

THURSDAY

February 17, 2011

READ: Isaiah 66:22-23

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What is God promising he will make? Will it be temporary or permanent? What does he tell us about ourselves and our descendants? What will mankind do?

KEY CONCEPT: We will have a permanent residence in the new earth. As our creator and redeemer, our God deserves our worship and it will be freely given to Him in that time to come.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What does it mean to “bow down before me?” Are you able to submit your life to God? Do you enjoy worshiping Him? In what ways do you worship the Lord aside from the weekend service? Do you see that everything you do in life can be an act of worship (see Colossians 3:23)? What difference does “doing everything for the Lord” make in the quality of your work and your attitude toward it? What area(s) of your life do you think God would want you to recommit to Him as an act of worship?

PRAY: God is omnipresent, meaning that He is everywhere. There is no place you can go where He is not with you (see Psalm 139). Knowing that nothing is hidden from Him, take time today to lift your life up to Him and ask for His help in any area of your life that you would like to make an act of worship. For example, if you have trouble with lying, commit your words to Him, asking Him to help you tell only the truth for His glory.

FRIDAY

February 18, 2011

READ: Genesis 1:28-30; Psalm 8:6; Psalm 25:13; Isaiah 57:13; Rev. 5:10

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What do all these verses have in common? Do you see a common thread of God’s plan as it relates to the reign of man through history and into the future new earth?

KEY CONCEPT: :God’s plan...from Adam & Eve in the garden of Eden to the new earth to come is for His people to reign over the land.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: How do you feel about God’s plan to allow mankind to reign over the New Earth? If you are a property owner, what do you need to do to properly take care of it? Do you think that you are a responsible and trustworthy person with what you now have control over? Based on your present stewardship, what do you think God might provide you with or want you to do on the New Earth as it relates to responsibilities? Read the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) for Jesus’ perspective on stewardship.

PRAY: How we live in our present lives will have an impact on our future on the new earth. Look at your life and what you are doing with your time, your skills and abilities, and your money. How much of it are you using for your own pleasure? How much of it do you give to the Lord for His purposes? Do you think you are living in such a way as to please God? Will he entrust more to you in the life to come, or will he consider you a “wicked, lazy servant”? Spend time in prayer today with this matter, and listen for what God says to you.

SATURDAY

February 19, 2011

READ: Matthew 24

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: The disciples were interested in knowing the timing of “the end of the age” and Jesus’ return. Did Jesus give them a date? What did he say that would give them (or us) some guidance? Why does he say that people will mourn when he returns (vs. 30)? Why do you think Jesus would not give a specific date of His return? What Old Testament example does Jesus use to compare His return (verses 37-39)? How does His analogy of the faithful & wise servant vs. the wicked servant apply to His second coming (verses 45-51)?

KEY CONCEPT: God does not reveal the timing of Jesus’ return, but does provide “signs of the times” to be watchful for. Jesus will return without notice and catch many off their guard.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you know people want to “eat, drink, and be merry” up until the 11th hour whereupon they think they will repent and get right with God before their death? What is wrong with this attitude toward life and toward God? Have you ever thought this way? What changed your perspective?

Many people over the millennia have thought they were living in the end times. Many today believe likewise. As you look at what is happening in the world today, do you see signs that would seem to correspond with events described by Jesus in this chapter? If you knew for sure that you were living just before the return of Christ, what difference would it make in how you live? If there is a difference, why is that?

PRAY: We may or may not be living at the time of Christ’s return. While the end-times scenarios are graphic in nature, we who are in relationship with Jesus need not fear for ourselves, as our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. Take time in prayer today to lift up anxieties that you may have relating to your life and ask God to replace them with his perfect peace. As He answers this prayer, give thanks for this wonderful gift of His love.



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HEAVEN
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SUNDAY

February 13 2011

READ: 2 Peter 3:3-9

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What are “the last days” that this passage refers to? Do the words of the scoffers (verse 4) sound familiar? Have you said these words yourself? What history of God’s creation/destruction are referenced in verses 5 & 6? Does the history of how God has acted in the past give any credence to the prophetic word here of what is to come (v. 7)? How do you feel about God’s timetable, as referenced in verses 8 & 9? Why does God delay?

