

November 6

Lesson 10

# BRAND

## NEW

DEVOTIONAL READING:: Revelation 7:13-17

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 21:1-8

### REVELATION 21:1-8

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> ‘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.”

<sup>5</sup> 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.”

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. <sup>8</sup> 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.”



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### KEY VERSE

*“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*

### LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify those who escape “the second death” and those who do not.
2. Contrast aspects of the old creation with those of the new creation.
3. Identify one way to shift his or her focus from the current world to the new heaven and earth, and make a plan to do so.

### LESSON OUTLINE

## Introduction

- A. New City
- B. Lesson Background

### I. United ([Revelation 21:1-4](#))

- A. Bride and Groom ([vv. 1, 2](#))
  - First, Out with the Old ...*
  - A Beautiful Bride*
- B. God and His People ([vv. 3, 4](#))

### II. Separated ([Revelation 21:5-8](#))

- A. New Creation ([vv. 5, 6a](#))
- B. Life Water ([vv. 6b, 7](#))
- C. Fire Lake ([v. 8](#))

## Conclusion

- A. One Life
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. New City

My family and I have lived in several large cities, including Seattle, Los Angeles, and Chicago. A few years ago, we took a trip to interview for my current job in Omaha, a midsized city. We were excited to visit a city of which we knew nothing.

We arrived at night. Our host drove us past a shimmering lake, gleaming tall buildings, a new ballpark where the College World Series is played, and other intriguing sights. We were impressed. Omaha seemed like a clean, vibrant city.

And it is. But having lived in Omaha for several years now, we have seen the other sights too: the scruffy neighborhoods of substandard housing; the once proud mall that is now nearly abandoned; the vacant lots of former gas stations that await environmental cleanup. Omaha is a great city, but it is a mix of the new and the old, the shining and the tarnished, the well-maintained and the dilapidated.

In that regard, Omaha is like most all cities. While Omaha is home to many strong churches and faithful Christians, it is also home to many social problems: gangs, prostitution, homelessness, and drugs. Were someone able to establish a new city that had just the “good” parts, it wouldn’t stay that way for long. An Internet search on the subject of *utopian movements* is telling in this regard.

By contrast, John’s vision in today’s lesson is that of a genuine, eternal utopia. The new Jerusalem is the perfect place, for it is the dwelling place of God and of the Lamb. It is a place of spiritual wholeness, where there will be no more tears and where those who despise God are denied entrance. It is the ultimate, eternally new city, the city of God for all time—the focus of our lesson.

### B. Lesson Background

The book of Revelation (not “Revelations”) is fittingly the last book in the Bible. It is likely the final book that was written, penned by the apostle John near the end of his life. Very early tradition places the writing in about AD 96. That was the final year of Roman Emperor Domitian’s 15-year reign, the year he was assassinated.

John was on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea ([Revelation 1:9](#)). The island was a barren, rocky place of less than 14 square miles in area. We think that John had been exiled there as punishment for conducting forbidden evangelistic work in the city of Ephesus.

The book of Revelation has three parts. The first chapter relates an appearance of the risen Christ to John on Patmos. This occurred “on the Lord’s Day” ([Revelation 1:10](#)), the day of worship for John. Christ told John that he (John) was to receive visions of glorious and mysterious things. John was to write them down for sending to the churches of seven nearby cities ([1:11](#)).

The second part of the book consists of personalized messages to those churches ([Revelation 2, 3](#)). We sometimes refer to these as “letters to the seven churches,” but they are more than that. Each serves as an introduction to the book as a whole for the named congregations. The third part, chapters 4-22, is John’s record of the series of visions he experiences. These are visions of Heaven and its activities, along with prophetic words delivered to John by angels who serve as his guides.

The book of Revelation features a type of literature known as *apocalypse*. That word does not mean “worldwide catastrophe” (as the word is often used in popular media today), but “uncovering of the hidden” and thus “revelation.” This book reveals the hidden workings and plans of the Lord God Almighty in the midst of the church’s trials and tribulations to give hope to the persecuted. It has been serving this function for nearly 2,000 years, showing readers that evil will not triumph. God has a plan for ending the power of evil emperors and of Satan and his allies.

