



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for May 13, 2007
Released on Wednesday, May 9, 2007**

"Our New Home"

Printed Text: Revelation 21:1-8

Background Scripture: Revelation 21:1-8

Devotional Reading: 2 Peter 3:10-18

Revelation 21:1-8

- 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.
- 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.**
- 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.
- 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.**
- 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.
- 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Al'pha and O'me-ga, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.**
- 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
- 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.**

LESSON BACKGROUND

In Revelation 20 we read of Satan's final downfall. Anyone who has ever suffered has felt the power of Satan, because all suffering finds its origin in Satan's

influences. That began with the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Satan has set himself up in this world as the enemy of God. Satan actively seeks to destroy us all (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus came to put an end to Satan's project (1 John 3:8). For all who experience Satan's influences through our suffering, pain, and trials, the book of Revelation is a great comfort.

God understands what it means for us to suffer. Jesus, as "the Lamb as it had been slain" (Revelation 5:6), knows what it means to suffer and experience trial (also Mark 1:13; Luke 22:41, 42). He knows our pain (Hebrews 4:15). The book of Revelation is His Word, and this book shows us that we are given what is necessary to overcome. In the book of Revelation, God tells us that He knows that we suffer. But He promises to destroy the source of our suffering: Satan. Those who embrace Jesus and this promise are able to remain faithful; they surely will be delivered to an eternal life – a life free from the trials and sufferings that Satan brings.

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to describe the new heaven and new earth that will be provided by God at the end of time and to see who will be admitted and who will be rejected.

Principle: to realize that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18) when we reach our home in the New Jerusalem.

Application: to gain confidence in facing life's challenges, sustained by the sure hope of our final destiny.

NO SEPERATION-Revelation 21:1-3

1. What became of "the first heaven and the first earth" (Rev. 21:1)?

Now we come to what is often called the consummation-the end. It is not really the end, though; it is the beginning of the eternal state for God's people.

Whether descriptions of the new heaven and new earth given in the Bible depict a totally new order of things or a renovation of the old is a matter of debate among scholars. Since Revelation is highly symbolic, interpreting what John saw is difficult. "We cannot be sure how [John] viewed the new heaven and new earth, but the context of this statement suggests that his real concern is not with physical geography, but to describe a context of life for God's people which accords with the great and glorious purpose God has in mind for them" (Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, Eerdmans). Suffice it to say, John declared that "the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (Rev. 21:1). That being so, whatever awaits us in heaven will be so superior to what we experienced on earth that it will be a uniquely new existence for us.

2. What are some possible explanations for there being "no more sea" in heaven? (Rev. 21:1)

In his vision John revealed that "there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1). Some have suggested that this is so because the sea represented chaos and dread to the ancients. Others note that the beast that blasphemed God and made war against His people arose from the sea (13:1-7). Scholars also note that several ancient apocalyptic writings speak of the destruction of the sea. Another points out that "from his exile on

Patmos John could see the mainland, but was separated from his flock by the sea" (Allen, ed., *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Broadman). The sea, therefore, represents separation, something that will never occur in heaven.

3. How does the New Jerusalem appear in John's vision? (Rev. 21:2)

John's vision reveals the New Jerusalem as the holy city coming down from God out of heaven. In looking at John's descriptive, "the holy city" will be a perfect place of holiness. "This heavenly city will be the abode of all the saints (Heb. 12:22-24), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9-10), and the place Christ is preparing for his people (John 14:2)" (Ryrie).

When John writes about the New Jerusalem prepared as a bride, we can revisit Revelation 19 which is of the same concept. As we look at this passage in the context of a wedding, a bride is beautifully adorned for her husband on her wedding day, so the New Jerusalem is depicted in John's vision. To be sure, the symbol of God's people being married to the Lord is one found throughout the Bible. Now, However, the marriage is about to be consummated as God and His people unite in the New Jerusalem.

4. What is the significance of the tabernacle and God's dwelling with men? (Rev. 21:3)

The cry of the Almighty is that "the tabernacle of God is with men." "The Greek word for tabernacle is closely related to the Hebrew Shekinah, which was used to denote the presence and glory of God. In the wilderness wanderings the tabernacle or tent was a symbol of the abiding presence of God in the midst of his people. In the Fourth Gospel, John writes that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men so that they saw his glory, the glory of the One and Only (John 1:14)".

That God will be among His people in a very special way indicates a closeness of communion with Him. God is always with His people, but it is not in the same sense that He will be with them in the New Jerusalem.

The most important thing about the city is that God dwells there with His people.

NO SORROW-Revelation 21:4,5

5. How do you think God will "wipe away all tears"? (Rev. 21:4)

Now we come to one of the greatest promises in the entire Bible: "God shall wipe away all tears." This is stated elsewhere (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17). Although we are not told how God will do this, we can be certain He will. Some suggest that God will permit us to forget painful memories. Others believe that the glories of heaven will be so great and marvelous that they will overshadow the heartaches experienced on earth.

Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in a perfect environment. Once they sinned, however, all of that changed. Such things as death, sorrow, crying, and pain became normal for the human race. It is difficult for us to conceive of a world where these things do not exist, since many important events in life revolve around them.

With the passing of the first heaven and earth will also come the passing of Satan's power and influence. And this is the hope to which we all cling: this world and its suffering are only temporary. Suffering tempts us to lose our focus on the eternal.

Thus it is a great tool used by Satan to distract God's people and tempt them to question their relationship to Him.

