saw Jesus, saw God the Father (John 14:9).

After Christ’s second coming

Jesus Christ will still be the visible image of the invisible God and believers will see who God is in the face of Jesus Christ at all times. They will fellowship directly with God through Jesus Christ. They will live, serve and reign in his immediate presence (Revelation 22:3-5).

22:5

Question 18. What will believers do on the new earth?

Notes.

Before Christ's second coming

Believers on this present earth have been given the cultural commission: to fill the present earth with people in God's image; to subdue and preserve the present earth and to rule over God's creation (Genesis 1:26-28). And believers have been given the great commission: "Go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19).

After Christ's second coming

Believers on the new earth will probably continue to fulfil their cultural commission to reign over God's beautiful physical creation and all the wonderful things in nature (Revelation 22:5). And they will serve God in worship forever (Revelation 22:3).

Question 19. What do you think is the importance of Revelation chapters 21 and 22 for your life as a Christian?

Notes. Revelation 21 and 22 teaches me to answer the question, "Where am I going?" "I am going to meet Jesus Christ at his second coming. Then my body is going to be resurrected and I will be judged. I will be changed to become like Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1-3). Then I am going to dwell forever in God's visible presence through Jesus Christ on the new earth. There I will fellowship with God, worship God, serve God and reign with God in his kingdom on the new earth! I surely have a wonderful and hopeful future!

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Revelation 21:1 - 22:6.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application. (Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Revelation 21:1 – 22:6.

- 21:1-3. Look forward to the second coming of Christ, when the perfect new heaven and new earth will become a reality.
- 21:4. Remember that all my present tears and weakness of my body are only temporary. The perfect reality lies ahead!
- 21:7-8. Be a person that overcomes!
- 21:16. Seek one thing only and that is to dwell in God's presence all the days of my life and gaze (meditate) upon the beautiful characteristics, words and deeds of God (Psalm 27:4).
- 21:17. Never doubt that Jesus Christ protects me like a wall (John 17:12).
- 21:18-21. Proclaim the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10; James 3:17).
- 21:22. Regard all believers in Jesus Christ in the world as being the temple of God in which God lives through his Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). But expect God in Christ to become our final temple.
- 21:23. Continually get to know the living God better and better by looking at the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6)
- 21:25. Tell other people that the gates are still open and that it is still a time of God's grace to be saved (cf. Luke 4:17-21)!
- 21:26. Do everything I do (my study, job, relationships, etc) as if I do it for Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16; 3:17).
- 21:27. Get rid of all shameful and deceitful practices.
- 22:2. Allow God to heal my past hurts and scars.
- 22:3. Like Jesus Christ, live on this earth to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45).
- 22:4. Focus on the throne of God and of the Lamb. Set my heart and mind on the things above, where Christ is and not on the earthly things (Colossians 3:1-4).

Grow strong, not only in faith and love, but also in hope: the very sure expectation about where we are going and what our wonderful eternal future will be (Hebrews 6:11-12; 10:23)!

2. Examples of personal applications from Revelation 21:1 – 22:6.

I want to remember that I am an alien and stranger on this present earth, and that my real citizenship is in the heavenly Jerusalem. This will help me not to get pre-occupied with the things of this world. I want to store up for myself treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:1-4).

I want to do now in my present life on earth what I will be doing in the future on the new earth. I want to fellowship with God, worship God, serve God and bring people and things that are glorious and honourable into God's kingdom. I want to seek God's kingdom above everything else (Matthew 6:33)!

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Revelation 21:1 - 22:6. (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

**[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS**

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

**[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON**

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Make a commitment to one of the possible applications.
2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter from **John 7:53 – 11:37** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (5) Assurance of God's guidance: **Proverbs 3:5-6.** Daily review the last 3 memorised Bible verses.
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook on making disciples. Include the notes on your personal time with God, memorisation notes, Bible study notes and this preparation.