

Vision 2005

Culture—

The riches of the nations will come

10.30.05 | Isaiah 60:4-14;
19-22

INTRODUCTION 10 minutes

If there is anyone new this week, make sure everyone knows at least every one else's name. Share your birth order with the group. Do those of you who are in the same order (i.e., eldest, second, middle or only child) share similar characteristics?

WORSHIP 20 minutes

Read Psalm 122 either in unison or one verse per person.

Psalm 122 (NIV)

- ¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."
- ² Our feet are standing
in your gates, O Jerusalem.
- ³ Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
- ⁴ That is where the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
to praise the name of the LORD
according to the statute given to Israel.
- ⁵ There the thrones for judgment stand,
the thrones of the house of David.
- ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May those who love you be secure.
- ⁷ May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels."
- ⁸ For the sake of my brothers and friends,
I will say, "Peace be within you."
- ⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

Pray for the good of New York City, and for a heart to see New York transformed by the power of the gospel.

Isaiah 60:4-14; 19-22 (NIV)

- ⁴ “Lift up your eyes and look about you:
All assemble and come to you;
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters are carried on the arm.
- ⁵ Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
to you the riches of the nations will come.
- ⁶ Herds of camels will cover your land,
young camels of Midian and Ephah.
And all from Sheba will come,
bearing gold and incense
and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.
- ⁷ All Kedar’s flocks will be gathered to you,
the rams of Nebaioth will serve you;
they will be accepted as offerings on my altar,
and I will adorn my glorious temple.
- ⁸ “Who are these that fly along like clouds,
like doves to their nests?”
- ⁹ Surely the islands look to me;
in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,
bringing your sons from afar,
with their silver and gold,
to the honor of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor.
- ¹⁰ “Foreigners will rebuild your walls,
and their kings will serve you.
Though in anger I struck you,
in favor I will show you compassion.
- ¹¹ Your gates will always stand open,
they will never be shut, day or night,
so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations—
their kings led in triumphal procession.
- ¹² For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish;
it will be utterly ruined.
- ¹³ “The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
the pine, the fir and the cypress together,
to adorn the place of my sanctuary;
and I will glorify the place of my feet.
- ¹⁴ The sons of your oppressors will
come bowing before you;
all who despise you will bow
down at your feet
and will call you the City of the LORD,
Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
- ¹⁹ The sun will no more be your
light by day,
nor will the brightness of the
moon shine on you,
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
- ²⁰ Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end.
- ²¹ Then will all your people be righteous
and they will possess the land forever.
They are the shoot I have planted,
the work of my hands,
for the display of my splendor.
- ²² The least of you will become a thousand,
the smallest a mighty nation.
I am the LORD;
in its time I will do this swiftly.”

STUDY & DISCUSSION 40 minutes

Isaiah's vision of the New Jerusalem is the basis for John's vision of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21-22. Both of these visions look forward to a time when culture fulfills its original purpose—the glory of God. Isaiah envisions a day when all the products and elements of culture (vocation, art, wealth, resources, etc.) will be brought before the Lord. The challenge for us, given that Jesus is already king, is how to begin this procession of cultural renewal today.

Many Christians operate with some expression of dualism. Dualism separates the physical from the spiritual. This distinction is rooted in ancient times, but dualism gained increased respect as a result of the impressive work of Immanuel Kant. Kant divided the world into two spheres: the *phenomenal* (that which can be observed by the five senses) and the *noumenal* (that which cannot be measured by the five senses, and thus cannot be proven empirically). Christians often employ Kant's observations. For example, when someone thinks that ministry is the superior way to serve God, over and against working in the world, that is a separation of the physical and spiritual. Or, for another example, consider the Christian who considers Sunday to be his or her day of worship, but then fails to understand the rest of his or her week as worship. For such a person, Sunday is made to be a special spiritual day, and the rest of the week falls into the category of the physical, regarding which it is often assumed that there is little spiritually to be said.

A dualistic worldview is not the worldview that is articulated in the Bible. God made the physical world, and in Genesis 1 and 2 he declares the created world to be very good. Psalm 145 boasts God's delight in all that he has made. The world is good in and of itself, and it is important to realize that God's plan of redemption includes the world and not just the souls that walk upon it. God has engaged a rescue project for his creation, not just for his elect people (remember the visions with which we began!). This is not to say that all of creation is not marred by sin nor compromised in its integrity. However, Christ's work to remedy sin for his people involves remedying sin for the creation (Col. 1:16-20; Eph. 1:9-10). What does it mean, then, for God's redeemed people to participate in the redemption of creation?

1. **In what ways do you function in everyday life with a distinction between the physical and the spiritual? Is this an accurate portrayal of a Christian worldview? Why or why not?**
2. **What does it mean that every aspect of our lives should be informed by a Christian worldview (i.e., that every aspect of life is defined by God's redemption in Jesus Christ, and therefore there is no distinction between the physical and the spiritual)? How does this change the way that you look at work, relationships, art, wealth, etc.?**
3. **In what ways can you participate in the redemption of God's world?**
4. **In what ways can Redeemer participate in the redemption of God's world?**

DIRECTED PRAYER 20 minutes

Adore God and praise him because he is good, and everything that he makes is good.

Confess that you have failed to live with a Christian worldview that informs all of your life.

Thank God that Jesus knew no distinction between the physical and spiritual, and that his faithfulness has ensured a day when we too will know no separation.

Ask God to help you be creative and faithful in renewing his world.

ACTIVITY

Take a moment to consider this study. Think of one way in which you can be an agent of redemption and re-creation in some context (e.g., work, social relationships, family relationships, how you use your free time, etc.). Share with one another your commitment, and pray for one another. Next week, ask each other whether or not you were able to carry through with your intentions and what you experienced as you tried to do so.

Vision Paper #6—Christians and Culture

As a follow-up to each study, we invite you to read one Vision Paper every week following your small group meeting. These have been written by Tim Keller to explain in more detail how the biblical aspect of the vision each week is fleshed out in the life of Redeemer. Each paper can be accessed at www.redeemer.com—follow the Vision Campaign Materials link.