



THE STORY Sermon Study Guide

Week 12: The Return of Christ – The Completion of God’s Plan Lance Blythe

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Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week’s sermon

Today we come to the twelfth and final week of our series The Story with a full circle conclusion. Our journey has taken us from the garden of Eden to the city of God, from the first tree of life to its final, healing renewal. God’s redemptive pursuit of humanity culminates with a profound and transformative vision—a vision not just for the future, but for today. The ending of The Story is not a distant dream, but a living hope—one that gives meaning, direction, and purpose to how we live now.

Read Revelation 21:22-27

In the final vision of Revelation, the new Jerusalem has no temple. God’s presence fills the entire city and there is no longer any need for walls, rituals, or intermediaries—God is fully with His people. This is a radical departure from the way people have related to God throughout history, where sacred spaces and systems mediated the divine. The promise is that one day, nothing will stand between us and God; we will know Him face-to-face, with no barriers of shame, fear, or distance. This image captures the ultimate purpose of God’s story: complete reconciliation.

Even now, our walk with God is a foretaste of that full and perfect unity. Every moment we live aware and engaged with God’s presence, every prayer, every act of love, every move of the Spirit in and through us, is a glimpse of that future city and the completeness that is to come.

1. How does knowing the end of God’s story give you hope for today? What might it look like to live each day in light of this vision of renewal?
2. The biblical picture of eternity is not one of floating on clouds in passive existence. Instead, the vision is of a city where there is vibrant, purposeful activity and joyful work. How does this reframe your understanding of heaven? Does this make you think differently about your work now?



Read Revelation 22:1-2

The Bible begins and ends with a tree. The tree of life that humanity was once barred from in Genesis now stands freely accessible again. It's an image of flourishing, but it is also a vision of fulfillment. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations, signaling a future where every wound—personal, communal, and global—is tended to by God's grace. This is not just about healing from physical pain, but about the reconciliation of peoples, the mending of divisions, and the undoing of the curse that has fractured humanity since the beginning.

We live in a time marked by conflict, injustice, and division. But the vision of Revelation offers a counter-story: a future where every tribe and tongue are gathered together in unity and peace under the reign of Christ. This is the future toward which The Story of Scripture points. But it's also a calling for the Church today. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to be people of healing who seek wholeness not just for ourselves, but for our communities, our neighbours, and even those we might consider enemies. We are called to participate in God's work of reconciliation here and now.

1. Where in your life or community do you see a need for healing and reconciliation? How might you participate in God's work of restoring what is broken?

Read 1 Peter 2:4-5

Too often, believers think of heaven as a faraway place we escape to after death. But in Scripture, heaven is not so much “up there” as it is *breaking in here*. Through Jesus, the kingdom of God has already begun to take root in the world, and the Spirit is at work now, bringing glimpses of that final renewal into our everyday lives.

We are called “living stones,” part of the spiritual house God is building. This means the Church is called to live as a preview of the new creation: loving God, loving others, and being agents of reconciliation in a divided world. But this kind of living isn't always easy.

To live differently in a world filled with shifting ideas and cultural tides, we must have a fixed point of reference—Jesus. Everything else (opinions, fears, politics, arguments) moves with the current. But Jesus, crucified and risen, is unchanging truth and love. We must fix our eyes on Him through all seasons—the God who lived among us, suffered for us, and calls us to follow Him.

1. What does it mean to you to be a “living stone” in God's story?



2. How can your group or our church community reflect this “preview of heaven” more deeply?
3. What are some “drifting tides” in your world that pull your attention away from Jesus? And how can you anchor your life more firmly in Him day by day?

Closing Activity (Optional)

Invite group members to share if comfortable:

“What part of this vision from Revelation most encourages or challenges you?”

“What’s one way you can live differently this week in light of that vision?”

Encourage the group to pray for one another—that each person would experience a deeper awareness of God’s presence and live as a sign of His coming kingdom.

Suggested Closing Prayer

Gracious God, Thank you for the hope of this vision—a world made whole, a city filled with light, a tree that heals every wound. Help us to anchor our hearts in Jesus, our true reference point, and live now as people shaped by heaven. Loving you, loving others, and bringing your peace wherever we go. May our lives be a glimpse of your eternal story. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Bible Reading Plan & Resources

As we engage in this sermon series and reflect on ‘The Story’ of God’s redemptive pursuit of humanity, we invite you to practise the discipline of regular Bible reading. You may like to use the [NewHope Bible Reading Plan](#) which has been developed to accompany each sermon over the next 12-weeks. Get a physical copy at church, download a digital copy from our website or follow NewHope in the Bible App for daily updates.

There are also many other wonderful ways to engage with Scripture and you can find a collection of resources, such as books, apps, courses, and more at newhope.net.au/the-story.