## HOW TO SAY IT

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Aegean *A-jee-un.*  
 Alpha *Al-fa.*  
 apocalypse *uh-pock-uh-lips.*  
 Artemis *Ar-teh-miss.*  
 Domitian *Duh-mish-un.*  
 Ephesus *Ef-uh-sus.*  
 Omega *O-may-guh* or *O-mee-guh.*  
 Patmos *Pat-muss.*  
 utopian *you-toe-pea-un.*  
 Zechariah *Zek-uh-rye-uh.*

### I. United

(REVELATION 21:1-4)

#### A. Bride and Groom (vv. 1, 2)

**<sup>1</sup> 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.**

What John sees as a future reality should be understood in the context of the creation story in Genesis. There we are told that, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” ([Genesis 1:1](#)). The account goes on to tell of a chaotic watery void at the beginning. A primary act of creation was separation of dry land from the seas on the third day ([1:9](#)).

John’s vision of a new creation differs from the first creation story in a significant way: *there was no longer any sea*. The seas are hostile places to ancient peoples; the seas seem almost in rebellion against God. But there will be no such terror in the new heaven and earth.

#### *What Do You Think?*

How does the Lord help you cope with the rough seas of life?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- When waves take you to undesired places
- When a riptide undertow threatens your safety
- When weary from fighting the current
- Other

The prediction of *no longer any sea* is not new, since it repeats a longstanding prophecy in the Bible (see [Isaiah 65:17](#); [66:22](#); compare [2 Peter 3:13](#)). Sin has spoiled creation, and God’s promised solution is to re-create. This is not simply a “makeover,” for the current heaven and earth are to be *passed away*.

#### ***FIRST, OUT WITH THE OLD ...***

We once lived near a restaurant that was absolutely nasty. We went there a few times because it was cheap and we were poor, but every time we left, I wanted to run home and wash my hands. A thin film of grease, ketchup, and unrecognizable grime seemed to cover everything.



Visual for Lessons 2 & 10. Start a discussion by pointing to this visual as you pose the question associated with [Revelation 21:4](#).

One day, I drove by and saw bulldozers demolishing that restaurant; afterward, a new one was built in its place. The first time I visited it, I felt like I had stepped into a different world. The counters gleamed, the décor looked high class, and the equipment shone. Everyone working there wore smiles and new uniforms. I sighed with relief.

God does his work of reconstruction like that: before the new can come, the old must go. This is just as true for the “old self” of sin ([Romans 6:6](#)) as it is for the new Heaven and earth to come. “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Which do others most see in you—the old creation or the new?—L. M. W.

**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.**

A major feature of the new heaven and earth now presents itself. The descent of *the new Jerusalem* to settle on the earth indicates that Heaven and earth are to be together. God will not dwell in a place that is separated from his people. He will dwell with his people utterly, completely, eternally.

Jerusalem is referred to as *the Holy City* six times outside the book of Revelation (see [Nehemiah 11:1, 18](#); [Isaiah 48:2](#); [52:1](#); [Matthew 4:5](#); [27:53](#)). Those are idealized descriptions since there always seems to be unholiness present (examples: [2 Kings 21:16](#); [Lamentations 1:8](#); [Micah 1:5](#)). By contrast, the new Jerusalem is holy in all ways and at all times because of the very presence of God.

Isaiah foresaw a time when many would desire to “go up to the mountain of the Lord” to worship him ([Isaiah 2:3](#)). “Go up” is a natural thing to say since earthly Jerusalem is at a higher elevation than the surrounding terrain (compare: [1 Kings 12:27, 28](#); [Psalm 24:3](#); [Zechariah 14:16, 17](#); [Matthew 20:17, 18](#)). How surprised Isaiah might be with John’s clarifying vision! The mountain of God becomes a city, and it is coming to meet us! This is further clarified in [Revelation 21:10](#), where we are given the impression that the holy city is descending to rest on the top of a mountain. [Isaiah 52:1](#) and [61:10](#) prefigure the images of the phrase *as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband*.

## *A BEAUTIFUL BRIDE*

I remember shopping for a wedding dress. I lived overseas at the time, working as a teacher for a missionary family. Since I loved them like my own family, I asked them to go with me to look at dresses. I preferred a simple, elegant look, but decided to try on an elaborate dress with a hoop skirt and a lot of lace.

When my kindergartner student saw me in it, his eyes grew wide as he said with awe, “You look like a princess!” Everyone chuckled. I didn’t like the dress, but his reaction made me feel so beautiful that I was tempted to choose it anyway!

