

A Feast of Flesh

Revelation 19:17-21

(preached Pine Grove 9/17/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me to Revelation 19:17-21...

We are finishing up Revelation 19 this morning by looking at the final 5 verses of it...

So let me read them to us to get our minds in gear and then we will go back and look at all the verses in a little more detail....

Rev 19:17-21...

17 Then I saw [f]an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of [g]commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with

him the false prophet who performed the signs [h]in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with [i]brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Psalm 23 is probably the most well known psalm in the world, and it is a beautiful psalm that paints the picture of God as a good shepherd to His people..

I love Psalm 23 and have preached through it many times..

Yet, the most helpful psalm in the world to you day in and day out is not psalm 23 but actually a combination of psalms..

Psalm 37 and Psalm 73...

You can remember this pair of psalms simply because the number of each psalm is the reverse of the other..

37 and 73...73 and 37...

And the reason this pair of psalms may be more helpful to you day and day out in this world is that both of these psalms answer a troubling question for the Christian...

And the troubling question that faces the Christian each day is this...

“Why do evil people seem to get ahead and be successful in this life?”

Asked another way..

“Why do people who do the wrong thing seem to find trouble but actually prosper in this world?”

That is a troubling question for me at times...

I try to live right...

I have devoted my life to spreading the gospel and teaching the saints...

I have sacrificed and given up so many things...

Yet I struggle from day to day financially...

I am attacked for what I say and believe and teach...

While the evil, sinful person buys more stuff, takes more vacations and lives a life of relative peace...

So, what gives?

Why is this life so hard for the righteous but a life of ease for the sinful?

Well, Psalm 37 and Psalm 73 both help me with that question..

And though we dont have time to read each of these psalms this morning, I do want to read a large portion of Psalm 73 to us this morning to set the stage for our look at Revelation 19...

So take your Bibles and find Psalm 73 this morning...

And let me read a few verses of it to us...

- 1 Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!***
- 2 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps [a]had almost slipped.***
- 3 For I was envious of the [b]arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.***
- 4 For there are no pains in their death,
And their [c]body is fat.***
- 5 They are not [d]in trouble as other [e]men,
Nor are they plagued [f]like mankind.***
- 6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.***
- 7 Their eye [g]bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of their heart [h]run riot.***
- 8 They mock and [i]wickedly speak of oppression;***

They speak from on high.

*9 They have set their mouth [j]against the heavens,
And their tongue [k]parades through the earth.*

*10 Therefore [l]his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance are [m]drunk by them.*

*11 They say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge [n]with the Most High?"*

*12 Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.*

*13 Surely in vain I have [o]kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;*

*14 For I have been stricken all day long
And [p]chastened every morning.*

*15 If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your
children.*

*16 When I pondered to understand this,
It was [q]troublesome in my sight*

*17 Until I came into the [r]sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.*

*18 Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to [s]destruction.*

*19 How they are [t]destroyed in a moment!
They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!*

The clear teaching of psalm 73 is this...

Even though wicked people seem to get ahead in the world, don't be troubled by it..

Don't envy them..

And why shouldn't you be jealous of them?

Because you know how the story ends for wicked and evil people..

You know that their end comes swift and it is sure..

God puts them in slippery places and they fall to their death in a moment's notice...

And it was only until the psalmist went into the sanctuary of God where it assumed he was taught the word of God that his jealousy left him...

And I would tell you this morning dear Christian....

If you are living in jealousy of an unbeliever today because of what they have, where they go and what they wear, all you need to do is hear the word of God in Revelation 19...

And your envy will turn to sadness...

Your jealousy will turn to grief...

Your discouragement will dissolve into thankfulness as you are reminded today in Revelation 19 of the end of all who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ...

Because in Revelation 19, we see how the wicked are swept away by sudden terrors...

Now as we finish Revelation 19 today, we come to the end of a huge chunk of human history...

You see, when God created the heavens and the earth, he then created man to rule his creation...

That is the story of Genesis 1 and 2...

But man gave up the right to rule for God when he fell into sin in Genesis 3...

And ever since that day, the story of the Bible and the story of human history is God working to bring someone else to rule his creation...

