

# Revelation

*Part Fifty-Six  
All Things New  
(Revelation 21:5-8)*

*With Study Questions*

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**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.”**

**<sup>6</sup> And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and *the* End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. <sup>8</sup> But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:5-8).**

## **Introduction**

I took a walk recently. Although the path of my walk was near my home, it was not a path I normally take. I generally drive that route. As I walked, I spotted buildings and bridges in Long Beach (probably fifteen miles from my house) that I never notice. I’m guessing that I noticed them, partially, because I was walking rather than driving and it was a particularly clear day. I was able to perceive striking details of these far-off structures. A clear day can be a remarkable thing.

Something so simple appearing to beautiful reminded me of C. S. Lewis and his description of heaven in *The Last Battle*, the final book of his Christian allegory, the *Chronicles of Narnia*. In my many years of ministry I have spent very little time attempting to describe the glory of heaven or the agony of hell. I tend to leave such efforts to Dante and his skin-crawling welcome sign to hell, “Abandon all hope, you who enter here” or Lewis and his simple, yet profound, contrast in his description of heaven.

He introduces the topic with the necessary instrument of entrance. “If, however, we truly love<sup>1</sup> with the power of the One who loves truly, we have nothing to fear from the gates of hell, for we know they shall not

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<sup>1</sup> I am not suggesting (neither is Lewis, I suppose) that our ability to love saves us. But that true faith will produce, at some level, true love (Ephesians 6:23).

prevail.” In his book, Lewis’ characters stand at the threshold of death, which reveals a strange and wonderful place. Simple things like the sky, the grass, the wind and simple colors become awe-inspiring. He describes a land where everything is allowed because evil is absent.

Lewis poetically weighs life, as experienced in a fallen world, against the true life of those who have crossed the threshold. “It is the difference between a shadow-life lived among shadows, and a real life lived in the light of life itself.” He continues:

**Life, true life, the fullness of life, is larger than any world in which death holds sway. God, who is life, true life, the fullness of life, is larger than any world He’s created. The Christ Child was unthinkably larger than the manger in which he lay.**

Lewis explains that life before death is a dream-life in a shadow-land. The true life is as different as a dream, or a shadow is from the real thing. The beauty of this current heavens and earth is when it sometimes looks like the real thing.

When the believer goes through that door of life to death, they are actually fully introduced to life, like awakening from a dream. No fatigue. No discomfort. No shortness of breath. No boredom. All these things are the symptoms of those not fully awake.

I was comforted in my research of Lewis to find that he also, with a bit of acknowledgement, recognized his own lack of skill in fully describing glory, when the dream has ended.

**...the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.**

**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).**

## **All Things New**

This is the great promise. Regardless of the beauty of the greatest life, there is something amiss and it needs renewal. And this is the promise. God is making (the active tense-*poio*) all things new. All that was lost in Adam is gained in Christ-and more. This promise is given in seed form in Genesis 3:15 at the dawn of time-directly following the fall. But it is repeated through God's covenant promises all throughout the Scriptures.

**Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19).**

People love Palm Springs. They retire there and go there for vacations. We easily forget that it is a desert. And the primary thing that makes it beautiful is that someone figured out how to get water there.

And though this newness is fully realized at the end of time, similar to the clear view I enjoyed, we have glimpses of it even now, little tastes of the real thing.

**Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).**

Believers are already a "**new creation.**" God has put his seal upon you (Ephesians 1:13). And, as we discussed in our previous meeting, God would have us ever reside (intellectually, emotionally, spiritually) in our true citizenship.

John is called to "**write**" these things. God has chosen to reveal specific things about Himself, His self-disclosure, in writings. The Scriptures are a great gift. They are a wonderful deposit of truth in our midst. Ezra stood on a platform (where we get the idea of a pulpit) and

opened the law and when he read it, **“all the people wept” (Nehemiah 8:9).**

There is something horrible about losing the truth. Many of us feel that in our current cultural trajectory. We feel the words of Amos:

**“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11).**

Pray that your church, all churches, will ever appeal to the word of God.

**And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and *the* End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son (Revelation 21:6, 7).**

## **It Is Done**

It is a common sentiment among Christians that Jesus will come again and sort things out. He will come again. But it is not to sort things out. He has no unfinished business other than judgment. Everything necessary for the renewal-for the **“all things new”** to be accomplished has been accomplished. Now it is a matter of application.

The **“waters”** are flowing through the desert, and they are yours freely. A gift.

