

In the World . . .

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world . . .” (John 17:11).

Use this news story from recent days to help your students see the relevance of this week’s Sunday school lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®/Standard Lesson Quarterly.

TROUBLING DISORDER

This month marks the 63rd anniversary of Israel’s declaration of independence following the partitioning of Palestine by the United Nations. Jews from all over the world consider Palestine their homeland. The partitioning and declaration of independence meant that at least part of Jerusalem again “belonged” to the Jewish people. Today the anniversary is observed by displaced Palestinians as *the nakba*—“the catastrophe”—when hundreds of thousands of them fled from or were forced out of the land their people had lived in for generations. Israelis set out to rebuild a homeland in May 1948, and Palestinians ever since have tried to take back territory they regard as *their* homeland. On Sunday, Palestinian demonstrations and the Israeli response resulted in at least a dozen fatalities.

PEACEFUL NEW ORDER

The new heaven and new earth John depicts is the new homeland to be truly desired. In apocalyptic terms, Scripture describes how it will be forged by a violent overthrow of the current order of things. This week’s text from Revelation 21 focuses on the result: the peaceful reign of God in that new creation. It will be far removed from the troubles that beset the territories of this old, sinful earth. Everything in the new heaven and earth—including our human temperament—will be changed for the better, and forever!

1. What should Christians do, if anything, about the various territorial struggles of the world?
2. What do you find personally most comforting in the descriptions in Revelation 21:1-8, 22-27? Why?
3. What lessons about the future “new order” of the universe can we apply to the “current order” of the church in general?
4. What lessons about the future “new order” of the universe can you apply to the “current order” of your church in particular?
5. How can you use today’s text to help bring peace between fellow Christians who are at odds with one another?

—Charles R. Boatman

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