

All Things New



SABBATH—DECEMBER 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 65:17–25; Revelation 7:9–15; Matthew 5:8; Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 22:3–5.

MEMORY VERSE: “He who was sitting on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this [saying] down. You can trust these words. They are true’ ” (Revelation 21:5, NlrV).



“We are looking for what God has promised, which are new heavens [skies] and a new earth. Only what is right [holy] and good will be there” (2 Peter 3:13, NLV).

THE BIBLE gives us this hope: “We are looking for what God has promised, which are new heavens [skies] and a new earth. Only what is right [holy] and good will be there” (2 Peter 3:13, NLV). Some people think that this promise is a make-believe story that leaders use to control people who are unhappy with the way things are in this life. If people believe that things will be better in heaven, maybe they will accept things on earth as they are. Then the people won’t fight their leaders or try to change things. Sad to say, some leaders do use this promise in that way. But their bad behavior doesn’t change Bible truth.

The Bible says that people will doubt God’s promise in the end times. People will make fun of our hope that God will make a new earth and skies (2 Peter 3:3–7). But their laughing at us is more proof that the Bible is correct: these people do laugh at us. That’s okay. The Bible already warned us about them.

During this week, we will spend time thinking about God’s promise to us of new skies and a new earth. We also will study about the temple in heaven and the end of death and tears. As we shall see, God’s love wins in the end.

NEW SKIES AND A NEW EARTH (Isaiah 65:17–25)

Greek thinkers in Bible times taught that something with a body or form was bad. Only the spirit was good. So, the Greeks had trouble accepting ideas about a real heaven with real people. If heaven was real, the Greeks thought that nothing with a body can live there. The Bible disagrees with the Greek thinkers. Heaven will be a place where real people with real bodies will live. Sin won't limit people's lives. So, no one will get sick or ever die.

Read Isaiah 65:17–25; Isaiah 66:22, 23; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1–5. What do these verses promise us?

The book of Isaiah shows us an interesting picture of the past. This is not a picture of what really happened. This is a picture of what God wanted for His people. Sad to say, things didn't happen this way. Israel didn't keep their agreement with God (Isaiah 65:17–25; Isaiah 66:22, 23; compare with Deuteronomy 28).

“God gives the saved a special reward. This reward will belong to them forever. The Bible names this reward ‘a country.’ [Hebrews 11:14, ERV; read Hebrews 11:14–16]. There, heaven's Shepherd leads His flock to fountains. Living water flows from these fountains. The tree of life grows its fruit each month. The leaves on the tree are for helping and healing God's people. In this country, streams flow. The water is the same as clean glass that you can see through. Next to the streams, trees sway or move back and forth. The trees shade the streets and trails that God made for His people to walk on. The plains in this country have beautiful hills. The mountains of God are tall. Below, the plains are filled with peace. Beside these living streams, God's people shall find a home. God's people are no longer strangers and wanderers.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 675, adapted.

Sad to say, many famous writers don't believe in God. So, they have no hope of everlasting life. Without a belief in God, they can't understand why humans are here on earth. They think there is no future life with God after humans die. They are wrong. At the same time, they are correct about one thing. Life without any future hope is the same as a life without a plan. How can we use this point to introduce God and Jesus? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.



“The tree of life grows its fruit each month.”

IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD (Revelation 7:9–15)

Some people think that God’s temple is the same as heaven itself. But the book of Revelation shows us a temple with God’s throne (Revelation 4:2–6; Revelation 7:9–15; Revelation 15:5–8). The saved ones from all the family groups and countries on the earth will come and worship God there forever (Revelation 7:9–17).

Compare Revelation 7:9–15 with Revelation 21:3, 22. Revelation 7:9–15 talks about the big group of people in front of God’s throne. They “serve him day and night in his temple” (Revelation 7:15, NlrV). John later wrote that he “did not see a temple” in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22, ERV). What explanation can you give to show that these verses really agree with each other?

The temple in heaven always has been the place where the angels and everyone else in heaven worship God. But then sin happened. Things changed. After sin, the temple also became the place where God offered His mercy to people to save them. “When God finally solves the sin problem, the temple in heaven will again be used for worship. In Revelation 21:22, John reports that he did not see a temple in the city. The Lord God All-Powerful and the Lamb are its temple. Does that mean that there won’t be a house of worship [outside the city on the new earth] where people can come and meet with God? Of course, there will be! [See Ezekiel 48.]”—Richard M. Davidson, “The Sanctuary: ‘To Behold the Beauty of the Lord,’ ” in Arthur Steele, editor, *The Word: Searching, Living, Teaching*, volume 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), page 31, adapted.

The book of Revelation gives special attention to the One who is being worshiped and to the people who worship Him. The people worship God and the Lamb (Revelation 5:13; Revelation 7:10). As always, Jesus is the reason for the worship. That’s how things should be.

The ones who worship the Lamb “ ‘are the ones who came out of the time of much trouble. They have washed their clothes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb’ ” (Revelation 7:14, NLV). Their lives show that God’s mercy saved them and that His love changed their lives. That’s why they sing praises to God with grateful hearts.



