***The Pale Horse and Rider  
  
RV120-01***

We continue with Revelation 6:7-8 as we begin the fourth seal. John, as you remember, is observing a heavenly scene in which Jesus Christ is breaking the seals on the scroll which contains God's judgment on the tribulation world of the antichrist.

**The Seals**

The first seal revealed a rider on a white horse signifying the status of peace which will be imposed on Western Europe by the antichrist. At that time, humanism will reign supreme, and all the hopes and aspirations of the New Age movement will be realized.

The second seal revealed a rider on a red horse signifying widespread bloodshed in the antichrist world. This takes place in the early part of the tribulation period, the first three-and-a-half years. This bloodshed will be the result of wars to some extent, but in a larger degree, to homicide, where people will be attacking each other in violence for a variety of reasons that we shall see as we go along.

The third seal revealed a rider on a black horse, which signifies enormous economic inflation, and subsequent shortages and failure. As we pointed out, the Lord Jesus Christ, in teaching His disciples how to pray, said in Luke 11:3, "Give us day-by-day our daily bread." So that petition indicates that the basic essential quality of a human being, the essential factor for livelihood, is daily food. This supply of food is to be secured from God. It is not to be secured by looking to the state. It is not to be secured by looking to other human agencies, all of which may have a part one way or another. It is to be secure by looking to God.

Furthermore, this supply of food is made available on the basis of our compatibility to certain biblical principles of economics which we have researched in detail. Mark 4:25 declares that the person who performs honest, productive labor will accumulate material goods: "For he that has, to him shall be given; and, he that does not have, from him shall be taken even that which he has." The implication being there that he who applies himself will receive; but, he who does not apply himself will suffer shortages – he will not have.

Of course, the politicians of our day have retranslated this verse to read: "He that has, from him shall be taken, even that which he has; and, he that does not have, to him shall be given." That is the direct reversal of what God has said, but that is the principle of humanism – the concept of removing economic possessions from those who have applied and earned them, and giving them to those who have not applied themselves and do not deserve it.

The reasons for poverty and want have been spelled out very clearly in the Bible. The people of Israel, from the very start, were informed how they could prosper. While these were directed to the Jewish people as such, they nevertheless, like the Ten Commandments, are an expression of how God works. These are basic principles upon which God deals with us as human beings. So, they are general factors which are equally true of us in this age.

For example, in Deuteronomy 8:11, we find that God is the provider of material prosperity to the believers. The Jewish people were told this: "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God in not keeping His commandments, and His ordinances, and His statutes which are commanded you this day (the principles of doctrine). Lest when you have eaten an are full, and have built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of Bondage; who led the through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint; and, who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you, and that He might test you to do you good at your latter end."

It is indeed very clear from this Scripture that God is the source of our material possessions, and consequently, the money with which we buy food. It is so easy for people to forget that God has been the source of that blessing. You may remember that one of the economic principles that the Bible spells out is that God does not prosper us in order that we may go on an ego trip. Isn't it disgusting when you find somebody who's been a poor, humble church-mouse type, and suddenly they come into some financial positions, and they have some financial prosperity, and things are better, and pretty soon they become the sophisticated, snobby country club type? The upper crust is nothing but a bunch of crumbs held together by their own dough. It's a checkbook society. That's all it is. So, why are you putting on your airs, that you're somebody? You were nobody before you got the checkbook, and most of the people who are playing that high and mighty sophisticated role, just lack couth. That's their problem. They are uncouth. They were uncouth before they got their checkbook, and their checkbook doesn't give them any class.

However, the Lord says, "If you obey my economic principles, I'm going to prosper you, and I'm going to take care of you. Some of you I'll give more; and, some of you I'll give less. In another economic principle, God says, "You don't try to be rich. You only be satisfied with having the essentials that you need to live and to serve. I'll decide whether I'm going to prosper you with more, and whether I'm going to prosper you with less." You want to remember that. There are some people who, no matter what they do financially, it's a Midas touch. They prosper. There are other people, no matter what they do, it never pans out, and it never works out. That should be a little indication to you that God is saying, "I've taken you to the level of what I want you to have. This is the level for you to function on. This is the level where I can maximize your spiritual gift and the investment of your life." That's a very important principle.

