

**International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
November 6, 2016**

**Lesson Text: Revelation 21:1-8
Lesson Title: Making All Things New**

Introduction

When was the last time you heard anyone talking about heaven? Nothing more demonstrates our worldliness than our lack of interest in heaven. The Apostle Paul said, “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Colossians 3:2). Desiring heaven, singing about heaven, reading the Scriptures and learning about heaven are vital to the believer’s victorious life and spiritual purity (1 John 3:3; 2 Peter 3:14).

Embracing the reality of heaven will change everything about us. Your values will be prioritized and purified. Money, things, time, friends, enemies, family and life itself will all be adjusted and improved. The reality of all things new in the future makes some things new in the present.

Following the Thousand Year Reign of Christ upon this earth (Revelation 20:1-7) and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15), John’s attention is directed to the “*new heaven and a new earth*” which replace the old heaven and the old earth. The “old heaven and the old earth” having “fled away” is an incredible statement describing the end of the material heavens and earth which we know (Revelation 20:10). Just as God created the “heavens” and the “earth” from nothing, were created from nothing, they will be uncreated at the word of God and return to nothingness.

As Revelation 21 opens, Satan, his demons, and all sinners have been sentenced to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-15). The “lake of fire” prepared for the devil and the wicked angels is also the destiny of all who reject Christ and all who follow Satan.

The New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1-2)

Verse 1

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

“And I saw...” is the first of three such statements in chapter 21 (Revelation 21:1, 2, 22). This statement marks the major points of what God is revealing to John throughout the chapter. The “new heaven and a new earth” presented here are not simply the old heaven and earth renovated, but an act of new

creation. Revelation 20:11 tells us this is going to happen because there was “no place found” for the old earth and heaven. When the Bible speaks about the “heaven fleeing away” it is assumed to mean the atmospheric heaven. There are three “heavens” mentioned in Scripture. The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven where the birds fly and the clouds are formed. The second heaven is the planetary heavens where the planets and stars are. The third heaven is the eternal heaven where the throne of God is, where God dwells and His children dwell eternally. It is the place Paul visited during his heavenly vision (2 Corinthians 12:2) and the place called “heaven” in verse 2 of our text.

The phrase “a new heaven and a new earth” is taken from Isaiah 65:17 and Isaiah 66:22. Isaiah’s prediction of “new heavens” and “a new earth” is now a reality in John’s vision.

“New” is the Greek word *kainos* meaning “new as in kind, fresh, never before seen.” God is doing more than knocking off the rough edges or trimming away the trash of the earth and the atmospheric heaven. In keeping with His nature, God makes “all things new” (Psalm 40:3; Isaiah 43:19; Lamentations 3:23; Ezekiel 18:31; Matthew 26:28; 27:60; John 13:34; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:10; Hebrews 8:8; 10:20; Revelation 5:9).

The “first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” God originally created the earth to be suitable as mankind’s permanent home. However, when sin entered, the earth and heavens were corrupted and God will eventually destroy them. There are several passages which speak of “heaven and earth” passing away. In First Corinthians 15:24-28, Paul speaks about the resurrection but looks beyond the resurrection to the day when all things will be subdued and the everlasting kingdom will be in place. The Hebrew writer said, “*And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail*” (Hebrews 1:10-13).

Proof the “new heaven and a new earth” will actually be “new” as in new kind, never before seen” is revealed in the words “No more sea.” Three-fourths of our present earth is covered by water and the “sea” is crucial to our environment. All life on the earth is dependent upon water for survival. The “new heaven and new earth” will operate on a completely different life principle than our present universe. Further truth what John saw was “new” is water is frequently mentioned in relation to the millennial passages (Psalm 72:8; Isaiah 11:9; Ezekiel 47:10, 15, 17-18, 20; Zechariah 9:10; 14:8). It is without question John sees the new eternal state, not the old revived, or even the millennial age. This is all brand “new.”

It is also interesting when John saw “there was no more sea,” he was seeing this vision while on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). John was surrounded by water, separated from his loved ones and his church in Ephesus. God showed him a coming day when there would never again be a separation.

Verse 2

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

The word “heaven” in this verse is referring to the third heaven, the abode of God. The “new Jerusalem” John saw “coming down from God out of heaven” suggests the “new Jerusalem” existed before the “new heaven and the new earth” were created by God (Revelation 21:1). What is this “holy city, new Jerusalem” John saw? Some commentators suggest it is heaven itself, the dwelling place of the righteous in all ages. The fact it is seen “coming down from God” leads them to conclude John is seeing an unveiling of what has always been. While there is some merit to this interpretation there are other aspects which should be considered.

First, the “new Jerusalem” John saw is a literal city (Revelation 21:12-27). This leads to the most logical conclusion the “new Jerusalem” is the capital city of heaven. There is a literal historic Jerusalem that existed in the Old Testament and still exists today in Israel. There will be a millennial Jerusalem where Christ will rule during the Thousand Year Reign. But this “new Jerusalem” is a “holy city.” The expression “the holy city, the new Jerusalem” is the direct opposite of what God called the city of Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8. He compared her to “Sodom and Egypt.” In Revelation 3:12 the “*new Jerusalem*” is referred to as “*the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.*” The emphasis is on the believer’s relationship to God and our security in that relationship. The “new Jerusalem” is called a “holy city” because of the presence of a holy God and His holy people. This is challenging to our minds to even think about a “holy city.” Most cities we think about are anything but “holy.”