People often find cause to blame God for their suffering. But in reality, suffering comes to all of us because we live in a world that has fallen to Satan's temptation and is therefore subject to decay (Genesis 3:1-19; Romans 8:18-22). When a loved one is dying from a terrible disease, who does not long for that person's healing? When we suffer physically, our perspective swiftly turns toward the physical and temporary. The tragedy of suffering drives our minds to obsess about the physical. Thus we become prime targets for the temptation to allow the temporary to dominate our thinking and values.

John's solution is to help us understand that our future with the Lord is utterly free from suffering (compare Isaiah 25:8; 35:10; 65:19). And because John understands the deep and eternal significance of this for us, he reminds us that these are not his *words* but the Lord's. The words are of the one who sits "upon the throne" (Rev. 21:5)!

We can have absolute confidence in our future, new life because *these words are true and faithful*. It is worth noting that John emphasizes the reliability of the message three times toward the end of this book (here and in Revelation 19:9; 22:6).

NO SIN-Revelation 21:6-8

6. What two important ideas do we find in verse 6?

In this verse John again emphasizes the reliability of the message, only from a different angle. When God says, "It is done" (vs. 6), it means that "from God's vantage point the future is determined" (Mounce). This can be said with certainty because God is Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet).

God is not, however, admitting that He himself has a beginning and an end. Rather, He announces that all beginnings and ends are in His control (Isaiah 44:6; 46:9, 10; 48:12).

The second part of this verse offers two important ideas: a certain problem (spiritual thirst) and its solution (*water of life*). These two concepts are not unique to Revelation. They are found throughout the Bible (examples: Psalm 65:9; Isaiah 41:17, 18; 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 13:1). For clarity we can look to John's Gospel. In John 7:37, 38, Jesus speaks to the problem of spiritual thirst and then offers the solution in terms of believing on Him. Here, those who are *athirst* are those who understand their need for Jesus. See also John 4:13, 14.

7. How is the theme of overcoming seen earlier in the book? (Rev. 21:7)

Early in Revelation, in the letters to the seven churches, Jesus said that those who overcome will eat of the tree of life(2:7), not be harmed by the second death (vs. 11), be given the hidden manna (vs. 17), receive power over the nations (vs. 26), keep their names in the book of life (3:5), be a pillar in God's temple (vs. 12), and sit with Christ on His throne (vs. 21). These promises are connected with the perseverance of believers in the midst of trials.

To overcome is the essence of faithfulness. The primary biblical example of this (other than Jesus) is Abraham. Abraham's trust in God was repeatedly challenged. But Abraham's unwavering belief that God would deliver on His promises proved Abraham to be faithful and the father of all who are faithful (Genesis 12:1-25:8; Romans 4:16-22). Faithfulness means overcoming any challenge to one's relationship with the Lord. Thus the overcomer is the person who does not melt away when faith is under fire (1 Peter 4:12-19). Such a person stands firm, knowing that the Lord will always win.

But we must not assume that challenges to faith always come in the obvious form of persecution. Faith is tested by anything that threatens our relationship with God. Money problems, family issues, health problems, etc. can all erode the foundation of that relationship. In short, *all of us* are constantly being challenged in our faith. The good news is that every time we withstand a challenge, we become stronger in our faith. In this way we become true overcomers who remain faithful to God. Thus we will inherit all things and be forever God's children.

8. What kinds of people will end up in the lake of fire? How can they avoid this judgment? (Rev. 21:8)

In contrast to those who overcome are those who fail to be faithful disciples of Christ. Heading the list are the "fearful" (21:8), or the cowardly. This may include those who, because of suffering, trials, or persecution fail to bring forth persevering fruit and fall away.

The "unbelieving" may include those who have never come to faith in Christ or those who profess faith but do not really possess it. Some think it refers to "believers who have denied their faith under pressure" (Mounce).

The "abominable" may include those who have been involved in various vile, pagan practices. Obviously, "murderers" are those who have taken the lives of others, especially Christians.

"Whoremongers" could be translated "fornicators" or "the immoral," referring to those guilty of sexual sins. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Sorcerers are those who are involved in witchcraft and the occult. Such things are an abomination (cf. Deut. 18:9-14).

Idolaters are those who bow before pagan deities. In the context of Revelation, the worship of the Roman emperor may be in view.

Since John emphasized the importance of truth in his writings, the presence of "all liars" (Rev. 21:8) in the lake of fire is understandable.

That this list does not include all sins should give no comfort to those guilty of other evils. All who reject Christ will suffer the fate of the "second death" (cf. 20:12-15).

CONCLUSION

He Can't Forget!

"Understanding that God is utterly trustworthy will deliver us from such incapacitating emotions as worry, anxiety, and fear. To be overwhelmed by the concerns of this life reflects poorly upon the faithfulness of God.

An old saint who was dying became concerned that he couldn't remember any of God's promises. His pastor said: 'Do you think God will forget any of them?' A smile came over the face of the dying Christian as he exclaimed joyfully: 'No, no, He won't.' This, too is our confidence. He *won't* forget, because being God, He *can't* forget." (Selwyn Hughes., *Every Day With Jesus-The Character Of God.*)

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for being the God of Truth. We, your children, know that you are a God who cannot lie and that all that you have said in your Word will come to pass. Lord God, continue to strengthen our faith throughout our Christian life so that we may overcome the tricks of the enemy through the power of your Holy Spirit. Like Paul, Lord God we want to fight a good fight on this Christian journey as we look forward to our new eternal home. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER: Our final home is our final hope.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: God In Our Midst

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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Have a Blessed Mother's Day, to all you Moms!