

## Things to Come 2

Romans 8:38f

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Will you take a Bible and turn to Romans 8:38. That verse and the next one are what we are studying over these Sundays. It runs like this, "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." All other loves end at the grave. However strong the present material or human support is that you have, it will not be able to do anything for you beyond the grave.

And indeed, it will be able to do very little or nothing for you in an earthquake, or in the event of a nuclear war. Indeed, faced with the massive disasters that are beginning to take place in our world, any love but that of an infinite Creator will be worthless to you. But the love of the infinite Creator will be effective for you even after the grave and you won't be able to be separated from it whatever things to come may happen. And it's those "things to come" that we're talking about on these two Sundays.

Now loved ones if you're here this morning for the first time, or if you're an agnostic, it's really important that you understand that all we're going to say today depends on our belief that Jesus is the son of the Creator of the universe. Intellectually and experientially we have come to that conclusion, and it's because of that that we trust the description he gives of the events that are about to take place in our world. Now, I fully understand that if you're a happy agnostic or if you're here for the first time you won't have very much ground for believing these things. But I would just want to say that we don't believe these things because they're said by just anybody -- we believe them because Jesus is the son, the unique, only begotten son of the Creator of the universe. He has described these things and his disciples have passed them on to us and that's why we believe them.

Last Sunday we talked about the period of time that would occur between now and what is known as the rapture. We shared that in many ways we would probably solve a lot of our problems -- over the next decade or so we'll probably solve the energy crisis, we'll probably produce enough solar power to solve our energy crisis, and we'll probably solve our food crisis. Probably by irrigation and increased crop yields, we'll overcome the shortage of food throughout the world.

The thing that we won't be able to overcome is that increasing selfishness that will develop in our world the more it possesses. That's just a fact of human nature that you've experienced in your own life; the more you have the more you want. We will not be able to overcome that increasing selfishness, and the greed will develop so powerfully -- not only among the third world nations but among our own nations -- so strongly that nobody will be able to hold down the desire for more and more things. The greed will produce crippling strikes, international embargos, and international distrust among all peoples. So it will be a world full with plenty but a world that wants so much of it for itself that eventually the whole international economic and political system will begin to grind to a stop.

Now it's at that moment that the spirit of antichrist -- which is already in our world because the seeds of all these things that we're talking about, (you're no fools, you can see they're already

here)-- the spirit of antichrist that is already in our world will, at that crisis time, produce the only alternative to chaos. We'll be faced by such chaos produced by every man doing what is right in his own eyes, and by every man trying to gather as much of the possessions of the world for himself -- such a grinding stop in the world system -- that we will be forced at that moment to choose the only alternative to chaos. And that will be totalitarian dictatorship.

And there will arise a great antichrist figure, a human being, who will offer to superimpose upon the whole world system -- upon the legal system, the political system, the economic system -- to superimpose an order that will again get the world's systems operating. Now loved ones, we will so have rejected Christ as the only answer to greed and selfishness that we will be faced with either chaos or totalitarian dictatorship. And the world will swarm to the answer of totalitarian dictatorship and this antichrist will take over.

Now he will probably bring peace to the world, he probably will. The will of one human will over four billion, five billion whatever we are -- 10 billion people -- he will bring peace because he will force everyone to do what he wants. You know yourselves that certainly brings a degree of order; it brings complete domination and complete destruction of free will but it brings peace and order, and there will be peace at the time that this great event will take place that we discussed during our last time together.

Maybe you'd like to look at the verse that describes it in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3. "But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourself know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." Now that "day of the Lord" means all of these events, loved ones -- all of the events that will take place over the next 10 years after the thing is initiated by what we call the rapture, when people say there is peace and security, and that's why we believe that the antichrist will bring peace and security. "When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape." At that moment the rapture will occur.

Many people think of the rapture as Jesus' return. Really it isn't, Jesus does not return at the moment of the rapture to establish his rule on the earth, he returns and catches up to him in the air those of us who have died to every love but his -- those of us who really are the children of the Father of the universe -- Jesus will take us up to himself and that's why it's called the rapture. We will be raptured up with him into heaven.

That's explained in the chapter before, if you look at 1 Thessalonians 4:15. That's the description of the rapture and that will be the first event that takes place in all these series of events that cover a great number of years and are known as the day of the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:15, "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself," this is the rapture, "will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

That is, all those who have died over the past thousands of years and who know Jesus will rise first. "Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." And that, loved ones, is how the Bible describes that first event and I'll try to outline it gradually to you. That will be the beginning of the day of the Lord, you see -- the rise of the antichrist and the spirit of peace, and then the rapture. And the rapture will mean that those of us who do know Jesus will be with him in

heaven.

During the next 10 or 10 and a half years, because you cannot tell when the rapture will take place, really, because Jesus told us nobody knows when that's going to take place, although you may say, "Well, when there's peace, when there's a great time of peace perhaps" but no one actually knows when that will occur. But after the rapture you can tell from Revelation when things will occur, and over the next 10 or 10 and a half years, there will be three series of events which will take place simultaneously.