Second, John saw the “new Jerusalem” heaven’s capital city, “as a bride adorned for her husband.” John is saying when he saw the new Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven, it looked like a bride “adorned” and ready to meet her husband. In other words, the new Jerusalem was arranged in all her beauty with freshness and readiness to be occupied by the saints of all ages. Certainly, cities take on the nature of its occupants. Therefore, since the “new Jerusalem” is seen by John as a “bride adorned,” it is logical to assume those occupying the city are the redeemed of the Lord, the bride of Christ. With that said, it would be inappropriate to limit the occupants to only those saved during the church age.

God Dwelling with Men (Revelation 21:3-4)

Verse 3

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

As John sees the new heaven, the new earth, and the holy city coming down, he “heard a great voice out of heaven.” “Great voice” or “loud voice” is mentioned no less than 18 times in Revelation. It signifies what is about to be heard is important and authoritative. The voice declares, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men...” “Tabernacle” can mean “tent,” or “dwelling place.” “Tabernacle” and “dwell” in verse 3 are rooted in the same Greek word. The words mean God will no longer be afar off or at a distant. He will no longer be veiled in human flesh. John is realizing from now on God is present with men in the new heaven, new earth, and in the new Jerusalem. What a contrast from the old earth where God and man were separated. Believers will enjoy eternal fellowship with God. Now our fellowship at best is flawed with sin and the imperfections of the flesh. John sees a day when our fellowship will be perfect and eternal. “God the Son came to dwell among men in order to save them (John 1:14). God the Holy Spirit came to dwell among men in order to comfort them (John 14:16-18). In John’s vision, God the Father comes to “dwell with them” in order to fellowship with them.” (*Liberty Commentary on the New Testament, page 795, par.4*).

“...And be their God” is a thought often repeated in Scripture. The phrase “be their God” is mentioned no less than 14 times and inferred in several other places throughout Scripture (Genesis 17:8; Exodus 29:45; Zechariah 8:8; 2 Corinthians 6:16). The point in all of this is the God of Heaven has a place where He will be with His people for ever. Today, no living person has ever seen God in the fullness of His glory (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 John 4:12). Exposure to Him as He is would mean instant death. All through the Bible God established points of contact, limited encounters here and there. But all will change in the “new Jerusalem.” God will be present with His people in a place untainted by sin where we will be able to comprehend and look upon our blessed Redeemer.

Verse 4

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

The wiping away of “tears” describes the absence of anything in God’s presence to cause sadness, disappointment, or pain. “Tears” are just one of the many “former things” absent in heaven. Think of all the “tears” that have been shed

upon this earth. Abraham came to mourn for his wife Sarah, and he wept (Genesis 23:2). Job said his eyes “poureth out tears to God” (Job 16:20). The prophet Jeremiah described his eyes as failing because of his tears (Lamentations 2:11). The Apostle Paul served the Lord with tears and warned the Ephesian with tears (Acts 20:19, 31). Our Lord wept and shed tears (John 11:35; Hebrews 5:7).

In a message on tears, Doctor Jerry Vines asks, “Have you thought about how small a tear is in comparison to this vast universe of ours? Just a little bitty tear. But do you know what God says in Psalm 56:8? God says there’s not even a tear that drops from your eye that He doesn’t see and He doesn’t care about. He puts our tears in a bottle. He is the God of the divine handkerchief. And one of these days He’s going to wipe away every one of those tears.”

Another dramatic difference in the new heaven and new earth will be the absence of “death.” When Adam sinned in the garden, death crept in the back door and has been here ever since. But through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, “death” has been “swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54) and “death” will not be in heaven because it has along with Satan been “cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14). What a great day when “death passes away.”

“Neither sorrow” is a reference to the grief caused by sin and death. The word “sorrow” is speaking of mourning. “Nor crying” refers to the vocal response to sorrow in contrast to tears which are a silent response. “Pain” will also be missing in heaven. The physical healing ministry of Jesus in part was a preview of the complete absence of pain which will characterize both the millennial kingdom and the eternal state. While “pain” is a part of this life it will be totally absent in heaven. The glorified bodies of the saints will not be subject to “pain.”

“The former things are passed away” means everything related to the original fallen creation will be gone forever.

All things New (Revelation 21:5-6a)

Verse 5

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

In contrast to the “great voice out of heaven” in verse 3, John declares “he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” God now speaks. “He” is God the Father. “Behold” means “look, or see.” “I make all things new” is the message from God. “Make” means “to make, form, or construct” and is commonly used throughout the New Testament for a work of accomplishment.

Why is God repeating He is making “all things new” when He has already established that in the previous verses? It is possible John has been so overwhelmed by all he has seen he momentarily lapses in concentration. Whatever the reason, God says, “Write: for these words are true and faithful.” The One speaking these words is “faithful and true” (Revelation 3:14), therefore His words must be “faithful and true.”

