

HEAVEN:
The Place of Everlasting Paradise!
Message 20

INTRO: Before I begin the message this morning let me say a word about something I inserted in the last message regarding the Muslim world. Some folk may find what I said too strongly worded. If you are one of those, may I recommend you go on internet to www.youtube.com. In the search area type in Dr. Jeffress and listen to this man. (Also www.firstdallaas.org/article/our-pastor-responds-to-dallas-morning-news-columnist/) The one reason people would find what I said to strong is that they do not know the whole truth.

For those who listen to these messages and are Muslim, let me say this in all kindness: we do not hate you. We do not wish you destroyed. We love you. The God of the Bible loves you. He loves you to such an extent that He gave His only Son to die the most cruel death for you that was ever invented. You can read in your own Koran that Allah does not love sinners and wrongdoers, and like the rest of us, you are both of those things. But the Bible says that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I have read the Koran. I challenge you to read the Bible and seek the truth; and if you will, you will find forgiveness for your sins and eternal life.

Now to our message. It has been the effort of these messages to show what God's saints experience when they enter heaven or Paradise as I have called it, what they do and what it is like after death, but before the resurrection. Then we have sought to set forth what God's saints experience in Paradise after the resurrection. We saw that for the last 1000 years before the eternal state, God's resurrected OT saints, the wife of God, and the resurrected Church, the bride of Christ; dwell together on earth with those who have not yet been resurrected. This is the time period the OT saints looked forward to.

Then we saw man's last test as the devil is loosed for a short season. We saw that in 1000 years of time with the devil bound, fallen, sinful, mankind; could not be cured apart from the cross of Christ and the death of self. After this, the unsaved are all judged and cast into hell along with the devil, to the place where the false prophet and the antichrist already writhe in torment. I said that it

was my view that all the saints are removed from earth, and they go back to that city whose builder and maker is God, that city where Jesus went to prepare a place for the saints. And at that moment the problem of sin has forever been dealt with and this present heaven and earth undergo a fiery cleansing. And when that is done, there is a sparkling renewed heaven and earth.

We left off in the last message in Revelation 21. In this chapter we enter God's final divine revelation to man. As far as I can find, there is nothing revealed past what these last two chapters of the Bible reveal. We saw in 21:1 a new heaven and a new earth. The old had been destroyed and renewed. And I said that I believe the words, "...there was no more sea", does not mean the oceans no longer exist, but the Great Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea will cease to exist as it gives way for this city, the New Jerusalem. And then we looked into the sky with John and saw the new Jerusalem, that city Abraham looked for, that city where Jesus went to prepare a place for His bride, ascending from God out of heaven. The saints and are coming back to earth to dwell there for all eternity, and God Himself will dwell there with them. And thus we enter the eternal state. And now, we are ready to look at what Scripture reveals takes place after this.

9. The new heavens and new earth - cont'd

-God will dwell tabernacle with people (3)

We go now to Revelation 21:3, where we left off last Sunday (read). Did you notice that this verse says that what is revealed in this verse is announced by a loud voice from heaven? Now I want you to think with me and ask yourself, "Why would something be announced from heaven with a loud voice?" And I want to recommend to you that it is for at least this reason. It is very, very, very important! Not only is it introduced with a loud voice, the message then begins like this, "Behold!" Listen! Observe! Don't miss this! And what is so important? "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God!"

Sometimes I wish I were eloquent. How can words get the true meaning of this message across? Listen to what is stressed about God. His tabernacle is with men. He will dwell with them! And God Himself, will be with them. And God will be their God." No, our picture of heaven has been painted wrong. Man does not go to dwell with God forever! God comes to dwell with man forever! Do you know the hope of your calling! God will come to live with you!!!

Now it says the tabernacle, not the temple, will be with mankind. If I see it right, this is the building around which the dwelling places were Christ went to prepare for the Church in order for them to dwell with Him for a brief time. The tabernacle was the movable building that housed the temple, or naos of the OT. This too is a movable place because God never intended it to remain in heaven forever. He wanted to tabernacle in it to earth! The word 'dwell' in this verse is the word to tabernacle! This will be God's dwelling place.

Now go with me to 22:21 (read). The inner temple, the holy place and the most holy place are gone! There is no temple in this city any more. It is gone! The temple had to do with dealing with sin and sin is finished. All learning about holiness and righteousness now have no relation to sin any more and God and Jesus will take the place of the purpose of the temple!

Now let me address a very important question from verse 3. One of the things people wonder about is will we still be people like now with a name and a separate identity? And the answer is, "Yes!" When Jesus met with some heavenly visitors on the mount of transfiguration the apostles recognized them. They had the same names as before. They were people. And I want you to notice in verse 3 that it says God will be with them and they will be His people. The book of Revelation mentions the book of life 7 times and most of those times it refers to the names of Christians written in this book.