What woman doesn’t want to be seen as a beautiful princess on her wedding day? We spend a lot of time and money preparing for it: beauty treatments, manicures, hair styling, and purchase of a dress we will wear once are all part of the process. Even for an inexpensive wedding, we do everything we can to look our best. We want our groom to see us at our finest. What can you do to help the church look her finest for her husband, Jesus, as the great day approaches?—L. M. W.

### **B. God and His People (vv. 3, 4)**

#### **3a. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,**

We naturally may think any *voice from the throne* would be that of deity. But that is not necessarily the case, since [Revelation 19:5](#) tells us that “a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants.’” We scarcely can imagine that God would refer to himself as “our God”! It’s quite possible that the voice in the verse before us is that of an angel. Elsewhere in this book (especially in chapter 14) they speak in loud voices to make great pronouncements.

#### **3b. “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.**

The voice announces the significance of the new city. In Old Testament times, *God’s dwelling place* was the portable tabernacle ([2 Samuel 7:6](#)) before the temple was built. The tabernacle was actually a tent; the Hebrew word is translated that way in hundreds of places (example: [Genesis 4:20](#)). We may struggle to comprehend God as dwelling in a tent inside a city, no matter how perfect and glorious either might be!

But that is not the point here. John’s vision is revealing to us a future time when all the things that separate us from perfect fellowship with God will be removed. Will this seem like city-dwelling to us? Perhaps (see [Revelation 21:10-27](#)), but it will also have the features of the great throne and the worship room of God, pictured in previous chapters of Revelation. That room is where uncounted multitudes of the saved will be present (see [7:9](#)).

We will be his people and he will be our God, and there will be no physical or spiritual barrier separating us. This is an absolute and eternal future, not a temporary situation like the current separation of Heaven and earth. “And so we will be with the Lord forever” (see [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)).

#### **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.”**

The voice now describes some of the spiritual and emotional aspects of this new situation. The future with God will be a time when death and every other cause of pain and suffering will be no more. This is surely one of the greatest promise-verses in all the Bible, a verse that we can hold dearly (compare [Isaiah 25:8](#); [35:10](#); [65:19](#); [Revelation 7:17](#)). Life brings us sorrow, sometimes in an unrelenting fashion. We tell ourselves, “It can’t get any worse,” and then it does. Sometimes it is the headline news of great tragedies. Often it is the personal news of our families. Christians are not immune from pain and tears.

Imagine this: *no more death ... mourning ... crying ... pain!* No more cause for weeping! The emotional body blows we suffer will cease forever! Just as the old creation is passed away, so are our lives of pain and hardship. How can this be? Won’t we remember the past and its pain? John goes on to explain some of the aspects of this in the remainder of the book.

#### *What Do You Think?*

Given that pain is a present reality, how can we use it to grow spiritually?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

Regarding physical pain

Regarding emotional pain

Considering last week’s lesson ([Hebrews 12](#))

## **II. Separated**

(REVELATION 21:5-8)

### **A. New Creation (vv. 5, 6a)**

**5. 6a. 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.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.**

If an angel has been speaking in [verses 3](#) and [4](#), John now hears a different voice that addresses him in a direct and personal way. Twelve times in this book John is told to *write*, and this is the final one. The command comes from the one *seated on the throne*. Combining the image of a throne of authority with other *the Alpha and the Omega* self-designations in this book, we conclude the voice to be that of “the Lord God ... the Almighty” ([1:8](#)).

The *trustworthy and true* fact that the Lord will be *making everything new* is certainly a commentary on all that John is seeing. But there is more here. This is a promise for the readers, a promise so important that John is reminded he must write it down. *I am making everything new!* This promise is needed in John’s day as his readers deal with the dark specter of persecution and martyrdom. *I am making everything new!* This promise is needed today for believers struggling to live faithfully for Christ. The pain and heartaches we experience are not the final chapter of our stories. There is a future that has no more pain or tears, a time when all is new and perfect and does not grow old or corrupt.

*What Do You Think?*

In what ways can we better prepare ourselves for the coming new Heaven and earth? Why is it important to do so?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In devotional and prayer times

In family relationships

In attitudes toward “old earth” things

Other

*The Alpha and the Omega* (also [22:13](#)) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. So in English, this is like the voice saying, “I am the A and the Z.” The concept is repeated when the voice identifies the one speaking as *the Beginning and the End*. We take care to note that this is not an attempt to establish beginning and ending points for God’s existence or reign. It is saying, rather, that he is the source and the goal of all things.

