

HEAVEN:
The Place of Everlasting Paradise!

Message 13

Scripture: Revelation 19:1-16

INTRO: Our subject is Paradise. We normally call this heaven. When we refer to heaven, we refer to all that which follows after we die or after we are raptured. So much of this is set out very clearly for us in the prophetic Scriptures. But somehow we do not make the connection that those prophetic Scriptures and the experience of those who have died.

In these messages, we have already considered what people do in Paradise before they are resurrected, and now we have been seeking to get into our minds what people do in Paradise after they are resurrected. We have seen four resurrections of the righteous already. If the rapture happens after the tribulation, then there would be only three up to where we are now.

Christ was the first One resurrected. We did not stop to see what He has been doing since He was resurrected. If you study that, you know one thing, He is not idle. Let me give you in point form what I covered in a number of Ascension Day messages. 1 He baptizes all new believers with the Holy Spirit. 2 Wherever two or three are gathered, there He is present in a special way with them. 3 He sits on the throne of grace and gives divine help to every believer who comes to Him for it. 4 He gives every believer access to God in heaven. 5 He aids believers. 6 He defends believers from the accusations of the devil. 7 He prays for us. 8 We saw that Jesus sanctifies the believer. 9 Jesus mediates between a righteous God and sinful man.

Of those who were resurrected shortly after Christ was resurrected we know nothing more. But we do know more of what happens to Church age believers after the Church is caught up. I believe one of the first things will be the judgment seat of Christ. I expect that the marriage of Christ and the Church will then take place and the believers of the Church age will enjoy a very special relationship with Christ from that time on. We will get to know Him in ways not possible now.

Then we have the resurrection of the two witnesses, and we are not given any further specific information regarding

what they do after their resurrection, but I have no doubt they will have a very important place in the economy of God.

But when we come to the end of the tribulation, we find that the resurrected Church has another tremendous experience. That is our topic this morning.

4. The Church's return to earth

For those of you who remember the 'Pilgrim's Progress' series, you may well remember some of the points because in looking at what the believer experiences in Paradise after the resurrection is the same as what I covered there. I am a chronological thinker and did not rightly know how to treat this without some duplication. But in talking with some of you, I found that some duplication may be valuable. So that is what I am doing. I trust there will be enough differences so that it is not boring to those who remember the other messages.

Last Sunday we read Revelation 19:7-9. Let us read them again. Verses 11-16 now give us what follows this scene (read). In Revelation 4:1 a door was opened in heaven and John was invited in. Now heaven is opened, and Christ and the Church will come out. The scene before us is a very interesting and captivating one. There is a white horse. And on this horse is a rider and He is called 'Faithful' and 'True'. And our text says that in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Now let me describe the scene on earth at this moment, because there is a reason the Lord makes war. Let me describe the situation in Israel and Jerusalem when the Lord returns by taking you back to 1948. Six million Jews had died. The second World War was over and something had to be done. On May 15, 1948, the short white haired David Ben Gurion stood up to read Israel's declaration of independence. Five Arab nations not only stood on their borders, ready to push them into the Mediteranian Sea, but they were already in the land.

I cannot paint a more hopeless picture for you than the one that shows Israel at that time. It would be something like our little hamlet taking on the rest of Canada. Sheer desperation drove the Jews to such a risk. And then the war began. Israel had been denied the right by Britain to buy guns and ammunition and the Arabs had hoards of both. It was a war that should have lasted a few days but desperation drove the Jews on. It is hard to believe what this handful of Jews accomplished, but the odds took their toll, and a month later, they were within a few days of being finished off.

But a miracle took place. An ordinary miracle. A ceasefire was called for 30 days. The Arab nations rested up, but the Jews doubled their efforts. The ceasefire was called June the 12. July 9, it would run out. When the war resumed, it took that tiny nation 8 days to bring the Arab nations to their knees to beg for another cease fire.

If you are interested in this history, there is a book in our small library called, "O Jerusalem". It is the best account of those days I have ever read. You may wish to read it for yourself.

Now why did I tell you that little story? Because when we read Revelation 19, and see the Lord on a white horse in a heaven that has been opened, on earth, Israel is once more only moments away from complete annihilation. Jacob and Esau meet again, and Jacob is about to die. For once, after so many tries, the world will be truly, "Judenrein", cleansed from every Jew.

But in heaven, the Lord Jesus sits on a white horse. He is poised and ready to exit heaven. I want you to see this (read 19:11). On earth, the picture is a disaster. Go with me to Zechariah 14 (1-2). Go to Luke 21, where the Lord Jesus paints this picture in other words (read 22-26).

This morning as I went over these notes I wondered what event triggers the Lord's return to

earth? And as I thought about that, it dawned on me what it may be. In Romans the Apostle slips a section into the book that for beginners might seem unrelated to the book, but it has to do with Israel. The gist of the message is that though the Church has been born, Israel has been cut out of from the olive tree, and the Church grafted in. But Paul says that if their cutting off brought about wonderful things, the coming into existence of the Church, what will their re-acceptance bring about (read Romans 11:11-15). Now look at verses 25-27. I should not be surprised in the least, when those few Jews who are left turn to Christ at the end of the tribulation, and just before they too are exterminated, the Lord has His cue to return and save them physically as well! Now turn to Zechariah 12 to see how they respond to Christ's return (read vs. 10).