No matter who you are now by name, that is who you will always be. You will be an individual person different from all others. You will be an individual. You will have your own joys and characteristics. But with regard to the Christian's name, something very interesting happens. Those who enter heaven will not only have one name. First, they will have the name of their biological identity. That is what is written in the book of life. Randy Alcorn says somebody asked George MacDonald if we would recognize friends in heaven. And George MacDonald said, "Shall we be greater fools in Paradise than we are here?" Yes, every saved person will be the same person with the same name they had on earth.

But, I want to show you something else about our names in Paradise. Go with me to Revelation 3 (read vs. 12). Now whether this refers to Church age believers only or all the rest I do not know. It does without question, include the Church age believer. And Jesus says He will write the name of His God, that is Jehovah God, on the believer. And second, the believer will carry the name of the new Jerusalem.

But third, Jesus says He will write His new name on him. And we ask, just what does that mean? Well, the Bible does give us a little more information so we go to 2:17 (read). The Lord Jesus gives to each believer a white stone. No doubt to me it is white because it speaks of a stone given to one of his righteous ones, a saint. And this stone will have a name that no one knows except the person who receives it. And I personally think that like the other names, it is an identification point. One's biological history is revealed in the name we get from our parents. Our identity with God is when we receive His name. Our identity with the city of God is the name of that city given to us. But I think our special name, given to us by Jesus Himself, may be a name that reveals what we have contributed to Him or the work of God. The Lord Jesus may grant us to know what we mean to Him as part of the Church and what special part we have had in His kingdom. And like some things between

husband and wife, only Jesus and that person will ever know what that is!

Now you may wonder, will we have emotions like we have now? Well, yes and no! The good emotions will be there intensified, and the bad ones will no longer be needed! Look at it in 21:4. First, God will wipe away all tears! There is comfort eternal and comfort is a good feeling. I have no question that joy and peace and comfort will be greatly increased. But will be no death, nor sorrow nor crying. Why? There death and pain are history. The former things have passed away!

So, let us read Revelation 21:5-6. So we come back to John's time, 2000 years ago, and from there hear these words of the Lord to him, "Behold, I make all things new." I think that is a historical promise of the things we are now looking at. God promises a new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem and a new identity for the believer. "I make all things new." And then at the close of verse 5 we are reminded of the truth of these promises. And then, when all things are made new, verse 6 says, "It is done!" That is where we have come to in this series.

And then at the close of verse 6 comes this incredible promise to all those who are alive now, and I ask you this morning, do you thirst? If so, this promise is for you. If you treasure the fear of man and the things of this world and the pleasures of sin, this promise is not for you, not yet. First you must become thirsty. First, this world must lose its luster.

In verse 7, we have another wonderful promise to the believer, but it is worthy to note that the believer must be an overcomer. Now look at what happens to those who do not overcome, the cowardly and the unbelieving, the abominable and murderers, and fornicators and druggies, and idolaters and all liars. They will be cast into hell. This is a living warning this morning.

Now I will not take time for most of the description of the new Jerusalem but for a few things. However, let us read verses 9-21 (read).

You may wish to study this city in greater detail, but let me comment briefly on verse 21. Some years ago I did a message on this verse called, "Streets of Gold and Gates of Pearl." I have no doubt but that every part of the description of this city has intended meaning beyond the description itself. For example, I believe the gates of pearl will forever remind us of the trials of life we went through before we got there. I do not wish to comment on that further than to say that every pearl begins with an oyster's problem. It gets some piece of grit in its mantel and it begins to build layer of layer of pearl over this piece of irritating grit. At the heart of every pearl is a piece of something unwanted, but in the end, what you have is one of the most sought after commodities on earth, the pearl.

Second, the streets of pure gold, will remind us of the refining the King of Kings accomplished in us through salvation's work. As gold is heated to a very high degree to get all the impurities out, so God allowed us to go through the fires of life's trials, and through this, we came to where we could walk on the streets of the King of Kings.

Now you may say, "Do you mean we will remember the past?" That is what I believe. It is remembering the past that will make the future so very good. And you will ask, "How could we remember the past without becoming sad?" Well, it is God who will wipe away every tear. That is how. And I do not think He wipes away every tear by wiping out the past. I believe this past is very important. It will keep both saved people and un-fallen angels from every being tempted or even desiring to do wrong again. I believe God will wipe away every tear by giving us full information regarding our losses so that we can know them and be fully content. That is what

comfort is. Comfort is not erasing the past, it is overcoming it.

Now you might ask like I did, "What about Isaiah 65:17 (read). Randy Alcorn makes a very good point on this subject. He says it is like God's comment to Jeremiah, "I...will remember their sins no more" (Jer. 31:34). Now I ask you, how can an omniscient God forget things? If it is forgetting, in the way that it cannot be recalled, God would cease to be omniscient. But when man repents and turns back to God He wipes out their debt, and He is satisfied and comforted with regard to what they have done so that, though He still knows these things He is propitiated so that it is no longer a bad thing. It has been replaced with that which comforts or satisfied. So, I believe, is this matter of forgetting the past.

