

SOME GOLDEN DAYBREAK

by Lee Roberson

Roberson's eschatological work addressing the believer's hope in Christ's return, examining the spiritual anticipation of heaven and future glory while encouraging Christians to maintain faith despite present struggles.

18 Chapters

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00.5-PREFACE

Preface

This is the third edition of Some Golden Daybreak. Two editions were printed with paper binding. Since the second edition has been exhausted, we have had an increasing number of calls for additional copies, hence this present printing.

All of these sermons, with the exception of the last two, were preached in the midweek prayer services of the Highland Park Baptist Church. I make no claim for original thought in these messages, but desire to present the plain Word of GOD to the hearts of everyday people. It will be noted that some truths are repeated over and over again for the sake of emphasis.

In the more than fourteen years that I have been the pastor of the Highland Park Baptist Church I have preached repeatedly the second coming of CHRIST. GOD has blessed the giving of this truth to our people. Literally thousands have been brought to the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

It is my prayer that many will read these simple messages and begin to live fully and eagerly, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"! (Revelation 22:20)

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01-CHAPTER ONE-ARE WE FOOLISH TO LOOK . . . ?

CHAPTER ONE

ARE WE FOOLISH TO LOOK FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST?

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So CHRIST was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:27-28)

Since our church and Tennessee Temple Schools believe so fully and completely in the premillennial second coming of CHRIST, it is easy for me to suppose that all of our people know the fundamental facts regarding His coming.

But they do not. This is proved by the fact that many of our members, if they leave this church, will readily and apparently without question join a church that does not believe in the premillennial coming. Some of our people endorse speakers who are definitely opposed to His coming. Still again, we observe some of our folks who speak and pray as postmillennialists or amillennialists.

This church believes the whole Bible. We believe every word has been fulfilled or will be fulfilled. The Bible teaches that JESUS is coming again. It tells us that He is coming in personal and bodily form. Since He is not here now in this form, we, therefore, do look for His coming.

We believe that CHRIST is coming, and will first receive His own. Then He will come down to this earth to reign. "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)

Somebody placed in my hands a little book with this title, "GOD Cannot Lie; There Cannot Be an Earthly Millennium." I will agree with the first part of the statement - GOD cannot lie. I cannot receive the last part of it because the Bible very definitely teaches that there will be a thousand-year reign of CHRIST upon earth. Furthermore, the Bible tells many things which are going to take place during this thousand years.

There are many pictures given of that wonderful time when the Lord JESUS will reign upon the earth. Isaiah, as well as many of the prophets, sets them forth in different places. In Isaiah 2 we have a prophecy of the coming of CHRIST back to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom, and to rule the world from there. Listen to these words:

"And it shall come to pass that in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:2-4)

This glorious day shall come to pass after the Devil has been chained, and CHRIST rules in righteousness.

In Isaiah there is a prophecy about the coming kingdom of our Saviour. It points to the time when righteousness shall cover the earth, and when justice will be given to all men, and when even the instincts of wild animals will be changed.

In Revelation 20 the phrase, "a thousand years," is given six times. There are those who argue that since this is the only passage that mentions a thousand years, that it cannot be accepted literally. My dear friend, as far as I am concerned, if it were mentioned only one time, it would be sufficient, but when the SPIRIT gives emphasis by repeating the number of years six times, there is surely some important meaning attached.

This little booklet mentioned previously, seeking to deny the millennium, is just another of the Devil's attempts to discredit the coming of JESUS and to tear down portions of the Word of GOD.

It is not hard to get a job on the wrecking crew. Any person can tear down, but let us join with those who are seeking to build up GOD's people in the faith.

Here is a poem to help you to settle where you stand:

"I stood on the streets of a busy town,
Watching men tearing a building down:
With a "Ho, heave ho," and a lusty yell,
They swung a beam and a sidewall fell.
I asked the foreman of the crew,
"Are those men as skilled
As those you'd hire if you wanted to build?"
"Ah, no," he said, "no indeed,
Just common labor is all I need:
I can tear down as much in a day or two,
As would take skilled men a year to do."
And then I thought as I went on my way,
Just which of these two roles am I trying to play?
Have I walked life's road with care,
Measuring each deed with rule and square?
Or am I one of those who roam the town,
Content with the labor of tearing it down?"

Friends, we are looking for His coming and we are looking for His kingdom.

Turn to the matter of His coming. Are we foolish to look for Him? Is it a waste of time? Are we doomed to disappointment?

I. IF CHRIST COMES NOT - THE BIBLE IS NOT TRUE

How wonderful is this WORD OF GOD! We read it and rest our hopes upon it. But if JESUS is not coming again, then the Bible is false. In every book of the Bible, save perhaps two, there is mention of His coming. There are those who have tried to say that the Bible is a lie. For example, Charles Smith, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, had printed across his headquarters, in big, bold letters, "The Bible is a Lie!" Now, if the LORD does not come again, then we must admit that such men and others of their kind are pretty much in the right, and we are without a Bible of any worth altogether. The Bible is true! CHRIST is coming!

II. IF CHRIST DOES NOT COME AGAIN, THEN THE SAVIOUR HIMSELF WAS FALSE

JESUS said, "I will come again." (John 14:3)

If He does not come, then we must agree that all JESUS said and did was false, and that His entire ministry and sacrifice on the cross were nothing. Here is an awful thing to contemplate, but if we are to be fair, we must face it. If JESUS does not return, then we are trusting in a false CHRIST. We cannot even say that JESUS was a good man, for a good man would not lie and deceive others.

Yes, JESUS is coming again. His Word is true, and we can with assurance look for Him. The Saviour has never disappointed anyone who has trusted in Him. We do not need to try to force ourselves to believe in His coming, but simply to receive His Word, for His Word is true.

III. IF CHRIST COMES NOT AGAIN, THE FONDEST HOPES OF MEN ARE CRUSHED

Men have long dreamed of a world of peace. The Bible leads us to look for such a day, a day when the implements of war will be formed into implements of peace. All efforts of man to bring about peace have failed; therefore, if JESUS comes not again, then man will be forever and eternally disappointed, for there will be no peace.

Man dreams of a world of justice and equality. This will never be realized apart from the coming of JESUS. Man dreams of a world where sin will be no more. This is impossible unless JESUS comes and Satan is cast down and the LORD reigns upon His throne. Man dreams of a time when pain and suffering and death will be no more. Such a day is promised unto us in GOD's Word. In the day of the coming of JESUS, the dead in CHRIST shall be raised first, and the living shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and together we shall be caught up to meet the LORD in the air. These bodies will not be changed if the LORD comes not, for the coming of CHRIST and the resurrection and the translation of the saints are all bound together in GOD's Word.

Let us lift up our eyes, for the coming of JESUS draweth nigh. GOD's purpose for this world is not going to fail, for "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

02-CHAPTER TWO- . . .STAND IN THE SAME JUDGMENT?

CHAPTER TWO

WILL THE LOST AND SAVED STAND IN THE SAME JUDGMENT?

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST. For it is written, As I live, saith the LORD, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to GOD. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12)

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

This is the second in our series of messages on the second coming of CHRIST. Let us remind ourselves of the great place that this teaching has in the WORD of GOD. In the New Testament one verse in twenty refers to His second coming. Practically every book of the sixty-six which make up our Bible has reference to the appearing of the LORD.

For those who are saved, this is not only a doctrine to study, but it is a truth to rejoice every heart. His coming is the blessed hope for GOD's children. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST" (Titus 2:13).

Someone has pointed out that all five chapters of I Thessalonians end with the LORD's coming for us.

"And to wait for His SON from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)

"To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before GOD, even our FATHER, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

AND IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF CHAPTER 5, VERSE 23, WE READ:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray GOD your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

And so we are to look for the coming of JESUS. This is the blessed hope set before us.

In the message we are discussing the matter of judgments. Much preaching has been done on the subject of "The Judgment." Most of it has been with the idea of a general judgment, when all the saved and all the lost stand before GOD. There is no such judgment in the Scriptures. Instead of one judgment, there are many judgments. Allow me to point out some of them.

1. The Judgment of the believer's sins on the cross of CHRIST. When CHRIST bore our sins in His own body on the cross, the result was death for CHRIST and justification for the believer. We are now free from condemnation and can never again be put in jeopardy. We have passed from death unto life through CHRIST JESUS.

2. The judgment of self. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). Self-judgment avoids chastisement. If we do not judge ourselves, then the result will be the chastening rod of GOD. Do not confuse the chastening rod with condemnation, for remember, we are free from condemnation through CHRIST.

3. The judgement seat of CHRIST. I have just read you three portions of Scripture regarding the judgment seat of CHRIST and will emphasize this judgment in a few moments.

4. The judgment of living nations. This judgment takes place at the revelation of CHRIST, when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory. "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). The test in this judgment is the treatment accorded by the nations to those whom CHRIST here calls "my brethren." These brethren are the Jewish remnant who will have preached the Gospel of the kingdom to all nations during the Tribulation. This is the judgment which is frequently called the "general judgment." But if you will notice, there is no mention of a resurrection and the persons judged are the nations of the earth. Also there is nothing said of any books being opened.

5. The great white throne judgment. This is given to us in Revelation 20:11-15. The lost dead, small and great, are to be brought before GOD and the books will be opened, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

Now I want us to study for a moment the third judgment I mentioned, the judgment seat of CHRIST.

I. WHEN DOES IT TAKE PLACE?

This judgment of believers' works will take place at the return of CHRIST for His saints.

"And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous judge, shall give me that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2

Timothy 4:8).

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the LORD come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of GOD" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

From these verses we can see that this judgment will take place when CHRIST returns for His own.

II. WHERE DOES IT TAKE PLACE?

This judgment will take place in the air, when we are caught up to be with the LORD.

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

III. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT?

When we stand before CHRIST at the judgment seat, we will be there in our resurrection or translated bodies. We will stand before Him as those who have been redeemed by His precious blood. We will stand there to be judged, not for our salvation, but for our works.

This judgment has only to do with Christians.

There will be no unsaved people at this judgment. The saved and the lost do not stand together in the same judgment. Our salvation was settled by our acceptance of JESUS, but now we are to be judged for our works and service. Paul tells us that every one of us shall give an account of himself to GOD. No Christian will escape; therefore, the apostle reminds us that we are not to waste our time judging our brethren, for the time of their judgment is coming when they must stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST.

Second, our works will be tested by fire.

In I Corinthians 3, Paul says, "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Corinthians 3:12-13)

From these words we can notice that our works will be judged, not on the basis of quantity, but on the basis of quality. It is not a matter of how much, but of how.

GOD does not mean that one person should have the advantage over another. Therefore in the judgment seat we will be judged alike; because of judgment by quality the one-talent person can receive a reward equal to that of the ten-talent person.

Third, some will receive a reward.

If a man's work abide, then he is rewarded by the LORD.

Fourth, some will suffer loss.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:15) You will remember that we said only saved people stand at this judgment; therefore, we cannot lose our souls, for we are standing there in resurrection and translated bodies. We will not lose Heaven at the judgment seat, but we can lose our reward.

It is for you to decide whether your works are of gold, silver, or precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. The testing time is coming; therefore, we need to do some checking up now.

There are four characteristics which, if found in our works, will make them to abide.

No work will abide which is not done in love.

GOD is love. CHRIST so loved us that He gave Himself for us. It is foolish to expect any work to abide which is not performed in love.

A work to abide must be done unselfishly.

If we work for a reward here, and receive it, then there is no reward hereafter. Hypocrites who pray and are seen of men have their reward. Those who sound a trumpet when they give their money and are seen of men have their reward. We are to labor unselfishly if our works are to abide.

We must labor willingly if our works are to abide.

Paul said: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (1 Corinthians 9:16-17).

The fourth characteristic of abiding work must certainly be faithfulness.

Much is said in the Bible about being faithful. We cannot imagine our CHRIST overlooking faithfulness in any of His followers.

Yes, we must stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST. Will you be happy, proud, and rejoicing as you look into the face of the Saviour, or will you bow your head in shame?

"When I stand at the judgment seat of CHRIST,

And He shows me His plan for me;

The plan of my life as it might have been,

Had He had His way and I see --

How I blocked Him here and I checked Him there;

And I would not yield my will --

Will there be grief in my Saviour's eyes --

Grief, though He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,

Stripped of all but His grace,

While memory runs like a hunted thing,
Down the paths I cannot retrace.
When my desolate heart will well nigh break,
With tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands,
I shall there bow my uncrowned head.
LORD, of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand,
Take me and break me, mold me to
The pattern Thou hast planned."

03-CHAPTER THREE-WILL THE CHURCH . . . ?

CHAPTER THREE

WILL THE CHURCH GO THROUGH THE TRIBULATION?

