**1. Motivate**

What is the most beautiful city you have ever visited? Why?

* Paris - monuments, scenes
* London - historical places, shopping
* Dallas - a mix of modern with the old West
* Atlanta - a mix of modern with the old South
* Washington DC - monuments, museums, government buildings
* Singapore - so clean, the “Pearl of the Orient”
* your own hometown - happy to come back to when you’ve been away

**2. Transition**

Heaven will be the most beautiful city ever.

* Today we look at how and why …
* we also hope to ban the common perceptions about sitting around on the clouds dressed in white robes playing harps

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 When and How Is Christ Coming Back?

Listen for things that will announce Christ's return.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV) Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Note the three methods of announcing Christ’s return.

* A shout, loud command
* The archangel's voice
* The trumpet of God

Some believers within the local church had died since Paul had visited with them. Those still alive were confused about whether or not these dead believers would miss the resurrection at Jesus return …

How does Paul reassure them?

* God will bring those with Him who have "fallen asleep" through Jesus
* we still alive will have no advantage over those who had died
* the dead in Christ will rise first
* we still alive will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air
* thus we will always be with the Lord

Consider how *ignorance* regarding doctrine lead to distress and unrest … *knowledge* leads to spiritual well being

* Satan is often the source of ignorance and confusion, he seeks to cause distress and unrest
* Jesus said, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32 (NIV)
* In Romans 6, Paul talks about knowing what Christ's death and resurrection have accomplished … about knowing the reality of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives
* In Romans 10:14 Paul says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"
* People must hear and believe in Truth for it to be effective

Note the end of the passage about being *with the Lord forever* … someone said that people who don't enjoy Jesus' presence **now** might not be comforted by the thought of *eternity* with Him!

How can we seek to increase our joy in Jesus company here on earth?

* Christian friendships
* worship
* prayer
* singing praises to Him
* Bible study
* enjoying His creation … not always thinking about the golf ball or the fish you hope to catch

3.2 Curtain Drawn, Backstage Revealed

Listen for another loud announcement.

Revelation 12:7-10 (NIV) And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

Note what happened to the dragon and his angels.

* fought against Michael and his angels
* he was not strong enough
* they lost their place in heaven
* hurled down

How did the voice from heaven refer to Satan?

* he is the accuser
* he accuses believers before God
* he does this continually
* yet he has been thrown down

Consider Job 1:9-11 (NIV) "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Of what did Satan accuse Job?

* easy living
* he was so blessed, obviously he lives a righteous life
* if he lost his wealth, he would rebel and curse God

What does Satan try to accuse us of?

* failure
* repeated sins
* don’t deserve to go to heaven
* deserve to die (both true, except for Jesus’ work of redemption)
* guilty of all kinds of things
* unfaithfulness

What words and phrases in verse 10 describe how God is our support when we are accused by Satan?

* Salvation – saved from *penalty* and *power* of sin
* God’s power, omnipotence to protect and provide
* God’s kingdom … the Kingdom of God is the realm where God rules
* God’s rule in our lives and all around us
* Satan hurled down
* God’s authority over *all* things

3.3 God Is Our Treasure

Listen for what comes and what goes away.

Rev. 21:1-7 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2] I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4] He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." [5] He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

VIDEO

What things are listed as present, what are missing in the new heaven and new earth?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In Heaven | Missing from Heaven |
| * dwelling of God with men
* He lives with them
* everything new
* drink without cost from the spring of the water of life
 | * no longer any sea
* tears wiped away
* nor death
* no mourning,
* no crying,
* no pain
* old order of things passed away
 |

Consider the significance of the *absence* of these things

* All these things are the result of sin in our world
* If they are not there, then there are no results of sin
* And there is no sin to cause them!

What kinds of things do you think will be good about “the dwelling of God is with men,” that is, God dwelling directly with you?

* instant access
* a more personal relationship
* implies the *non*-presence of sin and its effects
* don’t have to go to a place to “be with” God
* in a sense, no more need for faith … God’s presence will be almost a “perceptible” reality

In what additional life situations will these verses give us comfort?

* loss of loved ones
* tragedies
* health crises

Sing together

“When We All Get to Heaven”

* our failures or those of people close to us
* when young men and women are sent into war
* when little ones suffer pain and suffering

Application

As a devotional exercise, list the joys you are most looking forward to in heaven

* What joys?
* What kinds of relief?
* How do you anticipate being involved in praise?

Find the words to the hymn, “When We All Get to Heaven”

* They are at <http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh701.sht>
* Sing them together as a family and discuss what the words mean
* Meditate on the reality of being with Jesus in Heaven

Who do you know who is *not* headed for heaven?

* Pray for their salvation.
* Witness to them about the reality of eternity and where they will spend it
* Pray also for ministries around the world that communicate these wonderful truths.

Crossword Puzzle Words and clues taken from Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5 (NIV)

