

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The first series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 fundamental questions in life: “How do I respond to God’s Word?” “Where do I come from?” “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” And “How do I bear fruit?” Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE KNOWS WHERE HE IS GOING. The fundamental question is “WHERE AM I GOING?”

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Please read Revelation 21:1- 22:6 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in Revelation 21:3-4. Before the new heaven and the new earth, God’s dwelling was in heaven, while we people were on earth. And without Christ, God was invisible and unapproachable. Now in the new heaven on the new earth, God’s dwelling will be in the midst of his people. God will be visible and approachable. And *the relationship with God will be very personal and intimate*. He will wipe away every tear from my eyes. He will heal the scars of my sin and the memory of all my sufferings on this present earth. 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 the very best of all is that I will see his face!

(T) An important truth for me is in Revelation 22:3-5. On the new earth, the people of God will be *occupied with very meaningful activities*. They will inherit the new earth, reign over the new earth and serve God on the new earth. “Eternal life” is not an “eternal doing nothing”. 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. All work will be meaningful. We will bring the splendour, glory and honour of every nation from where we come from into the kingdom.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question from Revelation 21:1. After the Second Coming of Christ, will Christians live in heaven or on earth?

(T) After the Second Coming of Christ, the first heaven and the first earth will pass away. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. With complete restored relationships to God, the Christians will live in the visible presence of God on the new earth. The new heaven and new earth will also be the home of righteousness (2 Peter 3:13). On the new earth, the relationship of man to other men will be completely restored! God’s people will only do what is right. All who do what is wrong on the present earth will be excluded (Revelation 21:27).

2nd Question from Revelation 21:1. Why will there no longer be any sea?

(S) In the Bible, “the sea” is the symbol of unrest and conflict. It is the picture of the evil powers of chaos that threatens life. It stands for the nations who worship Antichrist, who is the Beast “out of the sea”, and Babylon, who is the great prostitute who sits “on many waters” (Revelation 13:1, 17:15). Therefore this symbol does not say that there will no longer be oceans, but that there will no longer be godless and anti-Christian nations or any evil and chaotic forces on the new earth.

3rd Question from Revelation 21:2. What is the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, that comes out of heaven?

(T) Revelation 21:2 and 9-10 clearly teaches that the new Jerusalem is not a literal city, but “the bride of Christ”. In the Old Testament, the true believers are called “the bride of God” (Isaiah 62:5). And in the New Testament, the true believers are called “the bride of the Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). Therefore all the true believers from the Old Testament and New Testament periods together form the heavenly Jerusalem before the Second Coming and form the New Jerusalem after the Second Coming.

The new Jerusalem and the Bride of Christ are symbols of the people of God, the sum total of all believers in the Messiah that ever lived on earth. At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgement and the renewal of heaven and earth, the heavenly Jerusalem will come down onto the new earth as the new Jerusalem. In the vision, the city is described in glorious terms, because nothing in the entire universe is as glorious as people that fellowship with the living God. While Babylon was unholy and old, Jerusalem is holy and new. On the one hand, the new Jerusalem is the ideal of what the people of God should be now. On the other hand the new Jerusalem is the perfect reality of what the people of God will be on the new earth.

4th Question from Revelation 21:11-23. What is the meaning of the different parts of the city?

(S) The great and high wall is for protection, safety and security. It is a symbol that the people of God remain secure in their possession of fellowship with God before the Second Coming and also after the Second Coming. Jesus says, “No one can snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:28). The gates are for entering into the community of the people who have fellowship with God. The gates are always open. Before the Second Coming of Christ, it is still a time of grace and there is abundant opportunity to enter by faith into the community of the people of God. The gates face in all directions. People from every nation in the world come into the community of the people of God. Angels guard the gates, so that no evil and ungodly person can enter. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on the gates indicate that only those who belong to the people of God will live in this city. The foundations are for supporting the wall. They are a symbol of the twelve apostles who founded the historical Church (Ephesians 2:20). They are the eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses of Christ, who is the real foundation of the Church (1 Corinthians 3:11). By their witnessing and their writings, they brought people to Christ and into the heavenly Jerusalem. The precious stones, which adorn the foundations, are symbols of the manifold wisdom and virtues of God, which the Church proclaims (Ephesians 3:10).

5th Question from Revelation 21:16. Why is the city shaped like a cube?

