

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS: 5b
The Incredible Journey
Of The
Church Age Believer
Jan. 4, 2004

INTRO: Well, where are we in our series of the journey of the Church age believer? In our last message we have entered the third phase of our journey. Part one of the believer's journey, that part given by John Bunyan, begins at salvation and ends at death or the rapture. Part two takes place in heaven while the tribulation takes place on earth. Then, when the most terrible time this world has ever known comes to the close, at the end of Daniel's 70th. week, the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth with His saints, all mounted on white horses.

Then, those few believers who are left alive, for most have been martyred, are delivered by Jesus Christ. While this happens the world unifies to fight against Christ and His saints. The place of this battle is a place that has seen many, many battles in history. It is a place called Armageddon. Here a battle is fought where horses are up to their bridle bits in blood. There in the thick of that battle will be the Lord Jesus Christ on His white horse. He will capture the antichrist and the false prophet, and cast them into hell alive and He will kill the rest with the sword that goes out of His mouth (Rev. 19:20-21). Then He will call on the all the birds to come and clean up the bodies of all the slain. Have you ever pictured the Lord Jesus like this? He will not even allow a burial of the bodies of His enemies. No, He lets the vultures pick their bones. I think it may well be here that Ezekiel 39:12-21 (read).

And so, phase three has begun. And with this beginning made, a holy hush falls over the entire earth. The nations lie in ruins after the devastating tribulation and the final battle. It is into a pretty scene. The birds have been invited by the Lord to a feast and they are gorging themselves on horses and men. And so we want to see how this third phase continues. We are going to give a definition of the millennium and then see how preparations are made for this wonderful time of peace that has now blanketed the whole earth.

B. Continued through the Millennial Monarchy

1. Definition of the millennium

A monarchy is the rule of a sovereign, and Jesus Christ will be the ruler of this third phase on earth. The word millennium is a Latin word signifying one thousand years. Although the Jewish Talmud had determined that this period should be one thousand years, the only place we find the duration of Christ's kingdom as being 1000 years in the Bible is Revelation 20:1-7. Here this time period of 1000 years is mentioned six times (Read Rev. 20:1-8). The millennium then is a time period of 1000 years of peace in which Christ reigns on this earth.

Revelation 20:1-10 tells us of the beginning and of the end of the millennium. This passage tells us how the millennium begins and how it ends but nothing in between. That may be so because the rest of the Scripture does not tell us how this time period begins nor how it ends but tells us much of what happens in the millennium. As a matter of fact there is so much information regarding the reign of Christ in the millennium in the OT that we will only be able to look at a very small part of it.

2. Preparation for the millennium

a. By the binding of Satan

Well, we are ready to see the first event to take place after the tribulation. We find a record of it in Revelation 20:1-3 (read). The devil is bound for 1000 years. Not only is he bound, but he is cast into the abyss, the bottomless pit, or as we know it; hell. You see, since man's creation the devil has been free to roam the earth and heaven (Job 1:6-7). He and his demonic host seem to be able to traverse from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven. But in the middle of the tribulation he is cast out of heaven and his access to heaven is barred. He is now limited to earth (Rev. 12:7-9). When we come to Revelation 20:1-3 we find that he is now cast into hell and banned from the earth for 1000 years.

According to this passage the devil is cast into the bottomless pit. The Greek word is abussos, meaning bottomless or depthless. When we speak of hell, this is the place we are referring to. When

we speak of the abode of the lost and we refer to it as hell, we are speaking of it as a place of eternal fire. When we want to describe where this place is we speak of it as the abyss or bottomless pit. When we speak of heaven we always speak of its direction as being up, and rightly so. When we speak of hell or the abyss, we always speak of it as being down. I believe hell is in the lower regions of the earth. It is no scientific secret that the heart of our earth is a burning inferno. Since it is the center of the earth it is the source of gravity. When one is at the source of gravity it is bottomless. This is the place prepared for the devil and his angels. When man sells himself to the devil by sinning then he too must go to the place prepared for the devil (Matt. 25:41). It is in this place the devil is bound for 1000 years.

What is meant by the binding of Satan? According to 20:1 he is bound with a chain. I think this refers to being limited to being in that place only where he is bound. Today, demons are all over the world. Through the spirit part of our being they have access to our minds. Many times we might wrestle with thoughts and doubts which we would not have but the devil has put them there. By faith we battle the demonic realm. Who knows what it would be like if the devil and his demons did not have access to our being. That is what it will be like in the millennium. When we read that Satan is bound it means he no longer can deceive, cast doubts in man's mind or tempt or trouble man at all. He is bound. Glory!

The first step taken to prepare for the millennium is the binding of Satan.

b. By a resurrection

There is another significant thing that happens right at the beginning of the millennium. Let's read it in Revelation 20:4. This verse speaks of those who were martyred for Christ, and it says they lived and reigned with Christ.

Now I must say something about the resurrection of the dead here. There are five or six resurrections mentioned in Scripture. I am speaking about the kind of resurrection where new bodies are received. Lazarus was resurrected but he did not receive a new body. Jesus Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23). After Him many were resurrected when their graves were opened after Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:52). The next resurrection happens at the rapture, when Christ calls the Church home (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Next is the resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. 11). Then is the resurrection at the end of the tribulation (Rev. 20:4). I think this may well be the time when OT saints are resurrected as well (Dan. 12:2).

