

# All Things New



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:3, 22; 1 John 3:2, 3; 1 Pet. 1:22; Isa. 25:8; Rev. 22:3–5.*

**Memory Text:** “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful’ ” (*Revelation 21:5, NKJV*).

Scripture gives us this hope: “But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (*2 Pet. 3:13, NASB*).

For some, however, the promise of “a new heaven and a new earth” (*Rev. 21:1*) seems like a fantasy, stories told by those in power who used the hope of an afterlife to help keep the masses in line. The idea being: *Though you have it hard at present, one day you will have your reward in heaven, or the like.*

And though some people have used the future hope presented in the Bible that way, their abuse doesn't change the truth of the promises that we have regarding the new heavens and the new earth.

In the last days, scoffers will ridicule our blessed hope (*2 Pet. 3:3–7*). But their scoffing, just as predicted, could be seen as more evidence that what the Bible says is true, for they are scoffing as the Bible predicted they would.

During this week we will reflect on the glorious promise of a new heaven and a new earth, including the heavenly temple, the presence of God, the end of death and tears—and, finally, the ultimate triumph of God's love.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 31.

## A New Heaven and a New Earth

For some followers of Greek philosophy, the idea that something is physical means that it is bad. That's why for them it is unconceivable to think of a real heaven with real people in the future. In this thinking, for it to be heaven and to be good, it must be a purely spiritual state, free from the blemishes found in the physical world here. If something is material, they assert, it cannot be spiritual; and if something is spiritual, it cannot be material. By contrast, the Bible speaks of heaven in concrete terms but without the limitations imposed by the presence of sin.

**Read** Isaiah 65:17–25; Isaiah 66:22, 23; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1–5. What is the ultimate message of these passages?

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The book of Isaiah provides interesting glimpses of how the earth would have been if Israel as a nation had remained faithful to their covenant with God (*Isa. 65:17–25; Isa. 66:22, 23; compare with Deuteronomy 28*). The whole environment with its various expressions of life would have grown more and more toward God's original plan; that is, before the entrance of sin.

However, that plan did not materialize as expected. Then a new plan was established, but now with the church, composed of Jews and Gentiles from all nations (*Matt. 28:18–20, 1 Pet. 2:9*). The prophecies of Isaiah, therefore, have to be reread from the perspective of the church (*2 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1–5*).

“In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called ‘a country.’ Hebrews 11:14–16. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

**Many secular writers, without the hope of eternity as presented in Scripture, have lamented the meaninglessness of human existence. Though they are wrong about the future, why is it hard to argue with their point about the meaninglessness of life without a future hope? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.**

## In the Temple of God

Some people speak of heaven itself as being God's sanctuary. But the book of Revelation refers to a specific sanctuary/temple within the New Jerusalem, where God's throne and the sea of glass are located (*Rev. 4:2–6, Rev. 7:9–15, Rev. 15:5–8*). There the great multitude of saints from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues will worship God forever (*Rev. 7:9–17*).

**Compare** Revelation 7:9–15 with Revelation 21:3, 22. How can we harmonize the description of the great multitude of the redeemed serving God “‘day and night in His temple’ ” (*Rev. 7:15, NKJV*) with the statement that John “saw no temple” in the New Jerusalem (*Rev. 21:22, NKJV*)?

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The heavenly sanctuary/temple has always been the place where the heavenly hosts worship God. But with the appearance of sin, that sanctuary also became the place from which salvation is offered to humanity. “When the sin problem is over, the heavenly sanctuary will once again revert to its original function. In Revelation 21:22, John the revelator reports that he no longer saw a temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. But does that mean there is no longer a house of the Lord where His creatures can come and have special fellowship with Him? By no means!”—Richard M. Davidson, “The Sanctuary: ‘To Behold the Beauty of the Lord,’ ” in Artur Stele, ed., *The Word: Searching, Living, Teaching*, vol. 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), p. 31.

