

**Life Group Notes**

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Speaker:** Andy McCullough

**Title:** The Presence: Presence Forever

**Passage:** Revelation 21:1-6

The end of the story of the Presence of God is the reunification of heaven and earth, of God's presence and God's people. The word "new" in verse 1 means renewed or upgraded. "The sea was no more" – the sea was the symbol of chaos and uncertainty and evil; these will no longer exist. "Holy city" – a city is an interlocked system of relationships and peoples and structures of power. Often in cities we have seen at close quarters the best and the worst of intense human interaction. "New Jerusalem" – Jerusalem, home of the temple, was considered the meeting point with God. But when Revelation was written, Jerusalem had been destroyed; it was wiped off the map by the Roman army. So to see the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven is like a restoration of a perfect society; everything that is wholesome and wonderful about human interaction without everything that is dark and malicious and unjust. There is also a sense in which the new Jerusalem is a fulfilment of the story of the Church. The church is God's new society, God's holy city.

"The Bride" - Heaven will be: a place of perfect, consummated love, an end to all waiting and longing and preparation, a secure relationship of covenant commitment forever, a society that is beautiful, stunning, radiant! Dwelling/tent/ "The tent of God is among humankind." Not dwelling of *man* with *God*. Dwelling of *God* with *man*. No more death. Every tear wiped away.

In verse 5 we hear the voice of God himself. "These words are trustworthy and true," these words about heaven are reliable, they are worthy of your trust, you can build your life on them.

Alpha and Omega; the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, beginning and end of all things, the first word and the final word. Finally, the water of life is given to drink. We have been thirsty since Eden. Now there is access to the source of the water of life.

**Suggested Questions:**

1. What are you most looking forward to about heaven, and why?
2. What are you most confused about regarding heaven?
3. Why should we care about the earth/ the environment? What lifestyle choices are you making in this regard?
4. How does the idea of heaven as a wedding between Jesus and his bride make you feel? What do you find helpful or unhelpful about this image?
5. How does a belief in heaven change the way you live now?
6. Are there ways in which you are thirsty now? What will it mean to have your thirst finally satisfied?