**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).**

The desert provides an atmosphere is danger throughout the Scriptures. It is an atmosphere where you can live for a while without food, but not without water. Water is life. Many times I have visited the strongest of men in the hospital who, for one reason or another, are not allowed water. A mere sip on the tongue is better than any feast. Jesus offers a

spiritual quenching of our souls. It is a life that is given to us and then flows out of us to others.

**On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37, 38).**

The Christian’s life is not to be a stagnant and idle pond, only receiving. Those who come by faith to Christ should have lives marked by animated ebbs and flows.

### **Love the World-Don’t Love the World**

Once again, we see this recurring theme of overcoming. There is a certain sense in which we are called to love the world. We are to care for the creation (Genesis 1:28) and love our neighbors (Matthew 22:39). But there is another sense in which the world is a powerful adversary. The same author who wrote the Revelation, also wrote:

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).**

We are to be governed by something beyond this world. And this should be a blessing to us and to the world in which we live. But the created order does not desire a governor. It desires to govern. And it desires to govern you. The recurring theme in the Revelation is to overcome that siren call and be governed by the grace and wisdom of God alone.

The promise now becomes even more intimate. The promise that we will be God’s people (plural, from verse three) transitions to our being God’s “**son**” (singular).

**But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).**

## **Lake Which Burns**

Not to go into minute detail on all of these objectionable adjectives, since, little doubt, John is not offering an exhaustive list. He is likely highlighting the current prevailing sins. But briefly:

We live in an era of Christianity where the culture has accomplished effeminizing the faith. To encourage young men to be courageous is to emit them into some form of toxic masculinity. But the Scriptures extol courage (Joshua 1:9; Deuteronomy 31:6). The current indictment against the cowardly in this passage likely has more to do with men and women not being fearful of Roman oppression and Jewish persecution. Sometimes we are called to be bold and courageous enough to express our faith.

It may sound odd to hear that **“unbelief”** is a sin. Yet God has so instilled a knowledge that He is, both by that which is seen and in our own minds, that to deny it is not merely ignorance but rebellion.

**Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God (Hebrews 3:12).**

That which is **“abominable”** means that which causes repulsion-to turn away. **“Murder,”** as bizarre as this seems, transitions into an acceptable societal behavior. Whether it is in the form of abortion, euthanasia, rioting or the simple disregard for other humans being made in the image of God.

**“Sexual immorality”** is the genesis of societal corruption. A people who aggressively disregard to the clear biblical proposition that sexual intimacy is to be confined to a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage, have shown themselves reprobate (Romans 1:26) and will crush the souls of all who oppose them. It is a curious thing to wonder how long

it took Sodom to so adopt evil sexual practices that not ten righteous people could be found in the entire city (Genesis 18:32).

“**Sorcery**” seems an odd addition to this list until we realize that those who engage are seeking something or someone other than the true God for direction. That the Greek form of this word is *pharmakois* has caused many to see a relation here to drug use. The end result of these sins is “**idolatry**” and “**lies**”. It is the nature of man to worship. And the options are the true God or a false god. As G. K. Chesterton mused:

**When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything.**

Finally, let us not minimize what hangs in the balance. It is very common today to scoff at eternal judgment. But on that issue, the Scriptures are not silent. The “**lake which burns**” and the “**second death**” are real and prominent. And the idea of the entrance of these should break our hearts. But God is a just God. We tend to think of hell as an evil place, but it is actually a venue of judgment and justice.

But mercy triumphs over judgment for those who have called upon Christ (James 2:13). We need to be careful not to view the above sinful adjectives as a contest we need to win in order to be saved. Should we run to win? Yes (1 Corinthians 9:24). But the winning is not a matter of being better than others, unless you think you can be better than Christ!

No, the winning is to finish the race. The winning is to keep the faith. The overcoming is to endure-to fight this battle until the Lord brings us home and bestows the “**crown of righteousness**” (2 Timothy 4:7).



## Questions for Study

1. Discuss Lewis' description of heaven and his use of shadows and dreams (pages 2, 3).
2. In what respect are "all things new?" At what level has this promise been kept (page 4)?
3. Why do you suppose God uses writing to disclose Himself (pages 4, 5)?
4. Why is water such a significant element? What does it represent in Scripture (pages 5, 6)?
5. How should we love the world? How should we not love the world (page 6)?
6. What is the "second death" and how is it avoided (pages 7, 8)?