



Sunday School Lesson for May 30, 2004.  
Released on: May 28, 2004.

Study Revelation 21:1-22:5. A New Heaven and Earth  
Questions and answers below.

TIME: A.D. 96  
PLACE: from Patmos

Revelation 21:1-7, 22-27

- 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 Alpha and Omega, 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.
- .....
- 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
- 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.
- 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.
- 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.
- 26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
- 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

## Lesson Background

Peter wrote, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up....

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:10,13).

This week's lesson texts describe some of the changes that will take place when this happens. John saw in his vision a new heaven and a new earth. He saw the holy city of New Jerusalem descend from God out of heaven. He was told there will be an intimate relationship between God and His people. There will be no more tears, death, sorrow, or pain.

These promises are dependable because they were spoken by the One who is true and faithful, the Alpha and Omega. From Him will come the water of life, an eternal inheritance, and sonship.

In the believers' new home, the Lord and the Lamb will be the temple. They will also provide its glorious light. The nations of the earth will bring their tribute to the city and find easy access. Nothing that defiles will be allowed to enter the city. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will enjoy eternal bliss there.

## New Universe

(Revelation 21:1,2)

1. How do we know the concept of a new heaven and a new earth was not really new to John (Revelation 21:1)?

John saw in his vision a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and first earth had passed away. This was not a new concept. Isaiah 65:17 quotes God as saying, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." Second Peter 3:10-13 describes how the elements of heaven and earth will be dissolved.

John also saw that there was no more sea. Scholars are unsure about the relevance of this. Since the world's bodies of water have traditionally served as barriers between people, it may be that the lack of a sea speaks of the fact that barriers will be removed in the new earth.

Some might wonder whether God plans to create a new universe out of nothing, as He did originally according to Genesis 1:1. The Greek word for "new" used in Revelation 21:1 is *kainos*, which means new in form or quality but not new in time. This may suggest that God will renovate what He had originally created.

2. How can the best things in this earthly life be improved in Heaven? What joy of Heaven are you most anticipating?

Because this world does offer many wonderful experiences—after all, it is God's creation—we sometimes get too attached to it and have no desire to leave. We enjoy the physical pleasures brought through our five senses, sharing lives with family, worshiping God with a loving congregation, and the sense of accomplishment from our work and service.

But earthly joys are only a small fraction of the joys of Heaven. Our bodies will be perfected and capable of even greater things, our relationships will be deepened and expanded, all our hopes will be realized, and our worship of and union with God will be heightened as we live in His very presence for all eternity.

3. What did John see with regard to the New Jerusalem's location (v. 2)?

John saw the holy city of New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Verses 9 through 21, which lie outside of our printed texts, give more details. From the vantage point of a high mountain to which he was carried, John saw the splendid city coming down from heaven. We are not told whether it hovered in the air over the earth or rested on it.

The New Jerusalem was abundant in divine brilliance. It had a high wall around it with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels and named after the twelve tribes of Israel. The city had twelve foundations bearing the names of Christ's twelve apostles. The city was in the shape of a cube or a pyramid and foursquare, with equal width, length, and height. The city and its one street were made of pure gold like transparent glass.

New Conditions  
(Revelation 21:3-7)

4. What is signified by the fact that God will dwell with people in the New Jerusalem (v. 3)?

John heard a great voice out of heaven telling him that the tabernacle of God was with men. In Moses' day, God's people worshiped Him at altars made of stone in the open air. When the Israelites came out of Egyptian bondage, they first pitched a small tent of meeting and later the large, portable tent known as the tabernacle. They eventually erected permanent temples in the times of Solomon and Zerubbabel.

The Jews have been without a temple since it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Various Gentile occupiers prevented one from being built, and today the Muslim mosque called the Dome of the Rock covers the site.

However, with the descent of the New Jerusalem, the time is coming when God will dwell together with people in sweet fellowship because all the reasons for estrangement will be gone. Alienation between God and mankind will be exchanged for familial closeness.

It is only in Christ that people have become able to comprehend the real meaning of the kingdom of God, a meaning that was beyond the grasp of the Old Testament kings and prophets. We in Christ have learned the meaning of submission to the King and the benefit of His protection. We will learn still more when Christ returns.

5. What things will God take away when He comes to dwell among men (v. 4)?

John emphasizes the fullness of God's care by stressing the removal of "all tears." God is going to wipe away all tears and replace them with joy. No comforting parent can rival Him!

Not only does John picture the removal of tears, but he also lists more things from our experience that indicate the hurts we have felt from our struggle with opposition. The words death, sorrow, crying, and pain bring to mind issues of suffering and separation. There will be no more death, since believers will have glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-57). But the time is coming when "the enemy" that brought us such things is no more! All those former things that belong to the first heaven and the first earth are passed away. Those things were temporary, but the "new" are eternal.

