

SUNDAY

January 30, 2011

READ: Genesis 3:17; Revelation 21 & 22;

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Have you ever read these chapters describing the resurrected, or “New” Earth? What strikes you about the picture that is painted of what is to come? How literal do you think we can take John’s description of the New Jerusalem? What is described that you are used to experiencing? What is described that will be radically new and different?

KEY CONCEPT: We live out our lives on a sin-corrupted Earth (see Gen. 3:17), between Eden and the New Earth, but we must never forget that this is not our natural state. Sin and death and suffering and war and poverty are not natural -- they are the devastating results of our rebellion against God.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you think of this life as your natural home, or just someplace you are visiting before you return home? Have you heard of “looking through spiritual eyes” at all that is around you? What do you think that means, and how can you do it? If “this world is not our home,” how can we gain a better understanding of what our home truly is?

PRAY: If you have never looked at life with “spiritual eyes”, spend time with God today asking Him to help you see the world around you from His perspective. Evaluate things that you see, the decisions you have to make, the words you speak from the perspective of what Jesus would do. If you’ve not done so recently you may want to read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) to get a better understanding on what Jesus values.

MONDAY

January 31, 2011

READ: Hebrews 11:8-10 (esp. v. 10) , 16; Hebrews 13:14

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: How do you see heaven described in these passages?

KEY CONCEPT: The New Earth will have some very familiar aspects to it that we will feel very much at home in.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: : The writer of Hebrews describes the resurrected heaven as “a better country” and a city whose architect & builder is God. What are some of the things that you know about cities and countries that help you to envision what the New Earth may be like? If God is the architect and builder of the city/country that is referred to in Hebrews, in what ways can you imagine it will be a much better place than the ones we have on Earth? Does it make you feel better knowing that heaven is described in terms of the earth we know, rather than a non-earthly description?

PRAY: If you are anxious about what lies beyond your present life, take comfort that God has a wonderful plan in store for His children. Descriptions of heaven are not “other-worldly” but are very much more beautiful and perfect versions of what we have on our present Earth. Thank God for His loving-kindness to provide for your future when your mortal life has come to a close.

TUESDAY

February 1, 2011

READ: Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What is it that God has promised through the prophet Isaiah? What has Peter talked about, and John (in Revelation) has seen with his own eyes?

KEY CONCEPT: God will restore His creation to its intended, un-cursed state as has been promised in His Scripture. It will be a familiar, yet much improved version of what we presently are experiencing.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What do all these words have in common: reconcile, redeem, restore, recover, return, renew regenerate, resurrect. The “re-” prefix suggests a return to an original condition that was ruined or lost.

Do you perceive that everything that is wrong in this world is in some way an outgrowth or manifestation of sin? What do you think our present world would be like if there were no sin...if God had not cursed the earth (because of Adam & Eve’s disobedience)?

How do you personally experience the effects of sin in your own life? Can you perceive how your own sin impacts the lives of others around you? How has Christ’s personal redemption of your life affected the amount of sin which you add to the world? Can you imagine what life would be like if everyone in the world had a true redemption experience with Jesus? How do you think that will mirror what life will be like on the New Earth that the Bible talks about?

PRAY: Today thank God for his gift of Jesus for us...that by His grace, through our faith in Him, that our lives have been redeemed. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17

WEDNESDAY

February 2, 2011

READ: Romans 8:22-25 (Emphasis v. 23)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Paul writes about having the “firstfruits of the Spirit”. What do you think that means? What is the hope in which we are saved? What does he mean by the redemption of our bodies? What is the tie-in between hope and patience?

KEY CONCEPT: Those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior have the Holy Spirit within them. The Spirit’s presence in us is the “firstfruit”, or precursor of our ultimate destination with God in heaven. Our physical bodies, wasting away in the present time, will be redeemed...or resurrected...in that future time.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you have the Holy Spirit within you? How do you know? Have you experienced His presence in some way? What difference does it make to you to have the Spirit’s presence with you? What do you think about having a redeemed, or resurrected body? Is your current physical condition such that you long for the day when you have your imperishable body in heaven? What do you think that body will be like? Is it difficult to be patient for what you are hoping for?

