

HEAVEN:
The Place of Everlasting Paradise!

Message 19
Revelation 20:7-15

INTRO: We have had read for us this morning Revelation 20:7-15. What we have described for us in the first 4 of those verses is absolutely incredible! God looses the chain that held Satan on an earth full of people who have only been able to read about him. Never have they experienced the full inner struggles in battling with demonic forces. All they have known is a time of peace and joy and comfort. And yet, in that time, with a sin nature, they have been bent on evil. And in a very short time, the devil has infiltrated almost every area on earth, except one. It is that spot on planet earth God chose for Himself long ago. We'll see more of this later.

Now for those born in the millennium, a new test is under way. And part of that is this, I think; what is man's sin nature like when it is fully controlled in a righteous environment and by a fully righteous government with a fully righteous Spiritual leader. Can the sin nature be cultured, refined and ultimately cured under perfect circumstances? Can the capacities of the sin nature be arrested and man be made good when nothing good is lacking. What is man really like? What is he like without demonic influences? How much can we blame on the devil? Was God wise in allowing the devil to be on the loose during these past 6000 years? How deep did man's depravity descend when he sinned? I think the millennium will answer these questions once for all. And now, in this time the Bible calls a 'short season' we will answer those questions. Here we get to see the depth of depravity.

Today, we have entered an age that is saturated with a psychological craze. Many deeply troubled people want to help to psychologize people into a better life. Psychology (falsely so called, by the way) is man's hope to cure, or discover a cure for the sin nature. Today the Christian church is saturated with false psychological hopes. Today's Bible school curriculums are filled with counseling courses based, many times on modern secular psychological myths. And the millennium, I think, will show that man, in the most care free of circumstances, with the best of real godly teachers, cannot cure the sin nature. When all is

said and done, it is only the cross, and the crucifixion of self, that can bring about true change in man.

8. The short season

Our subject is heaven, but permit me to make a few points on this short season. What we have here is the last trial before mankind described for us in the 4 brief verses of Revelation 20:7-10. In 20:3 we learn that this time is but, 'a little while'. Now the Bible says this, "Now when the thousand years have expired..." So, clearly, this happens after the millennium. What happens is that Satan is released from his prison.

Now surely, we must ask why God would release him after He once had him bound. A minister was asked once why God would release the Devil after He had imprisoned him. And the minister said, "If you tell me why He let him loose in the first place, I will tell you why He let him loose the second time." But I would like to propose that the millennium was a period of time set out to prove something to mankind for all eternity. It is this: First, man with a sinful nature, is an untrustworthy being and a sinner, even when the devil is bound. God proved for all eternity what kind of person man with a fallen nature is, though no devil is present.

What we learn here is that a thousand years of Messianic rule cannot change the sinful nature. There is but one solution for the sinful nature: death! The death of the Cross! And in this wonderful time of 1000 years, few have been willing to submit their sinful nature to the cross, and when the devil is loosed we find out how quickly they side with the devil against God.

In 20:3 we learn that when Satan is released he is let out for a little season. And in a very short time, he gathers followers that are numbered as the sand of the sea! This could never be accomplished in such a short time if man had not been bent on sin already in the first place! Such is the state of man after the millennium under a perfect rule, but with a sinful nature!

And not only that, but it may well be that many, who were born also make the same slippery slide, for the text says they are deceived. **

And I want to mention something I have been considering. Does God, in this time of 1000 years of the devil's confinement, show that His program of the curse of the earth, allowing sin and sickness and sorrow, turned more people to godliness than a thousand years of goodness and blessing? In this time God, in His wisdom, cursed the earth and allowed the devil to go free. And we might question God's wisdom. But when the millennium is over, we will never again question God's wisdom in cursing the earth and letting the devil loose. I am thinking that maybe one of the reasons for the millennium is to prove this.

So, I am proposing that in this time God has proved for all eternity that when He said in Eden, "...cursed is the ground for your sake..." He did the wisest thing that could have been done. When God left the devil to wreak havoc in mankind, and God allowed sickness and sin and sorrow to grow according to man's sinfulness, yet He did the wisest thing that could possibly be done. What He did in allowing the devil to run loose for those 6000 years was wiser than what He would have done if He had shut him up for those 6000 years. And now, to prove that, so that for all eternity mankind would realize this, He bound Satan for 1000 years to show us what happens. When He allowed disasters, earthquakes, hurricanes, cancer, murder all take place, more people became godly in the midst of all these than sinful man with a sinful nature in perfect world with Satan bound. I think it is well possible that more people surrendered their lives to Christ under the hardships of life with the devil on the loose than did in the easy life of the millennium!

And so, when this little season is done, God will send the devil to hell. God will have proved all that needs to be proved to the saved so that for

all eternity they will never again question His wisdom or His will in anything! With the evidence of 7000 years of earth's history, God will have put to rest every argument against Him and the saved will be fully satisfied for eternity!