Verse 6a

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”

“And he said unto me...” means the message from the throne continues in verse 6 as God says to John, “It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”

“It is done” reminds us of Jesus’ words on the cross, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). Jesus’ words on the cross marked the end of His redemptive work. Salvation was completed. The Father’s will was fulfilled. Christ did the work He was sent to earth to accomplish regarding our salvation. “It is done” are words that mark the end of redemptive history. The entire drama of human history prior to heaven and the eternal state has been completed. This statement does not mean there is no future works of God, but a major work has been brought to completion and the works now related to the eternal state are beginning.

“Alpha and Omega” are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, like our A and Z in the English alphabet. “The beginning and the end” is the definition of the letters. God started history as the “Alpha” and He ends history as the “Omega.” God started it all and He has the power and authority to end it all. Christ is referred to as the “Alpha and Omega” in Revelation 22:13 which again proves His deity and equality with God the Father.

The Residents of the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:6b-7)

Verse 6b-

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

Those who reside in this glorious eternal state are those who “thirst.” Thirsting signifies those who recognize their spiritual need. Jesus said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*” (Matthew 5:6). The prophet Isaiah said, “*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*” (Isaiah 55:1). The free drink of the

free water of eternal life is much better than the drink of Revelation 17:4 which is a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness. It is also better than drinking *“the wine of the wrath”* in Revelation 18:3. Those who will be redeemed and reside in heaven are those that are dissatisfied with their hopeless lost condition and craves the righteousness of God offered in salvation through Jesus Christ (John 7: 37-38; Revelation 22:17). Heaven belongs to people who know their need and thirst for salvation.

Verse 7

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

It is not enough to know you need salvation. The Bible says “He that overcometh shall inherit all things.” Who are those that overcome? First John 5:4-5 says, *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* In heaven, God will be the God of those who recognize their sinfulness, thirst after righteousness, drink of the water of life and exercise faith in Jesus Christ. God will “be his God” and those who are saved, God will call “my son.” The benefits of spiritual adoption will be fully realized when all things are new. Furthermore, we “shall inherit all things.” Our spiritual inheritance is Jesus Christ and His likeness (1 Peter 1:4).

The Outcasts of the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:8)

Verse 8

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

“But” is a powerful word of contrast. In contrast to the abundant blessings on the child of God mentioned in the previous verses, the unbeliever inherits “their part in the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” This is a serious and solemn warning. Many will be excluded from the blessings of the new heaven and the new earth because of unbelief.

Excluded from the “new heaven” are unbelievers characterized as “fearful” meaning “timid, afraid, cowardly.” They were afraid to identify themselves with the gospel and the cross of Jesus Christ (Proverbs 29:25). “Unbelieving” are those who refuse to believe. This is one of the largest groups on earth today. They know what God requires and offers through His Son but deliberately choose not to believe (John 3:36). The “abominable” are those defiled by abomination. It refers to the disgusting and detestable lifestyles. It involves

those who are stained and contaminated with the mind set and morals of a lost world. Homosexuals, lesbians, abusers, people who change the natural use of the body for the unnatural are just a few in this group. “Murderers” are human killers and human haters (1 John 3:15). These individuals view life as cheap and expendable and they will never see God or His new heaven.

“Whoremongers” are those who live with unrestrained sexual sins and a self indulged lifestyle contrary to God’s word in regard to sexuality (Hebrews 13:4). “Sorcerers” is from the Greek word *pharmakos*, our English word, “pharmacy” or “pharmaceuticals.” These individuals live with mind-altering drugs, addiction to drugs and obsession with the occult, fortune telling and mysticism (Revelation 18:23).

The final two are “idolaters” and “liars.” “Idolaters” refer to individuals who worship something or someone other than Jesus Christ. “Liars” is most often connected in Scripture with religion (John 8:44; 1 John 2:22). More lies are told in churches and places of worship than in all politics! Those who preach “another way” and those who claim to have divine revelation from God that contradicts Scripture will “have their part in the lake which burneth with fire.”

“The lake which burneth with fire” refers to eternal torment suffered by the unsaved. Those who die unsaved will live in God’s eternal place of separation in flames of fire forever without hope of rescue or relief. The “second death” is eternal separation from God. People who live consistently in the fashion described will never be saved and never see God’s heaven. However, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* Through God’s saving grace you can be saved. God can wash you, sanctify you, and justify you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Knowing and thinking about God’s new heaven should have a purifying and strengthening effect on believers. How can we fail to joyfully and humbly serve Christ when we know He has prepared a place for us where all pain, sorrow, and tears are gone forever?

God wants us to look ahead to our eternal home, because He gave us a thrilling glimpse of its wonders. But the Bible's description of the new heaven and the new earth is not just for our speculation. Contrasted to all the beauty and blessings those of us who are saved are going to enjoy, John also saw the awful fate of those who do not know Christ. As we meditate upon our glorious future

may we not forget to pray for and witness to those who are without this blessed hope (Colossians 4:5).

Amen.