The book of Revelation gives special attention to the One who is being worshiped and to those who are worshipping Him. This heavenly worship is centered on God and the Lamb (*Rev. 5:13, Rev. 7:10*). As always, and as it should be, Christ is the focus of the worship.

The worshipers are those “‘who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’ ” (*Rev. 7:14, NIV*). They are living witnesses of God's redeeming and transforming power. They sing praises to God for who He is and for what He did for them.

**Revelation 21:3 reads: “‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God’ ” (*NKJV*). This verse reflects numerous other passages (*Jer. 32:38, Ezek. 37:27, Zech. 8:8, Heb. 8:10*). What does it mean for us now, still here on earth, that God will be our God, and we will be His people? How do we live out this amazing truth now?**

## In the Presence of God

The Bible says that God “dwells in unapproachable light” (*1 Tim. 6:16, NRSV*), and that “no one has ever seen God” (*John 1:18, 1 John 4:12, NRSV*). Does it mean that the saints in heaven will never see God the Father? Not at all. It is quite evident that not seeing God refers to the human beings after the Fall, because there are several indications in Scripture that the saints will actually see Him in heaven.

**Read Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:2, 3; and Revelation 22:3, 4. What do these passages tell us about the supreme privilege of seeing God?**

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The same apostle John who states that “no one has ever seen God” (*John 1:18, 1 John 4:12, NRSV*) also declares that “we shall see Him as He is” (*1 John 3:2, 3, NKJV*) and “see His face” (*Rev. 22:3, 4, NKJV*). It can be debatable whether these passages refer to God the Father or to Christ. But all doubts are gone in light of Christ’s own statement, “ ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ ” (*Matt. 5:8, NKJV*). What a privilege it will be for the redeemed to worship God in His temple! But the supreme privilege of all will be to see His face.

“The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly.’ 1 Corinthians 13:12. We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and behold the glory of His countenance.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 676, 677.

Notice in some of the verses for today the link between purity and seeing God. The “ ‘pure in heart’ ” will see God; he who will see God “purifies himself, just as He is pure” (*1 John 3:3, NKJV*). What these verses reveal is that God must do a work in us now to help prepare us for heaven.

Though, in the end, our title to heaven has been made certain through the death of Jesus, we will go through a purifying process here and now that will help prepare us for our eternal home. And central to the purification process is obedience to His Word.

**Read 1 Peter 1:22. How does this text reveal to us the link between obedience and purification? What is it about obedience that purifies us? How, specifically, does Peter say our obedience will be made manifest?**

## No More Death and Tears

The theory of an immortal soul, suffering forever in an ever-burning hell, contradicts the biblical teaching that in the new heaven and the new earth there will be “‘no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying’” (*Rev. 21:4, NKJV*). If the theory of an eternal burning hell were true, then the “second death” would not eradicate sin and sinners from the universe but only confine them in an everlasting hell of sorrow and crying. And further: in this case the universe would never be fully restored to its original perfection. But praise the Lord that the Bible paints a completely different picture!

**Read** Isaiah 25:8, Revelation 7:17, and Revelation 21:4. What comfort and hope can these passages bring us amid the trials and suffering of this present world?

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Life can be very hard, unfair, cruel. Some people, so dear to us, are brutally taken away by the cold embrace of death. Or some people come subtly into our lives, steal our feelings, and then walk away as if nothing ever happened. How terrible it is to be betrayed by someone whom we loved and trusted.

There are moments when, with a broken heart, we may even wonder if life is worth living. Regardless of our sorrows, however, God is always eager to wipe away from our cheeks as many tears as possible. But some of our heaviest tears will continue streaming down until that glorious day when death, sorrow, and crying will cease to exist (*Rev. 21:1–5*).

We can trust that in the final judgment God will treat every single human being with fairness and love. All our loved ones who died in Christ will be raised from the dead to be with us throughout eternity. Those unworthy of eternal life will finally cease to exist, without having to live in an “unpleasant” heaven or in an ever-burning hell. Our greatest comfort derives from the fair way God treats everyone. When death definitively ceases to exist, the redeemed will shout joyfully, “‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’” (*1 Cor. 15:54, 55, NRSV*).