They sing praises to God with grateful hearts.

LIVING WITH GOD (Matthew 5:8)

The Bible says that God “lives in light so bright that people cannot go near it” (1 Timothy 6:16, ERV). Also, “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18, ERV; read also 1 John 4:12). Do these verses mean that the saved ones in heaven will never see God the Father? Of course not! After humans sinned, they no longer saw God face-to-face. Several verses in the Bible show us that God’s people will see God in heaven.

Read Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:2, 3; and Revelation 22:3, 4. What do these verses tell us about the wonderful blessing that we will have when we can see God?

The same Bible writer who wrote “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18, ERV) also announces that “we will see him just as he is” (1 John 3:2, ERV; read also 1 John 3:3). We will “see his face” (Revelation 22:4; read also Revelation 22:3). Some Bible thinkers argue about who John is talking about: God the Father or Jesus the Son? But Jesus helps us understand that we will see the face of the Father Himself: “ ‘God makes happy those [people] who have clean hearts. They will see God’ ” (Matthew 5:8, WE). God’s people will worship Him in His temple in heaven! This blessing is a wonderful gift to God’s people. The most wonderful blessing of all is that God’s people will see His face.

“God’s people will be blessed because they will communicate with the Father and the Son face-to-face. ‘Now we see as if we are looking into a dark mirror.’ 1 Corinthians 13:12, [ICB]. Now we see only a small part of God and His love in nature and in His care for us. But in heaven we shall see God face-to-face. There won’t be anything between us and God to hide Him from us. We will stand in front of God. We will look at His face, which shines as bright as light.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 676, 677, adapted.

Do you see in some of the verses today the connection between our clean hearts and seeing God? That’s because we must have clean hearts to see God. “Christ [Jesus] is pure [clean; holy]. All [people] who hope to be like [the same as] him make themselves pure” (1 John 3:3, NIV). What important Bible truth do these verses show us? They show us that God must change us now to get us ready for heaven.



“Now we see as if we are looking into a dark mirror” (1 Corinthians 13:12, ICB).

NO MORE DEATH AND TEARS (Isaiah 25:8)

As we saw, the teaching is false that the spirit doesn't die. The idea that the spirit suffers forever in everlasting fire in hell also goes against Bible truth. On the new earth, " 'no one will die. No one will ever cry or be sad for any reason' " (Revelation 21:4, WE). But what if someone believes that hell is a place where spirits burn forever? If that's true, then the "second death" won't destroy sin and sinners. Worse, the "second death" will be the same as a prison for evil people who will burn forever. They will never stop crying or being sad. Heaven won't be made new or perfect again. But praise the Lord that the Bible teaches us something different!

Read Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 7:17; and Revelation 21:4. What comfort and hope can these verses bring us in our troubles and suffering in this life?



God always is ready to wipe away our tears.

Life can be hard. Things may not always be fair. Some people we love can be killed. Other people can cause us to fall in love with them. Then they walk away from us as if they never knew us. These experiences are terrible. When our hearts are broken, we may not want to live anymore. But God always is ready to wipe away our tears. We may cry many more tears until Jesus comes. But we have the promise that pain, tears, and death will be destroyed (Revelation 21:1–5).

We can trust God in His final work as Judge. God will be fair. He will judge every person with love. All our loved ones who died in Jesus will wake up from the dead. We will live together with God forever. The lost ones who chose not to accept the gift of everlasting life will stop living. God will not force them to live in heaven or in an ever-burning hell. The evil ones would hate heaven anyway. We are comforted because we know that God is fair to everyone in His final decision. When God destroys death forever, we will shout with joy: " 'Death, you have lost the battle [fight]. Death, your power to hurt us is gone' " (1 Corinthians 15:54, WE; read also 1 Corinthians 15:55).

The Lord promised that in the new earth and skies, " 'people will not remember the past. They will not think about those things' " (Isaiah 65:17, ICB). This verse doesn't mean we will forget the past. Isaiah is telling us that the past won't get in the way of our joy.

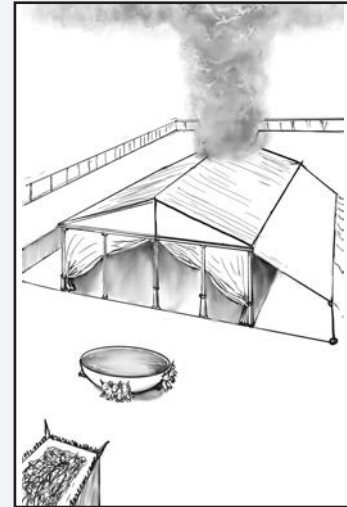
GOD WRITES HIS NAME IN OUR MINDS
(Revelation 22:3–5)

Revelation 22:3–5 says that God will write His name in the minds of His people. This promise shows that God will put His law and love into His people’s hearts and give them new life. How can we know for sure that we will be part of this group?