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

In my last message [Dr. Roberson] I spoke of the coming of CHRIST and the Christians' judgment. We noticed the following things:

This judgment will take place in the air when JESUS returns for His saints; it concerns only Christians, not the unsaved; this judgment has to do with rewards, not salvation; we will stand in this judgment in our resurrection or translation bodies; the outcome of this judgment will be the giving of rewards to some, and the suffering of loss by others. We should endeavor to work in such a way for our MASTER that our works will abide the testing of the judgment seat of CHRIST.

Let us notice that the rapture of the saints will occur before the tribulation begins. There are some premillennialists who would try to say that the church goes through the tribulation, and then CHRIST comes. If this be so, then His coming would not be sudden and unannounced. It would not be as a thief in the night. We are to watch for the coming of CHRIST and not for the tribulation. His coming for the redeemed will precede the awfulness of the tribulation time. There is no evidence that any of the saved will be left when He comes.

Let us remember that Paul said, "The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air . . ." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

There are some people who believe that only exceptionally good Christians will go up in the rapture and that bad Christians will be left on the earth. I do not find this teaching in the Word of GOD. It is true that some Christians are better than others. They live clean lives and work faithfully for the Saviour. There are others who compromise with the world. They are indifferent to the commands of CHRIST; their lives are not effective in His service. These people will lose their rewards at the judgment seat of CHRIST.

All Christians will go up to meet CHRIST when He comes. They will then stand before the judgment seat and be judged. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

We do not need to fear the tribulation, for we will be in the presence of the LORD. In Revelation 3:10 we read, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." This is the promise of CHRIST to us, that we are to be kept from the hour of trial (the Great Tribulation).

Notice the following things:

I. THE COMING OF CHRIST IS IMMINENT

The word "imminent" means that it might happen at any time. It is as a sword hanging by a tiny thread. At any moment the thread may break and the sword fall. Because the coming of CHRIST is imminent, we are exhorted to be in a state of constant expectancy waiting for His coming. Turn to Matthew 24:36-51 :

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

From this passage we learn the following:

1. The day of the LORD's coming is known to no man.
2. The hour of the LORD's coming is not known.
3. Neither the day nor the hour are known to the angels in Heaven.
4. The coming of the LORD will be as unexpected as the coming of the flood.
5. It will be as much without previous sign or warning as the coming of a thief.
6. Because the LORD is coming at an unexpected day and hour, like the flood, He exhorts the disciples to watch.
7. Because His coming is without previous sign or warning, like a thief, He says, "Be ready."

We are to watch and to be ready for this sudden coming of our Saviour, for "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52) the dead in CHRIST shall be raised and the living shall be changed and caught up into the air.

There are some people who think that it is farfetched to think of the translation of saints into the air, but GOD has given us a picture of what it means. In the days before the flood we find that Enoch

"walked with God, and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24) Or, as the New Testament says, he was translated, "that he should not see death." (Hebrews 11:5) Later on in GOD's Book we have the story of Elijah who was translated and carried into Heaven in a chariot of fire. Since this was accomplished for Enoch and Elijah, it is not impossible for GOD to do the same for all His children who are living when JESUS comes.

This brings us to a blessed thought. There is one generation of men that shall never see death. Those who are believing on CHRIST and saved shall be caught up into the air to meet Him when He comes. What a wonderful thing to anticipate! CHRIST may come any moment, and in a moment we are caught up to meet Him.

Look for the coming of CHRIST and listen for the sounds, for when He comes there will be a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of GOD. Yes, there will be a generation of saints who will never taste of death, but will go into the presence of CHRIST.

II. THE TRIBULATION BEGINS WHEN THE CHURCH IS CAUGHT UP AND THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKEN OUT OF THE WORLD

The Great Tribulation is a time of judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world. We are going to be taken out, and then the judgment will fall.

In the days of Noah, when Noah and his family were safe in the ark, the judgment of the flood came and took them all away. After Lot left Sodom, the fire and brimstone rained upon the city. These are pictures of that which will occur when the saints are taken out. The judgment will fall.

After speaking of the days of Lot, JESUS said:

"I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke 17:34-36).

In one part of the earth it will be nighttime when JESUS comes, and He pictures the scene by two men in one bed. One was a Christian; the other was not. Before retiring the night before, the Christian man prayed to GOD, and in the night suddenly he was caught up. Let us suppose that the other man scoffed at his friend for praying, and ridiculed his faith. When the morning light broke, he was alone in the bed. He searched for his friend, but found him not.

When JESUS said, "Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left," (Luke 17:35) this is a morning time scene. The women are grinding the meal for the day. Suddenly one is taken out of sight. The other is left.

When JESUS comes, throughout the entire world there will be consternation and confusion as the saints are caught up and the unsaved are left. Think of the stores and business establishments with only a few left to operate the business. Think of transportation systems, tied up completely because of the going of Christian men. You can simply turn your imagination loose and still not exceed the confusion which will come upon this earth.

When the saints are caught up, the tribulation begins. The tribulation is a period of unparalleled suffering which will come upon the world. When the HOLY SPIRIT is taken out of the way, then

iniquity will have its way, then the Antichrist will be revealed.

There is only one safe place for any person, and that is in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Believe in Him as Saviour; follow Him as LORD and MASTER. Think much of His coming again and live accordingly. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3)

04-CHAPTER FOUR-WHAT HAPPENS . . . TRIBULATION?

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:21-22)

We will consider in a moment some things which will take place when JESUS comes for the saints. But first, I want to point out some things which will not happen.

1. The world will not come to an end.

Some people tie together the coming of JESUS with the end of the world. They are not at the same time. In II Peter 3 we read of the day when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10) But this occurrence will not be until after the reign of the Lord JESUS on the earth.

***BBB NOTE: Up until the moment of the LORD's return (this old earth has at least 1,007 years remaining). The end of the world is a fair piece off yet.

2. The unsaved dead will not be raised when CHRIST comes for His own. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). When JESUS comes, the dead in CHRIST shall be raised, but the lost dead will not be raised until after the millennial reign of CHRIST.

3. The church will not be left on this earth to go through the tribulation. For the sake of emphasis, I am repeating the truth I gave you on last study.

A picture of the translation of living saints is given in Genesis 5:24 : "And Enoch walked with GOD: and he was not; for God took him." This interesting verse is further explained in Hebrews 11:5 : "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because GOD had translated him: FOR BEFORE HIS TRANSLATION HE HAD THIS TESTIMONY, THAT HE PLEASSED GOD."

As Enoch was translated before the judgment of the flood, so will we be translated before the tribulation comes on the earth. Revelation 3:10 gives the promise that we will be kept from the hour of trial or tribulation. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [or trial] which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

These are a few of the things which will not happen when JESUS comes. And now may we turn to the positive side and see the great and important things which will happen when He comes.

1. The saints will be caught up.

"For the LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

This promise for the resurrection and translation of the saints is also given in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 :

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

2. The HOLY SPIRIT will be taken out of the world.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Evil is hindered now by the SPIRIT, but He will be taken away and then terrible things will happen. After the HOLY SPIRIT is taken up, then the Antichrist will be revealed.

For one hundred and twenty years, during the ministry of Noah, the SPIRIT strove with men, and held back the evil of the world. For two thousand years, during this age of grace, the SPIRIT has been striving to lead men to faith in the SON OF GOD, seeking to convict of the sin of unbelief and using His infinite power to hold back and restrain iniquity.

The HOLY SPIRIT dwells in believers, and when believers are taken out, He, too, will be taken away. He cannot be separated from believers, for JESUS said, "He [will] abide with you for ever." (John 14:16)

3. The tribulation will begin when the saints and the SPIRIT are taken out.

What is the Great Tribulation? It is the time of GOD's great and sore judgment upon the world for the rejection of His SON. Daniel 12:1 calls it "a time of trouble." Jeremiah 30:7 calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble."

The full length of the Great Tribulation will be seven years, for we read in Daniel 9:27, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The context reveals that one week is seven years. This is known as the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy.

The intensity of the tribulation will be for three and one-half years. The last portion is called in particular "the great tribulation."

Where do we find a description of the things which shall come to pass? The fullest description is found in the book of Revelation, chapters 6 to 18. In the tribulation seven seals will be opened and peace will be taken from the earth. Famine will cover the earth, and death will strike a fourth part of the population. The seven trumpets will be sounded and hail and fire will visit the earth. Waters will

become bitter, and many will die. The sun will be darkened and locusts will plague and kill many.

A good description of the awfulness of the tribulation is found in Revelation 9:6, "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

In Revelation 16 the seven vials of the wrath of GOD will be poured out. Boils will come upon men and the sea will become as blood. The sun will burn and scorch men. Darkness will cover the earth and a great earthquake, such as was never known, will be felt.

These are just a few of the things to come. "Hell on earth" is the best description of the three years and a half of tribulation time. War and bloodshed will be the order of the day.

In the light of these solemn facts, there are three things that I call to your attention.

I. THE WORLD FACES DARK AND FEARFUL DAYS

The world does not face peace and prosperity as some would tell us. The chief characteristic of this age is war and rumors of wars, and all of this war will culminate in the wars of the tribulation and the Battle of Armageddon.

For some time to come, men will be beating their plowshares into swords, and their pruninghooks into spears. It is foolishness to cry peace and safety, when sudden destruction is coming. In tribulation days all peace will be taken from the earth.

Terrible and trying times are coming upon the world. There can be no real abiding peace until JESUS, the PRINCE OF PEACE, Himself will come. There will be no world-wide peace until the LORD comes and puts the Devil into the bottomless pit, and puts away all opposition to the work of GOD. JESUS will establish a peace, based on righteousness, the only foundation on which it can abide.

Peace made by sinful men cannot stand. Therefore all peace treaties are but scraps of paper. The work of peace organizations can do nothing more than secure a lull in the bloodshed which is sure to come and continue until JESUS sets up His kingdom upon the earth.

II. THIS IS THE TIME FOR PROFESSORS TO MAKE SURE THAT THEIR NAMES ARE IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

Every person who belongs to this church professes to know CHRIST. But among professors there are two classes (those who profess only, and those who profess and possess everlasting life in CHRIST. Do you possess eternal life? What a terrible thing to belong to the church and to make a profession, but you discover when He comes that you are lost and left outside. Make sure now that your soul is safe in CHRIST JESUS.

III. THIS IS THE TIME TO GO AFTER THE LOST AND WIN THEM TO CHRIST

The days are few. Opportunities are slipping away. Souls are falling into Hell. CHRIST is coming. The great separation will occur. The tribulation will begin. What a fearful prospect for those who know not CHRIST.

If we love the Lord JESUS and love lost souls, let us get them to CHRIST. Let us get them ready to go up in the rapture of the saints. One day the door of grace will be shut. The day is coming

when all opportunities to be saved will be gone forever.

Accept JESUS CHRIST and you need not fear the Great Tribulation or the coming judgment of the lost, or the eternal Hell prepared for the Devil and his angels and CHRIST-rejecters.

05-CHAPTER FIVE-WHO IS THE ANTICHRIST?

CHAPTER FIVE

WHO IS THE ANTICHRIST?

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

The word "Antichrist" is given to us in 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

"Anti" means against. There is coming one who is against CHRIST. The Word tells us that this person will reveal himself after the HOLY SPIRIT has been taken out of the way.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-10).

The Antichrist will be a man of great power and authority, and will be the personal agent of Satan himself. The Antichrist will be revealed in all his wonder-working power after the rapture of the saints and the taking away of the HOLY SPIRIT. Therefore, the Antichrist will have his great period in the seven years between the rapture of the saints and the revelation of CHRIST, this period which is known as the Great Tribulation.

Someone might ask, "What is the purpose back of all of this?" The answer is simple but terribly tragic. It is the work of Satan who has always sought to destroy Him and His work. Satan wants to rule over this earth; therefore, he will take a man out of this world and clothe him with great power and set him on high. Satan is powerful but he is not all-powerful. Because of this, he is forced to use some human being and enter him just as he entered into Judas and used him to betray CHRIST.

Now, may we see a few things the Scriptures tell us about this man.

I. HIS NAMES

In II Thessalonians 2 he is called "the man of sin... the son of perdition." (2 Thessalonians 2:3) Because of this name, "the son of perdition," some people think that the Antichrist will be Judas reincarnated. Judas was also called the son of perdition. We cannot be sure of this, but it is certainly something to think about. He is called also "the prince that shall come" in Daniel 9:26,

and in Daniel 11:36 he is referred to as "the king [that] shall do according to his will." In Revelation 13:1 he is referred to as a beast rising up out of the sea. These are some of the names given to this Man of Sin, the Antichrist.

II. HIS CHARACTERISTICS AND WORK

It is evident from the Scriptures that he will possess unlimited power. For a picture of this we have only to think of the power of demon-possessed men of history, such as Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Nero, Rasputin, and the power of recent dictators, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin.