God was there at the beginning of history with the first creation, and he will there at the end of history as well—at the re-creation of Heaven and earth. He is the “Lord God Almighty” who reigns forever ([Revelation 19:6](#); compare [Isaiah 44:6](#); [48:12](#)).

## B. Life Water ([vv. 6b, 7](#))

**6b. “To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.**

We are not to understand this promise merely to mean that the new Jerusalem will have a safe and abundant water supply. Rather, this is a fulfillment of a promise from the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied spiritual satisfaction for those who seek the Lord ([Isaiah 55:1](#)).

We sometimes understand this image to be that of eternal life, and rightly so ([John 4:14](#)). But there is more here: in the language of John, the living water is also the Holy Spirit ([John 7:38, 39](#)). No spiritual thirst will go unquenched in the new Heaven and earth. Just as there is direct access to the Lord God and to Christ the Lamb, there will be a lavish abundance of the Holy Spirit to all residents of the new Jerusalem (compare [Revelation 22:17](#)).

*What Do You Think?*

What can we do to avail ourselves better of the Holy Spirit’s life-giving presence?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In prayer and private devotions

During times of loss and discouragement

During times of joy and encouragement

Considering [Romans 8:5-9](#); [Galatians 5:16](#); [Ephesians 5:18](#); [Philippians 1:27](#)

**7. “Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.**

The theme of overcoming or being victorious is pervasive in the book of Revelation and elsewhere in John’s writings (see [John 16:33](#); [1 John 2:13, 14](#); [4:4](#); [5:4, 5](#)). It is based on the Greek word *nike* which derives from *Nike*, the name of the Greek winged goddess of victory. (It’s also the same word trademarked today as a line of athletic apparel.) To overcome is to conquer and be victorious.

Each of the greetings to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 ends with a promise to the one who overcomes: permission to eat from the

tree of life ([Revelation 2:7](#)), immunity from the second death ([2:11](#)), a new name ([2:17](#)), authority to rule the nations ([2:26](#)), a white robe ([3:5](#)), a part in the new Jerusalem ([3:12](#)), and even an invitation to share the great throne of authority ([3:21](#); compare [2:26](#)). All these are summed up in the verse before us, for the one who overcomes is promised to *inherit all this*. This is a climactic, all-inclusive promise to the readers, to us. God promises to be our God, and we can consider ourselves his sons and daughters. In this we are “co-heirs with Christ” ([Romans 8:17](#)), God’s beloved Son.

#### *What Do You Think?*

What more can we do to be victorious overcomers?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In witnessing to unbelievers

In defeating temptations

In helping fellow Christians grow spiritually

### C. Fire Lake (v. 8)

**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.”**

The picture here is that of cosmic housecleaning. Those listed are the opposite of the overcomers, the antithesis of the victorious who have lived faithfully. *The cowardly* are those who have been afraid to commit fully to Jesus and thereby overcome. Similarly, *the unbelieving* are those who refuse to trust Jesus and follow him.

The word translated *vile* includes the sense of stench, those who stink of sin. It also has the sense of being polluted and may be inclusive of those who “rob temples” ([Romans 2:22](#)). *Murderers* is a category especially pointed to those who have killed the faithful, who cry “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ([Revelation 6:10](#)). Martyrs (those who die for the faith) will not share eternity with their unrepentant killers.

*The sexually immoral* are especially men who engage in prostitution. They violate God’s standards for sexual purity as they perpetrate such degradation. *Those who practice magic arts* seek power through the spiritual forces of evil and are thus completely opposed to God. *Idolaters* constitute an ongoing threat to the church. This problem is underlined by the book’s connection with Ephesus ([Revelation 2:1-7](#)), for that city is the home of the great temple of the pagan goddess Artemis, also known as Diana ([Acts 19:23-41](#)).

The list concludes with a group we might think would be a lesser threat: *liars*. The idea behind this designation is only partly covered by saying that these are people who tell lies. More directly, these are false brothers and sisters, imposters in the church (see [2 Corinthians 11:13](#); [Galatians 2:4](#); [2 Peter 2:1](#); [Jude 4](#); [Revelation 2:2](#)). God, who knows the hearts of all, will see through any pretense; such frauds will not be allowed into the holy city.

