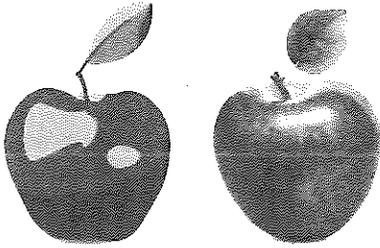


Christ Will Rule



Topic

Christ's rule in eternity

Theme

Christ will rule for all eternity on the new earth.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will set his affections on things above as he anticipates eternity with Christ.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 16
- Worn out item from your past

Scripture Focus

Matt. 6:19–21; John 14:1–3; Phil. 3:12–21; Col. 3:1–3; Rev. 21:1–22:6

Summary

Christ will rule on the new earth for all eternity. The new earth will be a paradise. Being forever in the presence of Christ will be a source of continuous joy. Believers should anticipate eternity by setting their minds on things above and laying up treasures in Heaven.

Outline

I. Christ's Rule of the New Earth

- A. Christ's presence (Rev. 21:3–8, 21–23; 22:1, 2, 5, 6)
- B. Christ's new city (John 14:1–3; Rev. 21:9–21)
- C. Christ's new earth (Rev. 21:1, 2, 24–27; 22:3)

II. Our Anticipation of Eternity

- A. Seek the things that are above (Phil. 3:12–14; Col. 3:1, 3)
- B. Set your mind on things above (Phil. 3:17–21; Col. 3:2)
- C. Lay up treasure in Heaven (Matt. 6:19–21; Phil. 3:14, 15; Col. 3:2)

Memory Verses

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"
(Colossians 3:1, 2).

That Will Never Happen

Draw a line across the board. Have learners suggest milestones adults look forward to in life (e.g., graduating from college, landing a job, getting married, buying a house, having children). Have them identify in their minds where they are at on the time line.

ASK: What major events now in your past at one time seemed like they would never happen?

ASK: What milestones or major events in your life are you still looking forward to?

ASK: How does looking forward to those future events affect you attitude and actions now?

If no one suggested eternity with Christ for the time line, add it to the end of the line. This lesson will help us understand the importance of anticipating eternity with Christ. It may seem like it will never happen. But it is coming. It is a part of reality. What we anticipate in life will influence our affections. Our affections need to be set on things above rather than on things on earth.

The Thing to End All Things

Talk about a possession you anticipated getting as a child or as an adult (e.g., a toy, a bike, a car). If possible, have the item with you in class or bring pictures of it to share. Talk about the emotions you felt as you anticipated getting the item. Share how you thought the possession would be the “thing to end all things.” Then share how your emotions have changed since getting it. Perhaps you eventually threw the item away or rolled it into the junkyard as it wore out and you began to anticipate something else.

ASK: Which of your possessions did you think would be the “thing to end all things”? (Q1)

ASK: What has happened to your desire for the possession since then? (Q2)

This lesson will help us understand the importance of anticipating eternity with Christ. Being in Jesus’ presence will never grow old. It will be forever amazing and better than any earthly possession. What we anticipate in life will influence our affections. Our affections need to be set on things above rather than on things on earth.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The previous lesson presented the reality of God’s future judgment on the lost

in the Tribulation as well as at the Great White Throne Judgment. That is a reality we would like to ignore, but reminding ourselves of it serves to spur us to share the gospel. By contrast, eternity with Christ is a reality we should anticipate every day. As we look forward to Heaven, we should set our affections on things above.

I. Christ's Rule of the New Earth

After the Great White Throne Judgment, God will destroy the present heavens and earth with fire (2 Pet. 3:10–13). Christ will set up His rule on a new earth and in the New Jerusalem.

A. Christ's presence (Rev. 21:3–8, 21–23; 22:1, 2, 5, 6)

Heaven will be a fantastic place to spend eternity. But it won't be the new earth or the amazing New Jerusalem that will capture our attention the most. God's presence with us will be the most wonderful part of Heaven.

READ: Revelation 21:3. **ASK:** What do you think you will appreciate most about being in God's presence forever? (Q3)

God dwelt in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve until their sin separated them from Him (Rom. 5:12). Later, God dwelt in the tabernacle and then the temple. At the appointed time, Jesus came to earth and dwelt with humanity (John 1:14). In the present age, God the Holy Spirit dwells in believers (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). But the continuing presence of our sin nature in our sin-cursed bodies keeps us from fully appreciating God's presence in us. We repeatedly grieve and quench the Holy Spirit by our disobedience (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). When Christ returns for the church, we will be freed from sin and receive glorified bodies (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). We will enjoy God's presence in Heaven and return with Him to earth to rule in the Millennium. Our presence with God will then continue for eternity on the new earth.