This coming world dictator will have all the power of the past dictators and more, too. He will work along the same lines and will abolish personal liberty, free speech, freedom of the press, the right of assembly; he will reject the authority of GOD, and will persecute the Jews. The Antichrist will be energized by Satan, and Satan will give to him power to perform signs, wonders, and miracles.

Notice also that he will oppose GOD and CHRIST. He will be against all that is called God (not only against the true GOD, but against heathen gods as well). He will tread all religion under his feet, and will set himself up as the only object of adoration. He will try to prove to himself and to the world that he is God. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as GOD sitteth in the temple of GOD, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

The Antichrist will be a man of war. "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7). War will be the natural element of the beast, for remember that Satan has chosen this man to head the armies of the earth, and to bring them together at Armageddon.

The Antichrist will rule the whole world for a time.

"And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the GOD of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done" (Daniel 11:36).

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

A few years ago it would have been impossible for one person to rule the earth, but now after what we have seen, we know that it is possible. It has already been demonstrated that one man, assisted by a small minority, can take over a whole nation of millions of people. This was done in Germany, in Italy, and in Russia. Now, with the atomic bomb, we can easily see how one person, with control of the atomic bomb, could rule the entire world. When all this is going to take place, we do not know, except that it will be after the rapture. The rapture might come at any time. There is nothing to hinder the coming of CHRIST for His saints.

Again, let us be reminded that we are to look for our Saviour. He is coming as a thief in the night to take away His redeemed ones. We are going to be snatched away and caught up into His presence. Therefore, live just one day at a time. Do your best for CHRIST moment by moment. The rapture may occur at any time.

Do not give your allegiance or love or support to anything that is against CHRIST. John says that there are many antichrists, and all of these are pointing to the Antichrist who is coming.

Tonight you are either serving CHRIST or Satan. You are either on the road to Heaven or to Hell. If you have never accepted CHRIST, I pray that you might see that your life even now is counting on the side of the evil one who opposes our CHRIST, and who is known as a Man of Sin, a vile person, the son of perdition. This is the time to put yourself on the side of CHRIST.

06-CHAPTER SIX-THE MARK OF THE BEAST . . .

CHAPTER SIX

THE MARK OF THE BEAST, OR, THE WORK OF THE UNHOLY TRINITY

REVELATION 13

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." (Revelation 13:1-18)

It is exceedingly easy to make a lot of guesses and speculations on matters of prophecy. Many have done so and have likewise brought into disrepute the teaching of the second coming and related events. Therefore, we will continue to follow carefully the WORD of GOD.

In the last message we discussed briefly the coming Antichrist, his characteristics, and his work. We noted that John said, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18).

There are many antichrists in the world today. All movements and men against our Saviour are antichrists. But let us notice that there is coming an Antichrist. The Antichrist will be a person. He will be a man just as CHRIST was a man. When the WORD of GOD speaks of the Antichrist, the masculine pronoun "he" is used.

When will this Antichrist appear? He will appear when the church has been raptured and the HOLY SPIRIT has been taken away.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the LORD shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

After the Christians have been raptured and the SPIRIT taken, the tribulation will begin upon the earth. The tribulation is that period of time when judgments are sent by GOD upon a Christ-rejecting world. The terrible plagues which will come upon the earth are described in Revelation 6 to 18. In the forefront during the tribulation time there will be three unholy persons. All three of them are mentioned in Revelation 13.

I. THE DRAGON

"And the dragon gave him his power . . . And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast" (Revelation 13:2-4).

This dragon is none other than old Satan. He is the enemy of our CHRIST. All of sin and sorrow we see today is because of him. All that will come upon the earth will be because of him. In the tribulation Satan will make his last stand and will endeavor to get control of the earth. He will choose a man to be his representative. He will give to this person great power. We know him as the Antichrist.

- The Devil is GOD's enemy.
- The Devil is every Christian's enemy.
- The Devil is the enemy of all righteousness.
- The Devil is the author of sin, suffering, and death.

Though Satan has great power, Christians can defeat him today. James says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). CHRIST showed us the way when He resisted the temptation of Satan in the wilderness. He won by the sword of the SPIRIT. We must battle and win in the same way.

The end of Satan is plainly given in the Holy Scriptures. First, we find that he will be bound during the kingdom age. This is given in Revelation 20:1-3 :

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

The eternal doom of Satan is in Revelation 20:10, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

The Devil does not reign in Hell as a king. He will be tormented in Hell just as the others who reject the Saviour.

II. THE BEAST

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy" (Revelation 13:1).

This is the one to whom the Devil gives power and authority. This beast is the Antichrist.

Note the origin of the beast. He will rise up out of the sea. The sea is typical of the Gentile nations. The particular sea in mind is doubtless the Mediterranean for it is the center, so to speak, of the former Roman Empire. The ten horns are a further mark of identification, showing that the Roman Empire is referred to, not as it has been during its entire existence, but as it shall be known in its last form. The seven heads doubtless symbolize the different forms of government in which the Roman Empire has existed from its beginning to the end.

Revelation 13:3 speaks of the restoration of the Roman Empire when it will be a federated empire of ten kingdoms, ruled over by the beast. This beast will be a warlike person, for the world will say, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Revelation 13:4) He will be a blasphemer. "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." (Revelation 13:6) The Antichrist will be an atheist. He will set himself above all that is called GOD and will cause the people to worship him.

The beast as set before us in Revelation 13 is the dragon's masterpiece of delusion. Satan has always wanted people to worship him, and now through the work of the beast they do so, for verse 4 says, "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast." (Revelation 13:4)

III. THE FALSE PROPHET

This is the third member of the unholy trinity (Satan, the beast, the false prophet).

The false prophet will be a man, just as the beast. This is proven by the doom of the false prophet as given in Revelation 19:20. False systems or empires are dealt with by GOD on earth, but persons are cast into the lake of fire.

The first beast came out of the sea. This second beast or false prophet comes up out of the earth. If the sea symbolizes the Gentile nations, the earth possibly symbolizes Israel. This false prophet, as he is called, may be a Jew, while the beast before whom he exercises his power may be a

Gentile.

The first beast will be a dictator and a world ruler. This second beast will be something of a religious leader and will perform wonders and cause the people to worship the beast. The main business of the false prophet is to support the beast. He will be the absolute tool of the first beast.

Seven verses give a summary of his work. Consider Revelation 13:12-15 :

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

Let us list the work of this evil one:

1. He will exercise the power of the Antichrist, and cause the world to worship the first beast.
2. He will perform great wonders and bring down fire from Heaven in the sight of men.
3. He will deceive earth-dwellers by means of his miracles.
4. He will cause the people to make an image of the beast. He will give life to the image and destroy all who will not worship the image of the beast.

And now, may we consider the closing three verses of Revelation 13.

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six." (Revelation 13:16-18)

In the tribulation days it will be either worship the beast or starve. All men, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, will be forced to receive a mark in their right hands or in their foreheads. No one will be able to buy or sell without this mark. Those who would eat must bear the mark or the name or the number of the beast. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." (Revelation 13:18)

Many people have tried to figure out the meaning of this number, 666. The outstanding Bible teachers simply say that six is the number of man. It represents imperfection, for seven is GOD's number of perfection.

Dr. William R. Newell says that GOD will give full understanding to His saints in the tribulation when it is needed. The saints of the church age will not be there, but there will be tribulation saints who 'worship not the beast and receive not the mark.' They will know and understand this man.

His number will be plain to them, for it is the number of a man.

Many people have tried to arrive at this mysterious number. It has been pointed out that the word Latin as spelled with Greek letters, lateinos, makes six hundred sixty-six in their numerical value. Others have called attention to the same fact concerning Nero Caesar spelled in Hebrew (the numerical value comes to six hundred sixty-six).

But putting aside vain guesses, we know that six is the utmost reach of man. Man was created on the sixth day. God's great human opponents have been marked by the number six. Goliath was six cubits in height. His spear's head weighed six shekels, and he had six pieces of armor. Nebuchadnezzar's image was sixty cubits high and six broad. These are but a few of the sixes which attach themselves to men.

In connection with this number of the beast someone has said that it is interesting that the radio broadcasting wave length of Rome, Itale, is 666.

In the light of the tragic days ahead, there are two things we should do. First, we should rejoice in our own salvation and in the fact that we will escape the terrible things which are coming upon the earth. Second, we should endeavor with all our power to bring people to CHRIST so that they will be saved and escape the awful tribulation. This is the time to win people before the darkness settles upon the earth. We have darkness now, but not as it will be in that awful coming day.

07-CHAPTER SEVEN-TWO PICTURES OF HIS COMING

CHAPTER SEVEN

TWO PICTURES OF HIS COMING

"And to wait for his SON from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even JESUS, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

The grandest fact of the past is that JESUS CHRIST, the LORD of GLORY, was made in the likeness of men and became obedient unto death in order that we might be saved. The most important fact of the present is that this JESUS is now seated at GOD's right hand, making intercession for us. The greatest event of the future is that this same Lord JESUS shall come again and receive us unto Himself.

If we can judge the importance of a doctrine by the number of times it is mentioned, then surely we know that the coming of our LORD is of preeminent importance.

We know that the coming of JESUS is to be both literal and personal. JESUS gave the promise of His return in John 14, when He said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." (John 14:3) Two men in white apparel at the ascension of JESUS said these words, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same JESUS which is taken up from you into heaven? this same JESUS which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

We are now turning to a further study of this great event. The Apostle Paul wrote two letters to the church at Thessalonica. In these letters he dealt with the two stages of the second coming of JESUS. In I Thessalonians we have a picture of the secret coming of JESUS and of the saints going to meet Him. In II Thessalonians we have another picture of CHRIST as He comes to execute judgment, destroy the Antichrist, and reign with His saints upon the earth.

I. THE FIRST PICTURE - HIS COMING FOR THE SAINTS (THE RAPTURE)

The entire epistle of I Thessalonians points to the coming of JESUS. In chapter 1 the apostle commends the people for waiting for CHRIST from Heaven. In chapter 2, he says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20) In chapter 3, he closes with a word of exhortation, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we have the entire outline of the coming of CHRIST for His own. In these words the apostle is giving comfort to those who have lost their loved ones. It seems that some of the Thessalonians were disturbed at the death of some in their midst. They had expected

the LORD to come from Heaven. Paul reaffirms the fact of the LORD's coming, and gives them the order of events at the coming of CHRIST for His saints.

And so we have in these verses three great things.

First, the return of Christ.

"For the LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of GOD." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) This is the sudden and unannounced coming of JESUS to catch away all believers. There will be a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of GOD, but these things will be heard only by those who are in CHRIST.

Second, we have here the resurrection of the dead in CHRIST.

"And the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) This is the first resurrection. It takes place when CHRIST comes for His saints. All who have died in the LORD will be raised.

There will be no resurrection apart from the coming of CHRIST. It is at His coming that we will be gathered unto Him.

A writer tells of an old black saint, father of a large family, who lived in North Georgia in 1833. When there was a heavenly display and many stars appeared to be falling from the sky, he was awakened by the noise and confusion in the street. Looking out of his home, he saw the stars falling like snowflakes. He thought the end had come, and he quickly roused his wife and children and said, "The day of the Lord is at hand." (Isaiah 13:6) He hurried into the street where all was confusion, and the black saint turned to his wife and said, "Old woman, the LORD am coming, and you take the chil'in along to the public square, and waits there till I come. Iz' a gwon down to the garden and see ol' Massa get up, and just as soon as he do, him and me will come along to the square, and we'll go up to meet the LORD together."

The old man, though unable to read the Bible for himself, had been listening to the reading and explanation of the Scriptures. He knew that the coming of CHRIST would be the signal for the resurrection of those who sleep in JESUS. Ol' Massa was lying yonder in the family graveyard.

Let us keep in mind that the WORD of GOD speaks of two resurrections. The first resurrection concerns the dead in CHRIST and the second resurrection will be for those who are lost. They will be resurrected to stand before the great white throne and to receive their sentence to eternal punishment. We are studying here about the first resurrection, for we read in Revelation 20, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." (Revelation 20:5-6)

Some people are apparently troubled because many careful students of the Bible for centuries seemed to know nothing about the two resurrections. This should not disturb us nearly so much as the fact that the Great Commission was overlooked and neglected for about the same period of time. It is our business to receive the WORD of GOD as it was given by the HOLY SPIRIT.

Third, the rapture.

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

This verse outlines three things which will happen in the rapture.

First, there will be a reuniting of the body and the spirit. Body and spirit were separated by death, but now when JESUS comes, "them also which sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with him." (1 Thessalonians 4:14)

Second, the living will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. This we read in I Corinthians 15, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51)

Third, we note that we shall ever be with the LORD. We are going to be brought together with our loved ones, and with our Saviour.

