

## THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES:

What Lies Before Us?

Scripture Reading:

Message 13

Intro: We recently heard Lou Sutera again. He spoke on loving God with all our heart. One of the areas he mentioned was that we are to love His appearing, His return. He said that one of the reasons we do not love His appearing is because we have it so good in our country. Most of us live in the rich middle class, not in deep poverty and we have a lot we look forward to in this world, that is why we don't love His appearing. He read a number of statements by some writer. He went so fast I could only get part of one down. It was something like this: If I am delighted with some earthly prospect more than that of Christ's return I do not truly love Him with all my heart.

The Bible teaches us to look for His appearing. Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And again in Titus 2:13 "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ..."

In the last message we had begun our studies on the millennium. As I began to prepare for this message, I wondered how much I was duplicating a series I did some time ago. So I checked back. You see, several years ago I did a series called, "Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey of the Church Age Believer." Now that series deals with personal eschatology. In this present series we are dealing with general eschatology. But in the millennium these two meet.

And so, this morning, I would like to summarize from the millennium to the eternal state in one message. If you would like to follow on from here, let me encourage you to get the series, "Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey of the Church Age Believer". If you are new to the topic of prophecy, you will want to listen to the entire series.

Now the recording in that series was not done well. Our sound people have turned the tapes into usable cd's. So my apologies for any sound problems that may still be there

and my thanks to our sound people for all the work you did in making that series available.

### 3. Descriptions of the millennium

In our last message we had introduced the millennium. We had covered the first 75 days after the tribulation which would bring in the millennium.

Let us go back and read Revelation 20:1-3 (read). I had an interesting time checking what some of the older amillennial commentaries had to say on this. Let me read one comment for you from Matthew Poole's commentary, "We are now come to the darkest part of the whole revelation. What is meant by the *thousand years*, and the *first and second resurrection*, and by *Gog and Magog*, [#Re 20:1-15](#), or the *new heavens and new earth*, and the *Jerusalem coming down from heaven*, discoursed on, [#Re 21:1-22:21](#), is very hard to say, and possibly much more cannot with any probability be conjectured as to them than hath been already said. I shall only tell my reader that, leaving him to judge what is most probable, and leaving it to the Divine Providence to give us a certain and infallible exposition of what is contained in these last three chapters."

I propose to you that when we come to Revelation 20, we have not come to the darkest part of Revelation. We have come to some of the most exciting Bible truths in all the Bible! These last three chapters of Revelation shed the greatest light on the future. Now if one does not interpret the Bible literally, then certainly, these are dark chapters. No amount of study will explain them.

I have often said this: Read the first three chapters of the Bible. Interpret them literally, and you have an exact account of how all things began. Then go to the last three chapters. Interpret them in the same way, and you have an exact account of all that lies in the future.

So, let me give you a basic chronology of events from the church age to the eternal state, using the book of Revelation. For those who wish greater detail on the millennium and onward, you may request the series called "Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey of the Church Age Believer."

In Revelation 2-3 we have the Church age, as I see it. In chapters 4-19 we have the tribulation time. In 20:1-6, we have the millennium. That is where we are at present (read).

Let me say here, the millennium is called the regeneration in Matthew 19. This earth is going to undergo a kind of rebirth and great changes will take place. These changes will affect the animal world as Romans 8 indicates. (Expand?)

Now let me mention one other thing that is very important to the millennium. Ezekiel prophecies many important things regarding the age we are in right now, before the tribulation. Then he prophecies of events that will take place in the tribulation. We find many of those in chapters 37-39.

Then in chapter 40 he begins to describe a temple. This description goes on for 7 chapters. Now this temple here described has never existed. So the question is, do these chapters describe a real temple that will some day be built, or does it speak of something spiritually. Well, all the detailed measurements and descriptions of sacrifices etc... in my estimation, must speak of a real temple sometime yet future. And I believe, along with many others that it refers to the temple that will be in operation during the millennium.

Now that raises all kinds of questions and all kinds of concerns. Some even say, "It is not possible, after the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that there will be another temple in the future with sacrifices and all." In the 1700 and 1800's, when the literal views of prophecy were again being taught, they said,

"Well, look at this. Israel will some day be a nation again. God will draw the Jews out of all lands and rebuild the nation of Israel." And the opposition said, "Those promises must have been spiritual. They could not possibly be fulfilled. There is no possible way." And the newly excited students of the Word said, "How it will happen, we do not know. We do know from these Scriptures that it will happen." And happen it did.