Some of them will take place in heaven; some of them will take place in the remnant of the church because, you see, the nominal church will continue on the earth. When those of us who really trust Jesus have been taken to be with him in heaven, the nominal church will continue and there will be events that occur there. And then there will be another series of events that will occur among those of us who have nothing to do with Jesus at all.

Now, it's important to remember that, because if you read Revelation and think that every chapter follows chronologically you'll be led astray. The fact is that there are three series of events that take place simultaneously and are described in Revelation and that's why I'd encourage you to look at Bloomfield's book ["All Things New", Arthur Bloomfield] because he has outlined that very clearly.

Now loved ones the first event that will occur will be in heaven. When those of us are taken up into heaven then Satan himself will be cast down onto the earth. He'll be cast out of the spiritual position that he holds, not in heaven, but the spiritual position that he holds in the world of spirits and he will be cast down onto the earth. You'll see that in Revelation 12:9. And you have to get used to the symbols that are used in connection with the last days and of course Satan is referred to as the dragon.

Revelations 12:9, "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent," you remember he is referred to as a serpent in Genesis, "who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." And then loved ones, Satan will begin to persecute the nominal church that has been left on the earth. That's what he'll do. Once he's thrown down to the earth he'll begin to persecute the nominal church that is left there and that's Revelation 12:12-13.

Revelation 12:12, "Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child." You remember last Sunday we talked about the woman as the church and the male child as those who were real in their relationship with Jesus. It was the male child, those who really loved Jesus that were caught up into heaven but the woman, the nominal church, remained and Satan begins to persecute that church.

Now this is the period of unprecedented persecution known as the tribulation and that's in Matthew 24. That's why it's important, loved ones, not to be foolish and start fearing persecution in these days because that will occur at this moment in Matthew 24:9, when Satan is cast down onto the earth and has nothing to restrain him. And in this verse Jesus is talking to all who are connected with him in any way, not those only who are present as he speaks, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And

then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold."

And that time will be unprecedented persecution loved ones, because the Holy Spirit at the moment restrains wickedness -- he does. You may look around and think, "Boy, he's not restraining much." But really loved ones, the Holy Spirit is holding back wickedness in our present world, he is. Through a thousand things, through even our broken down ramshackle legal system, the Holy Spirit is holding back wickedness. Now at this time when Satan is cast down to the earth, God will withdraw the Holy Spirit from restraining the spirit of lawlessness so that we will be able to see, and Satan and all who follow him, will be able to see where their unrestrained wickedness will take them.

That's taught plainly, if you'd like to look at it, in 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-10. And so at the time when Satan begins to persecute the church the restraining power of the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn so wickedness will possess the world virtually completely except for one small area. "Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come," that is -- the day when Jesus himself returns to establish his rule upon the earth, "For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness," that is the antichrist now possessed by Satan himself -- "and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time."

He means the Holy Spirit is restraining him now. "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it," that is the Holy Spirit, "will do so until he is out of the way," until the Holy Spirit is out of the way. "And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."

That describes the kind of lawlessness that will occur at that time as Satan possesses the body of the antichrist and then gains complete military control of the whole earth -- that is described in Revelation 13:7-8. "Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it," that is the beast or Satan possessing the antichrist, "and authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."

And then loved ones, at that same time a series of events will be taking place in heaven, because those of us who do know Jesus will be there with him, and we will begin to undertake the responsibilities we have for administering God's judgments and for administering his grace. And at this time God will administer judgments to the earth. So while Satan is bringing about his chaos, God himself will send plagues and famines upon the earth and that is the only thing that will in any way hold the evil and the wickedness of Satan back and the only thing that will enable anything to happen in the nominal church. So one of the first things that will happen is explained in Matthew 24:14; there will be no one on the earth to preach the gospel at that time except the nominal church and so the gospel will be preached partly by those of us who are in heaven. It will be preached and manifested on the earth.

Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come." Now some of you may wonder, "Why do you say it will be preached at that time?" Well, that's the only meaning you can give to the white horse that is described in Revelations 6:1-2 if you'd like to look at it. White always refers to those who have washed their garments white and it always refers to Jesus and so you get the mention of that in Revelations 6:1-2, "Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder, 'Come!' and I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."

The meaning of that is that Jesus, through those of us who are with him, will preach the gospel to even the nominal church and at that time some of the nominal church will actually be saved. In other words there will be what are called tribulation saints, there will be people who will be saved at that time but only, really, as by fire. You find that in Revelations 7:13-14. "Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?' I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

Now loved ones, part of the reason why they will be shaken into a sense of reality is because of the tremendous plagues that will come upon the earth at that time. You might look again at Revelation 6:3-4 where the other horsemen are outlined that come forth and this is what God and those of us who are in Jesus will be partly responsible for -- the administering of not only grace but also of judgment to the earth. Revelation 6:3, "When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, 'Come!' And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword." So there will be mighty wars at that time.

Then in Verse 8, "And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth." Because the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn, all kinds of pestilence and famine, and all kinds of chaos will reign in the natural world.

Then in Verse 12, "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place." The Holy Spirit holds all these things together -- it is him that holds the protons and neutrons together.

"Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?'" In the midst of all of that, loved ones, the antichrist will still, by his own signs and wonders, rule over great parts of the earth. He will not be able to prevent those who are saved and he will not be able to prevent a special group in Israel being saved because at that time part of the Israelites will actually come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah.

I would just like to share with those of you who are more anxious to save the dear Jews than you are to save anyone else to be careful, do not be found trying to live in the next dispensation when you are in this one. Do you see that it's during this time that there will be that special number in Israel who will be saved? It's mentioned there in Revelation 14:1, "Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion," in Israel, "stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." A hundred and forty-four thousand of the Jews at that time will believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

But loved ones, apart from those and the remnant in the nominal church that are saved and taken to be with Jesus, the great mass of the world's population will be under the heel of the antichrist. And the situation that will be is pointed out clearly in Revelations 13. "Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon." This is the antichrist possessed by Satan. "It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed."

The antichrist will be killed at some point and Satan will come in and take over his body and appear to produce a resurrection like Jesus. "It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men; and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived." And that's that resurrection, "And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast" -- Satan gave breath to the image of the antichrist -- "so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name."

Loved ones, I would ask you not to be foolish in these days. These things take place then -- after the rapture -- during these 10 and a half years that we're talking of. So by all means let's tear the government apart for their social security system and all the rest of it but let's not be silly. Maybe there's a foreshadowing of this time when we'll all be numbered and no one will be able to move. Maybe there is a foreshadowing in the fact that the bank records are public property and the federal authorities can tell your whole life if they want to. Maybe there's a foreshadowing of it -- but that is not the mark of the beast.

This mark of the beast will occur in an intense way at this time, Verse 17, "so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark." It will be the only way Satan will be able to bring order into the world -- that is -- the name of the beast or the number of its name. "This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six." And why the Bible says this calls for wisdom is because there is a lot of foolishness connected with that number and it is very difficult for any of us to see the real meaning. So be slow on all the so called pretenses at giving Hebrew letters to the value of the numbers. Really, you can almost prove that anybody is the antichrist if you play around with it.

So be content; be humble in the presence of God's wisdom. Say "there are some things here we can understand, there are some things that are beyond us", and don't let us be foolish about them. Now loved ones at that time when Satan is at the height of his power, Jesus will return. So these are the 10 and a half years and you see that we will be caught up with Jesus into heaven and the gospel will be preached to the entire world. At the same time there will be that tribulation that we

talked about and out of that tribulation there will be saints who will be saved and there will be wars and famine sent by God to the world to declare to all men that what is happening is not reality.

And then during that time comes the rule of the antichrist when that number will be printed and no one will be able to buy or sell without it. And then when Satan is at the height of his power in the antichrist, Jesus will return to the earth and it is then that the tremendous battle known as the battle of Armageddon will occur, probably near the plain of Megiddo in the Middle East. And at that time Jesus will defeat Satan and all his forces. And it is then, of course, that the judgment will take place, what is known as the great white throne judgment, when all peoples will be judged and will be judged according to the lives that have come from their faith or lack of faith.

And then loved ones, it is at that time that Jesus will bind Satan. He will be bound for a 1,000 years and that's what known as the Millennium and that's when the saints will rule on earth for 1,000 years. And during those 1,000 years those of us who really love Jesus and trust him will be used by him to reorganize the world. The world is a mess; it is nothing like it was when God first created it. Even the present climate of the earth is not what it was when God first created it. We have, in all kinds of ways, destroyed and polluted the entire world compared with what God meant it to be. And during those 1,000 years we will share with Jesus the reorganizing and the renewing of this world. And then loved ones that event that is described in Revelation 20:7-15 will occur: "And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven."

So Satan will be released for a moment but then defeated finally. "But fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil that had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

And then loved ones, the world will be completely renewed. And you remember, there's the description of the holy city which may occur somewhere in space because you remember it's talked about as coming down from heaven, descending from heaven. Whether that is spacial or spiritual you cannot tell. But by that time, presumably we will ourselves have instituted space travel and certainly when Jesus comes the whole universe will then begin to be opened to us and the whole earth will be renewed completely and then we will begin to be used by God to redeem the whole universe. And really, that's as far as the Bible takes us, loved ones.

So that seems to be the outline of the plan that Jesus tells us about the things to come. I don't ask you to argue about it or battle back and forward about it, but will you see there's a great deal of the Bible that is devoted to this. Now, Jesus is recognized by all of us to be the wisest man that ever lived and to have lived the most perfect life that was ever lived so let's see that he

does not give so much of his message over to this time unless indeed these things will take place. So I would encourage you, those of you who have seen this for the first time, to maybe get the book "All Things New". Get it settled in your own mind and then forget it and be what Jesus wants you to be in this present world.

Those of you who have seen this for the first time and do not know Jesus, loved ones, honestly, these things will occur. They will. I'm not claiming that my interpretation is dead right on every issue, but there's too much of this stuff to ignore that this is in fact the way that the world will go. And so I would encourage you who have not dealt with Jesus at all to really see that it possibly is a short time. And once these things begin to occur they will occur fast. It is really important that you are undeceived before they begin to occur.

So let's pray, loved ones.