The Big Picture

GOD IN THE CENTER FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

New Creation: His Glory, Forever

A DEEPER LOOK

This week we have reached the final movement of the biblical story: **New Creation**. The Bible began with God creating the heavens and the earth, and it ends with God making all things new. But as we have seen throughout *The Big Picture*, the story is not ultimately about Creation itself, or even about what we receive from God. It is about **God**.

Over the next five days, we will look more closely at the final chapters of Revelation and trace some of their connections back through Scripture. As you study, continue asking the question that has guided us throughout *The Big Picture*:

What does this reveal about God?

DAY 1: A New Heaven and a New Earth

Read: Revelation 21:1-8; Genesis 1:1

The opening words of Revelation 21 deliberately take us back to the opening words of Genesis. Genesis begins, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Near the end of Scripture, John sees "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1).

The biblical story has traveled a long way between those two passages. Sin entered God's good Creation. Death followed. Humanity was driven from Eden. But none of this defeated God's purposes. The God who created in the beginning is still at the center when the story reaches its end.

Notice also the direction of what John sees. New Jerusalem is "coming down out of heaven from God" (v. 2). The final picture of Scripture is not God's people abandoning Creation. God is making all things new, and the great announcement from the throne is that **God will dwell with His people**.

Then God Himself speaks: "Behold, I am making all things new" (v. 5).

Think About It

1. Compare Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 21:1. What words and ideas connect the beginning of Scripture with its ending?
2. According to Revelation 21:2, where does New Jerusalem come from? Why is its direction significant?
3. What does Revelation 21:3 emphasize about God's relationship with His people?
4. Make a list of everything Revelation 21:4 says will no longer exist. How are these things connected with the Fall?
5. Who is doing the action in the statement, "Behold, I am making all things new"? Why is that important?

6. God identifies Himself as “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (v. 6). What does that reveal about the God who stands at both the beginning and the completion of the biblical story?

What Does This Reveal About God?

Write down at least three things Revelation 21:1-8 reveals about God.

DAY 2: The Glory of God and His Dwelling Presence

Read: Exodus 25:8-9; Exodus 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:6-13; Revelation 21:9-11

When John is shown New Jerusalem, one of the first things he tells us is that the city is “having the glory of God” (Revelation 21:11).

That description becomes even more significant when we trace God's glory through the Old Testament.

When God instructed Israel to build the tabernacle, He said, “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst” (Exodus 25:8). When the tabernacle was completed, “the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34).

Generations later, when Solomon's temple was dedicated, God's glory again filled the place He had chosen for His dwelling among Israel. The priests could not remain to minister “for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:11).

Then we reach Revelation. John sees New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God with humanity, **“having the glory of God.”**

The connection between God's glory and His dwelling presence runs through the biblical story.

Think About It

1. According to Exodus 25:8, why did God command Israel to build the sanctuary?
2. What happened when the tabernacle was completed in Exodus 40:34-35?
3. What happened when the ark was brought into the temple in 1 Kings 8:10-11?
4. What phrase appears in both accounts?
5. What do the tabernacle and temple reveal about God's desire to dwell among His people?
6. Now read Revelation 21:3 and 21:11 together. What connections do you see with the tabernacle and temple?
7. What is different about God's dwelling presence in the New Creation?

Trace the Story

Complete the progression:

Tabernacle: The glory of the LORD filled the _____.

Temple: The glory of the LORD filled the _____.

New Jerusalem: The city has the _____.

Look Deeper

Read **Leviticus 16:1-2, 29-34** and **Hebrews 9:6-12**.

Although God chose to dwell among His people, access to the Most Holy Place was restricted under the old covenant. What do these passages reveal about God's holiness, human sin, and the work of Christ?

What Does This Reveal About God?

What have you learned about God's glory and His desire to dwell with His people?

DAY 3: God Dwelling with His People

Read: John 1:14; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:22-23

God's dwelling presence among His people did not end with the tabernacle or temple.

John writes of Jesus Christ:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The word translated “dwelt” carries the idea of pitching a tent or tabernacling among us. The God who had revealed His presence among Israel in the tabernacle had now come near in the person of Jesus Christ. Once again, dwelling and glory appear together.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus also promised His disciples that the Father would give them another Helper, the Holy Spirit, who would be with them and “in” them (John 14:16-17).

Paul carries the dwelling theme forward when he describes God's people as being joined together into a holy temple in the Lord:

“In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22).

Then John's final vision brings the theme to its culmination. When he looks at New Jerusalem, he sees something remarkable:

“And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Revelation 21:22).

The significance is not merely that New Jerusalem has no temple. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Then John tells us:

“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (v. 23).

The dwelling presence and glory of God that we have traced through Scripture now stand at the center of John's vision of New Creation.

