

NEW CHURCH DAY

Revelation 22:13-21

The emphasis in this lesson should be on the fact that the Second Coming of the Lord has been made and that this is His final revelation to mankind. The Lord has always given man sufficient knowledge of Himself and His will so that man has remained free to choose. Our opportunity is greater than ever, but the price of rejecting the Lord remains the same.

Doctrinal Points

The Second Coming of the Lord has been accomplished by opening the Scriptures. This revelation is to be the Lord's final great revelation to mankind.

Notes for Parents

We have read the description of the beautiful city for which our church is named, which the apostle John saw in vision descending from God out of heaven. It is not by chance that the Bible begins with the creation of the world and ends with the descent of the holy city: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" and, as Jesus told John in the first verse of our lesson for today, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The whole teaching of the Bible is summed up in this verse.

In the New Church the nineteenth of June is known as "New Church Day." This is because Swedenborg tells us in his last great work *True Christian Religion* (n. 791): "After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that *the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns*, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages.

. . . This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770.”

Almost everyone today speaks of our times as “this new age.” But most of them are thinking in terms of cars, airplanes, medical and archeological research, space travel, and computers. Man has indeed learned more and more about the physical world in which he lives, but he did not and does not create that world; neither is he necessarily made happier by his new knowledge and use of it. In fact, every advance in physical knowledge creates new problems. Why?

The first verse of chapter 21 of Revelation tells us: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” This is indeed a new age, but it is the Lord and not man who has made it new. As we read through the Bible we find how man, created by the Lord in a first state of innocence and happiness—the Garden of Eden state—has again and again wrecked his world by choosing not to believe in and obey the Lord, preferring to direct his own life, choosing to put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the center of his garden in place of the tree of life planted there by the Lord.

The new knowledge of the inner meaning of the Word which the Lord has given to man in His Second Coming is to be His final revelation. The New Church will last for ages and ages because sufficient light has now been given to satisfy all who want to recognize the Lord and do His will no matter what arguments may be advanced by the “learned” men of the new age. We are still able to think rationally and choose the Lord’s direction instead of our own. Each of us must study and think and choose for himself.

Primary

Speak of the Second Coming and of the new knowledge which has been given us, and the need of studying the Word more and more and choosing freely to try to behave as the Lord would have us behave. Review Revelation 1, emphasizing verse 11 as an introduction to today’s lesson. The important lesson for this class is that the Second Coming has taken place, and how it took place.

What is the last book in the Bible?

Through whom was it written?

It was a vision of what would happen to the Christian Church founded by the apostles.

What person did John first see?

Do you remember what the Lord Jesus said first to him (Revelation 1:11)?

Today we are celebrating “New Church Day,” which is the nineteenth of June. On that day, about two centuries ago, the Lord Jesus proclaimed that He was the sole ruler of the world, and that all who wished to recognize Him and live as He now clearly taught them might enter the beautiful city and live there forever.

This is a wonderful promise that has been given us. It seems as though we would all receive it with delight, doesn't it? But to receive it means much more than just saying, “Yes, I will.” It means studying the Word of God day by day, learning more and more from it every day as we grow older. And it means saying “no” to ourselves very often when we want to have our own way, and learning to think of other people's convenience and happiness, and being pleasant and kind instead of cross and mean.

But if we do make this effort, we shall soon find that the harder we really try to be good the easier everything will get and the happier we shall be.

Now read the first verse of our lesson for today.

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

So they stand for the beginning and the end of everything.

This means that we must all know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one God, creator of the world and everything in it, and that the true object of our lives is to know and serve Him.

John was shown that, even though the Lord had taken on a human body in order to show men how to live, many would still choose not to believe Him.

So finally He had to make a Second Coming of a different kind, which would be His final revelation to man.

He would come again “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

This means by opening the inner meaning of the Word so that the light of heaven could shine through.

This Second Coming actually took place about two hundred years ago.

It was first announced in heaven on June 19, 1770.

That is why we call the nineteenth of June “New Church Day.”

We find the key to this inner meaning of the Word in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, whom the Lord chose as His publishing agent.

So we need to study the Word daily, and also to study the writings of Swedenborg, which enable us to understand it.