Rather than be admitted into the city, those listed go to a lake of fire as their just punishment. There they will join their true masters: the devil and his associates ([Revelation 19:20](#); [20:10](#)). While even the thought of this eternal abode is unpleasant, its further description is the more chilling: it is *the second death*. To be *consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur* is to be cut off from God and Christ for eternity.

## Conclusion

### A. One Life

Life seems to gallop by at ever-increasing speed as we age. We cannot slow it down. I have a plaque in my office to remind me of this. It reads:

***Only one life, ’twill soon be past,  
Only what’s done for Christ will last.  
To me to live is Christ.***

What does the future hold for us, then? John’s vision of the new Jerusalem helps us answer this question. We have confidence, for we believe the promises of Revelation “are trustworthy and true” ([Revelation 21:5](#)). We have a reward, for we believe we are heirs of the riches of God ([v. 7a](#)). Most of all we have an assured hope, for we will have perfect, eternal fellowship with him ([v. 7b](#)).

### B. Prayer

Eternal God, may we remain true and faithful through all difficulties. May we never forget your promise that you are our God and we are your sons and daughters. May we not fear death, for we know what eternity holds for us. We praise the Son, who makes all this possible and in whose name we pray. Amen.

## C. Thought to Remember

Trust the promises of Revelation!

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

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## Into the Lesson

Display the first and last letters of the alphabets of English, Greek, Hebrew, and other languages (easy to find on the Internet). Ask, “What do these represent?” After responses, ask, “What do they have to do with today’s study?”

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Old Becomes New” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Students can work alone or in pairs.

## Into the Word

Call the following activity “The Great Escape.” Give each person a card with *ESCAPE* in large letters on the front, *NO ESCAPE* on the back. Say, “I am going to name some groups that are included or implied in today’s text. When I mention each one, hold up the correct side of your card to show me whether that group escapes the second death or does not.” Use the following list: the one who thirsts spiritually; the one who is cowardly; the one who overcomes; the one who lies; the one who lives in the Holy City; the one who is vile; the one who is made new; the one who is a murderer; the people of God; the one who practices sorcery; the one who is sexually immoral; the one who practices idolatry.

Then ask the class, “What is something that you consider better in its old form, of which you would say ‘Old is better!’?” Allow several answers. Then ask, “What is something that you consider better in its new form, of which you would say ‘New is better!’?” Allow several answers. Ask three class members to find and read: [2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Ephesians 2:11-14](#); [Revelation 2:17](#) in sequence, without comment. Then affirm, “Wow! Those are some significant new things that are better than the old. Today’s text pictures a new creation that is better than the old. How is that true?” Allow learners to examine the text and offer answers. Write the list in full view of the group. At the end, exclaim, “Now that is a new that is better!”

*Option.* The “Something New” activity from the reproducible page could be effectively worked into this old vs. new study.

Show a picture of the items below, one at a time, and mention the verse listed with it. Ask how the picture relates to that verse. Mix up the cards so they don’t appear in verse order. For [verse 1](#), a card with these letters: *A B D E F G H* (“no longer any *C/sea*”); for [verse 2](#), a wedding dress (“a bride beautifully dressed for her husband”); for [verse 3](#), a CD album of a great singer (“a loud voice”); for [verse 4](#), a box of facial tissues (“wipe [away] every tear”); for [verse 5](#), a chair (“seated on the throne”); for [verse 6](#), a large book with the first page and the final page marked to be shown (“the Beginning and the End”); for [verse 6](#), a bottle of water (“water of life”); for [verse 7](#), a document clearly marked “Last Will and Testament” (“inherit all this”); for [verse 8](#), a picture of lava flow (“fiery lake of burning sulfur”).

## Into Life

Suggest your learners add these letters and exclamation mark to this month’s calendar: *H, E, A, V, E, N, !*, respectively to the days of the week. Propose this as a devotional guide for the month: “On each Sunday, under the *H*, write an idea beginning with *H* that will help you focus on the new creation God has in store. Do the same for Monday through Friday, with their assigned letters. On Saturdays, write a grand truth about the new creation that is worthy of an exclamation mark.” Example: Sunday—*H*—Hear God’s Word about the future, such as [John 14:1-3](#); Monday—*E*—End! All the troubles of this life will end; Tuesday—*A*—Ask for nothing unless it has eternal value; Wednesday—*V*—Victory in sight; Thursday—*E*—Encourage others to think of God’s promises; Friday—*N*—No more mourning, for there is no more death; Saturday—*!*—Tears will never fall there!