In the light of these great things, it is no wonder that the Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians to do three things.

First, he said, "watch," for "the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

Second, he said "wake up". "There let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

Third, he exhorted them to "word" and to live for CHRIST. In verses 16 to 22 he gives a series of short exhortations and all of them look toward the coming of CHRIST. He said, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks . . . Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22)

Yes, the fact of the second coming of JESUS to receive us unto Himself should certainly stir us to be at our best at all times.

II. THE SECOND PICTURE OF CHRIST'S COMING - HIS COMING WITH HIS SAINTS (THE GLORIOUS APPEARING)

This is given to us in II Thessalonians. Here is a picture of the mighty CHRIST as He comes with the saints. Let us remember that we will be caught up into the air to be with Him, and we shall never be separated from Him.

There are four things about CHRIST and His coming with the saints to which I call your attention.

1. The LORD shall be revealed from HEAVEN with His mighty angels.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

This will be the most startling occurrence in the history of the human race. CHRIST will come, and every eye shall see Him, and the mighty angels will accompany Him.

While upon the earth, angels often ministered to the Saviour. They came to Him after the temptation in the wilderness. They appeared in the Garden of Gethsemane and strengthened Him.

Angels appeared at His resurrection, and also at His ascension. Now we find angels, coming with the revealed LORD as He comes in might and power.

2. He comes to take vengeance upon a Christ-rejecting world.

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

His vengeance will be felt upon two classes (those who know not GOD, including all who refused the knowledge of GOD and lived on in sin; and a second class (those that obey not the Gospel of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. They heard the Gospel preached, and they rejected the Saviour. When JESUS comes, judgment will fall upon them.

3. He comes to be glorified in His saints.

"When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

The saints will be with Him, and will be like Him. The resurrection and the translated saints will be in the image of CHRIST, for John says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2) This is the masterpiece that JESUS will eventually deliver unto the FATHER (a creation redeemed, purified, sanctified, and in the likeness of His dear SON.

4. He comes to destroy that Man of Sin, the son of perdition.

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked by revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And will all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-10).

The Antichrist is the world dictator, the beast of Revelation 13. CHRIST will come and destroy him with the spirit of His mouth and with the brightness of His coming. The fulfillment of this is pictured in Revelation 19:20 : "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

This is the end of the Antichrist who exalted himself above GOD, and brought together the armies of the earth to make war against CHRIST as He came from Heaven. He was cast into Hell.

Yes, the second coming of CHRIST is the greatest event of the future. We should pray daily that the HOLY SPIRIT would keep this truth before our hearts. If we know the truth about His coming, we will not be deceived in this treacherous age. If we know the truth about His coming, we will not be dismayed at the gathering darkness, but we will be looking for Him who is the Bright and Morning Star. If we are watching for the coming of CHRIST, we will be busy in His service. We will

be anxious to reach everyone for our Saviour. Terrible days are ahead for those without CHRIST.
Glorious days are ahead for those who are in Him.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

08-CHAPTER EIGHT-THE MAN ON THE WHITE HORSE

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Man on the White Horse

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." (Revelation 19:11)

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:27-31).

In other messages we have pointed out that the coming of CHRIST is in two stages. He first comes for the saints, and then He comes with the saints.

We have discussed the rapture, the judgment seat of CHRIST, the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, and other subjects. We now come to consider the second stage of His coming. This occurs after the judgment seat of CHRIST, and after the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In Revelation 19:7-9, we have the marriage supper of the Lamb:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

In Revelation 19:7 we notice these words, "And his wife hath made herself ready." The Lamb's wife here is the bride, the church. We must notice that she was arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

A different class of people are mentioned in Revelation 19:9. Most commentators make a distinction between the bride of CHRIST and those that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. Dr. Ironside says, "These are all friends of the bridegroom, who rejoice in His joy and share in His gladness. I understand them to be the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints, who, though they have no part of the church, are sharers in the heavenly glory; and these are pictured as the guests at the wedding who participate in the general gladness of the occasion, and whose presence, too, adds to the happiness of the bride and groom."

Now, following this happy scene in Heaven, we come to the study of the Man on the white horse. This is the coming of CHRIST with His saints. We will notice that He comes from Heaven and that He rides upon a white horse, which symbolizes victory, peace, and purity.

There are three things I want you to see about this white horse rider.

I. HIS DESCRIPTION

In Revelation 1, we have a stirring description of CHRIST as He walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Now, here we have another wonderful picture of our Saviour as He comes to judge and make war.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire." (Revelation 19:12) No one can escape the eyes of CHRIST. He sees all and His eyes are quick to detect sin.

"On his head were many crowns." This proclaims His authority over all the kingdoms of the earth. The misrule of the earth is to end when CHRIST begins to reign as King of kings and LORD of lords.

May we notice also His four names.

First, "Faithful and True." (Revelation 19:11) As He sat upon the horse, this was His name. This name reminds us of His earthly life (He was faithful to the will of GOD and true in every act.

Second, He had an unknown name. "And he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself." (Revelation 19:12) The name was written, but no one knew it but He Himself. There is nothing more to say about this.

Third, "and his name is called the Word of God." (Revelation 19:13) We read in John 1:1-2, "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God. The same was in the beginning with God." CHRIST was with the FATHER in the creation of the world. The WORD was as yet unspoken, but when CHRIST came into the world, GOD spoke in Him.

Fourth, His name was "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:16) This is His official title, and it belongs to Him as SON OF MAN, the rightful heir of all things. When JESUS came to earth the first time, they would not receive Him, and they crowned Him with a crown of thorns. They gave Him a cross instead of a throne. But GOD will soon speak from Heaven and JESUS will come, and the Saviour will be the KING of kings and the LORD of lords upon this earth.

Considering still further His description, we find a word about His vesture. In verse 13 we read, "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." (Revelation 19:13) Surely this is a picture of the blood which was shed for our redemption. As he comes to the battle of Armageddon His garments will be reddened with the blood of His enemies, but here His red garments speak of His sacrifice in behalf of sinners. This Bible is a bloody book. Our religion is a bloody religion. "And without the shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22)

II. HIS ARMIES

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:14).

This army which follows the Saviour as He leaves Heaven is made up of the bride of CHRIST and all the saints before the church was established, and the tribulation saints who had been slain after the church was taken out. All of these now come forth with our Saviour, riding upon white horses and dressed in white and clean linen.

The armies do not have any weapons. The armies follow Him who is upon the white horse. The armies are dressed in white, symbolizing righteousness. If you are a child of GOD, you will be in the army of the LORD when He comes at the revelation.

III. HIS PURPOSE

In Revelation 19:11 we read, "And in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

In Revelation 19:15 we read, "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Our CHRIST is coming in power and great glory to make war against the beast, the false prophet, and the kingdoms of the earth. He does not come now as the lowly Nazarene, but He comes to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of ALMIGHTY GOD.

CHRIST is coming to smite the nations with the sword. The sword goes out of His mouth, which indicates that it is the Word of GOD. Therefore, by the very Word of GOD. Therefore, by the very Word of CHRIST Himself, the nations will be put down, and victory will come. The eternal WORD will be an offensive weapon. CHRIST is coming to rule with a rod of iron. This is an altogether different picture from that of CHRIST who was born in a manger and rejected by His own people.

In closing we must notice that in order for CHRIST to rule the nations with a rod of iron, He must tread the winepress and wrath of ALMIGHTY GOD. The winepress is the wrath of GOD, and the wine flowing from it the blood of His enemies. In the coming of CHRIST, His enemies will be crushed under the feet of Him who treads the winepress. The full picture of this will be given in the next message, when we preach on the battle of Armageddon.

In summarizing this vision of CHRIST's departing from Heaven with His saints, may we remember:

First, CHRIST will be victorious.

The unholy trinity composed of the Devil, the Antichrist, and the false prophet, will do all they can to destroy CHRIST, but He spoke the truth when He said, "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." Thank GOD, we are serving a CHRIST who will be victorious!

Second, we will share in His victories.

But we do not fight. It seems that we are nothing more than spectators as the LORD smites the nations with the sharp sword.

Third, we need to live now as we are going to appear with Him.

We will follow Him upon white horses and we will be dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Our lives need to be clean and pure now. We must live in a dirty, sinful world, but our hearts and lives can be clean by the cleansing blood.

09-CHAPTER NINE-THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

CHAPTER NINE

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Revelation 16:16)

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." (Revelation 19:19)

In the last message we discussed the portion of Scripture found in Revelation 19:11-16. This pictures the coming of CHRIST upon a white horse. A vivid description is given of our Saviour as He comes in power and glory. Back of Him are His armies. They also ride upon white horses, and are clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

The purpose of the coming of CHRIST is given in Revelation 19:15, "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of ALMIGHTY GOD." CHRIST is coming to make war, to smite the nations with a sword, and to rule with a rod of iron. In order to do these things, it is necessary that 'He tread the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of ALMIGHTY GOD.'

Consider three things in this message.

I. THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

First, what is the battle of Armageddon? As we find in Revelation 19:19, it is a battle between the Antichrist and the kings of the earth and their armies against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.

At the close of the tribulation period, the Antichrist and his false prophet, with the armies of the earth, will besiege the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem. The coming of CHRIST will alarm the world powers, and they will fall back to Armageddon, the ancient hill and valley of Megiddo, west of Jordan, in the plain of Jezreel.

The battle of Armageddon will be the last world war. The little uprising instigated by Satan after the thousand years cannot be called a world war. This will be the last one.

The battle of Armageddon is truly a direct warfare of Hell against Heaven, for you remember that Satan gave his power unto the Antichrist and the false prophet, and now we find that the beast and the prophet are doing the foolish thing of trying to fight against Heaven itself. We need to remember that the puny arm of flesh can never fight against GOD and win. Man is slow to learn this, and in spite of defeat after defeat, he continues to war against GOD.

We have already mentioned where this battle will be fought. It will be in the valley of Megiddo, southeast of Mt. Carmel, in the land of Palestine.

When will this battle be fought? It will come at the close of the tribulation period, and will climax that awful time of judgment.

This battle is referred to in a number of Old Testament passages, but I want you to hear this one in Joel 3:9-14 :

"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty one to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision."

The battle of Armageddon is also a further fulfillment of the promise which GOD gave in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

These words were spoken by the LORD to the serpent, old Satan. Here is the promise that Satan's head will be bruised, and all he can do is bruise His heel. When a person's heel is bruised, it causes pain but does not bring about death. But when you bruise the head, you destroy a person.

Someone has said that the great purpose of the battle of Armageddon will be to attempt to annihilate CHRIST. Satan has always wanted the rulership of this earth, but it has been promised unto the SON OF GOD. But the Devil has attempted on many occasions to do away with CHRIST.

His first attempt was made through Herod, who had all the children up to two years of age slain in an effort to kill the CHRIST child. The second attempt made by Satan was when he took CHRIST up to the pinnacle of the temple and urged Him to jump off. The third effort was made through the Pharisees who tried to stone CHRIST to death. The fourth attempt was made by having CHRIST condemned by the Sanhedrin and crucified. The final attempt is in the battle of Armageddon, and again Satan fails.

II. THE DOOM OF THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20)

When CHRIST came to make war against the beast and his army, there was no delay in obtaining victory. We are not told how the beast was taken, but we do read that JESUS came with a sharp sword going out of His mouth. This speaks of the Word of GOD. Therefore, it would seem that CHRIST gave the order and immediately these two men were taken and sentenced to their eternal doom.

And now notice, ". . . these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." The word "alive" signifies existence in a body. It is not only a state of conscious existence, but life in a body. The LORD spoke of Himself after His resurrection in this way, "I am alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18) The saints who will reign with CHRIST are identified in this way, "They lived and reigned with Christ." (Revelation 20:4)

It is interesting to note that these two, cast alive into Hell, went there before Satan himself. The doom of the Devil is given in Revelation 20:10. And we find that when the Devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, the beast and the false prophet are still there.

This subject of Hell is one to solemnize all our hearts. The Scriptures indicate that the beast and the false prophet are tormented day and night for ever and ever. After a thousand years, there is no letup, but a continuation of the same torture.

When men persist in sin, despise the mercies of GOD, and follow in the steps of Satan, there is nothing left for GOD to do but to allow them to choose their own place - Hell.

III. THE SAD SUPPER

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven. Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God" (Revelation 19:17).

"And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:21).

In the first part of Revelation 19 we saw a glad supper. This was the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7) "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Revelation 19:9)

Here is another supper mentioned in the same chapter. This is the supper of the flesh-eating birds of the earth who come to clear away the carcasses of those who rebel against GOD and against CHRIST.