After Lucifer fought against God, and then Adam and Eve sinned, God could have destroyed our first parents. But God showed the human family that His love for them never ends. God made a plan of mercy to save every person who accepts the saving gift that He offers. God made this plan before He made the earth (Ephesians 1:3–5; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; Revelation 13:8). God first made this plan known to Adam and Eve in Eden, right after they sinned. Later, God told Moses to build Him a Holy Tent where His people can worship Him. This whole plan showed God’s saving plan in the animal offerings and other gifts. Jesus’ life, death, and waking up from the dead showed this plan, too (read Romans 5). Jesus shows us God’s plan to save us. Jesus shows us better than anyone or anything else can.

An important part of God’s saving plan is the promise of everlasting life. God gives us this gift because of everything Jesus did for us at the cross. Everyone who accepts Jesus’ life by faith will have the gift of everlasting life. Before the cross, God saved His people by their faith in His mercy. After the cross, God saves us by His mercy and our faith in it, too. God never saves us by our good behavior. At the same time, we must understand that our behavior is very important, because it shows that we are saved.

Paul wrote about Abraham. Abraham lived long before Jesus came to this earth. Abraham is an example that God saves us by His mercy: “If Abraham was made right [accepted] by the things he did, he had a reason to boast [brag] about himself. But God knew different. That’s why the Scriptures [Old and New Testaments] say, ‘Abraham believed God, and because of this he was accepted as one who is right [innocent] with [in the eyes of] God’ ” (Romans 4:2, 3, ERV). How do these verses help explain what being saved by God’s mercy is all about?



God told Moses to build Him a Holy Tent where His people can worship Him.



“God’s people will never forget that His power made the planets.”

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

“God’s saved people in heaven will study about the cross forever. They will sing about it, too. In their shining King, God’s people will see the Savior who died on the cross for them. God’s people will never forget that His power made the planets. No one can number the planets Jesus made. There are so many! God loves His Son so much. Jesus is the King of Heaven. The four-winged angels and the six-winged angels love to worship Him. This same God, Jesus, empties Himself of all pride to save sinners. This same God accepted our guilt and shame. This same God suffered as His Father hid His face from Him while He was on the cross. Jesus suffered all these things until the pain of our lost earth broke His heart. Our suffering ended His life on the cross. Jesus Himself made all the planets. Jesus Himself decides what happens to everyone. This same God gave up His own honor and praise. He suffered a terrible death. He did these things because He loved humans so much. Jesus’ love will always fill everyone in heaven and on earth with wonder and praise.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 651, adapted.

“The worldwide war between God and Satan is done. Sin and sinners are no more. Heaven and earth are clean. Everything that God made is filled with peace. God’s life, light, and joy flow from Him to everything He made. From the smallest parts of cells to the largest planet, all things in their beauty and perfect joy announce that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 678, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Many Christians live as if this earth will continue forever (Luke 12:16–21). How can we live on this earth but not be part of the ways of life around us? How can we guard against what Jesus warned us about in Luke 12?
- ② If heaven starts here, how can we use our homes and personal lives to show the important rules of heaven?

JUICE BAR FOR JESUS

Wailoloa Beach is a popular vacation spot in Nadi, Fiji. Visitors enjoy the food and hotels, which are not too expensive. Many people also come for the bars and other nightclubs. When COVID-19 started, many small cafés, fast-food restaurants, and other restaurants lost customers. One of these places was the Bamboo Hotel.

At this time, some Seventh-day Adventists decided to work with the owners of the Bamboo Hotel. Together, they opened a juice bar. The bar offered more than juice. It also offered health and exercise classes, weight-loss classes, and special meal plans to help people lose weight or feel better. The juice bar was named Bitu Health Bar. Bitu means “bamboo” in the local language. The Bitu Health Bar became popular right away with the local citizens. They came daily to drink the fresh juices.

Church members prayed that the juice bar would help encourage Fijians to lead more healthful lives. People in Fiji have many lifestyle diseases. The Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters in the South Pacific supported the bar. Church leaders hoped that the bar would help Fijians to stop drinking alcohol and choose more healthful drinks.

But then COVID-19 hit Fiji a second time. The local city leaders ordered the Bamboo Hotel to shut down, along with the juice bar. For two weeks, customers called every day to find out when and where the juice bar was going to open again.

What happened next surprised everyone.

A married couple who managed the Beach Escape Hotel next door to the Bamboo Hotel watched crowds pour in and out of the Bamboo Hotel every day. The couple saw that more people visited the juice bar than the bar that served alcohol. The couple also was happy to see that there were less crimes caused by alcohol in their neighborhood.

The couple contacted church members and offered the use of their bar for their health classes. Church members said no at first. They didn't want to offer fruit juice in the same place that sold alcohol. But the managers explained that they wanted to stop selling alcohol. The couple removed all the alcohol and bar equipment. Then they replaced it with juicing machines, blenders, fruits, vegetables, and herbs. The Bitu Health Bar was open again!

Church members are amazed at the wonderful way that God leads. The juice bar has helped many customers at the Bamboo Hotel. The juice bar also has changed the Beach Escape Hotel into a center for hope and healing in the community. Thank you for giving a big offering this quarter to support new church programs in the South Pacific and in other areas.

INSIDE
Story
by GEORGE KWONG



The Bitu Health Bar also changed the Beach Escape Hotel into a center for hope and healing in the community.