6. What did God mean when He said, "Behold, I make all things new" (v. 5)?

Paul wrote, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). In his vision, John saw God on His throne and heard Him say that He made all things new. The renewal offered to Christians in the age of grace will evidently be extended to cover all things in the end times. According to Romans 8:22, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain" under the curse of sin. However, just as Christ now delivers believers from the curse of sin, so God will eventually deliver all creation from it as well.

John was told to write these things down for others to read. God's words were backed up by His true and faithful character. It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). Whatever promises He makes will surely come to pass.

7. What did Christ mean when He said, "It is done" (v. 6)?

It would appear that the speaker here was the Lord Jesus Christ. This seems to be indicated by the use of the terms "Alpha" and "Omega" in 22:13. These were the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. We combine the simple statement "It is done" with the completeness inherent in declaring Himself to be "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (21:6).

The thing that was done, completed, and finished was the fulfillment of all the prophetic promises given throughout human history. Time will cease, and eternity future will be spread out before the people of God.

What can they expect? One thing is that those who are thirsty will drink of the water of life freely. They will enjoy fully the blessings of eternal life. Revelation 22:1,2 refers to "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Another promise given here is that those who overcome shall inherit all things (verse 7 of lesson text). Paul wrote, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16,17). It follows naturally that believers, who overcome evil, will inherit all good things because of their identification by faith with Christ. God will treat them in the same way He treats His own Son because He counts them to be His sons too.

In contrast to those who will inherit heaven's good things are those who insist on continuing in sin. They will be consigned to the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). We will come back to them when we study verse 27 for this lesson.

New Home in the Presence of God  
(Revelation 21:22-27)

8. Why will there be no temple building in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22)?

There will be no building serving as a temple in the New Jerusalem. The temple on earth was primarily for sacrifices, and there has been no need for them since Christ came and offered Himself up as the only perfect sacrifice for sin. The temple was also a place to make contact with God. This will not be needed when redeemed people dwell together with Him (v. 3).

The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will sanctify the New Jerusalem and make it a sanctuary all on its own.

9. How will the New Jerusalem be illuminated (vs. 23,24)?

The New Jerusalem will have "the glory of God" within it to provide light (v. 11). There will be no need for light generated by the sun or reflected from the sun by the moon. We can be thankful that God placed the earth at just the right distance from its source of light while it was needed, but it will not be relevant in the New Jerusalem. Divine radiance from God and the Lamb will suffice.

We are told that the kings of earth will bring their tributes of glory and honor into or to the New Jerusalem. The phrase "the nations" (v. 24) does not refer to everyone who has ever lived. Rather, it refers to the faithful ones who will share the presence of God and His glory (2 Peter 3:13).

10. Why will the gates of the New Jerusalem never be shut (vs. 25,26)?

The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem will never be shut. The custom in ancient walled cities was to shut the gates at the end of the day, probably after the elders or officials who held court there went home. The gates would remain closed and bolted until morning. Since there will be no night in the New Jerusalem, the gates will remain open all the time. The other factor allowing them to be continually open is that there will be divine security.

Our scene reminds us that the threat of enemies is gone for people in the presence of God. He offers constant light and complete protection. It is eternal day with God and His people.

You will note that Revelation verse 26 is a repetition of what was stated in the latter part of verse 24. The fact that John mentioned it twice, however, seems to elevate its importance.

11. Why is the book of life important, and how can a person be sure his name is written in it (v. 26)?

The holy city has nothing unclean or unholy. All things are pure and holy as God and redeemed humanity live together (Isaiah 52:1). It is the Lamb who has made such conditions possible.

One of the great blessings of the New Jerusalem will be the enjoyment of the beings it includes, namely God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the angels, and redeemed believers. Another great blessing will be enjoyment of the many positive things it

contains, as described in Revelation 21 and 22. A third great blessing will be the absence of who or what it excludes.

There is complete separation from the wicked. Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life gain the promise of Revelation 21:7 : "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." These are those who know full relationship with God.

Our lesson text ends with reference to those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life as being the only ones admitted to the New Jerusalem. All others will have already been cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). Those whose names are written there need have no fear, but those whose names are missing from it are lost. They desperately need to accept Christ as Saviour.

## CONCLUSION

No one knows precisely what heaven will be like, but no one will be disappointed. Even though none of us have ever been there, we do have "pictures" of it in God's Word. We know that it will be wonderful, but the most wonderful thing about heaven is not any one thing that will be there. It is that God will be there. We will live with Him forever, and that will be something none of us will ever get used to.

## PRAYER

Father, Your glory is beyond description! We have a better grasp of it as we see the goal of our faith in this lesson. We long to be home with You. But right now, Father, we want to share the message so that we can bring others with us. Help us to do so in the name of Jesus, amen.

## THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Heaven makes it all worthwhile!

## ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson focuses on the Person of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1 through 2:4 should be read in preparation for this first of eight lessons from the book of Hebrews.

Have a blessed Memorial Day weekend !

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