

Study Guide for the Week of January 29, 2006

The Bible and The After Life—Visions of Heaven

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.saintpauls-umc.com.

Monday – Paradise Restored This week our study guide readings will focus on what heaven might be like. You'll want to use your sermon notes as you reflect upon the various passages of scripture. One way we might infer a bit of what heaven might be like would be to look at what the Garden of Eden was like – this was paradise before sin entered the world, and with it, death. **Read Genesis 1:28-3:19** looking for how life was originally meant to be by God, and what changed after Adam and Eve sinned. What can you infer from this about what heaven might be like? You might read the story a second time; you'll find there is more here than you might see at first glance.

Tuesday – The Messianic Age. The Hebrew Prophets sometimes painted a picture with words of what life would be like when God restored all things. This restoration was associated with the coming of the Messiah so it is called the Messianic Age. Christians believe this began with Jesus' earthly ministry, death and resurrection; but will not be completely experienced until his Second Coming. These scriptures represent the prophetic vision of life in heaven. As you read them, what do they teach us about what life will be like when God makes all things new? **Read Isaiah 2:1-5, Isaiah 11:1-9 and Isaiah 65:17-25.** Note that the prophet paints a picture of the new heaven and new earth that is based upon what he knows of this earth. How should these pictures of heaven shape how we live on earth now? Isaiah 2:4 is found on a large monument across from the United Nations in New York – why?

Wednesday – Jesus and Heaven. We learned this past Sunday that Jesus came and gave us, in his ministry and teachings, glimpses of what life is like in heaven. The Laws of Nature were harnessed by him and what is impossible for us was possible for him. His resurrection body is the only glimpse we have of what our own bodies might be like in heaven. In each miracle of Jesus we catch a foretaste of heaven – a place where the blind see, the lame walk, the sick are made well. In his multiplication of the fish and the loaves we see a glimpse of a heavenly realm where there is no hunger or poverty. In his love of sinners we see a heavenly realm where God has welcomed the lost. In his teachings about the first and the last, and our need to become like children, and his call for us to be servants he teaches us about how life works in heaven. **Read Matthew 18:1-4.** What does this tell us about heaven, and how might it shape how we live today to prepare ourselves for heaven? **Read John 14:1-4.** Now, let's look at Jesus' resurrection body and see what we might infer about our heavenly bodies from these passages. **Read Luke 24:28-35, 36-43.** What was Jesus' resurrection body capable of?

Thursday – The Heavenly Vision of the Apostles. In the New Testament the Church was meant to be a community that gives a foretaste of heaven and, when believers gather for worship Christ is present in their midst in a way that foreshadows heaven. **Read I Corinthians 15:35-58.** Verse 58 gives us the implication of our hope in heaven for our daily lives. Hebrews refers to heaven as our "Sabbath rest" – when you think of rest and renewal, what do you think of? How might heaven be like this? While the apostles speak frequently of our hope for eternal life, they seldom try to describe what heaven will be like. Why do you think this is?

Friday – The New Jerusalem. Today we turn to the Book of Revelation where we have the most detailed pictures of what heaven will be like. As you read, ask what the author is trying to convey about heaven by his metaphorical description. **Read Revelation 21 and 22:1-5.** How can your hope in heaven positively shape your Christian life and faith today? This life is the journey that has heaven as its final destination. Are you preparing for heaven now? How?