

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Luke 21:5–19 • All Things Made New

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Luke 21:5–19 Signs of the end of the age
Isaiah 65:17–25. . . New heavens and a new earth

Overview

Today's reading, together with the Isaiah passage, speaks of endings and new beginnings; of terrible struggles leading to the renewal of life. Older classes can be taught about the Lord's first and second comings, and what they mean to us today. All classes can discuss how our own individual struggles in difficult times can be turning points leading to new spiritual life within us and in our relationships with others.

Key Points

- We are living in the time of the Lord's Second Coming, which is *a spiritual* event.
- Being a Christian isn't always easy. Sometimes we will be attacked for doing what is right and good.
- If we pray to the Lord and don't give in, we will experience a new kind of joy and happiness.

Example for Teaching Children

Today's Bible reading is a tough one, isn't it? It talks about the temple being destroyed, about wars, earthquakes, and famines. It talks about the Lord's followers being attacked and betrayed and even killed.

There was a time (when Christianity was still a new religion) that you really could get killed just for being a Christian. And much later—a few hundred years ago—Christians used to fight and kill each other. People hated each other just because they didn't believe exactly the same things.

That is what our Bible reading is really talking about: the selfishness and hatred, bad attitudes and wrong ideas, that had destroyed the Christian Church by the time Emanuel Swedenborg started writing religious books about 250 years ago.

But Christianity is going through a huge change. People from different churches who used to hate each other are learning to get along together. Many Christians have come to believe that God works through all churches and all religions. The old Christianity of Swedenborg's time has died, and a new, deeper, and more loving Christianity has begun. In our church, we think of this as the Lord's Second Coming.

What does this mean for us? For one thing, we can each decide for ourselves what we believe. As you grow up, you will be able to decide whether you

want to stay in this church, or whether you think another one is better for you.

But there is also a more personal meaning for us. Have you ever been teased or picked on because your friends wanted to do something you thought was wrong, and you wouldn't go along with it? (*Pause for responses.*) Doing the right thing isn't always easy! We don't have to worry anymore about being killed because we are Christians. But sometimes we do get attacked for living by our principles.

The Lord promises us that if we don't give in, we will be much happier in the end. We may have to give up some of our friends who won't accept us the way we are. But we will make new friends who are more thoughtful and caring. And most important, we will become new people ourselves—people who love others and do good and thoughtful things for them.

Basic Correspondences

temple's stones = holy truths about the Lord
temple destroyed = religion falsified and corrupted
wars = spiritual struggles
earthquakes = destruction of old attitudes
famines = starving for spiritual knowledge
end of the age = end of a religious era

Thoughts from Swedenborg

In Luke 21:5–7, the temple represents the church of today. [This was written in the mid-1700s. –LSW] The temple's destruction, when "not one stone will be left on another" means the end of this religious era, since there would be no truth left at all. When the disciples mentioned the temple to the Lord, the Lord predicted the various stages of the Christian church right up to its end: "the end of the age"—which means its final stages. This is happening at this day, and is symbolized by the temple being destroyed right to its foundation. *Apocalypse Revealed #191*

The Last Judgment, when the Lord comes in glory, does not mean that the earth is going to be destroyed, but that a religion will die—and, as always happens, a new religion will then be raised up by the Lord. . . .

It is similar with us when we are spiritually reborn and become Christian. When we have been newly created in this way, our inner self is called a "new heaven" and our outer self a "new earth."

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