The Lord promised that in the new heaven and the new earth He would create, “‘the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind’” (*Isa. 65:17, NIV*). This does not mean that heaven will be a place of amnesia, but, rather, that the past will not undermine the enduring joy of heaven.

**Who hasn't felt the unfair ravages of human existence here? Especially in those bad times, how can we learn to trust and, to the degree possible, rejoice in God's goodness and love?**

## His Name on Their Foreheads

**Read** Revelation 22:3–5. How can we be assured that we will be among those who will have the name of God written on our foreheads? Or can we be assured?

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After the rebellion of Lucifer and the fall of Adam and Eve, God could have destroyed the two sinners. Yet, as an expression of unconditional love for His creatures, God established a merciful plan to save all those who accept what He offers. This is what is known as the “plan of salvation,” which, though existing even before the Creation of the earth (*Eph. 1:3, 4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Rev. 13:8*), was first presented to humanity in Eden, right after the Fall. It was then further revealed in the types and shadows of the Hebrew sanctuary service (*Exodus 25*). And then it was given its fullest expression in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (*see Romans 5*).

At the center of the plan of salvation is the promise of eternal life, based on the merits of Jesus, to all who accept, by faith, the great provision supplied at the cross. Before the cross, after the cross—salvation has always been by faith and never by works, however much works are an expression of our salvation.

**Paul** wrote about Abraham, who existed long before the coming of Christ, as an example of salvation by faith: “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’ ” (*Rom. 4:2, 3, NKJV*). How do these verses help us understand what salvation by faith is all about?

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Thus, we can have the assurance of salvation if we have accepted Jesus, have surrendered to Him, and have claimed His promises, including those of a new life now in Him, and if we lean totally on His merits and nothing else. Abraham believed, and it was accounted to him as righteousness; it works the same with us.

This, then, is what it means to have His name written on our foreheads. If we have it written there now and don’t turn away from Him, then it will be written there in the new heavens and the new earth, as well.

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 674–678, in *The Great Controversy*; “The Earth Made New,” pp. 133–145; “Heaven Is a School,” pp. 146–158; “It Will Not Be Long,” pp. 159–166; “Heaven Can Begin Now,” pp. 167–176; “The Music of Heaven,” pp. 177–184; “A Call for Us to Be There,” pp. 185–192, in *Heaven*.

“The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 651.

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Many secularized Christians live their lives as if this world will last forever (*Luke 12:16–21*). How can we balance our earthly ideals with our heavenly priorities? How can we guard against what Jesus has warned us about in *Luke 12*?
- 2 If heaven begins here, what should we do to transform our homes and our personal lives into little expressions of heavenly principles?
- 3 Dwell on the question asked at the end of Sunday’s study. What is the logic behind the pessimism of those who don’t believe in eternal life? At the same time, too, some of these people nevertheless seem to live fairly “happy” lives, even without expressing any future hope. How do you think they do that? That is, how might they rationalize living, even contentedly, without the promise of something beyond this life?

## Influential Juice Bar in Fiji

By GEORGE KWONG

Wailoaloa Beach is a popular tourist destination known for affordable lodging, restaurants, and especially bars and night spots in Nadi, Fiji. But when COVID-19 struck, many small cafés, fast-food outlets, and restaurants lost business along the beach. One such place was the Bamboo Resort.

Sensing an opportunity, three local Seventh-day Adventist churches teamed up with Bamboo Resort to open Bitu Wellness Bar, a juice bar offering health and wellness programs, such as free biometric screenings, exercise programs, fat-loss challenges, and personalized meal plans. The bar, whose name *bitu* means “bamboo” in the local language, quickly gained popularity among the locals, who streamed in for healthy fresh juices daily.

