

**HEAVEN:**  
**The Place of Everlasting Paradise!**

Message 11

Scripture: 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 4:10-11

INTRO: It is some time since I did the last message in this series on heaven. After our holidays I looked at my outline and I think it is the poorest outline I have ever preached from. So let me take some time to review where we are. I said first of all, that when you consider what the Bible has to say about the future, the most important matter is one's method of Bible interpretation. We said that the best method of Bible interpreting prophetic passages, the only method that does the Bible justice, is the normal, literal method. We do not spiritualize prophetic passages.

Second, I said that usually when we speak of 'heaven' we are speaking from an amillennial viewpoint. That is the view that says after we die, if we are Christians, we go to heaven and we are with God forever. From the normal literal approach to Bible interpretation, that is incorrect. The fact of the matter is that God remakes the present heaven and the present earth, and there is a new heaven and a new earth and God Almighty comes down to dwell with man forever. Let me show you this by reading just a few brief verses from Revelation 21 (read 1-3).

So I have recommended that we call our experience after death Paradise, rather than heaven. You see, Paradise was in Eden and it is now in heaven and it is coming back to earth. We have proved all of this. If this seems strange, go back and listen to the messages again. This is not hard to prove.

Then we looked at what the OT had to say about life after death. And now we have been looking at what the NT has to say about this. We divided this into two sections. What happens to people who are Christians who die, but their bodies have not yet been resurrected? We saw from Scripture that they are comforted there. They come past the altar of the temple in heaven where all traces of sin are cleansed away by the blood of Christ. After this, they are dressed in white and then, I think they are free to explore this tremendous city of some 1500 miles cubed.

We are presently considering what happens to believers after they are resurrected. You see, when people die and go

to paradise, their bodies are left behind. But man was not meant to exist without a body. We speculated with good reasons that those who die receive an interim body. But some time later their bodies are resurrected and once more man is complete, as God meant him to be. Only now there is no more sin nature. No more physical sickness and no more physical death.

And so, in the last message we briefly looked at the two major resurrections, that of the just, and that of the unjust. We said these two resurrections do not take place at the same time. The resurrection of the just comes first. And we said that the resurrection of the just does not all happen at one time. Jesus was the first-fruits of the first resurrection. Then some saints were resurrected in Jerusalem. Then the resurrection at the rapture will occur. Then the two witnesses of Revelation will be resurrected. Then OT and tribulational saints will be resurrected after the tribulation.

In the last message we looked at the 'catching up' or the rapture. What an incredible event that will be. And this morning I want to paint a brief picture for you. Consider Paradise in heaven now, with millions upon millions of believers. And among those millions of believers, only a few have already received their resurrection bodies. These are Christ and those believers that were resurrected right after Christ was resurrected. We know nothing of who these were nor why they were resurrected at that time. We just know it happened from Matthew 27:52-53 (read).

But when the rapture happens, one large group of believers will receive their resurrected bodies and those are the Church that has been raptured. You see, we have been looking at life in Paradise BEFORE the resurrection. Now we are looking at life in Paradise AFTER the resurrection. And if I am right that the rapture happens before the tribulation, Then the first large group to receive their resurrected bodies is the Church. This includes all those who became believers and died in faith from the Day of Pentecost until the catching up of the Church.

So this morning we want to see what the Church experiences in Paradise after this whole group receives their resurrected bodies. So that is a lot of review and some introduction to this message.

## B. After the Resurrection

### 2. The judgment of the Church

Now I believe one of the very first experiences all those who are raptured will experience is what is referred to in the NT as the judgment seat of Christ. Let me give you several passages that refer to this judgment (Romans 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Then turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3 once more (read 10-15).

Now I want to quote somewhat at length from a message in the series I called, "Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey of The Church Age Believer." If you wish more teaching on the topic before us this morning, you may request the CD's from our folk that work with that. Here is the quote, "The Bible teaches that all of mankind will be judged someday (Heb. 9:27). However, the judgment of the saved and the unsaved is not the same. The righteous of the Church age are judged after the rapture. The unrighteous are not judged until after the millennium.

"Now, there are two types of judgment. There is the legal type of judgment where it is determined if the one judged is guilty or not and what punishment he will receive. We are all familiar with this type of judgment. But there is another type of judgment and this is the judgment used in athletics. Now these two judgments are as different as day and night. The one determines the degree of punishment to be given while the other determines the extent of rewards to be given. The one is for evildoers, the other is for well doers. The one we seek not to accumulate for, the other we seek to accumulate for as much as we can.