The invitation extended by the angel to the birds that fly in the midst of Heaven is this, "That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." (Revelation 19:18)

The word "flesh" is mentioned five times. The people of the earth who chose to walk after the flesh spiritually must now have their flesh devoured literally. This is not a very beautiful picture, but it is one that will be fulfilled to the very last word (a literal call will go out to the birds of the air, and a literal feast will be given to them with the flesh of those who fall in the battle of Armageddon).

Thousands, perhaps millions, of these birds will come to clear away the flesh of the dead. A number of vultures will doubtless get hold of one body and tear off every bit of flesh. The land must be cleared of the slain carcasses before JESUS begins His reign.

You have your choice as to which supper you will take part in (the marriage supper of the Lamb, or the sad supper of the flesh-eating birds). GOD grant you will choose wisely and receive CHRIST as your own personal Saviour. Trust CHRIST and be present at the marriage supper. Reject Him, and the birds of the air will pluck out your eyes and eat the flesh from your dead body.

10-CHAPTER TEN-THE DEVIL IN CHAINS

CHAPTER TEN

The Devil in Chains

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." (Revelation 20:1-3).

WHEN CHRIST returns to the earth, many important things will take place. He will leave Heaven with the saints, riding upon a white horse and coming to the battle of Armageddon. He will quickly gain victory in this battle because of the sword which proceeds out of His mouth.

The beast, the Antichrist, and the false prophet, who will bring together the armies of the earth, will be captured and cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone. After a thousand years they are still found in that place suffering torment day and night.

After the battle of Armageddon comes a great supper - it is the supper of the flesh-eating birds. These fowls of the air are called together by the angel who stands in the sun. They come to devour the flesh of kings and captains and mighty men, and of all men, small and great, who are destroyed in the battle of Armageddon.

Revelation 19 closes with this notation, "All the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:21)

We now come to a consideration of the first three verses in Revelation 20, which tells us of the chaining of Satan. There are three things I would have you to see about this enemy of GOD.

I. The Character of Satan

The Word clearly delineates the character of this evil one.

He is proud. Paul gives a warning unto preachers in 1 Timothy 3:6, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Satan is presumptuous. In Job 1:6 we are told that "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." He had no business in the midst of the sons of GOD. He had lost his place in Heaven, but he returned to bring accusation against the saints of the LORD. The Devil has always inserted his presence into the midst of GOD's people for the purpose of stirring up strife.

The Devil is powerful.

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

With many other words the Bible describes the character of Satan. John speaks of him as the wicked one. Moses tells of his subtlety. Paul speaks of his deceitfulness. The LORD recognizes Satan as fierce and cruel, and was always willing to cast out demons from those who were sore beset.

II. The Career of Satan

The Word indicates that Satan was once in Heaven, and doubtless in a place of great authority. His downfall came when he put his will against GOD's will. Let us notice Isaiah 14:12-14 :

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Remember this: The shortest definition of sin. is "I will."

After Satan was cast out of Heaven, he made the scene of his action on earth and in the air above the earth. In the Garden of Eden he caused the downfall of the first man.

Throughout the Old Testament we find evidences of his work. He caused even the people of GOD to forsake the LORD and to engage in doubtful practices. He caused the people to murmur against GOD and to complain. He led them to worship false idols and gods.

In New Testament days Satan was still busy. He tempted the Lord JESUS CHRIST, but was defeated by the Word of GOD. Please notice that it is always the Word which brings about Satan's defeat. If we are to conquer Satan and cause him to flee from us, it will be through the use of the Word.

As we study the Bible, we are made aware of the Devil's devices. Paul says, "We are not ignorant of Satan's devices." (2 Corinthians 2:11) The Bible will cause us to open our eyes and to discern the things that are right and wrong. In the days since the close of New Testament history, Satan has still carried on his work. Christians have always had a battle with him and the churches have often been torn asunder by his onslaughts.

One of these days the Lord JESUS is coming for His own. This we know as the rapture, when the dead in CHRIST shall be raised and the living shall be changed; when the church and the Holy Spirit have been taken out of the world, and the tribulation will rage upon the earth. In this period of time, Satan will have his heyday. It will be his last effort to gain control of the earth. In the tribulation period he will give power to the Antichrist who will take over the reins of human government, and will bring together the armies to the battle of Armageddon.

At the close of the tribulation will come this bloody battle in the valley of Megiddo. Satan will be present, working through the beast and the false prophet. To this battle will come JESUS who will quickly destroy all opposition. The beast and the false prophet will be cast into Hell. Disposition will be made of Satan for a thousand years.

The work of Satan through the centuries has been threefold:

First, to damn souls. This is the main objective of the wicked one. He desires to damn every soul in Hell that he possibly can. A saved soul is a testimony to GOD's power. A Christian is a reflector of GOD's glory; therefore, Satan hates Christians and desires to keep men from accepting CHRIST.

Second, his work is to destroy lives. If he cannot damn the soul, then he will content himself with destroying the life. If a person escapes his clutches and receives CHRIST, he does not give up the battle, but seeks to destroy the effectiveness of the life for GOD. How well Satan is succeeding is evidenced by the many indifferent, cold, worldly lives of Christians.

Third, his work is to disrupt every work of GOD. Take the book of the Acts and notice how he began with the early church. When souls were being saved and the revival fires burning, he had Peter and the other apostles cast into prison. When this failed to stop the work, then he brought in trouble by the deception of Ananias and Sapphira. Every disruption of the work of GOD is Satan's program; therefore, let us be on our guard and allow him no place in our lives.

III. The Chains of Satan

Revelation 20:1-3 is a portion of Scripture that Satan hates. It tells of something which is to come upon him. It has not taken place as yet, but it will take place one day. Of course, there are some teachers who say that now we are in the kingdom of GOD and the Devil is now chained. If this be true, then the angel certainly places a mighty long chain on Satan - a chain long enough to allow him to come from the bottomless pit to every place on the earth. Satan is not bound now, but he shall be.

The world will be in an awful condition after the tribulation and the battle of Armageddon. But conditions will begin to improve when Revelation 20:1-3 is fulfilled. This earth will begin to blossom like a garden when he is no longer here to damn, destroy, and disrupt.

Satan is going to be bound like a common criminal and cast into the bottomless pit.

The world will no longer be his arena. He will be cast out of the earth. You remember the story of JESUS on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John. The disciples were in the valley and a father brought to them a son possessed with a demon. They tried to cast him out, but could not. When JESUS came down from the mount, He reproved His disciples and cast out the demon.

It is not too farfetched to say that the Lord JESUS has been in the Mount of Transfiguration in Heaven for twenty centuries. Down upon the earth some of His followers have been trying to cast out Satan. They have tried reformation and education. They have tried every known means to cast out Satan and to bring in the fulness of the kingdom of GOD. They have failed utterly and completely. The Devil is still in power and even growing in power.

But, thank GOD, here in Revelation we read that Satan's reign and power will be broken and that he will be cast down. This will be accomplished, not by reformation, education, or legislation, but by the coming of CHRIST. Church work and preaching are good, but they will not accomplish the casting out of Satan from the earth. But the personal coming of our LORD will bring about this event.

Later we will see the final doom of Satan, but for the present it is enough to realize that there is coming a day when his power will be curtailed for a thousand years. Here is another reason why we should look eagerly for the coming of CHRIST. Let us give our wholehearted allegiance to the Lord JESUS and pray with John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

11-CHAPTER ELEVEN-WHEN WARS AND ATOM BOMBS . . .

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When Wars and Atom Bombs Will Be No More

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

THROUGH THE centuries men have been questioning, "Will this world ever have world-wide peace?" Some have said, "Yes," and devoted much time and money to bring about peace on earth. They vainly imagined that they could reform human nature and stop war.

Others have said, "There will always be war. There will never be any change in this world." Still others have searched the Scriptures and found two things: First, the impossibility of a warless world by the efforts of man, and second, the certainty of a warless world by the coming of CHRIST.

Yes, it is clearly revealed in the Bible that a day of peace and prosperity is coming. This period will practically equal the beauty of the Garden of Eden before sin entered in.

We are talking in this message of the coming of CHRIST and His personal reign upon the earth. I call your attention to seven characteristics of the Golden Age which is to come.

I. Satan Will Be Chained

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:1-3).

In the last message I dealt with the matter of the chaining of Satan. I called attention to the character, the career, and the chains of the Devil. You will remember that we emphasized the Devil is not bound now, but one day he shall be. He is going to be bound like a common criminal and cast into the bottomless pit.

Before world conditions can improve, the influence of Satan must be stopped. As long as he is the prince of the power of the air and the god of this world, there will be sin and darkness.

For hundreds of years Bibles have been distributed. Missionaries have gone to all portions of the earth. Millions have accepted CHRIST, but still sin is rampant upon the earth. We know that Satan is back of this.

Thank GOD, Satan is going to be bound. In Revelation 19 we see the LORD coming in power and great glory. He came to the awful battle of Armageddon and laid hold upon the beast and false prophet. They were cast into the lake of fire. The armies of the world dictator were slain, and now in Revelation 20 we see that as CHRIST begins His kingdom upon the earth, Satan will be chained and his power broken.

II. The Nature of Wild Beasts Will Be Changed

The Bible does not contain many more interesting promises than this one about the changing of the instincts of wild beasts.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (Isaiah 11:6-10).

In this Scripture the HOLY SPIRIT selects three wild and ferocious beasts and declares that the day shall come when they will be led about by a small child. Not only so, but the wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, the young lion and the fatling together. The cow and the bear will feed together, and their young ones shall sleep together. The nature of a lion will be changed so that he shall eat straw like the ox. And then, think of it, even a baby will be able to play with poisonous serpents, and there will be no danger of harm. Isaiah 65:25 repeats this promise, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

When the nature of wild beasts is changed, it will certainly be as it was in the Garden of Eden. You will remember that everything was brought before Adam to see what he would call them. There is no indication that any animals were enemies of man. There is an indication that their natures were changed when the curse was put upon the earth because of sin. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14). The Scriptures say that the serpent was cursed above all cattle. We can only interpret this to mean that all cattle and beasts were cursed because of man's sin, but the serpent was cursed more.

When the Lord JESUS comes, animal nature will be changed to a peaceful state. What a glorious day that will be!

III. War Will Be at an End

One of the chief characteristics of this present age is war, and along with war, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes.

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matthew 24:6-8).

Peace conferences may be held. Many good-sounding resolutions may be passed, but war will never cease until the Prince of Peace shall come. The United Nations, the alliances of nations, can never stop war. JESUS said that war is a characteristic of the age, and so it will remain until He comes again. In Micah 4:3-4 we have a prophecy of that day to come when wars and atom bombs will be no more:

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." (Micah 4:3-4)

IV. The Knowledge of the Lord Will Cover the Earth

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

In Habakkuk 2:14 we find this promise repeated:

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

When CHRIST comes and takes up His reign, all forms of false worship will cease. Mohammedism with its cruel trail of lust and blood; Romanism with its idolatries and superstitious practices; Buddhism and Confucianism will be at an end. The knowledge of the LORD will completely cover the earth. With the knowledge of the LORD covering the earth there will be righteousness. There can be no righteousness until people know the LORD. In the kingdom age we are assured there will be a world-wide righteousness.

V. The Curse on the Earth Will Be Removed

When Adam and Eve sinned, they brought not only a curse upon the cattle and the beasts of the field, but also upon the ground itself.

GOD said unto Adam:

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:17-19).

The entire earth is under a curse. Man is able to gain for himself bread, only by the sweat of his brow.

The extent of this curse upon the earth is illustrated by the land of Palestine. In the book of Numbers we are told that it was once a land flowing with milk and honey. When the spies were sent out to view the land, they came back carrying a bunch of grapes so large that it took two men to carry it between them. Palestine was once a rich and happy place, but sin brought a curse upon it. The trees disappeared. The soil washed away, and the land became as a desert.

The curse will be removed from Palestine, and we believe from much of the earth.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:1-10).

The earth will blossom like a rose when Jesus establishes His kingdom upon the earth.

VI. The Saints Will Rule and Reign With CHRIST

Paul said, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2). And again he said, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12).

The promise oft repeated in Revelation 20 is that "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)

JESUS gave a parable of the talents. To the men of five talents and two talents, who were faithful in service, He said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25:21) I believe that we will know the fulness of this in the reign of CHRIST. Those saints who are qualified by their faithfulness will have a special place in the rulership of the earth.

VII. The Golden Age Will Be the Personal Reign of Jesus on the Earth

"His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:10).

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." (Matthew 25:31).

During the earthly ministry of the LORD, again and again His disciples questioned Him about the set-up of the kingdom. They knew that CHRIST was going to reign upon a throne, but they did not know the time. James and John said to Him, "Grant unto us that the one shall sit on thy right hand and the other on thy left in thy kingdom." (Matthew 20:21) The disciples were looking for the kingdom when they said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

CHRIST is coming again in a literal body, with the nailprints in His hands and feet; He shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and shall sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and rule the earth.