So, the Jews are told, "God will provide. God is going to be the source of that material prosperity." Deuteronomy 8:17 says, "Here's the problem. After all this prosperity that God will give you: You say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who has given you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which is sworn unto the fathers, as it is this day." God has prospered you so that He could execute the covenant promises that He has made, and so that He could execute His dealings and His will and His plans for you. He prospers you so that you can serve. We learned that economic principles in the past few sessions.

The black horse rider represents the consequence of violations of God's biblical economic principle: poverty and want. In Deuteronomy 8:19-20, God had this to say to warn his people: "It shall be, if you do at all forget the Lord your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyed before your face, so shall you perish because you would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God." I can assure you that this is true of us as individuals who violate the doctrine of economic principles of God's Word, and it is certainly true of nations. History is littered with a trail of nations who have violated these principles, and have suffered the consequence of being brought down to extinction.

So, it was made very clear to the Jewish people what the relationship was between doctrine and personal prosperity. This is the book of Deuteronomy. This is the last book that Moses wrote. He knew that after this, God was going to take him out; put him to death; and, bury him. This was his last word to the people as they were standing, now after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, on the threshold of the port of entry at Kadeshbarnea to go into the land of promise. This was his finest hour. This was his most important declaration to them. This was the best that the Spirit of God had to say to them. It was a principle that is characteristic of God that we should take to heart.

So, those of you that are inclined to enjoy your prosperity, and those of you that are inclined to bust your hides and your back, earning and earning and more earning, and you never show up here; you're never involved in the Lord's work; and, you're never participating in some way in what God has enabled you to participate in by that which He has given, you might want to remember the consequences that you'll live with for all eternity, as some of these Jews, who wouldn't believe this warning of Moses concerning their relationship to personal prosperity; how it comes from God; how you keep it; and, how you get to enjoy it for all eternity.

God's earth itself is so designed, as a matter of fact, that it rejects the violators of divine viewpoint principles, including the violation of economic principles. In Leviticus 18:24, the Jews were warned about this. The very land (the very earth) that they were going into would vomit them out and reject them: "Do not defile yourselves in any of these things. For in all these, the nations are defiled, which I cast before you." The context has described the moral degeneracy here of these people: "The land is defiled. Wherefore I do not visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomited out her inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances, and shall not commit any of these abominations, neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourns among you." Isn't that interesting? Moses said, "You will not violate these principles of God: the moral principles (all of the ordinances), including the economic principles. You won't violate them, and you won't allow the foreigner who lives among you to do it either. Nobody in society is to be permitted to do it.

Have you ever heard that nonsense: "You can't legislate morality?" Here's another evidence. Moses is making it very clear that a society makes the rules upon which it functions if it expects to be preserved, prospered, blessed and defended by the living God. Moses says, "Neither of your own nation nor any stranger that sojourns among you is to be permitted to practice these vile immoralities. For all these abominations the men of the land who were before you have done, and the land is defiled; that the land does not also spew you out also when you defile it as it spewed out the nations that were before you." This is why nations are destroyed. This is why pagan nations are destroyed. The earth itself just regurgitates them, and they die because of the lack of prosperity. They die because of the lack of what they need. The land withholds its blessing, and God thins out the ranks of the pagans. God sends out the ranks of the apostates who will not operate on His principles. God does it to us within our family group, and he will do it to nations.

The prophet Isaiah touched upon this same principle in Isaiah 24:1. The earth rejects those who violate God's principles: "Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof. It shall be as with the people, so with the priests; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; and, as with the taker of interest, so with the giver of interest to him. The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled, for the Lord has spoken His Word. The earth mourns and fades away. The world languishes and fades away. The haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, the curse has devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. The new wine morns. The vine languishes. All the merry-hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceases. The noise of those who rejoice ends. The joy of the harp ceases. They shall not drink wine with the song. Strong drink shall be bitter to those who drink it. The city of confusion is broken that. The house is shut up that no man may come in. There is a cry for women in the streets. All joy is darkened. The mirth of the land is gone. In the city of desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction."

That was a grim picture to the Jewish people, warning them of how the happiness that the Promised Land brought them (this wonderful place flowing with milk and honey) would be turned into a bitter gall if they rejected the moral principles of the Word of God, and the totality of His commandments relative to economic principles.