Let me tell you something else very important to the topic of the resurrection. There are numerous resurrections mentioned in Scripture as we have seen already. One that we have not yet mentioned is the resurrection that happens at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15). Here is a very important thing to understand regarding the resurrection. There are two resurrections variously called; the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust (Lu 14:14). These two resurrections are further called the resurrection of life and of damnation or shame (Joh 5:29). In Daniel 12:2 the resurrection to everlasting life or to shame. From Revelation 20:5-6 we find they are the first and last resurrection.

Now you will ask, how can there be 5-7 resurrections and yet you say they are but two. Well, the resurrection of Christ, of the Church, of the two witnesses, of the tribulation and OT saints are the first resurrection. It is the resurrection of the just or the resurrection to life. Christ is the firstfruits and the rest happen somewhere thereafter but before the resurrection of the unjust or the last resurrection or the resurrection to shame. The resurrection to life happens in stages, but they are all before the resurrection to damnation. So they are the first resurrection. You can see this in Revelation 20:5-6.

Let me further add this, that I think the resurrection of OT saints likely happens right here at the beginning of the millennium. I gather that from these words of Jesus Himself, "And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." We will look at these words more closely later.

So, preparation is made for the millennium by the binding of Satan and by the resurrection of tribulation and likely, all the OT saints.

c. By a judgement

There is yet another important thing that happens at the beginning or just prior to the actual millennium. That is the judgement of all the living people at the end of the tribulation both of the righteous and unrighteous. Look at Revelation 20:4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was committed to them." Here are people to whom judgement is committed and they will judge all the living people at the end of the tribulation. The antecedents of the pronoun "them" of verse 4 is not clearly identified. I think it refers to the army of 19:20, or the church age believer.

Does it seem incredible to you this morning that if you are a believer someday you will sit on a throne to judge the world? Come with me to Matthew 19:28. The 12 apostles, who are the foundation of the Church, are told that they will judge the 12 tribes of Israel. You say, "That refers to the 12 apostles, not to me."

Come with me now to 1 Corinthians 6:1-3. In this passage Paul corrects the Corinthians for their practice of Christian taking Christian to court. He exhorts them to take their grievances before the saints for judgement. Then to show them how silly it is to go to the law courts of the world rather than before Christians he says, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to

judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that you will judge angels?"

The world will be judged by you, Christian. Some people tell me life in eternity will be boring. Imagine, my friend, Yassar Arafat or Saddam Hussien standing before you and you will give judgement as given to you by the Lord! Boring? I should say not!

I do not know when we will judge angels nor which angels we will judge but clearly, we are told we will judge angels. You say, "How could I judge the world or angels?" Revelation 20:4 tells us plainly. It says, "...judgement was committed unto them." God will give the believer the judgement and the believer will hand it out.

Now let us turn to a passage of Scripture that describes this judgement more fully (Matthew 25:31-46 read). In Matthew 25 we find the Lord separating the nations into two groups of people, the sheep and the goats. Of course the sheep refer to believers and the goats to unbelievers. They are divided into two groups, not on the basis of what they have done but on the basis of what they are, sheep or goats. Once they have been divided then they will be judged by church age believers. When this judgement is completed the Lord will say to the righteous, "Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..." This of course is the millennial kingdom. It will be absolutely incredible. You and I as judges of the world and angels with all the authority of God Almighty behind our judgement!

Now, how long will it take from when the Lord comes down from heaven until the battle of Armegeddon is over, Satan is bound, the saints are resurrected and the judgement of the people who live through the tribulation? Turn with me to a very interesting passage in Daniel 12. Look at verse 11. Here we are told that from the abomination of desolation which takes place 1260 days after the tribulation begins and 1260 days before it ends. But this verse says that after the abomination of desolation is set up there will be 1290 days. That is 30 days past the

end of the tribulation. We are not told what is significant about those extra 30 days, but likely this is the time when the Lord Jesus Christ puts down all rebellion, ending right after the battle of Armageddon.

Then Daniel 12:12 says, "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty five days. Again we are not told what is significant about the end of 1335 days. But the time period is 75 days after the official tribulation time ends. Now I suggest that the one who waits and comes to the 1335 days is the tribulation saint. The unrighteous will be judged prior to this time and not come to 1335 days.

And so, it will take time to clean up this world and prepare it for the glories of the millennium.

CONCL: How will the millennium begin? Well it begins with the binding of Satan. Satan and his hosts are rendered powerless for 1000 years. Second, it will begin with the resurrection of all the martyred saints of the tribulation period, a group too large to number out of every tribe, tongue and nation. It is also likely that all the OT saints are resurrected at this time. The only people not resurrected at this time are the unsaved of all ages.

Third, the millennium begins with a judgement. Those who have remained alive through the tribulation, both saved and unsaved will be judged. This judgement is given by the Church age believer. After this judgement, the wonders of a time of unparalleled peace will begin.

And so we ask, what will it be like during the actual millennium? Well if you do not want to wait until the next message, you can study it for yourself.