And that Someone is Christ Jesus, who in Revelation 20 will assume his seat on the throne of the world and begin to do what Adam gave up the right to do when he sinned against God...

So the final thing that must be done before Christ can rule is that rebels in God's Kingdom must be eliminated..

And that is exactly what we see in the closing verses of Revelation 19...

The earth as we know it is about to change forever...

Human governments are about to be replaced by God's government...

Human kings and rulers are about to be replaced by the King of all kings...

People in rebellion to God are about to be replaced by people who live in obedience to God...

The day has come for the wicked person's prosperity to end...

The day has come for the success of evil people to be replaced by the success of God's people...

The day has come for a world in rebellion to be replaced by a world in submission to God...

And we get a sneak preview of this glorious day in Revelation 19:17-21...

As we come to these final 5 verses of chapter 19, we come to the end of a long period of God's judgment upon the earth...

For the final 7 years of world history, God's judgments have been reigning down upon the earth...

Beginning with the seal judgments in Revelation 6, God's judgment of the world has been nonstop...

Disease, famine, natural disasters have come one right after the other...

Evil and sin has grown to a place of power in the world in these 7 years as well as Satan enables his men, the Antichrist and the false prophet to rule the world...

The world has literally been on a collision course with Revelation 19 for 7 years, but now the day has come and God will have his final say in the earth..

So as we look at this today, what are the lessons for the church?

We know that we won't be on the receiving end of this judgment..

We know that we have been safe in heaven for the past 7 years...

WE know that we will only be following Jesus and then watching as Jesus brings destruction on his enemies...

So what can we learn from this final segment of Revelation 19 today?

Well, I want to give 3 lessons from this final great battle scene of Revelation 19...

And the first lesson is found in verses 17-18 of Revelation 19...

I. There Is No Hope for Those Who Rebel Against God (17-18)

In verses 17-18 of Revelation 19, we are taken to a scene that God witnessed in his trip to heaven...

In this scene, an angel stands to call all the birds of the air to come to a feast of human flesh...

Now to understand the full picture of what is going on, we must understand where the world is at this point in time...

We are now in Revelation 19....

The world is in chaos...

Natural disasters has become more frequent...

Death is everywhere in the world...

The Antichrist is still the ruler of the world, but his empire is even crumbling....

People on earth are in shambles...

Most of the people on earth have pledged their loyalty to the Antichrist...

He controls the food, the money, the world economy and religion...

And even though he is weakened and his capital city of Babylon is burning, most of the people in the world are behind him...

Now in this chaos, there are also believers in Christ...

They came to faith after the rapture of the church and have survived the craziness of the world as God has protected them..

They have been preaching the gospel to the people around them...

Sometimes, that meant they were killed, but some have survived...

Now in the midst of a chaotic and out of control world, the Antichrist has one final hope...

He hopes he can rally enough support to fight against God one last time in hopes of overthrowing the Lord's rule and once and for all having the world for Himself...

So, he begins to rally his supporters..

There is also a demonic army that is pulling people into service to the Antichrist....

And as Babylon burns, the Antichrist begins to put together his last ditch effort to win the war against God..

So people from all over the world join his effort, and he begins to call the armies of the world to the Middle East...

You see the Antichrist knows the Bible...

He knows that Christ is supposed to come a second time to take control of the world...

He has read the prophets that predict that Jesus will set his foot on the Mount of Olives..

And his plan is to be ready for that day when heaven opens and Jesus returns...

So he gathers forces just like Judas did when he gathered 600 Roman soldiers to go and arrest Jesus...

The Antichrist hopes to gather millions to support his effort and the plan is to be in Israel to meet Christ when he comes a Second Time..

And to fight against Him in hopes of tearing off the control that God has over their lives....

They want to have a repeat of the Mount of olives where Jesus was captured and taken away and killed...

Except this time, they desire to put Jesus to death for good..

And we have read about this gathering of the worlds armies under the Antichrist earlier in the book of Revelation...

We know this as the battle of Armageddon, which is name of the valley in northern Israel where this battle will take place....

And so the plan of Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet is in place...

And though the people of the world are struggling to survive, they buy into the Antichrist's plan and begin to gather in hopes of taking down Jesus at His Second Coming...