Now let us see what happens (read Revelation 19:12-16). This is how the second coming of Christ begins. Jesus exits heaven on a white horse and the Church follows Him in like manner. All of this happens in that which we call 'heaven'. What we have here is that momentous time when the second coming of Christ begins. Now I want to say something here. There is a vast difference between the rapture and the second coming of Christ. I have given you a sheet giving 14 differences. There are more. When the Lord Jesus exits heaven on the white horse, the second coming has begun.

Go back to Zecharia 14 now. We read earlier in verses 1-2 how the nations were gathered against Jerusalem and the houses were rifled and the women ravished. Now look at verses 3-7 (read). Now go back to Luke 21. Here we saw men's hearts failing them for fear. Now look at verse 27 (read).

And now go back once more to Revelation 19 (read 11-15). You do understand how grapes were trampled. When I did the 'Wine and the Bible' series I gave you descriptions of trampling grapes. Hundreds of pounds of grapes were put

into vats carved into the stone. Those who made the juice then took off their sandals, washed their feet and took hold of the rope overhead and trampled the grapes until the juice ran from this upper vat into the lower one. When we have the bread and the wine, or I would say grape juice, at communion, we picture Christ's first coming as the Bread of Life and His second coming, the One who treads the winepress.

Let me give you this picture from another Scripture in Isaiah 63 (read 63:1-6). Let me take you to one more picture in Revelation 6 (read 12-17). Now I ask you, what do people in Paradise experience after their resurrection? Here we have some of that.

I want to ask you a question: How have you pictured the second coming of Christ in your mind? Let me tell you the picture I had growing up. Some day Christ would come as the lightening comes from the east and flashes to the west (Matt. 24:27) and in a nano-second it would be all over. And in the next second, all mankind would be gathered before the judgment throne to see if they were good enough to go to heaven. If they were, they went to heaven. If they were not they went to hell. And in moments, it is all over.

But though it is true that His appearance is sudden, it is not suddenly all over. I take you back to Revelation 19 to see what happens (read 17-18). Let me just mention that I am giving you a very shortened version of what all happens. I think now that when the Lord returns, we could be days or even weeks, and possibly more from the time when the tribulation will be over. You see, an angel announces to vulture type birds to gather for feast, because they will have plenty to eat. You see, the Lord does not return and its all over. Mankind sees the Lord coming, and while the Lord takes care of some very important matters first, they have time to do something as well. Look now at verse 19 (read).

There is in Israel a valley, a low lying area that runs south for some 200 miles. It is called the Valley of Armageddon. And here the antichrist will gather the captains and the mighty men together and here he will go against the One on the white horse and His armies. The outcome of this battle is so certain to the Lord, that in advance he calls for the birds to come for the feast.

And maybe like the Philistine Giant Goliath, the antichrist says, "What, are we but dogs that You come against us with a white robed throng? Who goes to war with white robes? Keep coming and we will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" And maybe like Goliath of old, he hears these words, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of heaven, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Palestinians to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands."

Now look at the outcome. It is given to us in the Bible (read 19-21). Note with me that it says the beast, that is the antichrist, and the false Prophet, maybe we could call him the Pope, were captured. They were captured, caught, laid hold of. Now let me show you a little more of how this takes place in chapter 14 (read 18-20). This is a real battle. There is real death. But there are resurrected people involved! You never pictured life after Paradise like this did you?

Now there is something very interesting in this passage in Revelation 19. The antichrist and the false prophet are cast into hell alive. No need to judge them. Their sentence is the max! All the

rest of the army are killed by the Lord Jesus!
That is what verse 21 says.

Now I want to draw another picture for you. The last three and ½ years have been tumultuous ones on earth. Luke 21 says, 'the sea and waves roaring'. That is an apt picture. And then, when the antichrist and false prophet have been cast into hell and the army killed, the noise of war and hate and injustice all of a sudden fall silent, and the earth is still. Do you get the picture? Let me show what the time to come will be like from words from the Bible which are inscribed on the walls of the United Nations. "He (this speaks of the One who sits on the white horse in Revelation 19) shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." These words are found in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3.

A new era is dawning. While the earth lies in ruins, the Lord Jesus takes command. You see, He came down as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has displayed His wrath over unrighteousness, but He is full of mercy and justice and love. A new day has dawned. Mankind is in the process of passing from one era into another. No, it is not the final one, but yes, you will want to be there.

CONCL: Heaven! Paradise! What will it be like? What will people be doing? Well, that is some of what we have seen this morning. Our experience, as the Church, after the resurrection includes this return to earth with Christ. We will be there, where He is. We will see every part of this, I believe. We will witness Bozrah, the Mount of Olives and the battle of Armageddon. We will see the Lord Jesus aroused to the greatest wrath ever to be witnessed. We will see Him bring the Antichrist and the False Prophet to an end. We will see Him destroy the armies of the earth. And then the storm will be over. A hush will fall over an earth that lies there in tatters. Seven thousand years of man's time on earth will become history. And now, a new account

is about to be written. We will see this in the next message.