There is a song that the postmillennialists sing without an understanding of its truth:

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun

Does his successive journeys run;

His kingdom spread from shore to shore,

Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

He is coming to reign, and we who are His followers will reign with Him. We face a wonderful, glorious prospect. If we love the LORD, we will be looking for His coming. Until He comes, we will let Him reign and have full right of way in our hearts.

12-CHAPTER TWELVE-WHEN SATAN GOES . . .

CHAPTER TWELVE

When Satan Goes to His Eternal Abode

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

THERE ARE some Bible themes that give the preacher a peculiar joy. The doom of the Devil is one of them. When we look around us and see the effects of sin and Satan, we are glad to announce his final doom. When we look back over the world's history and see the gruesome, blasting work of Satan, we are glad that the Bible gives us the assurance of his destruction and torment.

There are five things I want to give you about Satan and his eternal abode.

I. Satan's Record in Heaven

Satan was once a beautiful angel in Heaven. His pride became so great that it brought his expulsion from Heaven. (Read Isaiah 14:12-14).

Lucifer refers to Satan. It means "Day-star." After he was put out of Heaven, his name was Satan, which means adversary. The "I will" of Lucifer marked the beginning of sin in the universe. The shortest definition of sin is man's will against God's will.

Satan was cast out of Heaven, but he still has access to Heaven and is able to go and to accuse believers. This is illustrated with Job 1:6-12 :

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."

II. Satan's Reign on the Earth

When Satan was cast out of Heaven he came to the earth. The Word clearly indicates the great power that Satan has in connection with this world. Paul speaks of him as "the prince of the power

of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 the apostle calls him "the god of this world."

JESUS referred to Satan as the prince of this world. "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). These verses reveal to us the power of Satan and his place of rulership on the earth.

If you hesitate to accept the fact of the Devil, there is a simple test that you can make which will convince you forever that there is a Devil of power. Accept CHRIST as your Saviour and begin to work for GOD and you will soon find out about the adversary. There is a tremendous war going on in the world. It is CHRIST against Satan. It is light against darkness. It is life against death.

Satan's success in his work is evidenced by the hospitals, the insane asylums, the jails, the constant turmoil of the world. It is because of Satan that our nation spends fifteen billions of dollars per year on crime. Lawlessness is not of GOD; it is of Satan. No wonder that Paul exhorted us to put on the whole armour of GOD.

We read in Ephesians 6:11-17 :

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

There would be no sense in giving such a recommendation if there were not a war going on.

III. Satan's Removal From the Earth

In the previous message we spoke of the day when Satan will be removed from the earth.

This is clearly prophesied in Revelation 20:1-3 :

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

He will be taken as a common criminal and cast into the bottomless pit. He will no longer have any power upon this earth.

When this glad day comes and he is removed, the kingdom of CHRIST will begin in its fulness upon the earth. The nature of wild beasts will be changed. Wars and rumors of wars will be at an end. The knowledge of the LORD will cover the earth, The curse will be removed from the earth. The saints will rule and reign with CHRIST. CHRIST Himself will rule from the throne of David.

When will this chaining of Satan take place? At the close of the tribulation period and after the battle of Armageddon is finished. It may be very near to us, thank God!

IV. Satan's Release for a Little Season

During the thousand-year reign of CHRIST, the Devil will be chained. During all of this time we will rule and rejoice with CHRIST. But after the thousand years comes another event of great interest and significance.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Revelation 20:7-9).

These verses reveal two very pertinent facts: first, human nature is unchanged; second, Satan's nature will be unchanged by the thousand years in the bottomless pit.

Satan has always been a deceiver. He was a deceiver in the Garden of Eden. He is today. Satan is an attractive deceiver. He does not appear in ugly form to men, but in a beautiful fashion. He makes himself into an angel of light. Plain, fleshly human nature has always been the same. It is willing to be deceived and led astray by Satan. After the thousand-year reign of CHRIST on the earth, there will be those who will follow Satan in a final revolt against GOD.

Who are the ones whom Satan will deceive? They are the ones who will be born in the millennium, born not to the resurrected or translated saints, but born to the people of the nations who enter into the kingdom of God after the judgment of living nations. They cannot be any other. This will be a test for the people born in the millennium. Remember they have had no testing during the thousand years, because Satan has been chained, but now comes the test.

A great number join with the Devil and he leads them against the camp of the saints and the beloved city. The end comes swiftly for all - and "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:9)

Here is a sad fact but - it offers encouragement to those of us who have many disappointments in people. The fact is this: after a thousand years with CHRIST as King of the earth there will be those who will turn away from Him and go after Satan. It emphasizes the fact that the heart is incurably evil.

V. Satan's Reward in Hell

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

Satan has never been in Hell. He is not in Hell now. He will not be in Hell until after the millennial reign of CHRIST. When he goes to Hell, will he be king? No! He will suffer torment as any other lost sinner. He will suffer in a place where the fire is not quenched. After a thousand years the beast and false prophet are still there and unconsumed.

Satan's battle is a losing one. He cannot win. He is a person of power and tricks, but his final doom is set. Those who line up with him will fail also. They will suffer with him in Hell forever. I want no part with the Devil. I want my life to count for CHRIST and for God.

13-CHAPTER THIRTEEN-THE LAST JUDGMENT

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Last Judgment

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

IN PREVIOUS messages we have considered the eternal doom of Satan. We first observed that he was chained in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and then in Revelation 20:10 we have recorded the final doom of Satan: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

It has also been our pleasure to discuss the reign of CHRIST upon the earth. The length of this reign is given six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20 - it is to be a thousand years. During this time the children of GOD will rule the earth with CHRIST. Paul said, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" (1 Corinthians 6:2).

The reign of CHRIST will be a time of universal righteousness, a time when wars and rumors of wars will not be known, and a period when even the instincts of wild beasts will be changed.

Following these tremendous events given in the first ten verses of Revelation 20, we have the account of the last judgment. There are four significant things to be said about this awful and solemn event.

I. This Is the Final Judgment

Some people want to make this a general judgment at the end of the world, but a careful study of the Word of GOD will show that this cannot be a true interpretation. The Word of GOD mentions many judgments. For example, there is the judgment of the believer's sins in the cross of CHRIST. When we accept JESUS as Saviour, our eternal destiny is settled forever. We have passed from death unto life.

Again, there is the judgment of self. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). The judgment seat of CHRIST is clearly portrayed in the Word of GOD. Read Romans 14:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. The judgment of living nations is given in Matthew

25. This judgment takes place at the revelation of CHRIST when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory. The test in this judgment is the treatment accorded by the nations to those whom CHRIST calls "my brethren." (Matthew 25:40)

The great white throne judgment is the final scene before we come to read about the new heavens and the new earth. The awfulness of this judgment is seen in Revelation 20:11, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." When the great sea of faces stand before the Judge, the scene will be so awful that the heavens and the earth will vanish away. I think that we can refer also to Revelation 21:1, where we read, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

I believe there is also a very definite connection here with the passage in 2 Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

In my own interpretation of the Scripture I have never held to the idea that this earth is going to be purged by fire, but I have always received the plain teaching by the Word of GOD that this earth will be destroyed and will be burned by fire. I prefer to think of all of this as vanishing away, and in its place a new Heaven and a new earth.

One Bible commentator points out another fact about this judgment which is more than interesting. He says that the great white throne judgment is not a trial. Those who are judged are not asked questions. They are simply judged from the things that are written in the books, and accorded their punishment in Hell

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It is a great white throne because the lost of the earth will stand before the LORD. It is a white throne, for it reveals the holiness and purity of our GOD. It is before such a throne that men will be gathered. The one who sits upon the throne will be CHRIST, for He said, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:22-23).

We can be sure that all the persons of the Godhead are present at this serious occasion, but CHRIST will do the actual judging, for it has been committed unto Him by the FATHER.

II. This Is the Judgment of the Lost Dead

We have rejoiced over and over again at the prospect of the resurrection of the saved. Beautiful pictures of this are given in I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4. John said, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

But let us not forget that the unsaved will also be resurrected. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God . . . And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (Revelation 20:12)

This is the resurrection of the unsaved. This is the time when the graves will give up the bodies of the lost and when hades will surrender the spirits and souls of the lost. They will be reunited and will be brought to stand before the judgment of GOD.

The Word teaches the plain fact of two resurrections.

Notice Daniel 12:2 :

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

In John 5:28-29 we read:

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Paul speaks of the two resurrections in Acts 24:15 :

"And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

The saved dead have already been raised and have entered into life with the LORD. Only the unsaved are left in the graves, and now they are brought forth to stand before the judgment throne.

Notice the words, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." (Revelation 20:12)

The great men of all times who refused the Saviour will be brought to judgment. And the small, forgotten individuals will stand there, too. Those who have been buried for many centuries, on land or sea, will come forth. Body, soul, and spirit will be united, and face the judge.

III. They Will Be Judged Out of the Books

"And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Revelation 20:12).

The record books will be there. Every man's sins will be plainly written down. GOD will judge each man out of the record.

All sins will be brought to light, for remember, these are sinners who have not had their sins covered by the blood of JESUS. They know nothing of GOD's gracious forgiveness; therefore, every sin will be brought out to face them. The young who died without CHRIST will face their sins. The middle-aged and the old people will likewise see their lives pass before them.

Secret sins will be brought to light. There are things which you have done which no one knows about but GOD. He has it all written down in the record, and one day, if you die without CHRIST, you will face it. GOD's records are exact. He makes no mistakes.

Sins never committed openly will also be brought to light. JESUS said, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). John tells us in 1 John 3:15, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

All of us were shocked by the account of the young man who took a revolver and killed twelve people in cold blood. Whether sane or insane, we do not know. It was a horrible thing. Let us beware. JESUS said, "Whosoever hates his brother is a killer." (1 John 3:15) You are guilty of murder!

Yes, all sins will be brought to light, but the greatest sin will be that of rejection of CHRIST. There is no sin so terrible as refusing the loving Saviour.

We notice that another book was opened, which is the book of life. If this is the judgment of the unsaved, then why should the book of life even be present? It is there as a record against the lost. Even in the last judgment there will doubtless be men who will insist that they are good and deserve Heaven. Perhaps the judge will permit them to search the book of life to see if their names are written down.

Sinner friend, remember this: You will have to face your record. Nothing will be omitted.

IV. The Outcome of This Judgment

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14-15).

Will any be saved who stand before the great white throne? If the record be true, then none will be saved, for it says that death and hades will be cast into the lake of fire.

Will there be degrees of punishment in Hell? Yes, if GOD is to be just, then there will be a difference in the degree of punishment. In the giving of the parable of the steward and his servants in Luke 12, the Lord JESUS said:

"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48).

The Scripture says that men will be judged "according to their works." There will be a difference, but it will all be Hell.

And now in conclusion let us notice one sentence in Revelation 20:14, "This is the second death." Here is a statement of finality. The second death is the lake of fire. It is called the second death because it follows after the first death, or physical death. The second death is existence without life. It is eternal death, yet eternal existence. This is what is meant when we speak of the lost soul dying, yet continuing to exist. The second death is not annihilation, as some would try to teach and preach.

The second death means separation of the entire person from GOD. The first death has power to separate the soul from the body, but the second death has power to separate the entire man from GOD eternally. The second death kills all peace, joy, happiness, and hope forever. It is separation from GOD, from CHRIST, and from Heaven. It is separation from loved ones who are saved. I stood by a casket and listened to a wife murmur to the dead body of her husband, "It won't be long until we are together again." Yes, this is true in CHRIST, but without CHRIST there is eternal separation.

Last, the second death is a future certainty for the Christ-rejecter. There is no escaping from Hell for the man who has heard of CHRIST and refused to accept Him. Choose tonight where you will spend eternity. Will it be in the place prepared for the Devil and his angels, as pictured in Revelation 20, or will it be the glorious Heaven as pictured in Revelation 21? Receive CHRIST and make Heaven your home.

14-CHAPTER FOURTEEN-THE NEW HEAVEN AND . . .

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The New Heaven and the New Earth

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:1-8).

THE LAST word of Revelation 20 is "fire." It refers to the eternal fires in Hell and to the eternal abode of all who reject CHRIST.

In my last message I spoke of that tragic time when the unsaved dead will be resurrected and brought to stand before the great white throne. It is a picture that stirs our hearts and drives us into the work of soul winning. We are made to question, "Will we have loved ones and friends who will stand in the great white throne judgment to hear their final doom pronounced by the Eternal Judge? Will someone be there because we failed to give the message of redemption to them?"

