

A New Home

Brianna's forlorn thoughts were interrupted with someone's irritated, "Hey, aren't you next?"

She focused on the open door in front of her, then turned to nod at the other three women standing in line with towels. "Sorry," Brianna murmured, as she shuffled into the open door of the tiny bathroom that had just been vacated.

She had been in a Christian-run safe house and shelter for almost a week, and it was the last place she wanted to be. She hadn't foreseen the events that had brought her to this point, though now she should have predicted it. She should have been smarter. Done more. Tried to get away from her husband Raynard sooner when he refused to get help for his problems.

Later that day, she sat in the large living room as other women assembled for the evening Bible study and prayer time. Joanne was the group leader for the night. The woman had experienced drug use and homelessness, among other things. So, when she began talking about real hope that was in Christ, Brianna didn't tune her out immediately.

"How can we have hope in our situation?" scoffed one woman.

"If you are in Christ, you can indeed have hope," Joanne gently offered. "Life can be extremely unfair, hurtful, and hard. But believers have a promise that outshines anything this world can offer. One day, we will know no sorrow. We will be with the Lord, where all things will be new."

- 1.** *What are some things that discourage us in this life?*
- 2.** *When you're discouraged, how does faith in God's gift of eternal life change your perspective?*
- 3.** *How does God's promise to one day make all things new encourage you to keep moving forward?*

A Blessed Home

Revelation 21:1-3, KJV

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.

Revelation 21:1-3, NIV

¹Then 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. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And 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.

Having just described God’s righteous judgment on the Earth, culminating in the “great white throne” judgment at the end of the ages (Rev. 20:11-15), John turned his attention to our great hope, our new home with Christ. John saw a new heaven and new earth because the first heaven and first earth had passed away in the judgment of God.

Included in John’s vision of the new heaven and earth was an interesting observation, namely, there was no sea upon the face of the new earth. Whereas the oceans and seas of the current earth cover some three-fourths of the surface, such will not be the case on the new earth. From the beginning, massive amounts of water were associated with death and God’s judgment. From that time until the final judgment when John saw that the “sea gave up the dead that were in it” (Rev. 20:13), the vast waters of the deep have and will claim an untold number of lives. This will not be so on the new earth.

After these observations of the new heaven and earth,

John saw God's holy city, the New Jerusalem, descending from heaven. He specifically noted that it was beautifully adorned as a bride for her husband. The imagery of a bride and her husband reminds us that the Lord's people are referred to as His bride (see Eph. 5:25-27). And one day, His bride will rejoice during her marriage to the Lamb (see Rev. 19:7-8).

Because the description of a bride and her husband is used for the new Jerusalem, many commentators see it as the home of the resurrected, glorified Church after the heavenly wedding. This is right in line with what the voice from heaven said as the New Jerusalem descended from heaven. God's dwelling place has come down, and His people will reside with Him there. Such is the great hope of the saints of God.

4. What new things did the apostle John see?

5. Then what did John see descending from God in heaven?

6. Who will reside there?

A Blessed Hope

Revelation 21:4-6, KJV

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

Revelation 21:4-6, NIV

⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death⁷ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵He 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."

⁶He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life."

Because God's people will be with Him in our new home, it will be a place of great joy. All those tears we experienced in this sin-ravaged world will be wiped away forever. There will be no more death and mourning, no more pain, no hunger or diseases, and no more oppression of one person or people over another. Crime, warfare, and other forms of violence will be gone. All of this will pass away with the onset of the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem.

Of course, the promise of a glorious eternity bereft of death, suffering, and sorrow is only as good as the word of the one making the promise. For a promise to be kept, two conditions must be met: the promiser must have the intent to keep it, and he or she must have the ability to keep it.

Our Lord, however, does not suffer from any of these limitations. He who made heaven, Earth, and everything therein is more than able to keep every promise He ever made. Therefore, we can trust that every word spoken by Him who sits upon His eternal throne is faithful and true. For He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all things. Our Lord is the first cause and our ultimate destination. He gives meaning to what would otherwise be a futile existence. Furthermore, He gives living water to all who thirst and desire to be with Him. What a blessed hope God's people have of a new home with Him!

