

Revelation

Everything's Brand New

Focal Verses: Revelation 21:1-8¹

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **EVALUATE** the “*apocalypse*” genre that characterizes the book of Revelation to discern how to understand its message; **CONTEMPLATE** the coming of “*a new heaven and a new earth*” for the hope this vision brings; and **EMBRACE** the peace of God begins in this life with Jesus.

In Focus

Grandma Lottie knew growing old was a blessing. She had accumulated plenty of wisdom and experience throughout the years. However, it had its share of challenges too. Bones began to ache. Strength and speed diminished. Wrinkles and gray hair became her prominent features. One of the main problems with growing old, Grandma Lottie thought, was suffering a lot of loss. At 95 years old, Grandma Lottie had seen her share. She had buried both of her parents and two of her four children. Most of her closest friends had passed, and those who remained struggled to remember the great times they had together.

Most recently, she had lost her husband of 70 years. However, as God would allow it, she was eagerly preparing to celebrate the arrival of her first two great-great-grandsons. Twins! It was a tangible reminder, one day God would wipe away all tears and erase sorrows, replacing them both with all things new. These days, Grandma Lottie thought a lot about heaven. As grateful as she was for the life she lived, the experiences she had, and the family she had raised, she yearned for the day when all the pain and heartache of this life would be left behind. She knew it was coming sooner rather than later, she was ready. One day all things would become new.

In this lesson, we will learn about God's redemptive plan for heaven and earth. What is the thing you most look forward to in God's new heaven and new earth?

¹ Excerpt From Precepts for Living® Dr. Vince L., Bantu

Keep In Mind

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.

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

Lesson Text

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 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 overcomes 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 burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The People, Places and Times

John: John, whose name in Hebrew means “*Jehovah is gracious*,” was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, he is believed to be the author of the Gospel of John, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. The son of Zebedee and brother of James, he was one of the three in Jesus’ inner circle (along with James and Peter) who witnessed the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1), and he was present with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane right before His arrest (Mark 14:32–33). John is recorded as the only disciple present at the Crucifixion and was instructed by Jesus to care for His mother, Mary (John 19:25–27). Of the three, he was the only one not martyred (according to tradition). However, he was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos for his faith. It was there that he wrote the book of Revelation.

Jerusalem: Jerusalem is recorded as being founded by Canaanites (see Ezekiel 16:3) and either named after one of their gods (Shalim) or adapted from the Hebrew word “shalom,” which means peace. It is purportedly one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, highly sought after—and fought over. “Jerusalem has been besieged, attacked, and captured dozens of times, divided by Jews and Arabs (1948-1967), destroyed twice—and rebuilt. The city was captured by King David and became known as the “city of David” (2 Samuel 5:7). It is the place where Solomon’s Temple (and subsequent temples) was built, and the place where events leading up to the Crucifixion, the Day of Pentecost, and much of the history of Acts occurred. It is claimed as the rightful possession of both Israeli and Palestinian nationals. Jerusalem is known as the “holy city” for three major world religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Background

Although Revelation is the last book of the Bible, it is not necessarily the last book written. John’s original visions may have occurred shortly before the destruction of the Temple (AD 70), but some aspects of the book suggest the Apocalypse as we know it could also represent visions that occurred after the destruction of the Temple. Similar to portions of Ezekiel and Daniel, the book is apocalyptic literature filled with symbolism, poetry, and prophecy, specifically about the end times. Because of the symbolic language, it can be difficult to understand, and there are many interpretations of how or when events will occur (or whether they have occurred already). However, John makes it clear this is a revelation of Christ, affirming God’s sovereignty. This revelation serves as a warning to some, and it provides hope in the second coming of Christ and final victory over sin, Satan, and death for those who believe in Christ. With vivid imagery, he describes events that will occur, signs of end times, the awesome glory of God, and the beauty of a new heaven and new earth. Revelation 21 is one of the last two chapters of the book, and it grants a glimpse of eternity.