ASK: What types of memories might trouble us and cause us to cry? (Q4) *The pain or death of a loved one; a sad story from our past; loss of a sentimental possession.*

READ: Revelation 21:4. **ASK:** What will God do to all the memories that cause us to cry? (Q5) *He will get rid of them. We won't have lingering memories from our earthly lives that will cause us to be sad in Heaven.*

God will "wipe away all tears" in Heaven. That doesn't mean He will cheer us up when we are feeling blue. It means we will never have a reason to feel sad. We will never have a reason to cry. There will be no more death, no more pain, and no more sorrow. Painful memories will trouble us no more in God's presence in Heaven. No one will cause us harm or hurt our feelings.

Christ said He will make all things new (21:5). Nothing will ever die, decay, or wear out. It is hard to imagine a world without destruction and degeneration. There will be no more wrinkle cream, Tylenol, or Geritol. But we will get used to such a world because it will be that way forever. Christ told John to write because His words are "faithful and true" (21:5; 22:6). He then said to John, "It is done"

(21:6). Christ is so powerful and trustworthy that we can peer into eternity and be so confident of Christ's work that it is as if it is already done. Eternity with Christ will happen. It is a future reality we can look forward to with absolute assurance.

Christ will also offer an actual "fountain of water of life freely" to all who thirst (21:6; 22:1) as well as the actual tree of life (22:2). We won't have physical thirst and hunger in Heaven, so this must be referring to the spiritual blessings Christ offers to us. Our souls will be always satisfied and refreshed in Heaven. Christ makes this offer as "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Christ is eternal. He always has been and always will be. Christ's offer will stand forever. The satisfying and refreshing blessings of Heaven will never end.

Heaven won't be something we just admire as if we were visiting a museum, though it might seem like that at first. Christ will share the blessings of Heaven with us as heirs (21:7). Heaven will be like owning the museum and living in it. We will have different responsibilities and privileges based on the rewards we receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but all of us will be full heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16, 17). This setting sits in stark contrast to the existence of those who experience eternal death without Christ in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 21:8).

READ: Revelation 21:22. **ASK:** Why is it significant that Jesus is called the "Lamb" in this verse? (Q6) *It is through His past sacrifice on the cross as the Lamb of God that we will have access to Heaven and to God.*

The fact that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the city's temple means there will be no barriers to God, no veils or walls to separate us from Him. Jesus' scars on His hands, feet, and side will be a reminder of the high price of our redemption. We will forever see Him as the Lamb of God Who took away our sins and allowed us free access to God as His fellow heir.

There won't even be darkness on the new earth (22:5). The Lamb will be its light (21:23). This means the sun and moon will be obsolete.

B. Christ's new city (John 14:1-3; Rev. 21:9-21)

Though being with Christ forever will be the best aspect of Heaven, we will thoroughly enjoy Christ's new city, the New Jerusalem.

READ: John 14:1-3.

Most likely Jesus was talking about the New Jerusalem when He told His disciples He was leaving to prepare a place for them. We are included in this promise. The words "for you" are encouraging in this passage (John 14:2). Jesus is preparing a place for us. The heavenly Home will be personal, a gift from Christ to us. Its description is what you would expect to see coming from Heaven.

READ: Revelation 21:2. **ASK:** What would you expect a city to look like that was adorned as a bride for her husband? (Q7) *Radiant, beautiful, pure, set apart.*

The New Jerusalem will be the perfect place to live. God will build it out of love and by His wisdom. Nothing, not even today's grandest metropolis could ever come close to matching the splendor of the New Jerusalem.

READ: Revelation 21:9–21. **ASK:** What two descriptions of the New Jerusalem do you find most fascinating? (Q8)

Christ's new city will be nearly 1,400 miles wide, long, and high! Approximately the same square footage as California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota combined. That size alone is amazing without mentioning the brilliance of the gold and precious stones that adorn the city's foundation and walls. People often talk about Heaven having "pearly" gates, but each gate will actually be a single large pearl. Clearly God will not hold back when it comes to the splendor of the New Jerusalem. And His building materials will be far beyond the quality you could find on earth. The world's largest and most brilliant jewels would be not be brilliant enough for building materials for the New Jerusalem.