But as they gather in Israel and await the Lord's return, an angel in heaven begins to gather the birds of the earth in verse 17...

And the call to the birds is to gather in Israel for a feast...

You see, the Lord knows and sees the plans of Satan and he also know the outcome of their plan to defeat Christ...

So he calls for the birds of the air even before Jesus exits the hole in heaven...

With all the buildup to Hurricane Irma hitting Florida, power trucks began to head to Florida days before the storm even hit...

They booked hotels and put their trucks in the state even though the storm was still 5-7 days away...

And why did they do that?

It makes clean up easier to have the people in place before the storm comes...

Well, God seeing the future before it happens calls the birds to Israel to feast on the flesh that will be killed and begin to rot there...

And the promise to the birds is that they will, according to verse 18, eat the dead flesh of kings and commanders and horses that are about to die at the battle of Armageddon...

As the church is called to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven, the birds are called to great supper of God's enemies on earth...

And the easy lesson here is that the battle is decided before it is even fought...

I tell you today that all of God's enemies in that day will fall to Christ...

I am not a betting man, but if I were alive in that day, and Las Vegas was giving odds on Satan's army versus God's army....

All my money would go on Jesus Christ...

There is no hope for evil winning...

I get so amused by people who see this world as a battle of good versus evil...

There is no battle..

God is having his way now, and He will ultimately have his way in the future...

The hope of evil winning is zero....

The hope of God experiencing victory is a reality....

And so I ask you, why stay in your sin and on the team of the evil won who will surely be destroyed..

You have a better chance of destroying a tank with a BB gun..

There is no hope in Satan, but there is an abundance of hope and truth in Christ...

The second lesson of this battle is found in verses 19-20 of this passage...

II. There Is No End for Those Who Rebel Against God (19-20)

So as the birds of the sky gather together to get ready to eat, the enemies of God gather together to take on Christ..

Verse 19..

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

So, the stage is set....

Satan in in one corner and Christ is in the other corner...

And the bell rings for the fight and Satan falls at the first punch that Christ throws...

I will never forget going to watch a fight as a teenager....

Mike Tyson was the world heavyweight boxing champion in 1988 and he was fighting Michael Spinks who had been a champion...

So we drove up to Spartanburg to watch the fight...

We got our drinks and popcorn and sat in front of a big screen to watch it...

Tyson and Spinks come out...

The bell rings and Tyson knocks him out in a little over a minute into the 1st round...

I hadn't even taken two bites of popcorn or a sip of my coke and we were leaving the arena and heading home...

Yet as fast as that match was, the match between Christ and his enemies will be faster...

As Satan has the battle plan laid out and the armies lined up, heaven opens, Jesus comes to earth, his mouth opens and the battle is done...

In fact, verses 19 and 20 give you a feel for how fast victory comes...

In verse 19, the beast and the false prophet and the armies are assembled...

Then verse 20 simply says,

20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet

That is the speed and sureness of this final great battle...

Satan will have worked so hard for 1000s of years to get a shot at Christ and He will go down in one shot as Jesus speaks as evil is done...

And then we read in the second half of verse 20 that the Antichrist is seized along with the false prophet and both are thrown alive into the lake of fire with burns with brimstone...

We will talk more about this lake of fire in chapter 20, but take note here that the first two inhabitants of eternal hell are the Antichrist and his right hand man the false prophet...

If you notice, Satan does head for the lake of fire just yet...

That is coming but not just yet...

But what I want you to see here is this...

This lake of fire is an eternal punishment from God...

There are many people who refuse to believe in the idea of hell...

Some say that people who to hell eventually just go out of existence...

Some say that hell will eventually be emptied and all will eventually end in heaven...

But I would say to you that hell is eternal....

Jesus Himself described hell as a place where the fire does not go out and the worm does not die...

This is clearly the idea of an eternal punishment..

And in case you were wondering, Satan is eventually cast into hell...

Let me show this verse in Revelation 20:7...

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the [c]seashore. 9 And they came up on the [d]broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the [e]saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and [f]brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

We will look at this a little more in depth over the next few weeks, but once Christ returns and sets up his

kingdom, Satan is bound for all 1000 years of it until the very end...

