

NEW BEGINNINGS Sunday School- May 22, 2011

Unifying Topic: ALL THINGS NEW

Lesson Text

I. **The New Heaven And The New Earth** (Revelation 21:1-5)

II. **The Alpha And The Omega** (Revelation 21:6-8)

The Main Thought: And he that say upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write for these words are true and faithful. (Revelation 21:5 KJV).

Unifying Principle: Many people would like to have a new beginning that wipes away all that has been. What is it like to begin anew? The Revelation of John tells us that God, who is the beginning and the end, will make all things new.

Lesson Aim: To help students appreciate how God makes all things new.

Life Aim: To teach Christians that God, through Christ, brings the old order of things to an end and restores all He has made, creating an eternal existence of everlasting peace, joy, security, and blessing.

-
- 21:1 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.
- 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- 21:3 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.
- 21:4 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.
- 21:5 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.
- 21:6 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.
- 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
- 21:8 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.

HISTORY:

Chapter 20¹ closes with a description of the final judgment. Before the "*Great White Throne*" and Him who sat on it, all the dead are judged. John sees the dead, small and great, standing before God. Books are opened, including the Book of Life. All the dead were judged, each according to his works. None escapes the judgment, for the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades give up all the dead that are in them. Death and Hades are cast into the "*lake of fire*", described as the "*second death*". Anyone not found written in the Book of Life were cast into the "*lake of fire*" (vv.11-15).

LESSON:

Revelation 21:1-5 The New Heaven And The New Earth

Following the Judgment scene at the end of the previous chapter, the eternal destiny of the redeemed is now revealed with a "*New Beginning*."

21:1 **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:** This passage is connected with the end of chapter 20 by "then", (from the AMP) indicating a continuation of the chronological progression of events in John's vision. At this point, John is speaking of what he sees; events that will follow the Millennium and reach into eternity. Chapter 20 ended with the earth and sky disappearing quickly; evil, death and Hades thrown into the lake of fire.

A new heaven replaced the old heaven. A new earth replaced the old earth. The old heaven and earth will not still

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/rev/rev_20.htm

exist. ²"New" (*kainos*) pertains "to having been in existence for only a short time – new, recent (*Louw-Nida, § 67.115*)."
 This explains why John sees a new heaven and earth at this point. Louw-Nida indicates that the sense of the text is "to go out of existence." This is a clear reference to the final destruction of the present earth. One will notice the apparent absence of any reference to a fiery destruction of the earth. There is explicit biblical proof that God will destroy the wicked with fire (Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Isa 66:15-16).

³The Bible really uses heaven in three distinct ways. The first could easily be rendered *firmament* and corresponds to what we would describe as the atmosphere. Thus we get the *fowls of heaven* [Gen.7:23] and the *eagles of heaven* [Lam.4:19].

The second heaven we would term *space*. Thus we read of the sun, moon and *host of heaven* [Deut.17:3] and even *the stars falling from heaven* [Matt.24:29].

The third heaven, and scripture even refers to it as *the third heaven* [2Corth.12:2], is the place where God dwells. The third heaven is sometimes referred to as *the heaven of heavens* and Deut.10:14 show that heaven and the heaven of heavens are distinct places as both are mentioned. Of these three most Christians place their hope in the third heaven and would view this as their final resting place. However, the Bible makes it absolutely clear that the heavens as we currently know them are going to pass away. It would appear to suggest that everything is to pass away, including the sea. That seems to be a very strange thing to say if the third heaven were staying fixed. However, during this transition phase God effectively renders Himself homeless.

⁴Adapted from Wiersbe, 2:621.

Genesis	Revelation
Heavens and earth created (1:1)	New heavens and earth (21:1)
Sun created (1:16)	No need of the sun (21:23)
The night established (1:5)	No night there (21:25; 22:5)
The seas created (1:10)	No more seas (21:1)
The curse announced (3:14-17)	No more curse (22:3)

The reason God will destroy the present heaven and earth is that He originally made them as the habitat for humanity. However sin so thoroughly corrupted not only the human race but the race's environment that He will destroy it and create a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. This is the final stage in His plan to deliver humanity into the blessing He originally intended people to enjoy.

21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband: John did not only see a new heaven and a new earth. He saw a city, a "holy city" that came down from heaven. This was the New Jerusalem. Or more accurately, God moves home. God presents a new city for this new earth. The point is to show that God has prepared His own capital city to sit upon the earth. In the bride-husband simile, the city is the bride, and Christ is the husband (v. 9-10; cf. 3:12). Obviously some symbolism is present in the descriptions of the New Jerusalem. Note also that it is said to be as beautifully prepared as a bride for her husband. Though it is an actual literal city, its glory will far surpass the language that John uses to portray it. John's language is an attempt to describe what is in one sense indescribable. This points both to the beauty of the city and to our longing desire to have God's presence right here on earth with us. Remember that Jesus Christ told His disciples that He was going away to prepare a place for them. There is the possibility that He was referring to His preparing the New Jerusalem (Jh.14:2-3). The bride figure describes different entities in intimate relationship to Christ.