KEY CONCEPT: At the second coming of Christ, the old earth and old heaven will be renewed in God’s act of cleansing. We are being given a measure of time for repentance as an act of God’s grace.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What images come into your mind when you think of “the last days”? Where do those images come from? When you hear people sharing their thoughts on the timing of the resurrection, what do you say? Is it important when Jesus returns? Why? What should we be doing in light of the fact that Jesus will return at some point? Are you taking full advantage of the time that Jesus is giving you to make a Kingdom difference in some way?

PRAY: The return of Jesus will happen. Thank God today that He has given you a measure of time...perhaps a week, or perhaps your entire life...in which to be about His purpose for your life in advance of His return. Do you need that time to begin a relationship with Him? To carry out His command to love others in ways specifically appropriate for how He created you? If you haven’t already done so, ask God for His direction for the time He is giving you in this life.

MONDAY

February 14, 2011

READ: 2 Peter 3:10-13

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What does Peter mean by “the day of the Lord”? What does it mean that it will “come like a thief”? Why does Peter imply that the second coming of Christ and all that will take place at that time should impact the way you live your life? What is our future hope?

KEY CONCEPT: The present earth will be renewed and become the New Earth where sin will be absent. The prospect of this future event ought to encourage us to live a holy and God-honoring life.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you understand the linkage of our present behavior and attitude as it relates to future events? Do you have any thoughts about specific aspects of yourself that you would like to change to reflect God’s love in your own life? Have you begun to allow God to renew your life and your spirit as a way to help bring heaven on earth to some degree?

PRAY: If you wish to have God’s transforming power work in your own life, you need to surrender yourself fully to Him. Pray Psalm 51 and ask God to cleanse you. We deceive ourselves easily, and need God’s help in identifying our hidden sin that needs to be revealed (see Psalm 139:23-24). Allow God to reach into your heart and bring these things to the surface where you may confess them and be cleansed. Thank God for His desire to restore you in full relationship with Him!

TUESDAY

February 15, 2011

READ: Isaiah 60

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What is happening in this Old Testament prophecy? The gates of a city are meant to provide limited passage...keeping out enemies. What does it mean in verse 11 when it says “Your gates will always stand open”? Where else do you hear similar things as are in this chapter (e.g. “the LORD will be your everlasting light” and “your days of sorrow will end”)?

KEY CONCEPT: Isaiah prophesied the New Earth and New Jerusalem over 700 years before the birth of Jesus. He foretells of an amazing time when God will be fully glorified and evil will be vanquished.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you give credence to prophetic writings in the Bible? How is your perspective on Isaiah’s yet to be fulfilled prophecy influenced by his fulfilled prophecy about the Jesus? What do you see in Isaiah 60 that excites you about what is to happen when the New Earth and New Jerusalem are ushered in? Is there anything that gives you concern? Do you think that you will be alive to see that time come to pass? Why or why not?

PRAY: Slowly read through the Isaiah 60 reading again. Try to visualize things as they are being described. As you do, lift up your thoughts to God about what He will be doing in that day. Share with him your thoughts of awe and astonishment. Give Him praise for the majestic makeover that He will be giving the creation. Thank Him for His loving kindness in providing such a future place and condition as is described in this chapter.

WEDNESDAY

February 16, 2011

READ: Revelation 21:22-27

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: John is writing of the revelation that God gave to him regarding what will happen in the end time. What is familiar in this passage? (NOTE: If you did not do yesterday’s reading from Isaiah 60, do so now.) Why will the city no longer need the sun’s light? What does it mean that the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into the New Jerusalem? Who is able to enter the city?

KEY CONCEPT: John’s revelation mirrors Isaiah’s prophecy in describing the New Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: If you were to bring “the glory and honor” of your own life into the New Jerusalem as verse 24 says the nations will do, what would that mean to you personally? If nothing impure will ever enter into the city, will you be able to go in? Why or why not? If you think not, is there anything you can do now to assure your entrance will be permitted?

PRAY: Consider that there will be no night in the New Jerusalem...there will be no evil, pain, or suffering. If you have questions about your ability to be admitted to this place, review Monday’s devotion and seek the redeeming love of Jesus who is faithful and will forgive your sin. Thank God for His mercy that gives us hope for our life to come with Him in the New Jerusalem, as well as for a better life in the present.