

Gospel in Life (Timothy Keller)

Session Eight: Eternity - The world that is to come

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in your group.

Summary of the previous session

(5 minutes)

[Read the paragraphs below aloud to summarise the main points of the previous session.]

Last session we saw that we are to bring shalom to the world. We need to “act justly” and “love mercy.” We are to be engaged with our neighbors and with the poor and marginalized.

We saw that a deep social conscience and a life poured out in deeds of service to others, and especially to the poor, is the inevitable sign of real faith and real relationship with God.

In this final session on the course we will be thinking about eternity.

Bible study

(20 minutes)

[Read aloud Isaiah 60:15-22 and then work through the questions below.]

1. What will heaven be like according to Isaiah’s description in verses 17-21? How does this compare with the description in Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27?
2. How can the knowledge that there will be no violence or destruction in the future kingdom help us, and those we come into contact with, to cope with the violence and destruction we experience around us?
3. God is described in a variety of ways and given a variety of titles in this passage. What do we learn about God and what does it mean for our relationship with him?
4. Richard Mouw writes:

“My own hunch is that God has provided us with a rich storehouse of diverse images of the afterlife, all of them hint in the direction of something that is beyond our present comprehension, so that we can be free to draw on one or another of them as a particular situation in our life may require.”

In what situations might we draw on the description of heaven in Isaiah 60? What other descriptions of eternity have you drawn on in the past and why?

[Read aloud Isaiah 60:1-14 .]

DVD presentation

(10 minutes)

1. Was there anything from the DVD that was new to you, or had an effect on you? Did you hear anything that raised more questions in your mind?
2. Isaiah 60 describes a vision of the New Jerusalem as incorporating the cultural achievements of all people and all nations. What aspects of your work do you think might be incorporated into this final kingdom? How does this affect your understanding of your work?
3. The community described here is one of perfectly restored shalom. What are some tangible ways that the church can be a better foretaste of that community?
4. What are some things that are competing with God as your “glory” and your “everlasting light”? What do you think would change if God were only glory and everlasting light?
5. Now that you have completed the Gospel in Life course, take a few minutes to look back through your notes and then share with the group one thing that changed or affected you, and explain why. Pray about these discoveries and realizations during your time of prayer together.

Thank God for the amazing vision we have of the New Jerusalem. Pray that this vision would drive you and your community to action. Ask God to give you insight into his specific kingdom plans and purposes for your city and community. Ask to fit into his plan.

Pray that you would be able to put into practice all you have learned in these eight sessions, and that you would continually seek to transform your heart, community, and the world. Pray for each other in light of your answers to question 5 above.