Church members prayed that the bar would serve as a center of influence to encourage Fijians to take a more wholistic approach toward health in a region where people struggle with lifestyle diseases, particularly diabetes. The bar—supported by the South Pacific Division’s 10,000 Toes campaign, a recipient of a 2019 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering—also sought to raise awareness about healthy alternatives to alcohol.

But then a second wave of COVID-19 struck Fiji, and the authorities ordered that the Bamboo Resort shut down along with the juice bar. For two weeks, customers called daily to find out when and where the juice bar would reopen. What happened next surprised everyone.

A married couple who managed the neighboring Beach Escape Resort had watched crowds pouring in and out of the Bamboo Resort daily and had noticed that more people visited the juice bar than the liquor bar. They also noted with satisfaction a decrease in alcohol-related incidents on their street.

The couple contacted church members and offered the use of their liquor bar and other premises as a wellness hub. Church members initially declined the offer, not wanting to offer fruit juice in the same place as alcohol, but the managers explained that they wanted to stop selling alcohol altogether.

Alcohol was cleared out, and bar equipment was replaced with juicing machines; blenders; and fruits, vegetables, and herbs. The Bitu Wellness Bar was up and running again.

Church members expressed amazement at the marvelous way that God leads. The juice bar has not only influenced the patrons of the Bamboo Resort, but it also has transformed the Beach Escape Resort into a center of influence that is bringing hope and healing to the community.



*Thank you for your 2019 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that supported the South Pacific Division’s 10,000 Toes campaign in Fiji and other South Pacific countries. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter to support new projects to spread the gospel in the South Pacific Division and beyond.*

In the more than 2,000 verses in the Scriptures that deal with money and possessions and our attitude toward them, God gives practical instruction on how to live above the stresses of life and to manage in financially faithful ways what we have been given.

In this quarter's lessons, entitled *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes* by G. Edward Reid, we will study God's ideal for our relationship with Him and see how we can develop a deep trust so that we will remain faithful to Him, even when we can't buy or sell. (*See Rev. 13:17.*) This kind of faith does not come overnight; we can, even now, by faithfully managing what God has given us, be prepared for whatever comes our way. Although we live in challenging times, our Christian worldview gives us hope as we see the signs Jesus gave to let us know that His second coming is very near. We pray that these practical lessons will deepen your faith and trust in God and encourage you to be a faithful manager for Him.

## Lesson 1—Part of God's Family

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **We Are Part of God's Family** (*Eph. 1:14*)

MONDAY: **God Is the Owner of Everything** (*Ps. 50:10–12*)

TUESDAY: **Resources Available for God's Family** (*Phil. 4:19*)

WEDNESDAY: **Responsibilities of God's Family Members** (*Deut. 6:5*)

THURSDAY: **Treasure in Heaven** (*Matt. 6:19–21*)

**Memory Text**—*1 John 3:1*

**Sabbath Gem:** God trusts us to manage His affairs on earth. He encourages us to spend the resources He has given to us for our needs, others' needs, and the advancement of His work. There are privileges and responsibilities in being a part of God's family.

## Lesson 2—God's Covenants With Us

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The Salvation Covenant** (*1 John 5:13*)

MONDAY: **To Harken Diligently** (*Deut. 28:1–14*)

TUESDAY: **Honor the Lord** (*Prov. 3:1–10*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Tithe Contract** (*Mal. 3:7–11*)

THURSDAY: **Seek Ye First** (*Matt. 6:25–33*)

**Memory Text**—*Deut. 28:1, 2*

**Sabbath Gem:** God has made contracts (or covenants) with us. Most are bilateral, meaning that both parties (God and man) have a part to perform. As we look at some significant bilateral covenants between God and His children in this lesson, let's pray that we "uphold our end of the bargain."

**Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind** The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free in braille, on audio CD, and via online download to people who are legally blind or physically disabled. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services for the Blind, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981; email: [info@christianrecord.org](mailto:info@christianrecord.org); website: [www.christianrecord.org](http://www.christianrecord.org).