"There are three future judgments. 1 There is the judgment seat of Christ where the believer of the present Church age is judged. In this judgment only the believer is judged. This is the topic of our message this morning because it will take place right after the rapture. 2 Then there is

the judgment of the nations which takes place at the end of the tribulation (Matt. 25:31-46). In this judgment both believers and unbelievers will be judged, but only living people are judged in this judgment. 3 The last judgment is what is called the great white throne judgment. This is found in Rev. 20:11-14.

Now there is something very significant about all three of these judgments. NB First, judgment is never given to determine if one enters heaven or hell. Whether I go to heaven or to hell is determined not by judgment but by personal decision. This is very important because whether I go to heaven or not is not determined by the amount of good works or bad works one has done. It is determined by whether I have accepted Christ as my Savior or not! Second, each one of these three judgments is based on individual works. These works do not determine one's destiny, rather they determine the amount of punishment for the wicked or the amount of rewards for the righteous. We will be looking at the last two judgments later. Now we turn our attention to the believer's judgment at the judgment seat of Christ."

If you want further teaching on this judgment I have mentioned to you already the series, "Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey of the Church Age Believer." For the next while I want to preach. For that, turn with me back to 1 Corinthians 3 for a moment (read 12-15). First, I want you to notice that this judgment, and that is true of every judgment, and that is that it is according to works. It is the believer's works that are tested at this judgment. This judgment is not to see if you will go to heaven or not. There is no judgment like that. That decision you and I make here in life. This judgment is to reward the believer. I want you to notice that in verse 14 (read).

Now the Bible speaks of three kinds of works; good works, bad works and dead works. And in this judgment the believer's works are put in the fire, so to speak, and the fire tests the

believer's work. And if it is a good work, it abides the fire and the believer is rewarded. If it will ever be possible to be anxious in heaven, this will be an anxious time. I want to tell you that nothing impure will escape this fire. Every impure motive for a good work will zap that work and there will be nothing left but smoke. I want to assure you, there will be no arguing.

When we come before the judgment seat of Christ, every Christian deed we have done will be on the table. And then the Lord will take them and put them in the fire, that is the judgment. And there will be people there with works so pure, that when it passes through the fire, it will come out just as beautiful on the other side of the fire as on this. Then there will be many many works, that appear like gems and just make you wish it was yours, and when it is put in the fire, it becomes like gas and it lights up and nothing comes out the other side.

I want to give you an example. Let us say I witness to others about the Lord, but I am doing it so that others will think I am some great Christian. And let us say, and it can happen, that many are saved by my ministry. And I have these beautiful gems. There they are on the table at the judgment seat of Christ and then they go through the fire, and the fire consumes them like gasoline. My motivations were impure. My work is nothing!

Then there will be Christians there, when their life's work is placed on the table, there is this puny little pile. They have spent their life on all kinds of other things, but in service of value for God there is hardly a thing to show. I want to tell you that God is a just God. Do not think that believer will receive much for rewards. Does not the Bible say he that sows sparingly will reap sparingly?

We sing about no tears in heaven, but that is not what the Bible says. What the Bible says is that some day God will wipe away all the tears in heaven. And the time that is speaking about is

much later than the judgment seat of Christ. If it should be that there will be tears after this judgment, I should not be surprised.

I want to make a second point from this passage. Let us read verse 15 (read). It says that if anyone's work is burned up he will suffer loss, but he will be saved yet so as by fire. We think sometimes this refers to bad works or sin but that is not so. These works that are burned up are not bad works. They are dead works. By the time we get to this judgment all sin will be gone. Nor is there any comfort in this verse that I can live in sin and go to heaven because there all works that were sin will simply be burned up. Sin must be judged with a different kind of judgment than this one. Sin works will not simply be burned up. Deeds that are sin, if they enter certain categories will keep us from ever even coming to this judgment! Christians may not live in certain sins and still expect to come before this judgment. Go over 2 chapters to 6:9-10 (read). Paul is not saying that unbelievers who live in these things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Unbelievers, whether they live in these things or not, will go to hell. It is Christians who fall into these things and do not repent who will not inherit the kingdom of God. Let us never kid ourselves that as Christians we can live in these things and in heaven such works will simply be burned up and we will go to our little cabin in glory. We will have no cabin in glory, little or big. Make no mistake about that.

But let me come to another point, again in verse 15 (read). Notice that if a particular work is burned up, it is not simply that the person will not receive a reward. No, he will suffer loss!! Let me give you the picture. Here this believer's works are going through the fire. And after a while a little box of gems of rewards appears on the table. Sometimes the fire lights up brighter and nothing comes out, and at others, a reward appears. And each time the fire lights up and some work burns up, one of the gems on the reward pile disappears. He is suffering loss!

Brothers and sisters, where are we? Yes, we are in Paradise. But, we are at the judgment seat of Christ. And yes, these are all saved people. But here, what each believer will have for eternity will be determined. Later we will see what some of this means for eternity. Yes, we are in Paradise. No, there is no chance that we will now be cast into hell. But yes, there may be many tears.

