



A NEW
BEGINNING



SUMMER 13

AUGUST 30, 2026

LESSON TEXT

Revelation 21:1-9,
23-27

FOCUS VERSES

Revelation 21:5-7

⁵And 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.

⁶And 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. ⁷He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

Jesus makes all things new and restores creation through His eternal plan.

The Covenant Fulfilled

I WILL
PREPARE
MYSELF
TO LIVE IN
COVENANT
WITH
JESUS.

COVENANT CONTEXT

As we come to the end of the Bible, we see God restore all creation to better than it was in the Garden of Eden. Heaven and earth will be filled with redeemed humanity who chose to live in covenant relationship with God, and His covenant people will reign and rule with Him, never to be separated from Him again. The end will be better than the beginning.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: After seeing Jesus Himself, what are you looking forward to most in Heaven?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to the beauty and promise God has made His people for the end time.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection. **I**

I. THE NEW JERUSALEM

A. The Tabernacle of God

DISCUSS: *Both Genesis and Revelation describe a beautiful, intimate relationship with God. What can you do today to grow that relationship?*

B. The Restoration of Creation

DISCUSS: *What should we do to be good stewards of what God has given us? What is out of our control?*

C. I will prepare myself for God's ultimate fulfillment of His covenant in Heaven. **V**

DISCUSS: *How important is repentance in your daily devotion?*

II. IN THAT CITY WHERE THE LAMB IS THE LIGHT

A. The Light of Salvation

B. The Light to the Gentiles

DISCUSS: *When Paul described Gentiles as being grafted into the root of the nation of Israel, what do you think he meant by that?*

C. I will walk in the light of God's covenant.

DISCUSS: *If you are not yet ready for Heaven, are you ready to pray for God to save you today? If you are ready, whom can you help be ready for Heaven as well?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God's kingdom to come and His will to be done—only through His intervention can our world be restored
- For God to help us to fully embrace the light of salvation and look with hope to eternity

LESSON CONNECTION

I Ubud is a city in the Indonesian province of Bali. It's home to about seventy-five thousand people and is quite the tourist magnet. Many of the visitors take a tour through Ubud's brightly colored markets for local arts, crafts, and cuisine. Throughout the day the markets are fairly crowded, so two night markets are open from 6 PM–11 PM for the more nocturnal shoppers. Since Ubud was founded in the eighth century AD, it's rich with heritage, including two Balinese palaces.

For the more outdoorsy visitors, the Campuhan Ridge walk boasts some beautiful views of Bali. The walk is a paved 1.2-mile trail that starts in downtown and weaves through the rice paddies and forests. The rice terraces are dotted with palm trees, reaching up to the sky, as the locals work the fields in tropical temperatures. But on days when the temperature crests eighty-five degrees, tourists cool off and go white water rafting or ride ATVs through the jungle and around the waterfalls.

Ubud is beautiful, but beware the monkeys. The Sacred Monkey Forest is home to over a thousand long-tailed macaques. They look adorable, but they'll steal your stuff in a second with no remorse. Over the years, they have honed their kleptomaniac craft and have learned what people value: sunglasses, watches, and especially our phones. They have even learned how to unzip backpacks to purloin whatever they want from tourists, and then they stand with their stolen goods in their hands, ready to ransom your belongings for food. They are known as bartering monkeys.

They can sour a peaceful vacation in Bali to an insurance claim and a tough trip home as you wait for a replacement phone. It seems like every vacation destination here on earth has at least one downside. Perhaps it's too hot, too crowded, too expensive, or too many menacing monkeys stealing your stuff. But as we close out the Book of Revelation and glimpse that celestial city the Lord is preparing for us, we see only perfection.

John saw it and recorded what he saw. It was as a bride on her wedding day looking as beautiful as she could for her bridegroom. That is what Heaven will be like. There will be no fine print on the brochure or website you will wish you had read closer. There will be no need to flag down the wait staff to ask them to turn the temperature up and the music down. Best of all there will be no need to lock up your belongings in a locker because no one will steal or lie or cheat there. Heaven is perfect because God is Heaven's architect and Heaven's builder.

God created everything perfect in the Garden of Eden, but the enemy tempted humanity and we gave away our innocence. Yet God was already fighting for us to redeem us from our sin. In the end, God will make all things new, bring justice to all injustice, and restore creation to a better than Edenic state. God's covenant people will reign and rule with Him, fulfilling His covenant plan He has been working since before Creation.

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE NEW JERUSALEM

A. The Tabernacle of God

One of the most extraordinary things about our God is He wants to share eternity with us. Revelation 21:3 declares: “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.” This closeness, this eternal intimacy, brings us full circle to the point when God visited Adam and Eve just to walk and talk with them. The language of Scripture is simple, unadorned, and comforting, like the rare and special privilege of being a personal friend with a king. This kind of friend could casually spend time with the king in shared pleasures, without ceremony, and could even call the king by his name rather than his title.