21:3 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: There will be immediate

² http://www.revelationcommentary.org/21_chapter.html

³ <http://www.dabhand.org/Essays/NT518B%20C20%20Heaven.htm>

⁴ <http://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Revelation+21>

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

fellowship with God. This is His voice from the Throne. God is bridging the gap. The word translated "*tabernacle*" means place of abode. This is God's house, the place where He lives. In fact the very light and temple of the city is God Himself. Four things are said that would be beneficial:

1. The tabernacle of God, the very presence and glory of God will be with men.
2. God will dwell with them.
3. They shall be His people.
4. God Himself shall be with them and be their God.

This is what eternity will be like. His purpose for dwelling there is to have eternal communion with His people.

21:4 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: ⁵No more tears, death, mourning, crying or pain. And the reason is simply that the "*old order of things has passed away*" with the old heaven and earth.

Genesis	Revelation
Death enters history (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Man driven from the tree (3:24)	Man restored to paradise (22:14)
Sorrow and pain begin (3:17)	No more mourning, crying or pain (21:4)

This is a final reversal of the curse (Gen.3). Because there is no sin, which must lead to death, there can now be a new order of things, which leads to life in an ever more abundant way. Note that the removal of tears will take place after the judgments, including the judgment seat of Christ when some Christians will suffer the loss of reward (1 Cor. 3:15; cf. 1 John 2:28). The "first" things are the former things, the things associated with the old creation. Getting sin out of the way allows God to be seen for who He really is, and it allows His people to become who He created them to be. There can now be true fellowship with the God of love and truth.

21:5 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: God speaks the truth. He makes all things new. This means that the body of man will be perfected and so will the environment and earth. Life will be totally different from what it is now. All the sufferings and evil of life and all the bad and negative experiences of life will be gone. ⁶John was instructed to write what is said and what is seen, although that is what he had been doing all along. Perhaps he was so stunned by the last statement that he stopped writing, but more likely this was said to emphasize the importance of what is to come. God gives assurance of this when He tells John to write these words down, because they are true and faithful. God has given a double declaration. He declared that His words are true and faithful. By "*true*" He means true as opposed to false. He is not lying. He is God! Therefore what He says will happen. By "*faithful*" He means that He will do exactly what He says. We all can count on it!

Revelation 21:6-8 The Alpha And The Omega

21:6 And he said unto me, It is done: ⁷On the cross, Jesus said "*It is finished,*" (Jh.19:30) to signify that His work of redemption was complete. Now He again declares the job of renewal is also complete. Both tasks, redemption and renewal, bring the creation back to the state and order of righteousness and holiness originally intended. The point is this: God has willed a new heaven and a new earth. Therefore, He has already spoken it into being. He has already declared, "*It is done.*" The clock is set and the event fixed. The minutes of time are ticking away, and the hour will come when the set time arrives. To us, all these things are still in the future. John saw things as they will be after the 1000 years. He saw beyond the "*Great White Throne*" where God will be the judge of all people. God is in the past, the present and the future.

21:6b I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: God's sovereignty assures it. How? God declares, "*I am*

⁵ <http://bereanbiblestudygroup.com/2011/01/rev-211-14-%E2%80%93everything-is-new/>

⁶ <http://bereanbiblestudygroup.com/2011/01/rev-211-14-%E2%80%93everything-is-new/>

⁷ <http://bereanbiblestudygroup.com/2011/01/rev-211-14-%E2%80%93everything-is-new/>

Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." *Alpha*" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and means the *beginning*, and *Omega*" is the last letter and means the end. All things have their beginning in Him and He is the end of all things. He is the consummation, goal, the end, and objective of all things. All things find their meaning and being in Him. And He spans all things, beginning and end. Therefore, He can do as He wills.

21:6c I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely: Note, God Himself is still speaking. Adam and Eve were prohibited from taking of the tree of life, here, all are invited to take of the water of life freely through the redemption of Christ. Since Christ thirsted on Calvary when dying for us, no one will thirst in eternity. His promise of abundant satisfaction for the thirsty is symbolic, symbolizing His ability to meet the deepest needs of His people. Remember the woman at the well? This is an invitation to those who "*thirst of the fountain of the water of life.*" For those who thirsts this means...

- know the life that God wants man to live;
- know the life that God gives;
- know the fullness of life that is in God Himself;
- know the hope of life that God has planned for man;
- know the perfection of life that God longs for man to live;
- know God as you fellowship, commune, and share with God;
- know salvation, forgiveness, and the cleansing of God;
- know the hope, assurance, and security of God;
- live for God, obey, and follow God.

It's a beautiful gospel invitation (cf. 3:20; 22:17). This life is the gift of God. Nobody can earn or buy this life; it's free.

21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son: Lastly the person who thirsts after God will be a citizen of the new heaven and new earth because the citizen of the new heaven and new earth will be those that "*overcome.*" Note: God tells us who the citizens of His new heaven will be. Overcomers are those who remain faithful and loyal to Christ. It means the person, who remains pure and follows the Lord Jesus Christ; who conquers all the temptations and trials of life. Two great promises are made to the overcomer:

1. He will inherit all things, all that the new heaven and new earth offer. "*Inheriting*" emphasizes the privilege of obtaining something because of the work of another in contrast to one's own work (Constable).
2. He will be a son because God will be the eternal Father. All the rights and privileges of sonship come with this promise. The Father-son relationship He describes is, like the husband-bride relationship used earlier, and is one among the most intimate relationships humans understand.

