

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**May 15, 2011**

**Another World**

**Revelation 7:9-17**

**Key verse:** “They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelation 7:10)

The movie Avatar takes place on a distant planet called Pandora. Presented in 3D, using state-of-the-art film making, Avatar translates viewers to another world. It’s a world so beautiful and compelling that many viewers long to “stay” in Pandora.

“What is surprising,” writes Sam O’Neal, “is the way this fictional world impacted the perception of our own world for many of the film’s viewers. Within a week of Avatar’s debut, websites dedicated to the movie were filled with comments from people lamenting the fact that Avatar’s people and places could not be reached in any real way. In fact, an entire thread on a popular forum website was called ‘ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible.’

“When I woke up this morning after watching Avatar for the first time yesterday, the world seemed gray,” wrote one fan. ‘I love Pandora,’ wrote another fan, ‘and waking up afterward is extremely hard to do’” (from *Preaching Today*, Jan. 2010).

This phenomenon reminded me of a favorite quote by C.S. Lewis: “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”

Christians believe that we all were made for another world, the kingdom of God. That new and glorious world is within each of us now as we live our lives under the reign of King Jesus. That new world is being born now as God’s people share faith, work for justice, and love others in Jesus’ name. That bright new world will be fully realized in the future when Jesus establishes His eternal kingdom in a re-created heaven and earth.

Meanwhile, we are given glimpses in the Bible of that eternal home. These glimpses of God’s eternal kingdom are meant to (1) *give us hope in the face of suffering* and (2) *show us what our present world can be like whenever God’s will is done “on earth as it is in heaven.”* One such glimpse of heaven is found here in Revelation 7. Notice what this part of John’s vision reveals:

**1. God’s kingdom includes people from every race, nationality, and culture.**

“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from

every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white....” (v. 9).

In God’s eternal kingdom, we will not be divided by issues of race, culture, nationality, etc. Wherever we are able to express our oneness in Christ *now*, worshipping and serving the Lord without regard to skin color, etc., a little bit of heaven comes down to earth!

**2. Praise and worship is the language of heaven.** “And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.’” (vv. 11-12).

One definition of worship is “acknowledging God for who God is.” In eternity, we will want to acknowledge God for who God is for we will see God as God is! Now, we only see in part, but we ought to praise and worship God because of all we do know about Him now.

**3. Our hope in suffering is found in knowing that, in eternity, we will suffer no more.** “Then one of the elders addressed me, saying ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’” (vv. 13-14).

Other Bible versions translate “the great ordeal” as “the great tribulation” (v. 14). This verse could refer to the period of final conflict just before Christ returns, often called “the great tribulation.” But remember also that the Book of Revelation was written to believers suffering great persecution. So, these verses could also refer to their time of tribulation. One thing is certain, believers through the ages have found hope in knowing that in eternity we will suffer no more!

**4. In eternity, we will live in the immediate presence of God the Father, Son, and Spirit. We will “hunger and thirst no more” (v. 15) and God will “wipe away every tear” from our eyes (v. 17).**

Love’s Enduring Promise is a film about a family’s life in the American West during the 1800’s. In one scene, Clark, the family patriarch, is wounded seriously by an axe. He nearly bleeds to death, but a young man named Nate finds Clark and takes him back to his family where he can receive treatment.

Several days later, Nate comes back to Clark’s house to see how he is doing. Nate discovers that Clark’s wound has become infected and he is seriously ill. Nate is able to treat Clark and soon Clark’s fever breaks and he recovers. As the family and Nate gather for a meal, Clark offers a prayer. His prayer includes praise for “Nate, my very own miracle, who has re-opened our eyes to your enduring promise.”

Later, Nate is talking with Clark's daughter, Missie. Nate asks her, "Speaking of God, what did your pa mean by *your enduring promise*?"

Missie answers, "That someday He'll wipe away all our tears, and that all pain and suffering and heartache will be gone. That evening when we were all together, feeling dreadful that Pa was in pain, you helped give us a glimpse of that promise."

Here's our enduring promise: "And the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (vv. 15b-17).

Thanks be to God!

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