ASK: Why will God adorn the New Jerusalem so lavishly? (Q9) *It will both reflect God's glory (21:11) and demonstrate His love for the redeemed.*

ASK: Why would God reveal so many details about the New Jerusalem in His Word? (Q10) *To illustrate His glory and majesty. Also perhaps to help us anticipate eternity and realize the blessings of Heaven make sacrificial service on earth well worthwhile.*

C. Christ's new earth (Rev. 21:1, 2, 24–27; 22:3)

The New Jerusalem will descend from above and will settle on the new earth (21:2). We don't know a lot about the new earth other than it will have "no more sea" (21:1). That does not mean it won't have bodies of water. It just won't have three-fourths of the surface covered with water like our present earth does. The fact that we won't need water to live is probably a reason for not having such a large area of the new earth covered with it.

The new earth will undoubtedly be larger than our current earth. The size of the New Jerusalem would warrant a larger earth. The new earth will also be a perfect environment. The weather will always be enjoyable. There will never be a reason to complain about God's creation.

ASK: What about this current earth are you glad won't be a part of Heaven? (Q11) *Hurricanes, tornadoes, heat waves, droughts, famines, earthquakes, and the threat of meteorites.*

Ruling positions will be part of the rewards Christ gives at the Judgment Seat (2 Cor. 5:10).

Apparently there will be people groups or nations on the new earth (21:24). The nations and their kings will "bring their glory and honour" into the New Jerusalem. All glory and honor will belong to Christ. No one will be going to those ruling and reigning with Christ to give them glory and honor (21:25, 26).

Access to the city will never be denied to those written in the "Lamb's book of life" (21:27). The gates will always be swung open. Since there will be no more sin, no one who defiles, abominates, or lies would ever have the opportunity to enter the city.

There will be work to do on the earth (22:3). Work is not a part of the curse. God gave Adam work to do in the Garden of Eden before Adam sinned. Work is just harder now because of the Fall (Gen. 3:17–19). Work in eternity will be fulfilling and enjoyable. There won't be any clock watching or skipping out early in Heaven! Everyone will love their job and be glad for the opportunity to serve Christ.

In our finite minds, we cannot fully comprehend what the New Jerusalem and new earth will be like. But God has told us enough details to cause us to anticipate eternity and to desire to live for Him now.

II. Our Anticipation of Eternity

A. Seek the things that are above (Phil. 3:12–14; Col. 3:1, 3)

Paul told the Church at Colosse to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). Christ's position in Heaven was the focus of lesson 5. Christ is seated in Heaven because of His work on the cross and His resurrection. His presence in Heaven makes seeking Heavenly things worth the effort. His position in Heaven also guarantees us a home in Heaven in eternity (3:3).

The verb “seek” should actually be translated “keep on seeking.” This is a life-long endeavor and encompasses all we are. It is much more than just acknowledging that the “things which are above” are important. And it is more than simply giving lip service to them. It requires action and direction.

The “things which are above” include God's will, His desire for the salvation of mankind, and His desire for believers to serve Him and grow to be like Christ. In other words, that which is real and everlasting. The apostle Paul described his life's focus on becoming like Christ.

READ: Philippians 3:12–14. **ASK:** Describe Paul's personal testimony about seeking “those things which are above.” (Q12) *He pressed on toward the goal of fully knowing Christ and becoming like Him.*

The “prize” for Paul was to be glorified by Christ when he reached Heaven. Glorification refers to God taking away our sin nature and giving us a new body untouched by sin and unable to sin. It will take place at the Rapture when the living believers are caught up to Heaven and the dead in Christ are resurrected. Until then, becoming like Christ was Paul's focus. That focus demanded Paul give his all (Phil. 1:21).

B. Set your mind on things above (Phil. 3:17–21; Col. 3:2)

In Colossians 3:2, Paul urged the Colossians to set their “affection on things above.” That means to stay mentally focused on things of God. While we are to be responsible stewards of the possessions God has given to us, we must not let them become what we center our lives around.

READ: Colossians 3:2. **DISCUSS:** How might you know what your mind is centered on? What are some revealing questions you could ask yourself? (Q13) *What do you get excited about? What occupies your thoughts when you have*

a moment to think? What do you look forward to? What do you do when you are alone? Do you plan ways to serve Christ?

The worldly mind is focused on “earthly things” (Phil. 3:19). Paul considered those with a worldly mind to be “enemies of the cross of Christ.” The cross is about humility and love for others as perfectly demonstrated by Christ (2:6–8). The enemies of the cross want nothing to do with a life of humble service.

READ: Philippians 3:17–19. **ASK:** What is the focus of those who are enemies of the cross of Christ? (Q14) *The now; earthly things; whatever they think will satisfy their sinful desires.*

Society treats the present as if it is eternal, living as if this life will last forever. They deny death is coming and try to delay the signs that their bodies are breaking down and dying. Cosmetic injections make old skin appear younger, but it is still old skin. As believers, we must not get caught up in living as if our present life is all there is and that it will last forever. Our attitudes and ambitions should reflect a heavenly focus. We should not live as if we are “unpacked” and here on earth to stay.