⁸It might be instructive to recall what Jesus said about these overcomers in Chapter 2-3:

- **Rev 2:7 – Ephesus (lost 1st love):** "*To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*"
- **Rev 2:11 – Smyrna (martyred):** "*He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.*"
- **Rev 2:17 – Pergamum (syncretism, false prophets):** "*To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.*"
- **Rev 2:25 – Thyatira (syncretism, idolatry):** "*To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' — just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.*"
- **Rev 3:5 – Sardis (spiritually dead):** "*He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*"
- **Rev 3:12 – Philadelphia (faithful, hold on):** "*Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my*

⁸ <http://bereanbiblestudygroup.com/2011/01/revelation-219-to-2221%e2%80%93living-with-god/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name." (Note: The overcomers are the church.)

- **Rev 3:21 – Laodicea (neither hot nor cold):** *"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."*

21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars: What a tragic list:

the fearful or cowardly—

- these are those who do not confess Christ because they fear what others might say;
- those who are afraid to give up the world and deny self;
- those who fear taking a stand for Christ;
- those who fear to fellowship or become identified with Christian people.

the unbelieving—

- those who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world;
- those who reject Jesus Christ and His death upon the cross for their sins;
- those who profess Christ, but live hypocritical lives; who show by their sinful behavior that they do not really believe Him.

the abominable or polluted—

- those who are worldly and who live worldly lives;
- those who reach out to touch and taste the impurities and lusts of the world;
- those who are stained and contaminated and polluted with worldliness;
- those who refuse to separate from the pleasures and possessions of this world and refuse to turn to God.

the murderers—

- those who kill and take away the lives of others.

the whoremongers or immoral—

- those who are sexually impure;
- those who commit fornication or have sex before marriage;
- those who commit adultery and homosexuality and all other sexual acts that God forbids;
- those who look and lust, read and lust, think and lust.

the sorcerers—

- those who engage in astrology, witchcraft, devil worship, spiritism, séances, palm reading, fortune telling, and all other forms of false beliefs that claim to reveal and control one's fate, life, and destiny.

the idolaters—

- those who worship idols made with one's hands or just conceived in one's mind;
- those who have an image of what God is like and worship and follow that image instead of following the God revealed by the Scriptures;
- those who put the things of this earth before God;
- those who give their primary attention and devotion to someone or something other than God.

the liars—

- those who tell falsehoods and do not tell the truth;
- those who deceive and mislead others;
- those who are gossipers and talebearers and who pass rumors along.

Any person who does not repent and turn away from these things—any person who does not turn to God for forgiveness

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

of these things—any person who does not forsake these things—that person will not enter into the new heaven and new earth. He will not be a citizen of the new heaven and new earth. Where does he go? Scripture is clear.

21:8b They have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The "*Lake of Fire*" is the final destination of the wicked. It is different from the bottomless pit referred to in 9:1. The Evil Creature and the False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire. Then their leader, Satan himself is cast there (20:10). Finally Death and Hell are also cast there (20:4). Afterward, everyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life will be sent to the same fate (20:15).

The "*Second Death*" is spiritual death, meaning eternal torment. It's a permanent separation from God.

This is very much in contrast to the overcomers. Notice that both the unbelievers and the lake of fire still exist after the creation of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 22:15). Though unbelievers will exist in eternity, they will have no part in the new creation. Therefore the separation between these two places is absolute and eternal.

SUMMARY:

John first sees all things made new. There is a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth are no more (cf. 20:11); but also no more sea -- no more separation of land and water. Can you imagine? The earth as we know it will not be the same and will not last forever. The vision continues and John sees the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. A loud voice from heaven declares that God will dwell with His people and be their God. The new Jerusalem is where God dwells among His people instead of our going up to meet Him, He comes down to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among us (Jh.1:14).

Wherever God reigns, there is peace, security, and love. He wipes away tears forever! No more of what we had to go through on earth; no struggles or pain. We will totally see this newness He has in store throughout all eternity. God, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, will comfort His people by removing all that caused pain, and provide the fountain of the water of life freely to them that thirsts. Just as God finished the work of Creation (Gen.2:1-3); Jesus finished the work of Redemption (Jh.19:30); so the Trinity will finish the entire plan of salvation by inviting the redeemed into a new Creation. While those who overcome inherit all things and enjoy the blessings of being God's children, the wicked and unfaithful have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone (cf. 19:20; 20:10, 14-15) which is defined as the second death (21:8). Those who can endure the testing of evil and remain faithful are those whom God will reward.

APPLICATION:

Christians have a wonderful future; can you see yourself in that future with God and the rest of the saints? God is able to re-write our lives and give us a better future with a new beginning. This is something we have not even experienced nor imagined with Him. Take a moment and picture what God has in store for those who overcome to the end—a great inheritance! For it depended solely upon the work of Christ on the cross. Take what He has done!