This is what the black horse rider represents. In the epitome, this same thing is going to be done in the tribulation by society that was done by the Jews. These were societies which rebelled, therefore, against God's laws, and suffered terrible consequences. One of the things that societies suffer when they rebelled against the laws of God is disease. God told the people of Israel: "If you break My rules; if you turn your back against My moral code; and, if you pretend that you can treat as an option matter what I have ordained for the way human beings are to be associated within a world which is controlled and dominated by Satan, then I'm going to bring you down." God thins out the ranks of the evil. He does this to whole nations. He does this to individuals.

Take a look at Deuteronomy 28:27: "The Lord will smite you with the boil of Egypt, and with the tumors, and with the scab, and with the itch whereof you cannot be healed. The Lord shall you with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart," and so on. The whole passage goes on to describe the grim physical consequences of violating the moral codes of God. And have we not had that demonstrated to us in our day with herpes, and AIDS, and the terror that this is striking in a community that is practicing evil? God says, "I'm going to give you diseases, and when I decide, your penicillin and your antibiotics are not going to do the job anymore. I'm going to make a slight change in the microbe." And he's going to be immune to all of your preventive measures and your curative measures. The God of grace, on the one hand says, "I'll give you the wisdom to solve the problems."

So, indeed, one brilliant scientist, Dr. Fleming, found that a petri dish in which he had been growing some microbes was contaminated, and a green mold developed. But he looked, and to his amazement, discovered that all of the deadly germs around the circle of that green mold were dead. He said, "I've got to look into this. There's something in that mold that's killing the very stuff I'm raising," and penicillin was discovered. By the end of World War II, venereal diseases were practically wiped out in this nation because we now had the means of reversing a deadly disease. God gave a chance, but American society said, "No, we won't follow your moral code. We won't be obedient to the principles of doctrine. We're going to turn our back increasingly upon Scripture, and we're going to establish a society based on man as the center, and humanism without God as his ideal." And the venereal diseases have come back with a raging, thunderous stampede that none can stop. And when God decides to pull the plug, everybody's going to go down the drain.

This is a deadly thing now. You never know when you're going to walk into a restaurant, and somebody is handing you a plate full of AIDS microbes – AIDS viruses, in order to contaminate you. And don't forget that once you get it, nobody who has gotten that disease (the result of sexual immorality) has survived. Everybody (100%) within a three-year period has died. The television newscasters are making a great thing over the fact that they've identified it as a virus. But they've also taken the trouble to tell us that that's all they know. They have not achieved any reversal of the deadly disease.

Well, here's what's happening. God says, "I'll give you your daily food. I'll provide you with what you need. But if you turned against Me, and you violate my economic principles, then I'll send a black horse rider charging out through your society, and I'll bring you down with poverty and with disease. This is why the economic systems of socialist countries (which are a total violation of the economic laws of God) suffer privation, poverty, and pressures. Socialist countries are always economic basket cases, which are only sustained by the stupidities of countries like our own, who function, to some degree yet, upon God's economic principles, and therefore are prospered by God. Without us, those socialist countries couldn't survive because they are in such direct violation of the Word of God.

People are coming to me now and saying, "Who should I vote for in this election?" I'll tell you exactly how you should vote in this election. Look at the party platform, and match it up to what a socialist country would approve. Then you'll know how to vote. The party platform will tell you very clearly whether the economic principles are out of the Word of God or whether they're out of humanism. Then you will know what, as a Christian, you, in your duty, are bound to do. Don't you be dissuaded and frightened and scared off because there are powerful verbal and vocal and elitist type of people who are standing out there calling for compassion and calling us to violate the Word of God under the guise of compassion, in order to do the works of mercy that humanity needs done. Oh, human beings have needs. They have financial and they have material needs. And God has provided, as we already heard in our study of economics, for that. But that is not the role of government, and that is not the basis upon which God prospers a nation. So, may that be your guide.

The nations, on the other hand, who are subject to God's economic laws are nations which can expect to be prospered. I mean, there's no question about this. You will be prosper personally if you function on God's economic laws. We will be prospered as a society if we do that. Isaiah 32:15-16 put it this way: "But until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful land, and the fruitful field be counted as a forest, then justice shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteous remain in the fruitful field." God prospers us as long as we follow justice and righteousness, which means that we obey His principles.

You may also add Deuteronomy 28 (that whole chapter). It's a terrific to read: how God spelled out again to the people of Israel, "I'll bless you. You just work on my principles of financing.