So, people say to me: What will these sacrifices be for? How could this even fit into the plan of God? And I say, I have some speculations, but frankly I don't know. One thing I do know. God says it will happen and God does not do things without a good reason. So I just believe the Bible for what it says.

I might mention one other thing here that is very important to this time period. We find a most fascinating mention of it in Isaiah 11. This chapter begins the rule of the Rod from the stem of Jesse. That is the rule of the Lord Jesus in the millennium. Now let us read verses 6-9 (read).

That is the regeneration that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 19. Then we go to Romans 8 (read 18-22). Now this time period does not just come and then go. It lasts for 1000 years! And we will be there with Christ!

But after 1000 years, this period comes to a close and a short and terrible time comes. We read of it in Revelatin 20:7-10 (read).

#### E. The Short Season

##### 1. Events of this time

We are into the final brief time period before the eternal state. From Revelation 20:3, we learn that this time period will last only a little while (read). The Greek says it will be for a micros chronos. We get our word micro from the word micros and our word chronology from the word

chronos. It will be a micro time period; a short period of time.

We learn something about the devil from this time period and that is that one thousand years in hell do not improve him one iota. When he is released, he is right back at his oldest tricks in the hat; deception. He deceives people by the droves. We learn one great truth from the millennium; Man in his fallen state is fallen still, even though the environment is perfect. Man in his fallen condition is not fit for eternity with God. Something radical has to happen to man.

We learn another thing about the devil (read 8-9). He still hates Jerusalem! Now notice what this city is called. First it is the camp of the saints. This God's favorite piece of real estate. In all the universe, there is no place like this one. Second, it is called the beloved city! It is THE BELOVED CITY! My wife and I traveled to various countries recently on a CD. A cd does not use much fuel and you can travel all over for little cost. You can travel to many great cities; Rome, Paris; London; Constantinople and on and on. But none of those are THE BELOVED CITY. And the devil does not go after Rome or Paris or London. He goes after Jerusalem. Jerusalem is God's city.

Revelation 20:9-10 tells us how the devil comes to his end. Fire comes down from God out of heaven and destroys the devil's army. And in verse 10, we are told that the devil who deceived this army of people is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet already are. And the Scripture says this: And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever!

## 2. The closing of this time

But we are not quite done. Now something very important must happen. It is judgment time! (read 20:11-15). It is generally held by those who hold the premillennial view (not pretribulational), that this judgment is a judgment of all the lost

from creation to the end. Up until this point, no unsaved person has ever been resurrected. But most, if not all of the righteous have been resurrected before this time. You see, Jesus Christ was resurrected 2000 years ago. At the same time, the graves of many were opened and they were resurrected. At the rapture, all the saved of the Church age are resurrected. Then, after the tribulation, all the Christians who died during the tribulation and all the OT saints are resurrected. All of that is called the resurrection of the just or the first resurrection. The only righteous of whom we do not read that they are resurrected are the righteous of the millennium. And it is possible that the righteous during this time do not die.

But when we come to Revelation 20 and we read about the great white throne judgment, now we are talking about the resurrection of the unjust. And we read in verse 12 that books are opened. And then another book is opened, and we are told what book that is. It is the book of life.

So let me tell you a little about these books. The book of life, is the book of those who have eternal life. The once saved always saved view has tremendous difficulty with this book because Revelation 3:5 indicates that Christians who do not overcome will be blotted out of this book. That does not fit that view at all, so the only way out is to call it something else, and so they call it the book of the living. If a Christian does not overcome, the Lord will take his life, and he will not be in the book of the living. But in Revelation 3:5 it is not only the book of life. It is the book of THE life. That is only one book. And those whose names are written therein, who do not overcome, will have their names removed.

But I am often asked, "Why would this book be opened, when only the lost are judged here?" The NT talks a number of times about those who will say in that day, "Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in Your name? Why are we rejected? We healed people and did miracles in

Your name." And I think the Lord will go to the book of life and say, "This gentleman, this lady argues that he or she should be allowed to enter glory. Will you please open the book of life and check and see if their name is there." And maybe there is someone there who was a Christian once. And the Lord opens this book and says, "Yes, here is where your name should be. But it has been blotted out. You will have to wait until I open the books. There it will be recorded why your name was blotted out."