Think About It

1. What two ideas does John connect in John 1:14?
2. How does John 1:14 connect Jesus with the dwelling presence of God?
3. What did Jesus promise His disciples about the Holy Spirit in John 14:16-17?
4. How does Paul describe God's people in Ephesians 2:19-22?
5. According to Ephesians 2:22, how are believers being built together, and who makes them God's dwelling place?
6. What does John say about the temple in New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:22?
7. Why is the statement that “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” are its temple so significant?
8. According to Revelation 21:23, why does the city have no need of the sun or moon to shine on it?
9. What relationship do you see between “the glory of God” and “the Lamb” in verse 23?

Follow the Glory

Think back over the four movements we have studied:

Creation: God's glory was **revealed**.

Fall: God's glory was **exchanged**.

Redemption: God's work through Christ was **“to the praise of his glory.”**

New Creation: “the glory of God gives it light.”

Humanity's rejection of God's glory never diminished it. His glory has always belonged to Him.

What Does This Reveal About God?

What does Revelation 21:22-23 reveal about God's glory, His holiness, and the Lamb?

DAY 4: From Eden to Eternity

Read: Genesis 2:8-10; Genesis 3:22-24; Revelation 22:1-5

The connections between the beginning and ending of Scripture become unmistakable in Revelation 22.

In Genesis, a river flows from Eden. The tree of life stands in the garden. Humanity lives in the Creation God has made.

Then sin enters the story.

Adam and Eve are driven from Eden, and the way to the tree of life is guarded. The curse enters God's Creation, and death becomes part of human experience.

Now look at Revelation 22.

There is a river again, "the river of the water of life," flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (v. 1).

There is the tree of life again (v. 2).

But something has changed.

"No longer will there be anything accursed" (v. 3).

The way to the tree is no longer barred. The curse is gone. God's servants worship Him. And then comes one of the most extraordinary promises in all of Scripture:

"They will see his face" (v. 4).

What was lost through humanity's rebellion does not have the final word.

God does.

Think About It

1. What similarities do you find between Genesis 2:8-10 and Revelation 22:1-2?
2. Why was humanity barred from the tree of life after the Fall?
3. What has changed when the tree appears again in Revelation 22?
4. What does Revelation 22:3 say about the curse?
5. Where does the river of the water of life originate?
6. What will God's servants do according to verse 3?
7. Read the first sentence of Revelation 22:4 again: **"They will see his face."** Why is that statement so significant after everything that has happened since Genesis 3?
8. According to Revelation 22:5, what provides light for God's people?
9. How long will they reign?

Beginning and End

Compare what you have read:

Genesis: Tree of life
Revelation: Tree of life

Genesis: River in Eden
Revelation: River of the water of life

Genesis: Curse enters
Revelation: No more curse

Genesis: Humanity driven from Eden
Revelation: They will see His face

Genesis: Death enters
Revelation: Death is no more

What Does This Reveal About God?

What do these connections between Genesis and Revelation reveal about God's faithfulness to bring His purposes to completion?

DAY 5: His Glory, Forever

Read: Genesis 1:1; Romans 1:20-25; Ephesians 1:3-14; Revelation 21:1-5, 22-23; 22:1-5

Today, step back.

We began this closer look at the biblical story with Creation.

“In the beginning, God...”

God created all things. Creation came from Him, exists through Him, and was created for Him. What He made displayed His power, wisdom, goodness, and glory.

Then humanity exchanged that glory.

Rather than honoring the Creator, humanity turned toward created things and gave them the worship that belongs to God.

But God did not abandon His purpose.

He acted in redemption through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1 repeatedly brings us back to the purpose toward which His work is moving: **"to the praise of his glory."**

And now we have reached New Creation.

The curse is gone.

Death is gone.

The tree of life is there.

God dwells with His people.

They worship Him.

They see His face.

And His glory gives the New Creation its light.

The Bible has carried us from Genesis to Revelation, but the One at the center has never changed.

God.

Think About It

1. Read Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 21:1 together. Who stands at both the beginning and the completion of the story?
2. According to Romans 1:20-25, what did humanity do with the glory and worship that belonged to the Creator?
3. Read Ephesians 1:6, 12, and 14. What phrase or idea is repeated?
4. How does Revelation 21:23 answer the exchange of glory described in Romans 1?
5. What has happened to the curse, death, and separation that followed the Fall?
6. What does Revelation 22:3-5 tell us God's people will do forever?
7. Of all the blessings described in Revelation 21-22, why might **"They will see his face"** be the greatest?
8. After studying Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation, how would you answer the question:

What does the whole biblical story reveal about God?

The Big Picture - Complete the story in your own words:

Creation:

Fall:

Redemption:

New Creation:

Now look at those four movements together.

God was there in the beginning.

God remained sovereign when humanity rebelled.

God acted to redeem through His Son.

God will make all things new.

And when the story reaches its glorious consummation, He will still be there.

Still at the center.

Still on the throne.

Still glorious.

And forever worthy of all worship and praise.

Final Reflection

If God will be at the center of eternity, what would it look like for Him to be more fully at the center of your life now?

As you continue reading Scripture, carry this question with you: **What does this reveal about God?**
Look first at Him. Look at what He is doing. Look at what He reveals about Himself. Look for His glory.

And then find your place within **His story**.