Let me insert another point here that I have made numerous times before. We see it in the last sentence of verse 10. Satan will not be in hell torturing his followers, as we are often led to think. He will be tortured himself. And I propose to you that even Adolf Hitler's torture will pale in comparison to what this fallen angel will experience! He will be tormented day and night forever and ever!

I want to make yet one more point before we consider what this time is like for the saints. When Satan is loosed, there comes a division among people. The true Christians gather in the beloved city (20:8). Once more, it is the rest of the world against this tiny space on earth. Once more the world is seeking to do away with the Christian.

Once more it is that one spot on planet earth that Satan, to our very day, is doing everything he can to take over. It is that one spot, where many years ago, when he was still the anointed Cherub that covers, he wanted to be set up as God. Isaiah gives his words like this: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'" (Is. 14:12-14).

This phrase, 'the sides of the north' is used twice in the OT. Once in Isaiah here, and the other in Psalm 48. Verses 1-3 read like this: "Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the

whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

John Gill says this, "Jerusalem was north of Zion, as Zion was south of Jerusalem; likewise the temple was on the north part of Mount Zion, #Isa 14:13; the altar and altar gate were on the north side at the temple, and there were the tables on which the sacrifices were slain, #Eze 8:5 40:35-40; and on the north side of the altar was the creature to be offered killed, Le 1:11..." It is here, in the sides of the north, that Satan wanted to dwell.

Now let us consider briefly what will happen to the saints in this time period. Let us begin by looking at where are we in God's program. We have come past the last trial of mankind. And I want to make a proposition to you that you will never have heard before. Please do not string me up until you have given this a lot of thought. After the devil is cast into hell, all of earth's saved; OT saints, tribulational saints, Church age saints, and millennial saints are caught up to heaven. Another rapture occurs!

Now let me give you two reasons why I think that. We now have a judgment that takes place, on earth I believe. Let us read the passage (11-15). There is a general consensus among all premillennialists, that this is the resurrection and judgment of all the lost. There are no saved people in this judgment. And when this judgment is over they are all cast into the lake of fire.

Now I want you to look at 21:1 (read). Now look at 20:11 (read). Here is what I see happening. All the lost alive at the end of the short season, and all the resurrected lost are judged and cast into hell. And when all the lost have been judged and cast into hell, God will do something incredible with this present earth. When John says he saw a new heaven and a new earth, the word used for new is a word that does not speak of brand spanking new. It speaks of renewed. So, the Greek word for 'new' in this

passage tells me that this earth is not completely destroyed. It is renewed.

Now we want to see what happens. Turn to 2 Peter (read 3:10-13). What happens, as I see it, is that all that sin has contaminated in the heavens and on earth is renewed. It is renewed by fire and when the fire is done, there, instead of a sin cursed earth, changed by the flood and man's sin, is a new heaven and a new earth. Here is a new beginning.

Now, when it says the earth is burned, I think it refers to all that sin has touched here on earth is burned up. It says the elements will burn with a fervent heat. Now I ask you, where are all the saints at this time? Would you not agree that remaining on earth after the short season does not seem such a good idea if it is to be burned? That is one reason I propose that God takes them back to Paradise, that city in heaven.

But, there is another reason why I think that. So, go with me now to Revelation 21 (read 1-8). Here we are, with a freshly renewed earth. But notice now, what it says in verse 9 (read). Something very interesting happens here, something I do not fully understand. One of the seven angels of the book of Revelation now invites John to come and see the bride, the Lamb's wife. And what John sees is that great city, the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. But John never tells us anything about the bride that the angel was going to show him. What it sounds like in the chapter is that this city is the bride, but all other Scriptures indicate that the bride, the Lamb's wife is the Church. And what it seems to me happens here, is the angel is going to show John the bride, and she is in this city. But when John sees this city, he gets so caught up with the beauty of this city, that he describes it.

So, what I think happens is that after the short season, before the destruction of the present earth, the saved once more are taken to heaven, to this city. Then this present earth is cleansed

by a fervent heat, and heaven is renewed. When this new heaven and new earth are ready, that eternal city in heaven comes down to the new earth.

Now let me put something in here that I think is important. We long to be done with sin. Sin is such a hideous monster. The nature of it lurks in all of us. And sin is not finally and fully done away with for those on earth until after this short season. God's plan to bring to himself beings with a free nature who will glorify Him for ever more starts after Revelation 20. You see, for those who go to heaven in our age, and for those who went to heaven in times past, not all things had yet been made right. That is why those martyrs of Revelation 6 cry out to God for vengeance on those who killed them.

When we have past this short season, and the final judgment is over, and this city comes back down to earth, sin is forever finished! All of mankind's history will forever leave both redeemed man and those angels that did not fall satisfied at God's righteousness in all He allowed in the past! Never again will man or angel desire sin, or fall into pride. God will have brought about that which He desired before He created both angels and man. God will be glorified forever, and man will be fulfilled forever. And with all this, we are prepared to enter the eternal state, and this morning we have time only to introduce this final time period revealed in the Bible.

9. The new heavens and new earth

Let me begin our look at this time by saying that in the Bible there are four chapters given in a time when there was no sin on earth. They are the first two chapters, and the last two chapters. They are Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22. However, since man has spent many years in sin between those first and last two chapters, sin is still mentioned a few times in passing in the last two.