Let us move on. We go to 21:23 for another important subject to understand (read). Now I once thought that this meant the sun and moon would somehow disappear. But when God gave the new covenant in Jeremiah 31, He says this, "Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar, The Lord of hosts is His name: if those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever..." One of the young people asked me after the last message if there would be seasons on the new earth. I fully believe so. Read the purpose for the sun and the moon at creation. Will there be snow and warm oceans? Yes, I believe so.

So, what does this verse mean? It does not say there is no more sun or moon. It says this city has no need of them, and that is so far as light is concerned. The glory of the Lord lights up this city! Verse 25 says, "There will be no night there." And where, is 'there'? In the new Jerusalem. It is lit up by light day and night so that neither the sun or moon are needed for light there. Will the sun and moon always be? Yes, of

course! And so will seasons and planting and farming and gardening!

Now notice verses 24 and 26. There will be nations there! The earth will be inhabited by saved people. And unlike the millennium, none will have a sin nature! There will be kings there.

How is it that we have thought of heaven as some sort of unreal to life place? Because we did not take prophecy literally. But think of it as Paradise, and it may just become more real. It is a real place, earth. It has real people, saved ones. It has real plants and real water and real seasons and a real sun and a real moon and real stars and a real God, Jehovah.

Let us go to chapter 22 (read vs. 1). Here is a real river! It proceeds from the throne of God, like in the millennium. Now look at verse 2 (read). Here again, is that which the millennium pictured, only now it is forever! It has real trees with real fruit that is for eating, of course. So, there will be fruit pickers and fruit sales, and distribution centers. This time it will not be Joppa oranges, it will be New Jerusalem 12 Alive. It will be for the healing, or better, health of the nations. So it will be distributed world wide.

Now let me answer one other question. Recently we had the funeral of a little baby in our community. This baby only lived a few hours. What size will this baby be on the new earth? Now I do not know that the Bible answers this question. But I think we can answer it. Do we think that because a person died at a certain age, their body will remain at the maturity at which the body died? I do not believe that at all. Here is a tree for the health of the nations. I believe this would not be real Paradise if everybody did not reach their prime age. And from there, as time passes, these trees will keep man at his prime age. These trees are for the health of the nations.

Let me add something here. Every aborted baby, purposely or otherwise, will reach maturity here. It is sad that man commits abortions purposefully, but they have not cut God's hand short. If a rebel lived to 100 in the millennium, an aborted baby will reach maturity and think and know and learn etc... When we talk about heaven, we are talking about some place in the sky. When we talk about Paradise in the eternal state, we are talking about earth. Here God's original plan for man will be fully realized and experienced forever!

Note something else in verse 3 (read). God has servants, and they will serve Him. There is work there. There are special workers who work for God. He will instruct them, and they will do His bidding.

When we come to Revelation 22:1-5, we come to the last prophetic revelations in the Bible. Verse 4 gives us a very incredible revelation. I never paid special attention to this until I was preparing these messages. In Exodus 33:20, God said to Moses, "You cannot see My face and live." And in Revelation 20:11 we read that the present heaven and earth fled from His face. One look of displeasure in the presence of the face of God and they flee! You and I would drop dead away if we saw His face. But when we come to the eternal state, and God has come to dwell with man, something incredible happens. Look at Revelation 22:4 now (read). Oh, if only I could put into words what this means. In a person's face is revealed the most that you can learn about that person. We have learned things about God in the Bible. We have learned things about God in life's experience. But we have never learned to know Him face to face. And so, now, after sin is history, mankind will have undergone such a drastic change that they can look God in the face and live! As a matter of fact, they will be able to look God in the face and draw deeply from the wells of salvation! And as we saw earlier, God's name will be on the believer, but here we have this addition that it will be on their foreheads. Here

is an eternal reminder by God for all mankind and all angels, 'these are mine'.

And then the very last few revelations of God to man is about the new Jerusalem and man. We find them in verse 5. First, there shall be no night there. The Lord God is their light. And last, they shall reign forever and ever. The pronoun 'they' refers to His servants. This is the only book that could truly end like this, "And they lived happily ever after."

CONCL: Paradise! What a subject. What a hope! What a motivator. Every man that has this hope in himself purifies himself.

What I have sought to do in this series is to give what the Bible teaches about heaven both before the resurrection of the body and after. And we have seen that not all people are resurrected at the same time. That is an amillennial error. And we have ended where the Scriptures end on this subject and that is on the new earth in the new Jerusalem. In the final state, all the righteous from all ages have been resurrected and have their place on the new earth. No more bloodshed and no more war. No more death and no more sorrow.

And in this last great chapter in the Bible, in the epilogue in verses 6-21, after having revealed all this, the book speaks strongly to those who live right now. Let us read verses 12-17. I ask you this morning, have you not yet responded to this invitation? I need not tell you that we have no promise of tomorrow. Today is the day of salvation.

And for those who know the Lord, refresh yourselves from time to time with the blessed hope, Jesus may come at any moment! And when He comes, for us, the inner struggles with sin will come to an end, though there is much more to come while sin is still happening on earth.

Let me close with these words from Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for

us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and
purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good
works."