7. What will God wipe away in His holy city?

8. How can we trust this will be so?

9. What will the Lord give us freely from His fountain?

A Blessed Heritage

Revelation 21:7-9, KJV

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

Revelation 21:7-9, NIV

7 "Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they

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.

will be my children. ⁸But 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."

⁹One 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."

The blessed heritage of the victorious overcomers in Christ is that they will inherit all the good things that God has in store for His children. However, those who reject the Lord and choose to continue their sinful ways have quite a different future. Cowardly unbelievers who continue in their abominable practices, from murder to all manner of immorality, face the final judgment and will be sentenced to the lake of fire, which is the second death. Death is not annihilation, but rather separation. Physical death is separation of the spirit from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the spirit from God. The first death is physical; the second death is spiritual. So those who reject God's forgiveness and continue in their sin will face spiritual separation from Him for eternity in the fiery lake of brimstone and sulfur.

Then, one of the angels who was involved in releasing the last seven plagues upon the earth came to John with a message of hope. John saw the glorious bride, the Lamb's wife, descend out of heaven. God's saints truly have a great hope and home to look forward to. May that hope keep us faithful to Him.

10. *Who shall inherit all things?*

11. *Who shall not dwell in God's holy city?*

12. *What did the angel summon John to come and see?*

A New Perspective

Starting in 2019, the COVID pandemic consumed the world. People's hearts filled with discouragement. No one understood the virus or knew how to respond. The only certainty was its rapid growth and danger to the world. Life as "normal" ceased—no more traveling, large gatherings, or even dining in restaurants with loved ones.

Cynthia's mother died before the pandemic hit; six months later, COVID took her father's life. Jason had many problems in his life—the pandemic was the final straw. He ended his life. Debbie and Jerry woke in the middle of the night to the sound of their six-year-old daughter gasping as she took her last breath.

Throughout the world, people's perspective on life changed. Life no longer was about hustling and bustling to climb the ladder to success. It became about survival. Families struggled to eat and keep a roof over their heads.

Over time, people began to process and heal. Cynthia's loss of both parents in six months continued to hurt. But she experienced peace in knowing her parents were together for eternity. Jason's family wondered if they could have prevented his suicide, and they learned the importance of being open with one another. As Debbie and Jerry walked by their daughter's bedroom, their hearts cried out to hold her once again. Yet, their faith told them Jesus now held her forever.

Christians turned again to God's Word about life after physical death—life with no more pain, sorrow, or tears in eternity with Christ. God's promise of eternal life in His presence took on a new meaning as people realized once more that this life is not the end but just the beginning.

13. *What do you do when chaos fills your daily life?*

14. *How do God's promises of a new heaven and earth encourage you in the midst of chaos?*

15. *Do you take time to meditate on His promises when discouraged?*

In His Time

A chorus from several years ago proclaims that God “makes all things beautiful in His time.” We would like that time to be now, but God’s timing is not our timing. He doesn’t tell us the exact time when Jesus will return and all things will become new, but we can depend on God fulfilling His promises.

► *If you believe God’s promise to make all things new, how should this affect your actions when discouragement or trials come in your life?*

KEY VERSE

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, 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

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of August 8 through August 14

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 66:6-14—You Shall Be Comforted in Jerusalem.
- Tue.** Isaiah 66:18-22—God’s Glory Revealed in Jerusalem.
- Wed.** Hebrews 12:18-29—City of the Living God.
- Thu.** Psalm 48—Jerusalem, Joy of All the Earth.
- Fri.** Zechariah 8:1-8—The Faithful City, the Holy Mountain.
- Sat.** 1 Timothy 6:11-16—God, Who Dwells in Unapproachable Light.
- Sun.** Revelation 21:10-21—The Holy City.