The word *tabernacle* in Revelation 21:3 has a few important meanings. When we hear the word, we naturally think of the Old Testament Tabernacle, which was essentially a mobile church. It was a place where the priesthood went through their ceremonial duties, but more importantly, where God promised He would meet with humanity. Hebrews 8:5 declares the earthly Tabernacle was patterned after a heavenly one. In that sense the Tabernacle was representative of God’s presence, thus God was promising to spend eternity close to His people, the heavenly Tabernacle come to earth.

But the concept of the Tabernacle is also present in John 1:14: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us.” The glory of God was “tabernacled” in Jesus and dwelt among us. Revelation 21 promises that the incarnate God—tabernacled in flesh as Jesus Christ—will be with us for all eternity. This promise points to a restored covenant relationship like Adam and Eve initially enjoyed with God in the Garden, except without a serpent lurking in the undergrowth.

DISCUSS: *Both Genesis and Revelation describe a beautiful, intimate relationship with God. What can you do today to grow that relationship?*

B. The Restoration of Creation

God created a perfect world, but sin marred His paradise and brought with it sickness, death, and erosion of every kind. Our culture continually warns us about the perils of the planet. Certainly, we are called to be good stewards of the gifts God has given us (including our world), but God has a plan to restore all creation in the end of time. But before He restores, He will demolish much of the earth through plagues and pestilence.

The seven-year period of the Great Tribulation will be the greatest climate crisis since the Flood of Noah’s day. The ecosystems of this planet will all be severely crippled (even destroyed), and the Book of Revelation documents how the topography of the earth will change through seismic shifts that flatten mountains and cause islands to disappear (Revelation 6:14). All the bodies of water will be tainted, and wildlife will be devastated in water and on land. However, when Jesus returns to earth, He will bring

healing for our planet. Ezekiel and Zechariah prophesied of healing waters that will flow from Jerusalem and bring divine restoration. The solution for the “climate crisis” turns out to be the same solution for everything: Jesus. The millennial reign upon earth will be a time and place more beautiful than the Garden of Eden, a return to God’s original design of paradise and peace.

But even that is not the ultimate promise, for John described seeing “a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). God’s final creation will be His ultimate creative act, and it will never be tainted by sin or corrupted to deviate from His perfect design. Here are some of the things Revelation 21 says will be missing from God’s new creation: unwiped tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain, unredeemed sinners, a temple, sun or moon, shut gates, and the curse of sin. In essence, all the negative aspects of our human existence will be eliminated.

In an interesting observation, John noted there was also no more sea in the new creation. The word *sea* is used in interesting ways in Revelation. It can refer to wicked humanity (the beast arises from “the sea”), one of the holding places of the dead, and of course, the natural reference to large bodies of water like oceans. Throughout the vast majority of human history, oceans have served as impassible barriers that separated people. Sin and wickedness separated man from God. Death separated us from life. Likely the reference to “no more seas” refers to the reality that nothing will separate us from God or each other in the new creation.

DISCUSS: *What should we do to be good stewards of what God has given us? What is out of our control?*

C. I will prepare myself for God’s ultimate fulfillment of His covenant in Heaven.

- ▼ In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus addressed the seven churches of Asia Minor. His remarks to each church included praise for their strengths, rebuke for areas where they had slipped, and ultimately a unique promise of eternal reward to the overcomers of each church. We learn much from what each of these seven churches did right and what they did wrong. For the five churches for whom Jesus leveled rebukes, the remedy to each one was the same: Repent. The same instruction applies to us. Once we have entered into covenant with God through the gospel, if we find ourselves wavering in our faith or in keeping part of the covenant, we need to repent so we can be right with God again. We will find His mercy there for us just as it was for the seven churches in Asia Minor.

DISCUSS: *How important is repentance in your daily devotion?*

II. IN THAT CITY WHERE THE LAMB IS THE LIGHT

A. The Light of Salvation

Revelation 21 is a chapter filled with references to light. Scripture often uses the word *light* to symbolically represent good, or the decision to be in fellowship with God, and *dark* as a representation of evil or a decision to reject God’s presence. Truly darkness

does not exist on its own; it is the absence of light. We cannot install a “dark switch” in our living room. If we want dark, we have to block or eliminate the sources of light. We were created in the light of God’s presence, and only when sin began to separate us from God did darkness become present in the world. When talking with Nicodemus, Jesus lamented that many love darkness because it hides their evil deeds. None of us enjoy it when our private sin becomes public.

But we cannot be saved until we reach a place of such desperation that we want the light Jesus brings more than we want darkness to obscure our sin. We must realize our need of a Savior, and “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). His light does reveal our sins, but it isn’t the spotlight of a performer on stage illuminating our sin so an audience can mock us, but rather the bright light of a surgeon who uses the light to successfully operate and heal.