PRAY: God’s word to us through Scripture is full of promise for a wonderful existence after our mortal days are finished. Thank God today for the blessings He brings to you in the present, as He is with us daily and hears our prayers. While you look forward to what heaven will offer, make the most of all that God has done in your life here...and ask Him to help you use it all to bring about His

THURSDAY

February 3, 2011

READ: Romans 8:9-11

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: From this passage, what is the indicator that we “belong to Christ”? In verse 10, if Christ is in us, what does the Spirit do for us? Whose righteousness is meant here? In verse 11, why are our mortal bodies given life?

KEY CONCEPT: Our bodies are resurrected by the Spirit of God. To be assured of our future in heaven it is vitally important that we belong to Christ, as it is His righteousness, not ours, that assures our destination there.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you regard yourself as a righteous person? What is it that causes you to think that you are, or are not (see Isaiah 64:6)? How do you think it works that the righteousness of Jesus is assigned to us? Do you believe that it is necessary for Jesus’ righteousness to cover your unrighteousness? Is it possible for a person to be good enough to enter heaven on their own merit?

PRAY: It is by God’s grace, not our works (how we live our lives) that we gain the key that unlocks heaven’s door. Our part in this is having faith that Jesus is Lord and has been resurrected. Take some time today to thank God for the amazing grace that He has sacrificially provided to assure that you will have a wonderful resurrected body and will live

FRIDAY

February 4, 2011

READ: Colossians 3:1-4

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Paul is speaking to living people in this letter to the Colossians. What does he mean in verse 1 that “you have been raised with Christ” and in verse 3 that “you died...”? What are the “things above” and the “earthly things” referenced here?

KEY CONCEPT: When we place our trust in Christ, we die to the sin in our life and put on the righteousness of Jesus...we become a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What does the glory of God look like (see Matthew 17:1-3). Do you think that glory of God within us who have received Christ will visibly appear like this upon His return? Do you see where verse 4 affirms that you will indeed have a body (that can “appear”) at the resurrection?

PRAY: It has been said that we are but cracked vessels through which God is able to work. These cracks allow the light of God’s glory, figuratively speaking, to shine through them! Pray that God would use you in such a way as to let His light shine and push back the darkness in our world. Look for opportunities that He will provide you in answer to

SATURDAY

February 5, 2011

READ: 1 Cor. 15:35-58

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What do you make of Paul’s correlation of the seed of a plant to the plant itself as an analogy to our mortal body vs. our resurrected body? What is the correlation in verse 43 of dishonor/glory and weakness/power (e.g. how is our mortal body seen as dishonorable)? What do you infer from verse 52 as to when the resurrection will occur? What is it that gives us victory over death (see vv 56-57)?

KEY CONCEPT: Our mortal bodies are mere shadows of what our resurrected bodies will be like. The resurrection of our bodies will occur at “the last trumpet”, when Jesus returns (the 2nd coming). It is Jesus that gives us the victory over sin and death.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: How do you feel about having to wait for your resurrected body until Christ returns? (Understand that it is fully possible that we will also have a temporary body in which to exist between our death and the resurrection while we are in the “intermediate state.”) In verse 44 do you see that Paul is saying we have both a natural body in this life and a resurrected body in the life to come (not just a disembodied spirit)? How does this understanding compare with what you thought your experience of life in heaven would be like? Are you okay with not knowing all specific details of what your “life after this life” will be like? Can you fully trust God to do what is best for you without having to comprehend it all? (See Isaiah 55:8-9).

PRAY: Trusting in God’s best for you is a way in which you honor Him. “Inquiring minds want to know”...and yet faith isn’t truly faith if everything is fully known (see Heb. 11:1 & 1 Cor. 13:12). If you have anxiety about what lies ahead after death, what do you think is the cause? If you have trusted in Christ, God wants you to have peace and assurance in knowing your destiny is secure (see 1 John 5:13). Take that knowledge back to God in prayer, and



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