CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
DECEMBER24 2022

earth's makeover

Scripture Story: Revelation 15:1-4; Revelation 20:7-15; Revelation 21; Revelation 22.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 678).

keytext

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'"
(Revelation 21:2, 3, NIV)

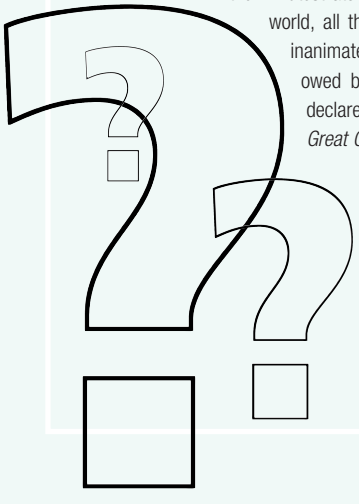
what do you think?

What Do You Think? A=Agree NS=Not Sure D=Disagree

1. People who live good lives will go to heaven. A NS D
2. Christians should worry more about today than the afterlife. A NS D
3. We can experience heaven today. A NS D
4. Heaven is open to everyone. A NS D

did you know?

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 678).



INTO THE STORY

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

"The angel said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.'

"'Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.'

"I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!'

"Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.'

"'Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

"'Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.'"

(Revelation 22:1-14, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What are the "new" features of the New Jerusalem in verses 1-6?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What crops does the river of life yield? How does this relate to the source of the river? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Compare this passage in the *Out of the Story* section with Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; and Zechariah 14:8. What are the similarities? What are the differences? What do these visions tell us about God?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What do you think John means when he says that God's name will be on our foreheads?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why are we rewarded for what we have done if we are saved by grace? (John 15:8-11; Romans 6:15-18; James 2:14-18)

_____
_____
_____
_____

What does the Christmas story tell us about God? In what ways are the topics of Christmas and heaven similar?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne" **(Revelation 3:21, NIV).**

"As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness" **(Psalm 17:15, NIV).**

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" **(1 John 3:2, NIV).**

"'Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" **(John 5:24, NIV).**

"'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit" **(1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, NIV).**

further insight

"In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammeled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found."

—Ellen G. White, *Education,* p. 309

connectingtolife

Sabbath

How biblical are your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section? Find more information on heaven and hell by studying the following texts:

Revelation 4:1-6	Revelation 21:15-21
Revelation 4:6-11	Revelation 21:22-27
Revelation 5:1-5	Revelation 22:1-5
Revelation 5:6-14	Matthew 8:12
Revelation 6:8	Luke 16:19-31
Revelation 7:16, 17	Matthew 25:41
Revelation 19:1-10	2 Peter 2:4
Revelation 20:10-15	Jude 6
Revelation 21:1-8	2 Thessalonians 1:9
Revelation 21:9-14	Mark 12:25-27

Sunday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

After reading the passage in the *Into the Story* section, prayerfully reflect on the following words:

"The life on earth is the beginning of the life in heaven; education on earth is an initiation into the principles of heaven; the lifework here is a training for the lifework there. What we now are, in character and holy service, is the sure foreshadowing of what we shall be" (*Education*, p. 307).

What will you choose?

Monday

Read Revelation 21:2, 3.

Read the *Key Text*. Consider the following ideas that pastor and author Max Lucado talks about:

"When the great Russian writer Maxim Gorky visited the United States, he was taken to Coney Island one weekend. His hosts took him on all kinds of thrill rides. . . .

"At the end of what seemed like a perfect day, they asked Gorky how he'd liked it.

"The writer was silent for a moment. Then he said, 'What a sad people you must be!'

"Gorky was right. Any society that bases its very existence on the 'cheap thrills' of the moment must be a sad society indeed.

"Jesus offers something so much better for us. . . .

"There is no greater joy than knowing that we are in the center of God's will. There is no greater happiness than knowing we are pleasing God. There is no greater satisfaction than the genuine satisfaction that comes from sharing His love with some other human being.

"The happiness Jesus gives us is lasting . . . . which will continue until the day He comes to take you home." (Adapted from Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 384-385.)

Complete this sentence: When I see Jesus face-to-face, I will

Tuesday

Read Psalm 16:11.

After contemplating the words of Ellen White in the *Flashlight* section, pay attention to glimpses of heaven on earth. Keep a journal for a day, noting all things of "unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, [which] declare that God is love."

Wednesday

Summarize all of the *Punch Lines* in one, concise statement.

Think about what the new earth will mean to you by considering these additional *Punch Lines*:

- New laws of nature (Isaiah 11:6-9)
- New government (Revelation 22:14, 15)
- New lifestyle (Isaiah 65:21, 23)
- New worship (Isaiah 66:22, 23)

Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10.

Ellen White once wrote, "Even in this life we may catch glimpses of His presence and may taste the joy of communion with Heaven, but the fullness of its joy and blessing will be reached in the hereafter" (*Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 602).

In light of Ellen White's statement, is it possible to experience heaven today? If so, how? See also *Further Insight.*

Friday

Read Isaiah 65:17.

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed: "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what does the right side look like?"

How are you preparing today for spending an eternity with Him?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy,* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.