(T) The city is not literal and its shape is not literal. The form of a cube was foreshadowed by the Holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:20). The Holy of holies was regarded as the dwelling of God during the Old Testament period (Hebrews 9:12,24). All the believers together on the present earth are not only regarded as the heavenly Jerusalem or the temple of God, but also as Holy of holies, the dwelling of God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22). Likewise, the new Jerusalem on the new earth is a description of the ideal Church and of future Church as the dwelling of God (Revelation 21:3,11,22). The number 12 000 is the product of 3 times 4 times 10 times 10 times 10. The number 3 represents “the Triune God”. The number 4 represents “the four corners of the universe”. And the number 1 000, which is equal to 10x10x10, represents “the number of ultimate completeness and perfection”. Therefore, the number 12 000 expresses the complete and perfect result of the work of salvation of the Triune God among all the nations on earth! And that result is the Church or kingdom of God, when the full number of all believers has come in (Romans 11:25-26). Thus, the cube represents the Church or kingdom of God in both its ideal form and its final form as the complete and perfect result of the work of salvation of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!

6th Question from Revelation 21:22. Why is there no temple in the new city?

(S) There is no temple in the city, because God and Christ is its temple. The radiance of God’s majesty and glory is not limited to a particular place anymore, but manifests itself everywhere. Before the Second Coming, Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). After the Second Coming Jesus will still be the visible image of the invisible God, but then believers will see God’s face at all times. They will fellowship directly with God. They will live, serve and reign in his immediate presence.

7th Question from Revelation 21:23 and 22:5. Why is there no sun, moon or lights in the new city?

(T) There is no sun, moon or lights in the city, because God and Christ are its “light”. Christ is specifically called “the lamp of the city”, because he visibly reveals the face of God and imparts the true and saving knowledge of God to believers (2 Corinthians 4:6), now in the present before the Second Coming and also in the perfect kingdom of God on the new earth after the Second Coming.

8th Question from Revelation 21:9 and 22:2. What is the meaning of the street?

(S) The terms for “street”, “river” and “tree” in the original language are singular, but they could also have collective meaning. 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! The streets are a symbol for easy access to the throne of God, to the rivers of life and to the trees of life. The streets are of pure gold, like transparent glass, which symbolises the perfect and open character of fellowship with God.

9th Question from Revelation 22:1-2. What is the meaning of the river of life and the tree of life?

(T) Before the Second Coming of Christ, 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) and the tree of life and its leaves symbolise the wholesome influence of the gospel and the healing it brings to body and soul. After

the Second Coming of Christ, the river of life symbolises the fullness and perfection of the salvation that God gives to his people and the tree of life symbolises the complete healing of all the scars of our life on the old earth and the continuous blessings of God that will satisfy all our needs and fill us with unspeakable joy. On this present earth, man has been driven out of the Paradise. On the new earth, the Paradise will be inside the city!

10th Question from Revelation 22:5. Over what will believers reign forever and ever on the new earth?

(S) Believers on the new earth will probably realise their original assignment to rule over God's beautiful physical creation and all the wonderful things in nature (Genesis 1:26,28).

11th Question from Revelation 21:7-8. What does it mean to overcome?

(T) In John 16:33 Jesus Christ says, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." The apostle Paul says, "We are more than conquerors through Christ." (Romans 8:37). To overcome is to remain in Jesus Christ under all circumstances. It is not to allow the devil or the world to pull you away from fellowship and service of God. It is to fight to the end against backsliding. It is to continuously oppose unrighteousness. People who fail to overcome are unbelievers, who prefer the power, fame and pleasures of this earth above the salvation of the new earth.

12th Question from Revelation 21:24-27. Who are the nations in the new Jerusalem and what do they bring into the new Jerusalem?

(S) Before the Second Coming of Christ, many people from every nation and language on earth will become Christians and so become a part of the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 5:9-10). They will worship God in Christ through everything that is good in their specific culture, their poetry, writings, music and dance. After the Second Coming of Christ, people from every tribe, language and nation will forever be a part of the people of God on the new earth. But the people of God are not and will not all be the same. There is and there will be a great variety of people, with different personalities, gifts and skills. Whatever in their culture stood the test of the fire of judgement, whatever is glorious and honourable, all this splendour will be a part of the new Jerusalem. Think of 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. Only those whose names are written in Christ's book of life, will enter the new Jerusalem.

13th Question. What do you think is the importance of Revelation 21:1-22:6 for your life as a Christian?

(T) Revelation 21:1-22:6 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. Then I am going to dwell forever in God's visible presence on the new earth. There I will visibly 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!

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After you have brainstormed with one another and recorded 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**.

(T) My personal application is the following. 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.

(S) I want to do now what I one day will be doing 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!

(T) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Revelation 21:1-22:6.

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for showing me that, while I am now still a pilgrim passing through this present earth, my real destiny is the new earth. Help me not to get sidetracked by the activities of this present earth, but to invest my life in the future new earth.

(S) Dear Father in heaven, make me determined to put you first in everything. To fellowship with you now, to worship you now, to serve you now and to bring people into your kingdom now.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Meditate on the following question. "Where are you going? To the new earth or to the lake of fire?"

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from John 15:1-17. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".