

LESSON 10
August 7, 2022

Unit III: The Great Hope of the Saints

No More Tears

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 32:9-20
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 21:1-9
PRINT PASSAGE: Revelation 21:1-9

KEY VERSE

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, KJV)

.....

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Examine the unique writing classification, “apocalypse,” that characterizes the book of Revelation in order to discern how to understand and apply its message to daily life.
- Contemplate the creation of a new heaven and a new earth for the hope that this vision holds for the faithful.
- Embrace the peace of God that begins in this life with Jesus and continues in God’s new creation.

*Key Terms

Tear(s) (verse 4)—Greek: *dakruon* (dak’-roo): tear drop(s).

Trustworthy (verse 5)—Greek: *pistos* (pis-tos’): “faithful” (KJV); believing; reliable.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

The external backdrop against which this lesson was composed was distressing, depressing, oppressing, and suppressing. The media continues to broadcast more to discourage than encourage people around the world. America has witnessed the horrific resurfacing of hidden and restrained racism. Politics is riddled with sharp, irrational divisions along party lines. The effects of an invisible yet deadly pestilence created a global disruption and claimed the lives of many millions around the globe. Personal tragedies abound in people’s lives without discrimination. Tears of sorrow, distress, anger, and fear continue to flow. The spoken and unspoken questions from many are “How long?” “When will these things cease?” “Where is a safe place from the pain and suffering?” Believers who are students of the Bible know that declining morality and spiritual carelessness will continue and worsen. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, warned, “But all these things are merely the beginning of the birth pangs [of the intolerable anguish and the time of unprecedented trouble]” (Matthew 24:8, AMP). Tears will inevitably continue



The Biblical Context

The author of Revelation is none other than Jesus Christ Himself, recorded by the apostle John (verse 1). Jesus revealed His full identity to John and gave warning and hope to believers. Revelation is addressed directly to the seven churches of Asia Minor and globally to all believers everywhere. The book's date and setting are around AD 90–95 from the island of Patmos, approximately 34 miles from the coast of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). John was exiled there by Roman authorities during a period of increased persecution of Christians when the Emperor Domitian reigned. While separated from his Christian friends, John received this revelation of Christ in a spectacular vision. An analysis of the book's content reveals a divine wake-up call to the seven churches because of their complacency and compromising attitudes. John recorded the details of his vision in a style of writing called apocalyptic literature, which is literature that reveals hidden things. The word *revelation* is *apokalupsis* and means "an uncovering, unveiling, or disclosure of something (or someone) hidden becoming visible." This literary style uses symbols to describe invisible, supernatural events in human terms. There was a practical reason for using this writing style during the intensified period of persecution against Christians. The rich symbolism would be puzzling to the Romans and to future unbelievers. To this day, God has continued to conceal the meaning of some sections of the book from the understanding of many astute believers until the appropriate time for it to be "revealed." The book of Revelation is unique among the books of the Bible because it is the only one that contains its outline. Christ instructed John to write the things he had seen (chapter 1); the things which are occurring now (chapters 2–3); and the things which will take place (chapters 4–22). This lesson's biblical context is from the third section—the things that will take place (Revelation 21:1–9).

to fill the eyes while we live in this world. God's children are encouraged to endure and not question (see Matthew 24:13; 2 Timothy 2:8–13; Revelation 2:10). The motivation to persevere rather than complain, worry, and be overcome by fear is God's promise of a prepared place where tears of sorrow will be no more (see Revelation 21:4). This promise is to be accepted and believed because of who made it. God said that He would wipe every tear away from every eye—that is, ensure that there is no reason to shed tears of sorrow—and that He cannot lie (see Numbers 23:19). Believers' greatest challenge because of this promise is to intentionally pursue and develop their spirituality. The more spiritual—that is, the more like Christ—that believers become, the easier they will find it is to live joyfully and confidently amid the chaos. Also, Christians' "lived out" spirituality will serve as a visible witness to others as models of perseverance and faith in God and His promises.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

An Eternal Renewal (Revelation 21:1–4)

KJV

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.

NIV

THEN I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

4 “He will wipe every *tear* from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

When God created the world, it was ideally prepared for humankind. This ideal physical environment and His intimate relationship with humanity were intended to last forever. Sin entered the picture and disrupted this relationship and negatively affected creation. The apostle Paul substantiates this as truth in his letter to the Roman Christians (see Romans 8:20-22). From the beginning, God never intended to allow sin to reign and continue to block His eternal plan for humankind and all He created (see Genesis 3:15). Sin was ultimately defeated by the death and resurrection of God’s Son, paving the way for the day when He would make all things new. John describes a vivid revelation of this renewal in Revelation 21. As the chapter opens, John has just described the judgment, sentencing, and punishment of all existing evil (see Revelation 20:10-15). He begins by stating that he saw a new heaven and new earth replacing the firsts that have vanished (**verse 1a**). God makes a complete transformation of everything. The universe will be destroyed and replaced by a new, eternal creation (see 2 Peter 3:10-13). “New” in the text is qualitative—new in character, better than the old, free of sin’s contamination.

