

# ***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

## ***Revelation 21:1-8***

**New Revised Standard Version**

***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, November 6, 2016**

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 6, 2016**, is from **Revelation 21:1-8**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

## ***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

### **Revelation 21:1-8**

**(Revelation 21:1) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.**

Revelation indicates that the old earth as we know it now will pass away, but it will be replaced by a new earth. We do not learn how the new earth will be similar to or different from the old earth, but it will satisfy us and be better than our old earth that has suffered from so much abuse from sin and decay. Neither the new heaven nor the new earth will suffer from any evil or sin or death. Similar to the Garden of Eden before the fall, the new heaven and earth will bring only blessings and not be a place susceptible to suffering or temptations. The sea may symbolize that which separates people and nations from one another as well as a place of danger. The sea separated John, who was on the Island of Patmos, from his fellow Christians and the Churches he served. A storm at sea led to Paul's shipwreck, but the spread of the gospel. In the new heaven and earth, God's people will no longer be separated from God or one another and they will never face dangers that would threaten their faith or their life.

**(Revelation 21:2) And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

Elsewhere the Bible describes the Church as the bride of Christ. John may mean to reveal symbolically that the holy city is actually the redeemed and purified Church of God; all those who have loved Jesus and who have previously gone to heaven and who will return to earth with Him. Christians will inhabit the new earth, and they will live holy lives in relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the holy angels, and other believers. A morally pure, loving, and spiritually holy Church will be beautiful to Jesus and to all who have come to Him to be forgiven and cleansed from all sin.

**(Revelation 21:3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;**

Not only will the Church of God dwell on the new earth, but God himself will make His home on the new earth with the His children, even more gloriously than in the Garden of Eden. We will be the people of God, and only the people of God and the holy angels will dwell on the new earth with God. The entire universe may be or become the home of God’s people, so people can explore the whole universe for eternity, providing ever more reasons to rejoice and give thanks to God. But actually being with God as His redeemed people and children will bring more joy still. Worshiping God and expressing our love for God with songs of praise will be our greatest joy!

**(Revelation 21:4) he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”**

On the new earth, there will be no reason for believers to ever weep. Memories of our old life on the old earth may not be erased (we are not told explicitly), and if these memories bring us sorrow, God himself (not an angel) will comfort us and do for us what we need done to restore our happiness. We do not know of other reasons to weep, but we do know that in the new heaven and on the new earth there will be no pain, crying, mourning, or death. Everything evil or sorrowful or that could ever bring anyone unhappiness that we associate with life on this old earth will be no more. God will prepare us in heaven for the new responsibilities that may be ours on the new earth, and then we will return with the moral purity and spiritual beauty God has given us, as wonderful as a bride adorned for her husband.

**(Revelation 21:5) And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”**

Here, God speaks. We have become familiar with the idea of replacing old things with new things and with discarding those things that are worn out or have no value any longer. God will make believers into new creations without discarding them as those who have no value. God has the ability to make something new rather than destroy it or discard it. We will recognize many similarities between the good old worn out things of God's creation and the new things God makes them into. We might throw away a pair of worn out old brown shoes, and buy a new pair exactly like the brand we threw away. Perhaps in a similar way God will make all things new. God's Word is worthy for John to write down, pass on to others, and for Christians to preserve without addition or subtraction or change for subsequent generations. God's Word, the Holy Bible, is trustworthy and true; therefore, we can build our lives and future hopes on the Scriptures.

**(Revelation 21:6) Then 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 as a gift from the spring of the water of life.**

Just as God created the world originally, God will create a new world, but God may choose to continue to expand His old creation and the new creation and create new things forever. God's work of redeeming believers will come to a decisive end when all who will be saved have been saved, sanctified, and glorified. Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter in the Greek alphabet, meaning from beginning to end. God being infinite had no beginning in time and will have no ending in time or eternity. He is our beginning at our creation, at our salvation, and at our new creation. God is the end, or the purpose, or the goal for which all Christians live. God will exist forever, so His promises will always be fulfilled. Whatever we need in life or for life, God will give us as a free gift. Jesus promised the woman at the well that He could give her living water, and He will give living water to those He loves for eternity.

**(Revelation 21:7) Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.**

John picks up on the earlier revelation that God showed him when He sent seven letters to the seven Churches in Revelation 1-3. God challenges all Christians to conquer themselves, to overcome sin and temptation, to gain the victory over the world and the devil and other problems they face. Here God shows us the reward of conquering. Because we are God's children, we will inherit all the new good things that God will make. We will inherit the new heavens and the new earth and all that is in them. Of greater value than the things we will inherit is actually living with God himself and knowing that we are God's children and He is our Father and Jesus is our Brother, and we can see them as they live among us.

**(Revelation 21:8) But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”**

Unbelieving people have rejected God and want nothing to do with God or God’s people. They often do all they can to drive God and God’s people out of their lives. People who practice the ways of living described in this verse would ruin God’s new creation and make God and others miserable by the way they commit these sins as a way of life. For example, murderers cannot live on the new earth because there will be no death there. Many would be unhappy if they could not be violent, abusive, and murderous, and believers would be unhappy living among such people. Liars would be unhappy having their lies constantly and immediately exposed so they could never deceive anyone. On the new earth, the sinners described here would not have others to gratify their immoral desires, except other sinners and God’s children; their presence would bring danger and true sorrow to those with pure hearts and minds on the new earth, to those who know how these sinners are living and who would need to walk wary of them for eternity. Those who practice the sinful ways of life described here would be unhappy living with God and His children; however, they will end in greater unhappiness than their practice of sin has ever given them. Their experience away from God will be dreadful for them, but the way they have demonstrably preferred to living with God and His people forever. Today, the work of evangelism and Christian missions remains highly important; for God saves people by grace through faith, by hearing and believing the true Word of God, by bowing morally and spiritually before Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, by being born again to a new way of life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What is the most important truth that you have learned from these verses?
2. What are some of the things Churches need to do and teach today so believers can conquer as Revelation describes? What do you need to do to conquer?
3. What are some of the things on (or in) this old earth that you would like to see on (or in) the new earth that God will create? Do you think God will retain or even make more beautiful these things? Give some reasons for your answers.
4. Why do you think someone might weep in heaven? How does God respond to this weeping? What, if any, difference is there between weeping and crying (and between weeping and mourning)? What may God be teaching us here?

5. Why do you think God inspired John to include Revelation 21:8 in the Book of Revelation? How might you teach someone the truths this verse conveys?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.  
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