So let us now consider the books, plural, that were opened. What are these books? Well, look at verse 13. Here we find what these books are (read). These books are, I have no doubt, a record of everything each person has ever done. I should spend a whole message right here. Let me tell you this in brief. There is no judgment that has as its purpose to judge people to see if they are fit to go to heaven. Why is that? Because that decision we make ourselves. If we do not repent of our sins and receive Christ, we are lost. If we truly repent and receive Christ, then we are saved. That judgment we make ourselves.

On the other hand, every judgment is according to works. The saved will be judged and rewarded according to their works. The unsaved will be judged and punished according to their works. People sometimes tell me that a sin is a sin is a sin. No! Some sins are much worse than others and will receive much more serious judgment. You say then, "Will there be degrees of punishment?" Of course. Do we think God is unjust?

You see, while it took only one book to record all the names of the lost, it takes many books to record all their works. Here, absolutely everything will be judged. Indecent dress; smoking; murder; bad thoughts; bad sights, everything is recorded here; everything. And all will be judged and punishment will be meted out accordingly. You see, if they were not punished according to what they have done, there need be no judgment. Just send them to hell!

If we grasped and believed this judgment, not one person in this room would ever be lost. We would get saved. But the devil is still in the business of deceiving.

I am happy to tell you that after this judgment, no bad things ever happen again! So we are ready to consider the last section of this series called:

#### F. The New Heavens and New Earth

If you are interested in learning more, I encourage you to get the series, "Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey of the Church Age Believer." Now I must briefly conclude. First, John sees a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Now let me tell you one of the most important words here. It is the word 'new'. There are two Greek words for new. One is *neos* and the other *kainos*. The word *neos* means something brand new. The word means something that has been renewed. It is that second word that is used here. It is not a brand new heaven, it is a renewed heaven. And notice that it is the 'first' heaven. I think it refers to the atmospheric heaven. Today, the Kyoto agreement is getting much attention. But here is God's Kyoto agreement. After the final judgment there will be a new heaven!

Then there will be a new earth. Let me tell you something important. When God created the heavens and the earth, He created them to last for all eternity future.

Then let me show you something else that is very important. We find it in verse 2 (read). In John 14, Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also." Well, at the rapture or at death, that is the place we go. But then we come back with Christ to earth to reign with Him for a thousand years. Then after the thousand years and the final judgment, then He renews the first heaven and the first earth and onto that earth this beautiful place ascends.



Now why does this city come to this new earth? Here is a most incredible thing. Let us read it in verse 3 (read). Now I want you to notice carefully what it says, because if you think I said it, you won't believe it. Look at it. It says, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them!" I wonder if you can truly believe these words! We have been so wrongly taught for so long, that these are incredibly hard to believe. That is why I said, "Read the first three chapters of the Bible. Believe them for exactly what they say and you have a very accurate account of creation. Then read the last three chapters. Believe them for exactly what they say, and you have an accurate account of what is coming in the future!"

CONCL: Well, let me briefly remind us of what we have seen in this series. We began by looking at things important to understand when one considers Bible prophecy. We considered the major views; premillennialism; postmillennialism and amillennialism. We considered how important Bible doctrine is and how important prophecy is in doctrine and why there is such a dislike for doctrine today.

Then we turned to the Word of God to see what the closing days of the Church age, the age in which we find ourselves, will be like. We looked at what things would be like in the Church and in Israel, events we see unfolding right before our very eyes.

Then we considered in some detail the rapture of the Church and I gave you some reasons why I believe He will rapture the Church before the tribulation. Then we spent some time on the tribulation. We saw how it would start. What would happen during the tribulation and how it would come to a close.

Then we briefly looked at the millennium and the short season which follows it. We saw that it closes with the great white throne judgment. And then we saw the most glorious truth of all. After the great white throne judgment, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. And the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven onto this new earth. And God Almighty will move from the third heaven to the New Jerusalem, and He will dwell with man for all eternity. What lies before us is so very incredible; and what lies before the lost is so very horrible, that not a

person on earth should go to hell. And so from now until He comes, may we be bearers of the good news to as many as possible. Even so, come Lord Jesus.