Then, if we live as the Lord teaches us to live, we shall be able to enter the gates of the beautiful city New Jerusalem and live there forever.

Notice the last verse of our lesson. It is often used in our church service as the minister's final blessing to the people. It is the most beautiful thing we can wish for anyone.



Junior

We have given the Juniors no questions to answer this time. The teacher may ask such questions as he thinks the class should be able to answer, before proceeding with the assignment for the day.

In one of our lessons from the book of Revelation we learned about the messages given to the apostle John for the seven Christian churches which had been established in Asia Minor by the time John was an old man. We saw that they were all different, just as each one of us is different, and we learned something of what those messages mean for us as individuals.

But these seven churches were real churches, the beginning of the first Christian Church on earth, and it was true that already they were showing bad as well as good qualities. So the whole of John's vision applies to the first Christian Church and its future as well as to our individual lives. The first Christian Church declined, just as all the earlier Churches had declined because many continued to put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of their life instead of the tree of life, worshiping man instead of God. And John's vision showed that this would go on until men would think themselves so wise that the innocent good people who wanted to believe in God and serve Him could no longer answer their arguments. They needed more understanding of the Word, the "many things" which the Lord had told His disciples He still had to say to them (John 16:12). So the Lord had to make His promised Second Coming in order to save mankind.

The Second Coming actually took place about two hundred years ago, when the Lord opened the inner meaning of the Word through the agency of His dedicated servant Emanuel Swedenborg. This inner meaning was the light coming through the clouds. The beautiful vision of the holy city New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven is the picture of the New Church on earth built in the lives of all who study the Word diligently in the light of this new knowledge and do their best to live as this new knowledge teaches them. The first essential of this new life is to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, the alpha and the omega.

Swedenborg tells us that on June 19, 1770, the twelve apostles were sent by the Lord throughout the spiritual world to “preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns.” So we in the New Church celebrate June 19 as “New Church Day.”



Intermediate

Stress the importance of our daily choices and the proof which history gives us the truth of verses 13 and 14 of our lesson for today. It is very necessary that children of this age be encouraged to think and act independently of what “everybody” thinks and does.

We are living in a new age. Our modern scientists often tell us this and young people are tempted to use it as an excuse for thinking that the ideas of right conduct which their parents and grandparents have are out of date. But the laws of God do not change. The commandments were known from the earliest times, and then thirty-five hundred years ago they were given from Mount Sinai in the ears of all the people by the voice of God and written on the tables of stone by the finger of God to prove that they are not man-made rules but the fundamental laws of God. And nearly two thousand years ago John was told in vision by the Lord Jesus Christ: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through

the gates into the city. This was said after the Lord had showed him the holy city descending to earth from heaven. John's final vision begins (Rev. 21:1): "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." We are indeed living in a new age, but the laws of right feeling and thought and conduct are God's laws, the same for every age. Never forget this.

Day after day we are presented with choices to make. If we could not think and choose, we should be merely animals. Animals are governed by their instincts. They can never know the God who created them. Try to remember this, that whenever you choose to do as you please without thinking whether it is right or wrong, you are making an animal of yourself. Heavenly knowledge is eternal. It is much more important than earthly knowledge, which serves us only for a few short years. And each of us, by his choices day by day, is forming the character which will determine where he will live to eternity.

Swedenborg tells us that on June 19, 1770, the Lord sent the apostles throughout the spiritual world to proclaim that He alone reigned. The new earth and the new heaven are the new knowledge of heavenly and earthly life given us by the Lord in His Second Coming. This is why we call June 19th "New Church Day." May the new age mean for each of you a new heaven as well as a new earth.



Senior

Stress the difference between the New Church and all other churches and the reason why the Second Coming was made when and as it was.

We call the nineteenth day of June "New Church Day." What is the difference between the New Church and all the other churches in the world? We know that there are good people in all the churches, people who believe in God and are trying to live as they think God would have them live. This is true not only of the Christian churches but equally of Jews and Mohammedans and the people of what we

call the pagan religions. Yet the different churches have always had different ideas of what a good life really was, different ideas of just who and what God is and of what His will is.