When he will be released and try for a final time to win the war against God...

On this final attempt, he will once again be defeated and notice verse 10...

the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and [f]brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Take note of 2 things...

First, when Satan is cast into the lake of fire 1000 years later, the beast and false prophet are still there...

So clearly, the lake of fire doesn't cause a person to go out of existence even after a 1000 years...

But in case you still doubt that, the second thing you need to see here is this...

The final word on the lake of fire being eternal punishment is found at the end of the verse...

Which says that torment in the lake of fire will be forever and ever...

In other words, the enemies of God wont just cease to exist...

They will be killed and then cast into an eternal torment known as the lake of fire...

For those who rebel against God, there is no end to this suffering...

Now, you may look at me and question why I would preach such horrible news....

Well, first of all, I only preach what is here so just blame the Bible and its author...

But second, you have to teach the truth about hell...

You see the biblical idea of hell has always been attacked in various ways...

And the reason for that is quite simple...

The idea of hell is offensive...

TO think that God would establish a place of eternal torment upsets us, so we do things to help us feel better about the idea of hell...

The current trend in the world is to reject the idea of hell in any form...

There are men who call themselves pastors who don't believe in hell and eternal punishment...

They claim that hell is made up to scare people into salvation...

Well, they got half of that right...

Hell is scary, but I assure it isn't made up..

In fact, it is all over the Bible from beginning to end...

And it is put there to cause us to fear going there...

If you are fearful of going to hell, Good!

Come to Christ in repentance and faith and escape the fear of hell..

But make no mistake about it...

If you continue in rebellion to God, you wont simply die and go out of existence....

You will die and go to a temporary hell and be punished until you are resurrected and go to the final great white

throne judgment where you will be cast into the same lake of fire we see here...

There is no end to those who rebel against God...

The end goes on forever and it never comes...

And it nothing but torment forever and ever..

A final lesson of Revelation 19:17-21 is found in the final verse of this passage..

III. There Is No Mercy for Those Who Rebel Against God (21)

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

To make this final lesson short and sweet, let us simply look at two words here...

“the rest” ...

Who are the rest?

Well, this is everyone besides the Antichrist and the false prophet who is at the battle on the side of Satan..

The rest of the armies of the world were all killed..

Now, all were not cast in the lake of fire immediately, but all were killed at Armageddon and all will go to a temporary hell to be tormented until they will be raised to stand before the great White Throne at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ...

But I simply want us all to see the completeness of God...

Just as God will not leave 1 sheep behind, He will also not allow one rebel to sneak into the kingdom...

I think so many people look at God and arrogantly think he will make an exception for them, even though they have never repented and trusted in Christ..

But please notice that every single enemy of God at the battle of Armageddon will not go unpunished...

In the same way that every single unbelieving person who dies today will not be overlooked by God...

God eternally saves every last person who trusts in Him but he also eternally punishes every last person who rejects Christ..

There are no “close enoughs” in heaven and they are no “not so bads” in hell...

Heaven will only have those who have truly repented and trusted in Christ...

And hell will only have those who have refused to do so..

Conclusion

The final word on world history as we know it is simply this...

“all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

What a sad final statement on the world’s end..

What a sad ending for some of the world’s most powerful and successful people..

At the end of their lives, their bodies are simply bird feed...

Yet, that is the sad reality of those who reject the gospel...

Don’t end up as bird feed this morning...

Obviously, I dont know where we are on the timeline of God’s plan for the end....

The tribulation and the great supper for the birds may be years or decades or centuries away...

You may not be a part of that feast of flesh...

But I do know this...

Those who refuse to submit to Christ today may not have their bodies eaten by birds but they will end up in the same lake of fire that we read about this morning...

And that is not some preacher trick to scare you into heaven...

The lake of fire is coming reality for all those who reject Christ...

Avoid that lake today by looking to Christ...

The one who loved you enough to die as a Substitute for sinners like you and me...

The one who offer forgiveness of sin and eternal life forever with Him...

Today is the day to avoid the lake of fire and look forward to the crystal sea before the throne of God...

Let us pray...