So, that's the black horse rider. It's a very important symbol that John sees relative to the tribulation world, because it tells us how man is going to come to the height of socialism in that era; to the height of humanism; and, to the height of his atheism, and how, when that happens, there won't be any salt left. All we Christians are gone. All we fundamentalist Bible people who keep interjecting the restraining hand of biblical economics will be gone. Then they'll be able to go for broke, and they will go, indeed, for broke.

**The Fourth Seal**

So, in Revelation 6:7, we read, "And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, 'Come.'" The word "opened" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "anoigo." The word "anoigo" here really means "to break:" "When he had broken the fourth seal." This is speaking about the point when the Lord Jesus reaches over, and He snaps seal number four. This is active voice, which indicates that the Lord Himself does it. As we've seen, this is because He is the only one qualified to do it. And what He breaks is the next seal: the "sphragis" in the Greek. This is the fourth seal of whatever kind it was –, whether it was a clip of some kind or whether it was a wax seal with an impression upon it. This seal now restrains the information in the fourth section. It was keeping that secret until Jesus Christ breaks it.

When the Lord breaks that seal, John hears something. The word "hear" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "akouo." This word means that John hears an intelligible voice. He does not hear a bunch of gibberish. He listens to it; it's his language; and, he understands it. This is at the point of time now when the fourth seal is broken. This word is in the active voice. It means that John personally comprehends the statement. And what he hears is a voice: the "phone." This word refers to speech. He actually hears understandable speech. It is the speech that belongs to the fourth living creature angel, who now thunders forth the word "come." This is "erchomai" in the great Bible. This word means "to move out." It is in the present tense which indicates a standing directive now to this fourth horsemen of the apocalypse. It is active voice, and it means that the horseman is to come forth. It is imperative mood this time. This is a command. The fourth living creature angel, who surrounds the Father's throne, sounds for this commandment to the fourth horseman to move out, and to come out on the scene.

John by this time is, no doubt, appalled by the preview of the tribulation via the first three horsemen of the apocalypse. He is staggered by what he has seen is ahead for the human race. Each horse symbolized something worse than the one before it. So, you can imagine what he thinks now when he hears the thunderous sounding forth of this word, "Come" once more in the order to the fourth horseman. He's probably waiting and wondering, "What on earth can be coming next? What can be worse than what I've seen already that is ahead?"

**A Pale Horse**

Verse 8 tells us, "And I looked, and behold, a pale horse." The word "look" is "horao." The word "horao" is the word for looking in an overview. It's a broad overview observation of the scene. John is taking it all in. It's in the aorist sense, which is that specific point when John sees this horse appear with its rider. It's active because John is seeing this with his physical eyes. He is experiencing a vision. He has been taken up into heaven in the vision, but he's looking around just the way you are looking around now. That's what this word means. But John is not focusing upon one thing (the horse, or the rider). He is taking in the whole scene again. You remember that that scene was dramatic in itself with the Father's throne surrounded by the 24 elders representing the church. The Father's throne is immediately surrounded by the honor guard of the four living creatures, and then the vast, angelic host around that.

Now, into this scene, as John watches this magnificent portrayal, comes this fourth rider. And John is so awed by it that he adds the word "behold." This word "behold" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "ido." This is a word that's sort of a technical word. It is repeated to alert the reader that an important fact is about to be observed. It's a dramatic word, and it almost implies surprise on John's part when he sees this next rider come out. That is because what he sees is "a pale horse." The word "pale" is "chloros." The word "chloros" means "pale." That's probably the best translation for this word. It is referring especially to the gray, ashen color that a person's face takes when he is struck by fear or terror, or when he gets deadly sick.

We look at people and we say, "You look pale." They have this kind of a grayish, ashen appearance because the blood has rushed from their face. It signals that something is wrong in the physical mechanism, and it may even signal the imminent approach of death itself. That's why this pale color is used. This is the color, in other words, of a corpse. It's the color that a corpse has – that pale, grayish color of a corpse, and it signifies death. This word is used elsewhere in the Bible to indicate the pale quality in terms of referring to vegetation which is pale – a yellow-green grass, or newly evolved vegetation which hasn't fully become solidly green.

Revelation 8:7; Revelation 9:4; and, Mark 6:39 use this same word "chloros" in terms of that yellowish-green appearance, but again, the emphasis is that it's pale. It's a deadly color, and this color is relative to a "hippos," which is the word for the "horse" – the animal which the rider is on. This horse then has the ashen, gray color of death.