I want you to come with me for a moment to see the one who is doing the judging. Turn with me to Revelation 1 (read 9-17). You see, in this message we are at the judgment seat of Christ. And in these verses we have a description of the Judge. He has eyes like a flame of fire. There is discernment for the finest of judgment. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace. He stands on pure judgment ground. And no, there will be no one who will argue when He judges. Out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword.

This past week I had a little test. Several churches in Mexico had asked if I would do a father son camp while I came down to do the "Wine and the Bible" series in German for their folk. I suppose that they found out we had had some kind of church problems here and it was requested that they check me out. They called here to Canada and a certain minister warned them about me and recommended that I might just tear father and son apart. As it is now, I will be going to do the 'Wine and the Bible' series, but the Father Son thing is now off.

Now, what do you do in a case like that? May I recommend that whatever you and I do in such cases, let us do it in light of the judgment seat of Christ. This minister and I both profess to be believers. And if that is also so, and we continue our walk with the Lord until death or the rapture, he and I will both stand before this One who has eyes as a flame of fire, feet as if refined in a fire, and a sharp two-edged sword comes out of His mouth. On that day, how will I wish I would have responded to this matter? No

doubt, I will wish I had responded with the judgment seat of Christ in view.

I want you to look at a few verses in 2 Corinthians (4:9-11). Let me read from my notes on the terror of the Lord, "This verse says, 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...' What does the terror of the Lord refer to? Whom does he seek to persuade, the lost or the saved? Does it refer to hell for the lost or being at the judgment seat of Christ and not be well pleasing to Him? (The word 'terror' is *phobeo*, or fear. Literally, it is, 'Knowing the fear of the Lord.' In the context, it refers to persuading Christians to live right because we will all stand at the judgment seat of Christ.)"

Now I have not time this morning to speak to you about one of the greatest robbers of treasures in heaven, but let me mention it briefly. It is that which we call the sin nature and the Bible calls the flesh. We have available several messages on cd called, "The Flesh" let me recommend that to you. The flesh will destroy more gems Christians have earned than any thing else. Some time ago I said to our young people, "Learn to recognize the flesh." Oh, the flesh is a slippery eel.

Are you jealous of others; envious of others; or do want to impress others with your spirituality? Do you try to win people to your side? Do you get hurt when others say bad things about you? Do you have to protect your reputation? Those are signs of the flesh.

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (read). And what evidence is there that they are fleshly? Look at verse 4 (read). Maxwell, quoting Mantle, says in *Crowded to Christ*, "The flesh has almost infinite forms. It may not always appear devilish, deceitful, and hateful; on the contrary, it may be cultured, educated, refined, and religious. In fact it may so play possum as to lead you to think that it is dead. It thrives in any soil, and under the shades of earthly sorrow as well as in the sunshine of prosperity. Whatever its behavior, however, it is still changeless flesh,

'unimprovable, incorrigible, incurable...There remains then no remedy but that which God has provided - condemnation, crucifixion, death with Christ" (Mantle). Maxwell then adds this, "The only trademark becoming the flesh is the death mark of the Cross" (pg. 70).

So I warn this morning, the flesh is a robber of treasures at the judgment seat of Christ.

CONCL: And so, let us conclude this message on the judgment seat of Christ. I think one of the very first things the Church will experience in heaven will be the judgment seat of Christ. Oh what a time this will be. How many will mourn squandered time? How many will mourn fleshly pursuits?

But how many will rejoice and be highly rewarded? On earth they were considered fools because of what they gave up for the kingdom. In heaven, they will be considered the wisest of people. The rewards there will make up and go beyond the trials they reaped for doing right. No more will it be man's opinion of their works that counts. Now God's opinion will reign supreme. When the Lord puts our works in the fire, every fiber in our being will pray God will be pleased with it. We will not give one cent worth of thought to what others think of it.

I wonder this morning, what are you doing to lay up treasures in heaven? I wonder, what is there you have done that will pass the fires of this judgment? I wonder, do you even think of this judgment? Did you know that the Lord Jesus said we are to lay up treasures in heaven? He did. And we can lay up treasures in heaven.

Then I wonder this morning, do you recognize the flesh, sinful flesh? Or do you think yourself spiritual, quite spiritual but you do not even recognize the flesh in your life? Do we do things to appear spiritual to people, or to God?

I wonder, what circumstances are in your life, and does the flesh cause you to do things that will cost you treasures already stored up? Do you say, "I don't need to put up with this or with that. I will fix that person" and so on. And you do not realize that horrible stench of the flesh.

May God wake us up this morning to the fact of the judgment seat of Christ, and that all who enter glory must face this event. Let us live in light of the judgment seat of Christ.