The New Jerusalem will be flooded with light because there is nothing to hide. The redeemed have been thoroughly washed and cleansed in the blood of the Lamb and have no need to hide in shadows. Revelation 21 and 22 reveal there is no need in the New Jerusalem for either natural light (like the sun) or artificial light (like a candle), for the Lamb is the light of that city. We will literally walk in His light. The logical outcome of walking in the light of salvation now is to live eternally in the perfect light of our Savior.

B. The Light to the Gentiles

The references to the New Jerusalem are thoroughly rooted in the Jewish origins of our faith. Jerusalem means “the dwelling of peace,” and it has been the capital of Israel since the time of King David. The twelve gates into the eternal city each bear the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve ascending foundations are named after the twelve apostles, all Jewish men. We who are Gentiles (non-Jews) should be forever thankful God extended His covenant invitation to us.

But make no mistake, the New Jerusalem is a city for the redeemed of *all* nations. Right in the middle of John’s description of the holy city is this verse: “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 honour into it” (Revelation 21:24). The saved include people of all nations. The song of the elders in Revelation 5:9 rejoiced over the fact that humanity was redeemed to God “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Even the Old Testament hints that God’s plan exceeded just the Jewish nation. The prophets wrote of a “light to the Gentiles,” and Simeon held the infant Jesus and rejoiced over the Messiah who would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32). God’s plan has always been for people of every nation to have a part in His eternal reward. He told Abraham from the beginning: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). This salvation is for “whosoever will,” and God loves the world. The New Jerusalem is not just for Jews; it is for the redeemed of every ethnicity.

DISCUSS: When Paul described Gentiles as being grafted into the root of the nation of Israel, what do you think he meant by that?

C. I will walk in the light of God's covenant.

The Book of Revelation is frightening to some because it pulls no punches. It graphically describes great spiritual and physical conflicts, the rage of evil and vengeful men, the wrath of God, and the punishment of the wicked. But without the Book of Revelation, we also would lose some of the most vivid descriptions of our heavenly reward. Many of our greatest hopes are firmly rooted in the message of this last book of the Bible.

The Book of Revelation clearly delineates our eternal choice. We have only two choices. One leads to eternal torment, sorrow, and separation from God. The other leads to eternal life and eternal reward in the presence of our Lord. Our culture tries to obscure the simplicity of this choice and to create endless doubts and questions, but God gave us the Book of Revelation to allow us to look past the shades of gray in our present to the black and white outcomes of the future. When we choose God's covenant through the gospel, we will one day live and reign and rule with God. If we choose to reject the gospel, we will one day be separated from Him. Choose life. Choose to live in the light of God's covenant invitation and follow Him from here to Heaven and an eternity bathed in the brilliant light of His glory and grace.

DISCUSS: *If you are not yet ready for Heaven, are you ready to pray for God to save you today? If you are ready, whom can you help be ready for Heaven as well?*



Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how walking in the light of God's covenant relationship is the best way to live.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

As his eyes opened in a darkened room, he was trapped somewhere between sleep and wakefulness. His brain was still overlaying the reality of what his eyes saw in the dim light with the confusion of his dreams. He could not tell how many times the slowly blinking red lights of the smoke alarm had taken on far more sinister intent as his brain rewrote their normal harmless function as some monster or weapon from his dreams.

That night was not his best night. In fact, it would later be described as his least popular night as the husband and father to his household. You see, when he opened his eyes to look around the dark room, his attention fixated on those blinking red lights on the smoke detector. As he rose for a closer look, his sleep-confused brain led him to cover those blinking lights with his hand. Yep, you may have guessed it: he set off the interconnected smoke alarms all throughout the house. Strobing lights burst against the dark walls in everyone's rooms, sirens blared, and a robotic voice announced over and over, "Fire, fire, fire." He was a little chagrined as he tried to explain to everyone there was no fire; he just needed a lot more sleep.

The shadows have a way of obscuring reality. This dad never once took a nap in the middle of the day, half-awakened, and then wandered over to the smoke alarm because he was confused over why it was blinking. Even though he might have been groggy from sleep, the natural light streaming through the windows eliminates that kind of confusion.

Satan has lulled our culture into embracing the shadows, and in the shadows, he is far more effective at creating confusion. He can try to redefine reality, influencing our generation to call evil "good" and good "evil" (Isaiah 5:20). The only way to truly clear the confusion from our age is to fully embrace the light of God's presence and Word. Jesus' light makes things rather simple and uncomplicated. We can clearly see what is beneficial and what is destructive when we are in the light. We can make much clearer choices. Let's walk in the light of covenant relationship with our God, and we can look to eternity with clear-eyed anticipation as we look to that holy city where the Lamb forever is the light.