READ: Philippians 3:20, 21.

Paul viewed earth as a “foreign country” and Heaven as his home. He recognized that his citizenship was in Heaven. So he didn’t get comfortable on earth. Instead, he used his life to “pack” for Heaven.



RESOURCE: Display resource 17. **ASK:** Describe the *attitudes* of a person who is “packing” for Heaven. (Record or reveal answers.) (Q15) *Grateful; content; joyful; humble; loving; motivated.*

ASK: What are the *ambitions* of a person who is “packing” for Heaven? (Reveal or record answers.) (Q16) *To know God; to serve God; to grow in Christlikeness; to witness; to know God’s Word; to love others.*

When we focus on eternity, we don’t waste time investing in earthly endeavors and goals. We won’t get attached to this world as if it is all there is to live for. We keep our primary focus on our home in Heaven.

C. Lay up treasure in Heaven (Matt. 6:19–21; Phil. 3:14, 15; Col. 3:2)

Paul’s instructions in Colossians and the example of his life in Philippians are really echoes of what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19–21. Jesus said not to lay up treasures here on earth because everything on earth is temporary. Critters, corrosion, and criminals all destroy earthly treasures. But none of them can tamper with the treasures we lay up in Heaven.

Treasure in Heaven is eternal. It includes the crowns Christ will award at the Judgment Seat. It also includes the results of our service for God here on earth. Those we lead to Christ will be in Heaven forever as will those fellow

believers we disciple and train. Those treasures will bring joy to us and glory to God forever.

Jesus said that where our treasure is, there our hearts would be too (6:21). Living for eternity takes heart. It is not something we can do by simply going through the motions. That is why Paul said to stay mentally focused on the things of God (Col. 3:2). And it is why his personal testimony is followed by an appeal to the Philippians to be “thus minded” (Phil. 3:15). He wanted them to share in his press toward the goal of Christlikeness (3:14).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Anticipate Eternity

ASK: What evidence of anticipating eternity is there in your life? (Q17)

Decisions are weighed in light of eternity. Use of time is shaped by eternal values. Excitement and joy comes from anticipating Heaven.

Challenge your learners to purposefully anticipate Heaven. Not so they sit around and daydream, but so their hearts and minds will be set on God’s work rather than on earthly treasures. Remind them of the opening activity and the futility of living for earthly things.

For further help, direct your learners back to question 13. Ask them the revealing questions you came up with as a class. Have them personalize those questions to help them begin to understand what their mind is centered on. (Q18)

Live in the Real—Course Wrap-up

Review the following course wrap up with your learners. Pray that the Biblical realities you covered in this course would become part of their lives. And that your learners would order their lives by them.

Revelation 22:15 describes the people who will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. The last description is particularly relevant to this course. This verse describes the lost as those who love and make, or practice, a lie. In other words, those who make up their own reality and live according to it. This course was designed to challenge you to live in the real, applying Biblical realities to your life. The first lesson talked about the need to wake up spiritually because the lost need you to shine the light of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:34). So what you do with the Biblical realities covered in this course is vital. If you ignore them and decide to live in your own reality as do the lost, you are doing both you and them a grave disservice.

Expect living in the real to take a lifetime, but also expect maturation along the way. Refer to the Biblical realities in this course often until they become part of you. And continue to study the Bible. The Epistles in particular will guide you in living in the real. Get to know them well.

Summary and Memory Verses

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 13 or

Look for other Truth for Living Bible studies from Regular Baptist Press. They will expand and reinforce the Biblical realities covered in this course.

| Living in the Real | |
|---|---|
| 1. Wake up to reality! | 8. Handle God's Word as God intended. |
| 2. Live in response to Who God is. | 9. Take an active part in Christ's church. |
| 3. Live in response to God's person. | 10. Exercise your spiritual gifts. |
| 4. Walk in newness of life as God's redeemed. | 11. Live in light of the Judgment Seat of Christ. |
| 5. Boldly approach the throne of grace. | 12. Share the gospel with the lost. |
| 6. Live in the power of the Spirit. | 13. Anticipate eternity with your mind set on things above. |
| 7. Value and study the Bible as God's very words. | |

use the following: Anticipate eternity with your mind set on things above. Use this resource as a way to review the key responses to the Biblical realities covered in this course.

Encourage learners to memorize Revelation 4:10 and 11. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.