Furthermore, our understanding of creation is based on the first two chapters of the Bible. But, our understanding of the eternal state is based almost entirely on the last two chapters. In these last two chapters we are given many things not given elsewhere in the Bible with regard to life after death. Remove the first 2 chapters from the Bible and you are left with a very huge hole in Scripture. Remove the last two, and you also create a very huge hole in Scripture. Read the first three chapters, and you have a very rounded understanding of all of creation. Read the last three, and you have a very rounded understanding of the future.

And so, when we come to Revelation 22, for the first time in seven thousand years, we enter a time on earth completely devoid of sin. And we enter a time in which for all eternity, sin will never be a problem again. I think that is what it means in verse 6 when it says, "It is done!"

Now the very first thing the Bible tells us about that time when sin is forever gone is that there is a new heaven and a new earth. All sin's marks are gone from man's present abode and there, in this vast universe is one planet that has been remade and surrounding it, is the new heaven.

But then John says something that I found disappointing. He said, "Also, there was no more sea." Does this mean there will be no ocean? For those who have been at the ocean, you might think like I, that this is not something very wonderful as we would expect on the new earth. Some of you will remember what I said on this some time ago. So, let me quote from my Pilgrim's Progress notes: "The first thing John noted about this new earth is that there were no seas. When it first dawned on me what this might mean, I found it disappointing. After initially speaking on this I have rethought and considered if this actually means what it sounds like it means. When I originally spoke on this I said the Scriptures said there would be no more seas. I have discovered that I was in error. I want you to look at it in 21:1. It says, "And there was no

more sea." Did you notice that it is singular? There is no more sea, singular? My next question was, does the Bible refer to the oceans as seas, plural? The Greek word for sea here is *thalasa*. The plural is *thalasas*. Well, the NT never uses the plural, so I checked the Greek version of the OT and we find the plural right in the beginning. Listen to Genesis 1:10, "And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. There it is, *thalasas*, plural.

So, the fact that it is in the singular indicates that it does not refer to all the seas. Second, in the original the word "sea" has the article before it. Here is how it reads, "And THE sea was no more." This clearly indicates that a specific sea is intended. The question now is, which sea in Scripture could be referred to as THE sea? Doubtless, it would have to be either the Sea of Galilee or the Mediterranean Sea. And in studying these two seas, I think that with little room for question, it refers to the Mediterranean Sea. This sea is referred to as THE GREAT SEA 13 times in the OT. And it is referred to as "the" sea in such Scriptures as (Gen. 49:13). And what is most interesting, when you measure the New Jerusalem and place it on the map, this city will cover most of the Mediterranean Sea."

Now let us read verse 2 (read). John now beholds a breathtaking event. It is so easy just to read such words, but imagine this for a moment. Study Jerusalem in the Bible, all the times it has been destroyed and rebuilt. Think of Jerusalem today. It is the city that is the cause of the most news today. The Muslims want it. For what reason? It is not an important city to their faith. Why do they want it? Because they are owned and operated by the forces of darkness. In them the devil has found a tool to seek to take this city. And why does he want this place? It is from here that God will run, not only the land of Israel, or the middle East, or even the world. From here He will run the universe!

It is the "New" Jerusalem. It is that city in which Jesus said to the disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." It is that place where the raptured Church goes to. It is that place all the saints went when they died. It is that place from which the Church left to go to earth when Christ returned. It is that place to which the Church returned when God destroyed this present heaven and earth. It is that city. And in this city, now returning to earth, I believe, are all the saints of all time and they are returning to the new earth to live there forever more.

And I ask, what makes it 'new'? It is not new. It has been in existence for a very long time. So how is it new? It is new to earth. It is the 'new' Jerusalem. No doubt it is this place the devil ultimately wanted! It is no doubt to me that is why Jerusalem is the hotspot of planet earth today. It is for this reason, though he does not know it, that Obama, president of the Untited States of America calls for a building freeze by Israel in this city. Here is God's final plan for Jerusalem. In this city, I think, from the sides of the north, God will rule the universe. And John sees this holy city coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and we have entered the eternal state!

CONCL: What have we seen this morning? We have seen the devil's last ditch effort to take the reigns of the universe. He is loosed after 1000 years of captivity. We have seen the depth of man's depravity, and how 1000 years of a perfect environment cannot change the nature of sinful man. Only the cross of Christ is a cure for the sin nature. Only death, and the new birth can change sinful man. And even in a perfect environment, man does not become better.

But then we saw the devil defeated, the saints once more removed from earth to heaven and this present heaven and earth destroyed by a fervent heat and the renewal of it. And then, when this earth was renewed, John viewed this spectacular sight, the descent of the New Jerusalem to this renewed earth. And with that, we will look at the eternal state in our last message on this subject, because we will have entered the eternal state, and God's revelation to man

ends in this eternal state. From there on, the saints, or Christians will experience that which God, man and angels have longed for.