But now we turn to the thought of Heaven. You will be noticing that the SPIRIT of GOD will keep us near to sad thoughts even as we have pictured the glorious future of every believer.

In the Scripture before us tonight may we notice three things :

I. The Passing of This Earth and This Heaven

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." (Revelation 21:1).

Along with this verse we must read again Revelation 20:11 :

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

These two verses are certainly speaking of the same things - that time when the present earth and Heaven will pass away. The Apostle Peter deals with the same matter in 2 Peter 3:10-14 :

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of GOD, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

There are some who choose to interpret these verses as meaning that this earth will be purified by fire just as it was cleansed by water in the day of Noah. But it seems to me that these words mean even more than that. The repeated statement is that the old "earth and heaven shall flee away," or "pass away with a great noise," and the statement, "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Though it may tax our faith, I believe that we do right by the Word of GOD when we accept what it says.

JESUS had such a matter in mind when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35) This does not seem to me that things will simply be changed or purged, but that there will be a passing away.

And let us recall also Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new." This suggests that GOD will make things by a creative act, just as He did in the beginning.

Now, to take the place of this earth and this Heaven, there will be created a new Heaven and a new earth. This is given to us in Isaiah 65:17, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Note also Isaiah 66:22, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."

Just as GOD brought this world into existence out of nothing, so can He turn it into nothing, and create a new Heaven and a new earth.

II. The Picture of New Things

We are now looking at the eternal state. We are beyond the millennium. We stand upon the brink of eternity and see the things which are promised to all believers. Scofield says that there are seven new things given in the last two chapters of the Bible: the new Heaven, the new earth, the new people, the new Jerusalem, the new temple, the new light, and the new paradise.

This new city which John saw coming down from GOD to the new earth will be the home of the redeemed. It is that better country for which Abraham and the patriarchs looked. It is the place that GOD has prepared for His saints.

A description of it is given in Revelation 21:9 to the end of the Bible. It will be a vast place, lighted by the presence of GOD. It will be a dwelling place of our LORD, for He is coming to dwell with His people. This place is so glorious that GOD uses negatives to describe it.

1. No sin. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27). Sin has brought the terrible condition which we see before us today. Let your mind dwell upon a place where there will be no sin.

2. No curse. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of GOD and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him" (Revelation 22:3). The curse which came upon the earth because of man's sins will be done away.

3. No sorrow. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying . . ." (Revelation 21:4). All tears will be wiped away, and sorrow will be a thing of the past.

4. No pain. "Neither shall there be any more pain." (Revelation 21:4) In that eternal home there will be no sickness, no need for hospitals, no drives to raise money to combat tuberculosis, cancer, or heart disease. No children afflicted with polio - there will be only everlasting health for all of GOD's children.

5. No separation. "And they shall see his face . . . and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:4-5). After the saints are caught up to be with the LORD, we have the assurance that we shall ever be with Him. There will be no farewells in Heaven, no separation.

My wife and I were discussing a matter that deeply touched our hearts. We learned that our missionaries, Rev. and Mrs. J. B. Williams, located in Africa, must be separated from their little daughter by a distance of seven hundred miles. Because of the climate where they are working, she is unable to stay with them, and they are forced to send her to a distant place. They get to see her but once a year.

Many times people have written me asking that I try to locate some loved one. Occasionally it is a father who wants to see his boy before he dies. Thank GOD for the promise of a place where there is no separation!

6. No darkness. "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light . . ." (Revelation 22:5). In the presence of the new city which is coming down upon the new earth, the light of the world will be present, and there will be no darkness. The city will have no need of the sun, neither the moon, for "the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21:23)

7. No death. "And there shall be no more death." (Revelation 21:4) Death is forever put down. It will be crushed beneath the feet of CHRIST. CHRIST will reign until death is conquered, and then He will deliver the kingdom to God, even the Father. May we read this in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 :

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

These are things that will make every believer homesick. May we let our minds dwell upon them, and look forward to the day of fulfillment.

III. The Plea of the HOLY SPIRIT

After a description of eternal things, the HOLY SPIRIT turns to a plea for sinners to come to the LORD. In Revelation 21:6 we read, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." If you are thirsty for the things of GOD, here is your invitation, 'Come . . . take the water of life freely.' (Revelation 22:17)

The word "freely" reminds us of our free salvation.

The SPIRIT is anxious to keep every man from thinking that he can earn salvation by good works and a good life. No, salvation is the free gift of GOD and is given to all who will come and take.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of GOD: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of GOD is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

In Revelation 21:7 we have a promise to overcomers, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." There is but one way to overcome, and that is by the blood of the Lamb. Receive CHRIST, take the water of life freely, and in CHRIST there is victory.

Another warning and plea comes from the HOLY SPIRIT. In Revelation 21:8 we read, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

You may be saying that you do not belong in the class of such terrible sinners, but please notice the fifth word in that verse, "unbelieving." The terrible, awful punishment of Hell is for those who do not receive the truth and thus be saved. Hell is for lost sinners and the sin of all sins is unbelief.

GOD is a GOD of love. He is kind and merciful, but He cannot pardon those who hate and despise the Lord JESUS CHRIST. And so we see in the midst of the picture of Heaven a plea unto men to be saved.

Are you one who has received the water of life, and through CHRIST are you overcoming, or are you in the class of those who are fearful and unbelieving, rejecters of the loving Saviour, and bound for the lake of fire and brimstone? Come now to the Saviour while there is yet time and opportunity to be saved.

15-CHAPTER FIFTEEN-THE LAST PRAYER IN THE BIBLE

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Last Prayer in the Bible

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus CHRIST be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:17-21).

WE HAVE just read the closing words of the book of Revelation and the last words of the Bible. For many weeks we have been studying together the truth of the LORD's second coming and events related to His coming. Now, we come to the last words given by the SPIRIT of GOD to John. You will notice that these words are on the subject of the Second Coming. Once more I repeat that it is impossible to understand the Bible apart from the message of the blessed hope.

His coming is mentioned three hundred eighteen times in the two hundred sixty chapters of the New Testament. One verse out of every twenty-five refers to His glorious appearing. Therefore, the Bible becomes a new book to the person who reads it in the light of His return.

There are three last things to which I call your attention.

I. The Last Invitation

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Your soul will be blessed if you will take a good concordance and study the many verses where the word "come" is used.

GOD invited Noah into the ark with these words, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1).

In Isaiah 1:18 we have GOD's invitation to come for cleansing, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The Lord JESUS extends an invitation to those who are weary. In Matthew 11:28 - "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

In a parable JESUS invited men to come to the gospel feast. "And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:17).

In Revelation 22:17, the last chapter of the Bible, we have a chorus of invitations. The Spirit says, "Come." It is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT to invite men to come unto JESUS. It is His work to convict them and by conviction to point their eyes to the Lamb of GOD who is able to save from sin. The bride says, "Come." This refers to the redeemed ones who extend the invitation also for guilty sinners to come and be saved.

"And let him that heareth say, Come." Yes, the one who hears the invitation also joins in the chorus and passes the word along and says, "Come."

Some commentators make this threefold invitation from the SPIRIT, the Bride, and him that heareth refer altogether to the coming of CHRIST. Dr. Pettingill interprets the passage to be an invitation to lost sinners. Here is his comment: "Is any sinner out of CHRIST reading these words? To such the SPIRIT and the bride say, Come. - That 'come' is from the very heart of GOD, and it has been sounding out for thousands of years."

We can be certain of the interpretation of the rest of the verse, for it is calling to the thirsty and to "whosoever will" to come and take the water of life freely. With the words, "whosoever will," GOD swings the door of salvation wide open. He invites all sinners to come and to drink of the water of life. No one is excluded. All are invited. What is the water of life? It is salvation through faith in CHRIST. How do we take it? Freely, without money and without price. It is for everyone.

This is GOD's last invitation. It is His strongest call to every sinner in the world.

II. The Last Promise

"Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20).

There are many people who laugh and scoff at the preaching of the Second Coming. They say that we will never see JESUS again unless we go to Heaven. They say that we are wasting our time looking for His return and talking about it. But what will the scoffers do with the plain Word of GOD? JESUS said, "I will come again." (John 14:3) Now if He comes not, He will be a liar and impostor. We know that CHRIST was true and is the truth. Therefore, we accept His promise that He is coming again. The coming of CHRIST is the Christian's blessed hope.

There are three announcements of our Lord's return given in the closing chapter of the Bible. In Revelation 22:7 we have the promise of His return, and it is connected with our keeping the sayings of the prophecy of this book. "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

The second announcement is in Revelation 22:12, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." CHRIST is coming again. He is coming suddenly, and He is coming to bring rewards to His servants.

The third announcement is in Revelation 22:20 where He simply states, "Surely I come quickly." This last plain factual announcement of His coming makes the second coming of CHRIST to this earth from Heaven a great event of the future.

When He comes, some very definite things are going to happen.

First, He is going to receive us unto Himself. This is His promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." (John 14:3) 'The dead in Christ shall be raised first, and the living will be changed, and together we shall be caught up into the air to be with the Lord.' (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Second, He is coming to inspect our labors. We must stand before Him at the judgment seat of CHRIST and there give an account of ourselves. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Third, He is going to reward us if we are found faithful. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." (1 Corinthians 3:14)

The promise of the LORD's return should stir us to three things.

First, to a life of purity. John said, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

If CHRIST should come today, would He find you with a clean heart? Is your heart right toward others? Is it empty of rebelliousness? Would you be ashamed to stand before the LORD?

Second, the promise of the LORD's return calls us to live a life of separation. When He comes in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed into His likeness and called up into a heavenly atmosphere.

GOD wants us to get ready for that time by living a life of separation now. He wants us to come out from the world and be separate.

Third, the promise of the LORD's return calls for us to live fruitful lives. There will be rewards for those who are faithful in service and there will be crowns for those who have engaged in winning souls to CHRIST.

Are you ready for that time when CHRIST will fulfill His promise and will come and receive us?

III. The Last Prayer

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

CHRIST promised to come again and John said at once, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20) John was speaking for himself when he voiced this last prayer, for he had been a life of great suffering. He had been persecuted severely for his faith in CHRIST. He was anxious to see the LORD.

The Apostle John spoke also for every persecuted saint of his day. The scattered believers were hungry for the sight of Jesus. John spoke for us also, for we too want to see His face. The more we study the truth of His coming and the more we observe the trends of the times, the more we feel like fervently praying, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

Are you praying this prayer? I believe that the way we say these words is an indication of our spiritual state. If we are indifferent in the LORD's service, we will not pray fervently, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." The lazy, indifferent, do-nothing Christian is not anxious to look into the face of the LORD, for he realizes that his life and service will be judged. If we are compromising with the world, we will not be anxious to face Him. You will never find worldly Christians praying this last prayer, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

If we are doubtful of the truth of His Word and His promises, we will not be found praying this prayer.

When doubt comes in, it usually begins working on the great fundamental, foundational truths of the Word of GOD. No modernist believes in the premillennial return of CHRIST. It is one of the first things that he tries to exclude from his preaching; therefore, doubters and modernists will not be praying, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

If we love material things more than we love CHRIST, we will not pray earnestly, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20) There are too many Christians who do not want to see CHRIST because His coming would disrupt their business affairs. There are other professing Christians who do not manifest an interest in His coming because they have their plans made for certain trips and vacations in years ahead. Oh, friend, may we set our affections on things above and look for His return.

He is coming again. He is coming in power and great glory. The CHRIST who was prophesied to come as Saviour hundreds of years before He was born; the CHRIST who walked upon the earth and died upon a cross; the CHRIST who arose triumphant from the grave; the CHRIST who ascended back into Glory; the CHRIST who gave His promise before leaving this earth that He would come again - this CHRIST is coming.

He is coming just as the two men said on the day that He ascended. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) He is coming with the nailprints in His hands and feet, but He is coming to be KING of kings and LORD of lords.

"Some golden daybreak Jesus will come;

Some golden daybreak, Battles all won,

He'll shout the vict'ry, Break through the blue,

Some golden daybreak, For me, for you."

16-CHAPTER SIXTEEN-THIS PRESENT AGE

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

This Present Age

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

AGES PAST, a present age, and future ages are clearly referred to in the Bible. An age is a period of time that has a definite beginning and a definite end.

CHRIST gave His promise to be with His followers to the consummation of the age. The King James version reads, world," and the word also means "age." In a number of places we have the word "world", the word "age" is in view.

We are now living in an age or dispensation that had a definite beginning and will have a definite ending. This age began with the coming of the Lord JESUS to this earth to die. This age will end with the coming of CHRIST to reign as KING of kings and LORD of lords.

I want to call to your attention some Bible teachings about this present age.

I. The Characteristics of This Age

The Bible clearly says that this is an evil age. There is no suggestion in the Word of GOD that this age will become better as it continues. The age is evil and will become more evil as it progresses toward the end.