**The Rider of the Pale Horse**

Then John is given information relative to the name of the rider. The name of the rider here identifies specifically what the one who rides this animal signifies. The word "seated" is "kathemai." This refers to the position of the rider on the horse. This is his constant position. He is actually on the horse, and the word "on" is really a little different word than is normally used. It's "epano." The word "epano" is an adverb, and it indicates how he is sitting. He's sitting above the horse. So, it's kind of interesting that John is that specific. He says, "I looked, in the overall panoramic view, and behold (pay attention – here's something important), a pale horse – ashen gray, the color of death, and his name of the one who sat on him (above him). It's almost as though John is saying, "The guy isn't coming, storming out with a cowboy riding on the side, trying to hide himself. He's not riding under the belly of the horse. He's not standing on top of the horse like a great big circus trick rider. He is sitting there in a sober position, riding this animal, representing death itself.

**Physical Death**

Out he comes, saying that he who is riding on this horse has the name of "thanatos." Here, by the context, this refers to physical death. So, here is an enormously important revelation to John concerning the antichrist's tribulation world. The antichrist's New Age world of humanism is literally to be invaded by death. One thing that an unbeliever fears desperately is death. All you have to do is have the misfortune of attending a funeral of somebody who was not a believer, and who is surrounded by unbelieving relatives. You will see the fear of death that overwhelms and that possesses people who don't know what happened.

I heard of a lady recently whose daughter-in-law is desperate. She helps take care of this mother-in-law. This woman, who has grown up over the years in total contempt of the gospel; in total contempt of Christianity; and, in the total arrogance that a moneyed person is able to indulge. Now the body is beginning to break down. Now she doesn't feel so well. Now the visits to the doctor are increasing, and she's beginning to put two and two together – that at her age, on the horizon lies the imminent possibility of death. She keeps talking about the fact that she just can't imagine it. She is so fearful of being put in a box and covered with dirt.

Well, I could comfort her with the fact that she won't mind, really. She really won't mind. She won't know a thing. Her mind will be on something a lot more serious than the dirt that covers her casket, because the way she's going, she will end up in the torments compartment of Hades, and in all the terror and agony of an eternal hell. That's what she ought to be worried about. But she demonstrates her fear of death so that she is harassing family members every time something doesn't feel well on her: "Call them in. Get the doctor. Check me out." She's going to try desperately to avoid that terrible moment. That is fear of death.

Satan, of course, has held this club over human beings. This is how he has control the human race until Jesus Christ broke his back in that domination with the victory on the Cross. Titus 2:14-15, says, "Who gave Himself for us (the Lord Jesus Christ), that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of His own zealous good works. These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you." That happy position is ours because Jesus Christ has broken the control of death.

Then Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Forasmuch then, as the children of partakers of flesh and blood, He (the Lord Jesus) also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that has the power of death (that is, the devil), and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And if the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't deliver you from the fear of death, no one and nothing will. That is what the people in the tribulation world are going to be faced with – the terror of this death.

**Hades**

John observes something else about death. He sees the rider. He sees him riding a horse that is the color of death, and he sees that the one who sat upon him was death, and that something followed this horse; namely, Hades. The Greek word looks like this "hades." "Hades" follows, in some way, the rider on this horse. The significance of that is this. This tells us a very great, tragic truth concerning the people of the tribulation era. These are those who are going to be dying. And as we shall see in a future moment, this death hits one-fourth of the earth's population. What do we have: 4 billion people? Can you imagine a billion dead human beings within a span of three-and-a-half years, and that within a lesser span than that up front in that era, as things begin to unravel and come apart in the antichrist's New Age world?

The tragedy that is indicated here is that these people who die go to Hades, and that tells us that they're unbelievers. The world is full of these creatures who have rejected God; who have blasphemed God; who have turned against the Bible; who have held it in contempt; who have come up with their false cults and their false religions; and, who now are standing in their high and mighty arrogance of their own reasoning, and they've applied it to their political; their educational; their religious; and, their economic institutions. They've shaken their fists in the face of God, and said, "We don't think that the Bible applies to us now, or in this case, and we're not going to listen to you." Now God says, "Fine, you may enjoy this rider going through the field with a swinging scythe and just cutting human beings down left and right as fast as he can cut them down. They are in desperate fear as they realize it.