In Depth

1. All New (Revelation 21:1–2): John begins this chapter by sharing his vision of a new heaven and earth, a fulfillment of Isaiah 65:17–18. This could be a restored and wholly cleansed version of God’s creation, or it could be an unused, fresh heaven and earth which replaces the one that was marred by sin and its effects—death, sorrow, and chaos. In the ancient Near East, the sea was a symbol of chaos (the Canaanites said the god Yam controlled the seas). John notes the sea no longer exists, thus implying the establishment of complete order in the new creation.

Not only is there a new heaven and earth, but there’s a new “holy city”—a New Jerusalem—coming down from God Himself. Jerusalem has been at the center of Jewish “and Christian tradition. While it is called the “holy city” because God’s presence is said to dwell there, historically it has been marred by division, fighting, death, and chaos from its founding even into the present. In this vision, God presents Jerusalem as a bride—a virgin, untouched, untainted, pure, and presentable to a perfect Christ. He does not “fix” the current Jerusalem by going to it, but He presents a new true Holy City through His presence.

2.. God Dwells (Revelation 21: 3–4): Now that a new, holy, and perfect heaven, earth, and Jerusalem have been created, God is free to live among His people. The tabernacle was known as the place where God’s glory resided temporarily (Exodus 25:8). When the cloud or pillar of fire (God’s presence) moved, it indicated when the Israelites should pack up their tents and the Tabernacle and move along with Him. In Revelation, God, from His throne, says He will set up His tent and live with the people. Human kings do not reside among the people, but God, reminiscent of the incarnation of Christ who “*became flesh and made his dwelling among us*” (John 1:14, NIV) chooses to do so. Because He is there, He wipes away every tear (Isaiah 25:8; 65:19; Revelation 7:17), removing death, sorrow, crying, and pain. The new earth will as be the original one when God walked with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8), but this time without the influence or presence of Satan, who is now defeated (see Revelation 20). All things will be made new. It’s a fresh start!

3. All Done (Revelation 21: 5–8): It is done!” While the events recorded by John have not yet occurred, this is a promise of completion from the all-powerful, all-knowing One—the Creator who is the beginning (Alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet) and the end (Omega, the final letter of the alphabet).

Throughout Scripture are references to living water (Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 14:8; John 7:38, Revelation 7:17), water that is not stagnant, like a pond, but free-flowing and fresh, as from a

mountain stream. Stagnant water is often dirty, filled with harmful bacteria, and not recommended for drinking. Flowing streams and fountains, however, refresh and give life. No one can survive without physical water. Christ uses the “water of life” metaphor to demonstrate the need for us to quench our spiritual thirst through Him (John 4:10, 14). For those who thirst for Him, He offers this water—eternal life. Those who belong to Him will be children of God and inherit all the blessings already mentioned: new heaven and earth, eternal life free of pain, sorrow, and tears. In contrast, those who choose a sinful life apart from Him—fearful of a commitment to Him, rejecting Him, not believing, worshiping false gods, practicing sexual immorality—are destined for a place far worse, a place filled with pain and a second death.

Liberating Lesson

We are drawn to things that are new: new homes, new clothes, new jobs, new babies, and new cars (even a new car smell). There is something appealing about starting over; it provides hope, anticipation, a clearer outlook, and excitement. We appreciate newness. If such excitement exists in receiving new temporal things, which are here today and gone, broken, stolen, or old tomorrow, how much more excited should we be about the forthcoming new heaven and new earth?

Application for Activation

Life is full of suffering and difficulty, but this passage provides hope for a new, perfect world. We are often so focused on the present that we ignore that there is an eternity. When things are going well, we are content with the present. When we struggle, we strive to find a solution for the present. What challenges do you face now that viewing eternity helps you to put it into perspective? What decisions do you believe you need to make now in light of what is to come? Are you free from the sinful lifestyle described in these verses? Have you accepted Christ? If you have, are there people in your life that you need to tell about Jesus? Pray for courage to share your faith with others.”

Closing Prayer

Week of 25 August 2024

Daily Bible Readings



Monday: 1st John 1-5

Tuesday: 2nd John-3rd John

Wednesday: Revelation 1-3

Thursday: Revelation 4-8

Friday: Revelation 9-12

Saturday: Revelation 13-16

Sunday: Revelation 17-22