



All Christians' Fellowship International

INTERACTIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTLINE FOR YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Foundations

New Creation

Overview

Summary

In this seventh week of the Foundations series, you will invite your students to consider the identity and purpose of the Church and their place within it. There's no place like home, and God has made his home and ours among his family: the church. Church is not just somewhere we go once a week; it's the community of God's redeemed people across time and place. The community helps us orient our lives around God's Word as we walk in the way of Jesus. We need to ask not just what the church can do for us, but what we can do for the church.

Key Takeaways

1. The church gives us a place of belonging.
2. The church helps us orient our lives.
3. The church is local and global.

Scriptures

Revelation 21:2-3,22-27; 22:20 / Romans 8:21-23

Sermon Script

Introduction

[Tonight] we're wrapping up our eight-lesson series on the foundations of Christianity. But we're not looking back to recap; we're still looking forward. In fact, we're really looking forward – all the way into eternity.

Every single person in the world asks questions like, "What happens when we die?" or "Is this all there is?" No matter how religious or spiritual a person is, everyone wonders about this mysterious subject.

Consider for a moment what pops into your head if you try to picture "heaven." Raise your hand and tell me what comes to mind for you. [Take a few responses and try to highlight common themes that come up. Alright, thanks! And how about the ways "the afterlife" is portrayed in the media? Cartoonish pearly gates up in the clouds, a bright light at the end of a tunnel, ghosts hanging around sending messages to their loved ones...

The vision the Bible casts of our resurrection life in eternity is very different, and that's what we're exploring today...

Transition

Have you ever seen a movie or read a book that kind of just stopped instead of truly ending? Isn't that so disappointing? The story of God is not like that. All of this, all of creation, all of salvation... it's all moving towards something. The story of the world is still progressing, and where we're headed is a good ending.

Think back one more time to our metaphor of the cave. We've been talking about how God saves us from the darkness and chains, the shadows, and captors. God calls us into the real world of his glorious light and teaches us how to live according to the truth of who he is and who we are. But this isn't the end goal, to just pull people out of the cave forever.

The Bible talks about the kingdom of heaven growing on the earth until the cave is no more. One day, the captors and chains will be no more. Light will pour into places where evil once ruled, and flowers will grow instead of shadows.

This future is the ultimate hope we have as Christians: that the day will come when all suffering shall cease and all that will be known is God's love. So, let's get into it!

Point #1: Jesus brought heaven near.

If I asked you to explain *where* heaven is, would you point or look up? We have a strongly embedded idea in our culture that heaven is out of this world, literally. It's somewhere above ...in the sky...maybe just beyond the edge of the universe.

But when the biblical authors refer to "heaven," what they really mean is "the place where God is" – God's realm, the spiritual realm. The Gospels make it clear that the incarnation was God's way of breaking heaven into earth. With Jesus' death and resurrection, he planted the seeds of heaven in the soil of the earth, and since then, they have been growing. And the last chapters of the Bible paint a picture of the final result: heaven and earth fully reunited, the invisible made visible as God restores his creation and makes all things new. Revelation 21:2–3 says,

I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.”

This is what the story of the Bible is all about: God making his home among us in his creation. This is what God has always wanted, and it’s why he sent Jesus to take care of the problem of sin which stood as a barrier between heaven and earth.

Listen to how the Revelation passage continues describing this future reality: I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Revelation 21:22–27

Walls of gemstones, gates of pearl, and streets of gold? Yep! Nations dwelling in peace? You bet. But no angel babies playing harps on clouds here. We learn about the restoration of all things with the beautiful imagery of a city with rivers and trees, a place bursting with life, a place where everyone can flourish. The true home that God has always wanted for us. And it’s our entire way of life that’s healed in that new city; not just the pretty scenery surrounding us. Nope, we ourselves are getting in on this newness.

Remember that salvation, even this final salvation, is all about a new way to be human. And this leads us to our next point...

Point #2: We will receive new bodies in the new creation.

Not only do many folks place heaven “out there,” but we also hear things about us turning into angels or spirits. Again, this isn’t what the Bible teaches. Think about Jesus when he died and was resurrected. When he was raised to a new life, he didn’t come out of the grave as an angel, a spirit, or a different type of being. He came back to life in his flesh, still Jesus, still human. So just like Jesus, just like the earth, our being will be restored. We will still be embodied humans.

The book of Revelation says something interesting if we’re talking about still being human and still being embodied. Verse 4 says, He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. We know that our bodies bring much pain and many tears and ultimately end in death. But one day, that will cease. Our new bodies will be totally set free from sin’s effect on them.

Hear what Paul tells us in Romans 8:21–23: The creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

No more pain. No more cancer. No more COVID. No more death. This is better than angel wings.

But you know that those things are still happening now. Even though we have been saved from the cave into God's marvelous light, not everything is perfect yet. So this leads us to say more and get us to...

Point #3: In this life, we must say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Remember what Paul says in his letter to the Romans, *that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory* (8:22–23)? It's like all of creation is expecting or anticipating the fullness of the kingdom of heaven here, even though the time is not fully come. So even though things aren't perfectly "heavenly" yet, we do have the Holy Spirit, and we are already experiencing a *foretaste of future glory*.

We haven't quite made it to the land without tears, but God's light is still shining here! We know freedom from the cave even though we don't know freedom from all the effects of sin. The freedom and goodness we have now are like just a taste of all that is to come. To use another metaphor, life now is like a blurry picture that will come clearly into focus when Jesus returns to make all things right. 1 Corinthians 13:12–13 says, *Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.*

One day we will be at perfect peace with God and each other. But until that day comes, we must wait patiently yet not lazily. We must be like the writer of Revelation who says, *Come, Lord Jesus!* (22:20) Even here and even now, imperfect as things are, we believe God's kingdom can be established on the earth. Suffering can be lessened, tears can be wiped, and sorrow can cease even now if we let Jesus lead us.

We must remember that this world, even in brokenness, has always been home for God and us.

Closing

As we end [tonight], I want you to consider something. What we've been talking about isn't just some made-up happily-ever-after from a fairy tale. We've been talking about the reality of God's truth for us and our future as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Maybe it feels far away right now, but the restoration of all things is coming. God, the one who dwells with his people, is making all things new, and this is something you can count on.

So, with that truth in mind, what does it make you think about? How does it make you feel? The future promise of new creation should change our current reality on earth. We aren't just to sit around and do nothing until finally God fixes everything for us. What God wants to do for us, God wants to do with us.

Take this moment to consider the implications of the coming new creation on your life now. What does it mean for how we take care of the environment, our society, and our bodies? What should our priorities be in light of eternity? How would you live if there was nothing in the way of God and you? How can we help rip the roof off the cave?

The Light of the world has come. Let's not wait until heaven to bring heaven to earth.

Discussion Questions

1. Based on these Scriptures, let's imagine together what eternal life will be like after the resurrection. These passages envision us living in bodies, in society, on an earth united with heaven and freed from sin and death. What will we do? What will society be like? How will we relate to God and each other?
2. If you really believe in the future hope that Christianity proclaims, how might it shape the way you live your life? Would it change your priorities, values, or goals? Would it help you face challenges?