In the New Testament, this word "hades" refers to the abode of the souls of dead people between the time of their physical death and their physical resurrection. Here, at the time of John's vision, which is a period following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Hades was the staging area for unsaved dead only – those who are destined eventually for the lake of fire. At this point, only unbelievers go to Hades. Hades is constructed like this:

It has two compartments, and between those two compartments is an impassable barrier. The physical death, which is stalking the antichrist citizens, is taking them into eternal spiritual death, or separation from God, in the lake of fire via this staging area in Hades. Hades, we are told, will someday, with its inhabitants, be cast into the lake of fire, which we commonly referred to as hell. Revelation 20:14 tells us that: And death and Hades were cast into the Lake of fire. This is the second death." The second death in the Bible refers to the eternal death (the eternal separation) from God. Hades in Hebrew was called "Sheol." It is "Sheol" in the Hebrew and "Hades" in the Greek. It's the same place.

In Genesis 37:35, you have Jacob speaking about his going down to Sheol to where he thought Joseph was. Jacob thought that Joseph had been torn to shreds and killed by a wild animal because his brothers soaked his many-colored garments in blood and then brought it to the Father. In fact, they had sold the brother to some traders in Egypt. Jacob, here in this passage in Genesis 37:35 says, "That he will go down to Sheol to where his son is." This was because, in the Old Testament time, everybody who died went to Hades. It's a holding area of the souls of the lost until their physical resurrection.

**Torments and Paradise**

Now, before the death of Jesus Christ and before His resurrection, both saved and unsaved went to Hades. Everybody who died went to Hades or to Sheol. And it had this compartment that divided it. We learn this from Luke 16:23. This is the story of the rich man and Lazarus: "And in Hades he (the rich man) lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." So, one side was called Torments. That was the side in which the lost were placed. The other side was called Abraham's Bosom. As we shall learn, it had another name: Paradise. That was where the saved went to. So, before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, everybody who died went to Hades, or to Sheol. The unbelievers went to torment; and, the believers went to what the Jews called Abraham's Bosom, and what the gentiles called Paradise.

Now notice in Luke 16:26: "And Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in their lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed so that they who would pass from here to you cannot. Neither can they pass to us that would come from there." This gulf prevented any communicating and any transferring between. So, tells us very clearly (in contrast to the falsity of something like Mormon doctrine) that there is no second chance after death. You cannot transfer from Torments to Paradise. In fact, the people of Paradise cannot come over to Torments to minister to your pain, which is what the rich man was asking. He said, "Just have him bring me a drop of water on his finger, and put it on my tongue to relieve me." This tells us also that this is a place of burning pain just exactly the way the Scriptures describe it.

So, one compartment was called Abraham's Bosom by the Jews, or Paradise by the gentiles. We had the Paradise name indicated in Luke 23:43, where Jesus is talking to the thief on the cross who trusted in Him as Savior: "Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." He was talking to a gentile, and he used the gentile word that the gentile would understand for the place of bliss, or the place of blessing in Hades.

**Tartarus**

There's a third compartment here. This third compartment is called Tartarus. We won't go into that in any detail right now, but Tartarus is a special place of imprisonment for certain vile demons who are no longer free to roam the earth and to operate. 2 Peter 2:4 tells us about these particular category of vile demon spirits. Paul says, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus." Note that this is not hell as you have in the King James Version. The Greek word is Tartarus: "And delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." The context is talking about the situation in Noah's day that developed where demon spirits had intermarried with human women and produce the hybrid race of half-human and half-demon, which became the "men of renown" that have been immortalized in pagan stories about the gods and the goddesses.

Jude 6 also refers to Tartarus: "And the angels who did not keep their first estate, but left their own habitation (their own relationships) with angels, and related themselves to human beings, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Both of those passages refer to Tartarus.

So, there's the picture that we have of the place called Hades. Now, after Christ's death on the cross, the soul of the Lord Jesus Christ went down to Hades to make a proclamation to those who were incarcerated in that place. Ephesians 4:8-10 tell us about that. The Lord Jesus Christ went down to Hades: "Wherefore he said, 'When he ascended upon how, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." The captives he let up on high were who were in the Abraham's Bosom portion of Hades: Paradise. Paradise was removed from Hades, and taken up to the third heaven into the presence of the very throne room of God.

Verse 9 says, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth." So, that gives us a clue as to where Hades is. It's right down in the center of planet earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens: "That he might fill all things." So, the Lord Jesus Christ went down to Hades; made the proclamation of salvation was now complete; the penalty had been paid; and, now He is ready to take them into the presence of heaven itself. They had been saved on credit. Now that that payment had been made, now He could take them into heaven itself, out of the staging area of Hades.

