

Devoted To The Goal

Dowlen Road, November 8, 2009 PM

Reading: John 14:1-3

- A. The lessons in our fall focus have been designed to challenge us.
 - 1. Too often would-be followers of Jesus have been sold on something less than authentic discipleship. Settling for less than God desires will only lead to profound disappointment. We've emphasized throughout this series that we want the real thing.
 - 2. And yet, we have also seen that being a true disciple is not for the uncommitted. It requires nothing less than complete devotion to the master (**Luke 9:23**). I must deny self. I must take up my cross. I must follow Jesus. I must devote my time to Him. I must be devoted to His word. In essence, I must give my life to Him.
 - 3. Being an authentic disciples requires nothing less than complete surrender of my life to Jesus (**Philippians 1:21**).
- B. But why would anyone do that?
 - 1. We do this because it is what God requires, and He is the Creator (**Genesis 1:26-27**).
 - 2. We do this because we love God and desire to please Him (**John 14:15**).
 - 3. We do this because our lives will be blessed (**Proverbs 3:5-8**).
 - 4. But there is another reason. We do this because we want to go to Heaven. We live with the promise that one day we can leave behind the sorrows of this life and go to be with our heavenly Father in a place of perfect happiness. It is our desire to go to this place that motivates our obedience. (**Matthew 7:21**).
- C. This why we must never lose sight of this goal (**Philippians 3:20**).
 - 1. It can happen. We get caught up in this life and all of our stuff and we can forget our pilgrim status (**1 Peter 2:11**). This world is not our home. We are just passing through. Our treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
 - 2. We must never lose sight of this. Being devoted to Jesus involves being devoted to the goal – heaven.
 - 3. We want to spend some time thinking about the goal tonight. We will do three things designed to stir up our minds. First, we will read through the symbols John uses to describe heaven in Revelation 21-22. Second, we will make a few comments on the meaning of these symbols – what they tell us about our goal. Third, we will teach and admonish each other with songs that help to reinforce the message.

Reading: Revelation 21:1-3, *Perfect Fellowship*

- A. In his opening words John describes heaven as a place of perfect fellowship. Verse 3 makes this point emphatically ("among men"). Of all the wonderful things that could have been said about heaven surely this is the most important. We will be with God.
- B. This would certainly comfort the suffering disciples who received this letter. As they were being tormented by their Roman persecutors, it must surely have seemed like God was far away at times. He wasn't; Revelation reminds them of this. But they also lived with the promise that one day they would dwell with God in heaven.
- C. We share this promise with them. Sometime we may feel like God is far away as we go through the struggles of this life. He's not. But keep in mind that we too live with the promise that one day we will be with Him in heaven. It's the best thing about heaven.

Songs: 235, *Immortally Arrayed* S-104, *What A Day That Will Be*

Reading: Revelation 21:4-8, *Perfect Happiness*

- A. John continues his picture by describing heaven as a place of perfect happiness. In heaven we will be free from the things that rob us of happiness in this life (evil, pain, disease, death).
- B. What a comfort that must have been for the disciples who received this letter. They were suffering at the hands of their persecutors. Some had already died for the cause. But this picture reminded them that they were going to a place where they would be free from such things, to a place of perfect happiness.
- C. Don't you look forward to this? We don't know life without sin and sorrow. We are surrounded by evil men who cause us grief. We suffer with pain and sorrow. We confront daily the reality of death. Won't it be wonderful to exist forever in a place where these things simply do not exist?

Songs: S-195, *Some Day* 214, *No Tears In Heaven*

Reading: Revelation 21:9-27, *Perfect Protection*

- A. In John's vision heaven is described as this magnificent city surrounded by huge walls with mighty gates. This may not be very striking to us, but it would be to people of that day. The walls provided their primary defense against their enemies. A city with walls like this would offer perfect protection. It is a symbol telling John's audience that they would be perfectly safe in this place.
- B. This message would give great comfort to the people who received this letter. They were suffering terribly at the hands of their enemies. They did not have a lot of security in this world. But they would have perfect security in the one that was to come.
- C. It is a message that offers comfort to us as well. In our violence-filled culture it is hard to feel secure. We check the doors, arm the security system, get a dog...and sometimes still have trouble sleeping at night. Isn't it wonderful to think about dwelling forever in a place of perfect security?

Songs: 227, *There Is A Habitation*

Reading: Revelation 22:1-5, *Perfect Provision*

- A. In this final scene John describes heaven as a place where every need of man is richly supplied. The paradise lost by Adam and Eve is a new paradise regained in heaven by God's faithful children.
- B. This would give comfort to the suffering saints who first received this letter.
 - 1. Many suffered economic hardships because of their faith in Jesus. At times they were not permitted to purchase what they needed in the public market. They were suffering need; doing without.
 - 2. But in this vision they are reminded that they are going to a perfect place where every needed will be provided.
- C. We share this hope with them. We too look forward to this wonderful place where there will be no shortages, but all of our needs will be richly supplied by our heavenly Father. Let's sing about that.

Songs: 232, *When All Of God's Singers Get Home*

Reading: Revelation 21:25-27

Heaven is awesome. But sadly, most people will not know of its glories. Only the few whose names are recorded in the book of life. Be honest with yourself; is your name on that list right now?

Invitation Song: S-103, *Hallelujah For The Judgment Day*

- David A. Banning