In preparing for your life in this world you do not say “I want to be a good and useful person” and then fumble along from day to day doing whatever happens to come your way, without study, thought, and practice in your chosen field. You study your own abilities and your own weaknesses and choose the best schooling for the work for which you think you are best fitted. But our life on this earth lasts only a few years. It is the spiritual world in which we shall all live to eternity. Does it make sense to imagine that we do not have to study and plan and practice for that life even more than for this?

Just as our homes and schools give us progressive instruction as we grow in age and ability to receive it, so the Lord from His first creation of man upon the earth has progressively provided all the instruction man was capable of receiving. The wise have recognized this instruction as coming from the all-wise God, have studied it, and have made use of it in their daily lives. The foolish have closed their eyes and ears and stumbled along on their own.

The Lord has now in His Second Coming given us the key to all the spiritual knowledge man can ever need. The New Church recognizes this and is founded on the belief that Jesus Christ glorified is the one God of heaven and earth and that His instruction can be found in His Word illumined by the new light from within it, now revealed to us. It is the revelation given two hundred years ago to meet the need of men of the new age when they were beginning to hunt for the reason back of everything and asking questions about the Word which they could not find answered in the literal sense. In the New Church we can find the answers to all of men’s questions about the Lord, the purpose of our life here on earth, and the nature and reality of the spiritual world. It takes study and continued effort, as does anything that is worthwhile, but it makes us more and more useful to the Lord and to our fellow men and leads us into the holy city.

Adult

A brief verse-by-verse study of the lesson should be made in this class, after speaking of the reason for the name of this special day. Then ask for questions, and discuss whatever they bring out.

In our lessons from the book of Revelation, we have studied the nature and purpose of John's vision, the different types of reaction to the Lord and His Word which appear in the Lord's Church on earth and in each one of us individually, the nature of the final Church in heaven and on earth pictured as the holy city New Jerusalem, and what is required of each of us who wishes to live within that holy city.

In TCR 791 Swedenborg tells us the basis for celebrating "New Church Day." See the quotation below.

Our lesson for today, the last nine verses of the Word, gives us really a summary of the whole teaching of the Word and of our duty as members of the Lord's New Church. First (verse 13), we must recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, our creator and our guide forever. Second (verse 14), if we wish to dwell in peace and happiness in the holy city both here and when we pass from this world, we must keep His commandments. Third (verse 15), we must be aware of the many temptations to evil which surround us in this world. Fourth (verse 16), the Lord has made available to us all the truth we need now and for all future time. Fifth (verse 17), the Lord offers us this truth freely to understand and to use from day to day. Sixth (verse 18), He tells us plainly that if we try to add our own ideas of what is true and right to what the Lord has said, we shall get into serious trouble. Seventh (verse 19), if we try to change and reject what the Lord says in order to make it suit our finite desires, we shall not be able to live in the holy city at all. Eighth (verse 20), we should accept gladly the fact that the Lord has made His Second and final Coming. And ninth (verse 21), we should all recognize our own weakness, and look to the Lord for forgiveness and love.

You will find very interesting statements in regard to the Second Coming in TCR 768-790, 846-847, and in AR 875.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

True Christian Religion, n. 791: “After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that *the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns*, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13-14), and in the Apocalypse (11:15).

“Also that blessed are those that come to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Apoc. 19:9). This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What special day do we celebrate today? *New Church Day*
- S. Why do we call it that? *TCR 791*
- P. What is the first thing the Lord says about Himself in our lesson for today?
I am alpha and omega
- P. What are alpha and omega? *first and last letters of Greek alphabet*
- P. How do we know it is Jesus Christ who says this? *John recognized Him*
- P. Where do we often hear the last verse of our lesson for today? *benediction in church*
- J. Why did the Lord have to make a Second Coming? *men needed new insights into divine truth*
- J. Why must the Lord always leave us free to choose whether or not we will do right? *love for the Lord and for what is good cannot be forced*
- J. Why should we try to remember this even when we are children? *helps prepare us for heaven*
- I. Why do men say that we are living in a new age? *great scientific advances*
- I. What false conclusion do we sometimes draw from this? *Biblical laws “outdated”*
- I. What laws will never change? *the Lord’s laws*
- S. What has the Lord done to meet our need in this new age? *opened inner sense of Word*
- S. What obligation does this lay upon us? *regular study and continued effort to live up to the new truth*