First, this evil age is dominated by the Devil. He is spoken of as 'the god of this age.' (2 Corinthians 4:4) As long as the Devil remains, this age will continue to wax worse and worse.

Men will take sides against CHRIST and with Satan. He hates GOD and hates CHRIST, and will do all he can to defeat the work of GOD. Therefore, this age will be evil as long as the Devil remains. But, thank GOD, one day CHRIST is coming and the Devil will be chained for a thousand years and will finally be cast into the lake of fire.

Second, this is the age of the HOLY SPIRIT. The HOLY SPIRIT has always been present on the earth to move men to operate through them, but now in this age He is abiding in believers. Jesus gave this promise:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

The HOLY SPIRIT dwells in believers to empower and to energize. He is here to administer the work of the churches. He was the One who called out Barnabas and Saul for the work of missions and sent them forth.

The HOLY SPIRIT is here to convict of sin. There is no salvation without conviction. This is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT to make men see their lost condition and to point them to the Lamb of GOD.

Third, this is an age of separation. Christians are to be separated from the world. We are not to be conformed to this age, but we are to be transformed. JESUS CHRIST "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of GOD and our Father." (Galatians 1:4)

This age is to be definitely characterized by the separation of the people called Christians from the things of this world.

"Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

We are in this world, but we are not to be of the world. We have been chosen out of the world.

A fourth characteristic of this age is the grace of God. This is the age of grace. Grace is unmerited favor of God. CHRIST commands us to go abroad and tell men of the love of GOD and His willingness to save all who will come unto Him.

We need to remember that this age will not last forever. It had a definite beginning, and it has a definite ending; therefore, we must hasten with the good news of GOD's grace.

II. The Purpose of This Age

The purpose of this age is 'the calling out of a people for his name.' (Acts 15:14) Listen to the clear message of James to the church council in Jerusalem:

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts 15:13-17).

There were four points to James message.

- First, God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.
- Second, the return of the Lord. "After this I will return."
- Third, the restoration of Israel. "I will build again the tabernacle of David."
- Fourth, the millennium: "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord."

The purpose of GOD is to take out a people for His name and to make them ready for the great things which are to take place. The purpose of GOD is not to convert the world. This world will not be won to CHRIST in this age. The purpose of GOD is not the establishment of a new world order. This will come in the age which follows ours. The purpose of GOD for this age is not to bring universal peace to nations. Peace is also promised in the Word of GOD, but it belongs to the time

when CHRIST shall reign upon the earth. In this age of trouble, heartache, and evil, GOD is offering to man the highest and best that He has. He is offering salvation through the blood of His Son. The HOLY SPIRIT is working to produce conviction and to point men to the Saviour. Here and there are those who hear and heed. These are the called-out ones and they will live and reign with CHRIST.

III. The End of This Age

The Word tells us that certain things will happen in the last days of this age. JESUS gave a full discourse on this matter in answer to the question of His disciples, when they asked, "And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3)

He said that wars would characterize this entire age and would continue down to the end of the age. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" (Matthew 24:6-7).

CHRIST said that wars would continue. Put this truth of our LORD over against the modern conception of trying to stop war through alliances and combinations of nations. Wars will continue and will finally go into the Great Tribulation period and will climax in the battle of Armageddon. This present age faces a complete collapse, and every word of the Lord JESUS will be fulfilled.

In the end of this age there will be a departing from the faith.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Listen to these words:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The day will come, Paul said, when professing Christians will reject doctrinal preaching. Christians will seek teachers who will please them. They will be turned from the truth and will be turned to fables. I leave it with you whether or not we have come to this day.

Scoffers will be a sign of the end of the age.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

This day is certainly upon us. The matter of the second coming of our LORD has become an issue. Some are openly scoffing and fighting the doctrine. Others are trying to solve the problem by saying that they believe in the coming of CHRIST, but not in the imminent, premillennial return of CHRIST.

Finally, I find another sign of the end of the age. It is given to us in James 5:1-8 :

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupt, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered in the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Here is a picture of the conflict between capital and labor. We know that such a conflict has been going on and continues to become more intense. I have no comment to make save that this is one of the signs of the end of this age.

We have talked about some very serious matters tonight - matters that should cause all of us to think seriously. We have been seeing GOD's picture of this day in which we live. It is not beautiful, but it all points to a glorious event - the coming of JESUS and our removal to be with Him. As the world rushes on in its evil course, we are looking for the return of CHRIST. We are waiting for the fulfillment of prophecies regarding His coming, and the Golden Age.

The Bible has good news for every lost person. It is the news of salvation through JESUS CHRIST. Hasten to receive CHRIST as your Saviour that you might be ready for His coming and for the new age which He will begin. A beautiful picture of how it should be when JESUS comes is given in Luke 8:40, "And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him."

This verse does not refer to the Second Coming, but it certainly should be a picture of our attitude.

17-CHAPTER SEVENTEEN-THE CHRISTIAN'S WATCHWORD

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Christian's Watchword

"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Php 4:5).

THERE WAS a day when CHRIST led His disciples to the Mount of Olives, gave His commission to them, and began to rise into the sky. As the disciples watched Him a cloud received Him out of their sight.

As the gaze of the disciples was still fastened upon the disappearing LORD, two men in white apparel appeared and began to speak. They said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven; This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

Following these words they returned to Jerusalem and began a prayer service which lasted for ten days. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were all in one place, with one accord. The HOLY SPIRIT came in mighty power upon them.

They began to witness of the life, the death, and the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. Thousands were saved. In the days to come, they continued their faithful witnessing of the LORD. But as they worked, they never forgot the promise of His coming.

Therefore, we find that the early Christians lived and labored in the light of the blessed hope. They suffered nameless persecutions for the CHRIST they looked for daily.

Now when Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, he had much to say about the second coming of the Lord JESUS.

In the fourth chapter he began to deal with very practical matters.

"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life." (Php 4:1-3).

As we come to verse 4, we find the apostle returning to his theme of rejoicing, for he said:

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." (Php 4:4)

In Php 4:5 he states:

"Let your moderation [or your gentleness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."

That expression, "The Lord is at hand," seems to have been a favorite one of the apostle and the watchword of the early Christians. They used the nearness of the LORD, both as to space and time, to keep their lives in tune.

Paul said, "The Lord is at hand," and since He is at hand, there are three suggestions I want to make to you as Christian people.

First, he said, "Be careful for nothing." (Php 4:6) Since the LORD is coming soon, it is exceedingly important for us not to be careful and anxious about minor matters. Since the LORD is at hand, there is not time for foolish worry.

Second, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Php 4:6) Nothing that troubles us is too trifling to bring to the LORD. We should pray about everything.

Third, pray, "with thanksgiving." (Php 4:6) Please notice that he said "in every thing" pray and give thanks, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It is easy to give thanks when we receive the things that please us, but otherwise it is sometimes hard. When our plans fail and when our friends betray us, it is not so easy to give thanks unto GOD. Let us remember to give thanks for everything that comes our way.

Yes, the LORD is at hand. He is an ever-present CHRIST. We need to lean upon Him, rest in Him, and fear not. He is at hand in His second coming. If Paul felt that the LORD was at hand, then how much more should we feel it today in the light of His soon coming to receive us.

There are three practical admonitions I would like to give.

I. The LORD Is at Hand; Therefore, Be Prayerful

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33).

The LORD is coming; therefore, we need to be watching and praying. The sore need of every Christian in this present hour is more prayer. We need prayer which digs down deep into our hearts. We need to pray burning, sincere, heartfelt prayers which reach the throne of GOD and allow the searchlight of the HOLY SPIRIT to shine into our hearts. The men and women who have been greatly used of GOD in ages past have always been mighty in prayer. As you read the biographies of the famous, the spirit of prayer predominates in every life.

JESUS, the SON of GOD, took time to pray. In the midst of His greatest activity and opportunity for service, we read that He withdrew Himself from the multitude and sought out a solitary place where He could pray. In the Garden of Gethsemane the Saviour prayed in such anguish of spirit that His sweat became blood. There are not many of us who are willing to pay such a supreme price in order to have power with GOD. And yet we must remind ourselves that this was the all-powerful SON of GOD who felt the need of prayer.

Can it be that many people who are gifted, talented, and well equipped for the service of GOD fail because they do not pray? It is the tragedy of this hour that many people seem to think that if they know the mechanics of serving GOD, that is all that is necessary. May this thought be far removed from your minds. No service is acceptable unto GOD unless it is rendered upon the wings of

prayer. Therefore, may we withdraw ourselves to the secret place and there pray until we have an answer.

What foolishness that we seek the advice of our friends and families before we have even spent as much as five minutes in earnest prayer. What foolishness that we would trust the advice of a mere human when we could have the leadership of an all-wise GOD.

The LORD is at hand; therefore, be prayerful. Pray about the small things; Pray about everything that will affect your life in relation to others. It is not only hard; it is impossible to live a godly Christian life without prayer. And yet, how many are trying to do it!

II. The LORD Is at Hand; Therefore, Be Patient

The Word of GOD teaches this very fact. It is repeated twice in two verses in James 5:7-8 :

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The LORD is at hand; therefore be patient in your Christian labors: It is necessary that there be a sowing time in order to reap a harvest. We who are workers for JESUS must remember that we cannot always reap, but we must sow as well. We must be as a farmer who waits for the season of harvest.

Be patient in hardships, for the LORD is at hand. All of our worry and concern will fade into thin air when JESUS appears. Today you are troubled about everything, but if CHRIST should come in this moment, every worry would be over, and as a Christian you would rise to meet Him. Therefore, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Php 4:6) And here is His promise, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Php 4:7)

Be patient in sorrow; the LORD is at hand. Paul believed this, and it sustained him through many dark hours. He gave this word in encouragement to the Christians in Thessalonica. It was to them that he said:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the LORD, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the LORD shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In the time of sorrow there is no comfort that can equal the promise of His coming, for the day that JESUS comes, the dead in Christ shall rise, the living shall be changed, and there will be a glorious reunion in the sky. The week this is written many members of our church have been

saddened in the going of three of our fellow Christians. We have followed the caskets to the cemeteries. We have shed our tears with the sorrowing families. But listen, the LORD is at hand! His coming is near, and in that day we shall see our loved ones face to face again.

Be patient in your differences with others, for the LORD is at hand. This is what James said to the people after exhorting them to be patient:

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the LORD, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:9-11).

In the same manner, the Apostle Paul exhorted Euodias and Syntyche - that they be of the same mind in the LORD. Why do we make so much of differences when the LORD is coming, and at His coming, every difference will be made straight and right?

As a Christian looking for the Lord JESUS, pass by the slights and insults which are given you. Your attention is fastened on something a thousand times bigger. Don't try to get revenge against those who mistreat you. Leave it all in the hands of the Lord. Pray for your enemies. Love them that despitefully use you and be patient until the coming of the Lord.

III. The Lord Is at Hand; Therefore, Be Pure

You may be asking, "Do we have any Scripture for this?" I can answer, "Yes, the very finest and strongest statements exhort us to be pure, for He is coming."

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

Paul gives the same thought in the book of Titus, chapter 2, when he said:

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:12-14)

The Apostle had the same thought when he said:

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." (2 Peter 3:11).

In the light of the coming of our LORD, the Word of GOD calls for purity of speech, purity of thought, and purity of conduct.

To be pure of heart, mind, speech, and conduct is to be ready when He comes.

- To be pure of heart and life is to shed abroad an influence which will bless others.

- To be pure of heart is to be filled with the HOLY SPIRIT; as a matter of fact, there is no other way for God's HOLY SPIRIT to fill and pervade your life except through separation from sin and the world, and purity of life.

- To be pure of heart, life, and conduct is to be used of GOD, for GOD must have a clean vessel. Listen to these words of the Apostle Paul:

"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

Is there a spot upon your life which would make you an unfit vessel for the Master's use? If so, then claim the promise of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It is true that we make mistakes and that our lives are often touched by the impurities of a sinful world, but that is no reason for us to continue in such a state, for GOD has given us a way whereby we can be cleansed, and whereby we can be pure in His sight. The Lord is at hand, and John says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3)

Let me call Christian people to a new place of separation and dedication of life. If you are to be used of GOD, there must be a separation from the world and a dedication to the work of GOD.

In closing, let me press upon lost people the significance of the statement, "The Lord is at hand." (Php 4:5) Are you ready to meet Him? No, you are not ready, but you can be. He is at hand now to save you, and He will come one day to receive you unto Himself. The way of salvation is plain. No person need miss the way; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)

CHRIST in plain and simple words set forth the way of salvation when He said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18)

Yes, the LORD is at hand. It is my prayer that you, dear reader, are ready to meet Him.

~ End of Book ~

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