So, you can understand, with Hades in the center of the earth, that indeed they have plenty of heat. As a matter of fact, when the heat builds up too much, they have pop-off valves, such as Mount St. Helens, and Kilauea in Hawaii, and in different places on the face of the earth. Those are designed such that when those pop-off valves blow, you should understand that what's happening is that things have gotten too hot in the center, and they're releasing some of the pressure. It's a grim place. All the need for suffering under the pains of fire, I assure you, are there, and they're in abundance.

Paradise has now has been taken up here to the third heaven. The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven that the birds fly in. The second heaven is the interstellar spaces, which is a primary area of demonic activity. The third heaven is the very throne room in presence of God. It sometimes is called the New Jerusalem.

Paul was stoned to death at Lystra in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. We won't read that here, but Paul says that he was taken up into the third heaven, into the place called Paradise. This tells us that Paradise, which was once in Hades, has been transferred into the third heaven so that it is now in the presence of God.

So, what happens today when a Christian dies? When a Christian dies, the thing that happens today is that he goes directly to Paradise, into the third heaven, to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8: "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather, to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Paul said, "I'm rather willing to be absent from my body. I'd rather be dead, and be with the Lord." When he said that, he wasn't saying that just to be some Pollyanna sweet Christian: "I love the Lord, and I'd like to be with him." Most Christians say, "Heaven is my home, but I'm not homesick."

The truth of the matter is that it is Paul who had been in the third heaven; who had been in paradise; and, who had seen what a place it is. He had to be given a physical ailments to remind him never to tell people what it was like to be in heaven or he died. He died at Lystra as the result of that stoning. He went into the third heaven in his soul. He saw what it is like. He heard magnificent things that just steeled him for the rest of his life to the service and to the agonies and to the cause of being a soldier of Jesus Christ, Paul had learned what it is to be in combat, as many of you have learned. We know what it is to fight. We know how to stay in the angelic conflict. We may be driven to our knees, but: "Greater risk that is in us that he that is the world." Paul learned that from his experience.

So, he had this painful physical ailment to always remind him never to tell what he had seem, lest people, I suppose, should be tempted to suicide to go there. Paul, who knew by personal experience, said, "Hey, death is nothing. It's a sorrow for those of you who are left behind, but I assure you that the person in whose service you're holding that memorial is glad to be rid of the whole scene down here, and has entered real living.

Philippians 1:23 adds to this same thought. Paul says, "For I am in a strait between two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." But in this case, he says, "You need me more, and I'll stay with you."

One more point is the completion of happiness. That's the thing to remember. Torments is now total unhappiness; total pain; and, total sorrow, but Paradise is total happiness; total peace; and, total prosperity. Paradise has been transferred to heaven. So, when, we read that the black horse rider of death is sweeping through the antichrist world, and shoveling people into Hades, he's telling us that these are unbelievers who are going down by the truckload and the carloads into the agonies of Hades that God has prepared for those who reject the authority of His Word; His principles; and, His commandments.

You and I are never going to enjoy the fullness of our happiness, even if we should die and go into the third heaven ahead of the rest of Christians. Out fullness of happiness is going to come when we are in that third heaven in our physical bodies – not just in our souls and spirits, but in our resurrected, perfect, sinless body.

1 Corinthians 15:51: "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep (that is, not all of us Christians are going to die), but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (that is, the rapture), for the trumpets shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible (our sinful) body must put on incorruption, (sinless bodies). This mortal (we who can die) must put on immortality so that we can never die. So, then this corruptible shall have put on incorruption; this mortal shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Indeed, O death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?" Death has no sting, and the grave has no victory for the Christian. For the unbeliever, it's a terror, and for the people in the antichrist's world, it will be a terror because they're going right into torments.

Aren't you glad that, because you have accepted Christ, and because He called you and gave you the capacity to believe, that you will never face that kind of terror, but that the best is yet ahead of you?

We close with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Here's how it's going to happen: 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." If you had a loved one who was in Christ (a believer that you buried), he comes out of the grave ahead of all of us in a resurrection body: "Then we who are alive (still in our mortal bodies) and remain, shall be caught up together with them into the clouds." Our bodies now change without having to go through death: "To meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." And indeed, with this kind of divine viewpoint, we can comfort one another.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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