Interestingly, John observes that there is no more sea (**verse 1b**). In ancient times, the sea represented chaos, disorder, destruction, evil, and separation. The sea’s symbolic absence coincides with the new earth’s character and the eradication of how it was perceived and feared by John’s audience. John also sees the Holy City, New Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven and pictured as a bride adorned for her husband (**verse 2**). In contrast to the original city, the New Jerusalem is characterized by righteousness and is prepared by God for His people. The descriptor referring to a bride adorned for her husband symbolically represents the absence of anything unholy inhabiting the New Jerusalem. Next, a loud voice arrests John’s attention, announcing that God will make His dwelling among His people (**verse 3**). God’s previous promises to abide among His people—foreshadowed in the tabernacle, the temple, and Christ the Incarnate Word—is a reality in His holy city (see Leviticus 26:11-12; Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11). The voice also announces dramatic changes in the new heaven and earth by identifying what will not exist in them: no more tears, no more death (**verse 4**). These changes mark the end of all related to the original fallen creation. From His throne, God speaks to John and confirms the absolute certainty of what He has seen and heard (see verse 5). He commands John to record His words because they are faithful and true. As God had done in the beginning, He now speaks the certainty of making all things new. For John’s original audience, the trustworthiness of God’s words was a source of confident hope. They should be the same for believers now as well. However, they must not lull us into a “pie in the sky” attitude and way of life. The assurance of living eternally in a place of “no more” with God should be accepted as a call to holy living, engaging in good works, and seeking the salvation of those destined to eternal separation from God while the opportunity remains.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can believers practically make this world better by addressing things that currently cause pain, suffering, and tears?

Contrasting Destinies (Revelation 21:5-9)

KJV

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.
 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.
 9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

NIV

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are *trustworthy* and true."
 6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.
 7 "Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.
 8 "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."
 9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

God's work of creating a new heaven and earth is a direct parallel to His creative work in the beginning. God pronounced all He had made as good and complete (see Genesis 1). John is told to record the words spoken as trustworthy and true (**verse 5**). The One seated on the throne proclaims the absolute finality of His decree to make all things new by affirming, "It is done" (**verse 6a**). His statement is in the present tense, confirming that what He says is so sure that He can speak of future events as already finished and lasting. Because He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things (**verse 6b**), He is both the origin and completion of all things and can be trusted to control (perfectly and sovereignly) everything. God concludes this comforting statement by promising the water of life, eternal life, to all who desire to receive it (**verse 6c**). Note the requisite for receiving this gracious gift—anyone who thirsts for it. The offer is given, but accepting it is an individual choice (**verses 7-8**). Those who overcome—that is, faithfully maintain a relationship with Jesus Christ—will become God's children and heirs of the blessings described in **verse 7**. Overcomers are not those who live perfectly, if that were possible; they are those who consistently live by faith (see 1 John 5:4-5).

Contrastingly, many stubbornly choose the opposite path and its consequences (**verse 8**). John begins this significant list with those who are cowards. In this context, the cowardly are those who choose to allow self and personal security to prevent their faithfully following God in the presence of His enemies. The rest of this list represents all sin and rebellion against God. Instead of receiving the "water of life," this group will receive the "lake of fire." The contrasting fates of these two groups intensify the importance of two essential things. One is believing in the name of Jesus now, and the other is the mission to evangelize the lost. His promises of eternal life and eternal death are as trustworthy as His promise to make all things new. The choice of one or the other is the decision of those who hear the Lord's Word. The remaining verses in this chapter contain a magnificent description of the New Jerusalem, beginning with **verse 9**. One of the angels holding the bowl judgments commands John to tour the city described as the bride of the Lamb. The bride is the Holy City itself, the New Jerusalem, where the redeemed will abide with God. The imagery of marriage expresses the depth of the relationship between God and His people.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How do the fates of overcomers and unbelievers challenge the community of faith to refocus and reprioritize ministry?

A Closing Thought

The times in which we live certainly increase longing and anticipation of the renewal of all things among the faithful. God's guarantee of its future certainty should also increase one's desire to have a more intimate relationship with Him. His revelation of the glorious future for us is an urgent call to be about what Christ has commanded all believers to do while waiting for its fulfillment. Our rejoicing about living in a place of "no more" must be accompanied by focused efforts to evangelize the world so that others can receive the gift of eternal life.

Your Life

How often have you reflected on God's promise of a new home for His children? If you have, then what have you been convicted to do here and now? Employees work diligently in anticipation of a check at the end of their work cycle. The saints' future hope should motivate each of us to work diligently, visibly obey His commands, and point the unsaved to Christ.

Your World!

Admittedly, it is difficult to imagine a world absent of anything sad and sorrowful. Yet, God has promised it, and it is already done. What can you do this week as proof of your confident faith in this promise to encourage, exhort, or comfort others who may have lost hope or never heard about what is in store for the redeemed? Commit to practicing "active, visible anticipation" this week by ministering to someone in one or more of these ways.

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Father, for the absolute certainty of eternal communion with You in the New Jerusalem. We realize our unworthiness and are grateful for Your making it possible through Jesus Christ, the Son. While we wait, use us as Your representatives to share this great hope with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

This week, we were assured of the fulfillment of the saints' hope—spending eternity with God in the New Jerusalem. Next week, we will continue to explore the indescribable magnificence of this Holy City (see Revelation 21:10-21).

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, August 8	"You Shall Be Comforted in Jerusalem"	(Isaiah 66:6-14)
TUESDAY, August 9	"God's Glory Is Revealed in Jerusalem"	(Isaiah 66:18-22)
WEDNESDAY, August 10	"City of the Living God"	(Hebrews 12:18-29)
THURSDAY, August 11	"Jerusalem, Joy of All the Earth"	(Psalm 48)
FRIDAY, August 12	"The Faithful City, the Holy Mountain"	(Zechariah 8:1-8)
SATURDAY, August 13	"God, Who Dwells in Unapproachable Light"	(1 Timothy 6:11-16)
SUNDAY, August 14	"The Holy City"	(Revelation 21:10-21)