

40. Paradise Restored

THE rebellion is ended. Christ Jesus is gloriously victorious. The fires of hell have done their purifying work. Satan, sin, and sinners are gone; they have utterly perished from the face of the earth. Gone also are all the works of man. Every defiling and hurtful thing has been destroyed in the flames. The results of sin are past.

Now that all this is fully accomplished, the destroying, purifying fire will go out for want of material to burn; and the smoke of the great conflagration will clear away. Thus, Isaiah indicates that when the fire burns up the wicked as stubble, and has completed in work of destruction and cleansing, it shall become so completely extinct that thereafter - there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." The fire will die out. See Isa. 47:14.

The destruction of Satan and all his followers will finally open the way for the complete establishment of Christ's kingdom upon the earth and the restoration of man to his Paradise home.

It was God's original purpose that righteous men should dwell on the earth, and this purpose, though temporarily halted by the intrusion of sin, finally will be carried out.

"The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." Prov. 11:3. This earth is man's inheritance. The promise to Abraham that he and his seed should be heirs of the world was not an idle promise. It is as certain of fulfillment as that God lives, for "He is not slack" concerning His promises. Not one of them will fail. "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Rom. 4:13.

After describing the purification of the earth by the fires of hell, the Apostle Peter exclaims in ecstasy, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." 2 Peter 3:10-13.

A New Earth

The lake of fire, therefore, is not to destroy the earth but only to melt and renovate it. When the smoke has lifted and only ashes remain, the Lord will once more exercise His creative power by making it new again. This, too, is God's promise., for "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Rev. 21:5.

This arrangement is as old as the plan of redemption. When God set in motion the program for saving man, it included not only his person but also his home. The Bible abounds with God's promises of a renewed earth in which His people shall dwell. Thus, He declared through Isaiah the prophet:

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." Isa. 65:17-19.

To this agree the words of Jesus spoken on the mount of blessing, when He said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matt. 5:5.

John the beloved tells us that in heavenly vision he saw the home of man in its restored state. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Rev. 21:1.

To the new earth, the glory of Eden will be fully restored. The earth will be as it was before the blight of the curse fell upon it. What a fitting place this will be for an eternal abode for God's people!

And this is exactly what is in store for them. As soon as everything is fully restored, Christ will present the entire earth to His people, who have returned with the Holy City. The promise is:

"But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, said the Lord of hosts." Mal. 4:2, 3.

Yes, they will go forth from the City of God and will once more possess the earth. For "the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." Dan. 7:18.

In graphic language the prophet Isaiah describes the new earth as it is restored to man and as it was

shown him in vision.

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and, the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.”

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.” “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Isa. 35:1,2,5-7,9,10.

This is man's long-lost home. All that was lost by him in the fall will be restored to him again in the new earth. There is to be a “restitution of all things.” (Acts 3: 2 l.) The first dominion is to be restored to man through Christ (Micah 4: 8); and-thank God! - This restoration will include the return of the Garden of Eden to the earth. Once again man will walk by the side of the river of life and drink of its sparkling, life-giving waters. Once again will he have free access to the tree of life, from which he has so long been exiled. Yes, Eden, the garden of God, the first home of man, will once more shed forth upon the earth the fragrance of its bloom and verdure.

The New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem will become the eternal capital. This wonder city, with its towering walls of jasper, its twelve gates, each of one solid pearl; with its streets of transparent gold; with its “many mansions?” prepared for the saints by Jesus and the angels, will be already resting upon the earth. It will have safely out ridden the awful conflagration which destroyed the devil and sinners, and from within its walls, King Jesus will govern the nations.

John attempts a description of this mighty metropolis as he saw it descending out of heaven from God. He pictures it as “having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Rev. 2 1: 11.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Verse 3.

This city is of sufficient size to furnish a home for all the saved. John declares the measure of it to be “twelve thousand furlongs” and that “the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.” (Verse 16.) Whether this measure is of one side only or of the entire circumference of the city is not clear. In the one case, it would be 375 miles square; in the other, it would be 1,500 miles on each side. Many times larger than any metropolis we have seen upon earth before, it will become the very center, not of the earth only, but also of the entire universe, for God will dwell there.

“And I saw no temple therein,” John declared “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.” Verses 22-25.

Thus, the earth, the battlefield. of the forces of good and evil, which for nearly six thousand years has been in the hands of the rebel leader, will not only be restored to God's kingdom but will be exalted above any of the myriads of worlds and planets in God's vast creation. The City of God, as a memorial, will be located on the very spot where Jesus was put to death by His enemies. At that time Satan thought the victory was his. He had succeeded in placing the lifeless form of the Son of God in the tomb and had sealed it with the Roman seal.

But He who came forth from the tomb, a conqueror over the devil and death, will establish His eternal throne on Mount Zion as an everlasting memorial of His complete triumph over all His enemies.

“The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one.... And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.” Zech. 14: 4-11.

Country Homes

But the saints are not to dwell only in the city. They are also to establish homes in the country. The entire earth will be theirs; for “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High.” Dan. 7:27. As Adam and his posterity were bidden to go forth from Eden and replenish and subdue the earth, so the redeemed will go forth from Jerusalem to inhabit all sections of the new world. They are not to spend their time in idleness. They will be real people, living in a real earth; and their time is to be employed in useful labor.

Adam was told in Eden that he was to dress the garden and keep it. (Gen. 2:15.) So will it be with the redeemed. Concerning this the Lord has spoken through the prophet Isaiah, saying:

“They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.” Isa. 65:21-23.

Peace

Think of it! The saved will have eternity in which to build and beautify a home and develop a country estate! No invading armies will march in to pillage and destroy. No thieves will break through and steal. No one will molest or make afraid, for God will plant His people, and they will move no more. The soil, which was cursed for Adam's sake, will yield its strength once more. No chilling frosts nor summer heat will destroy the fruit of the ground. The climate will be perfect. No destructive insects will attack the crops, for all these pests will have been destroyed. No pestilence will come, no storm will sweep over the land, no floods will inundate the crops; for the forces of nature, thrown out of joint as a result of sin, will have been adjusted again, and everything will work to man's interest and not against him as now.

The species of animals we have known this life will be seen in the new earth also, but none will be ravenous or cruel; they will have lost their ferocious natures.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Isa. 11: 6-9.

Sweet birds of this Paradise will carol their songs of praise to their Creator; rich verdure will cover hill and valley; majestic trees, which dwarf the giant sequoias, will wave their proud branches in the breeze; and the entire earth will be a place of glory and beauty.

There will be no hospitals there, for the inhabitants of that land will never say, ‘I am sick.’ (See Isa. 33: 24.) There will be no graveyards, no crepe on the doorknob; no black-plumed hearse will ever go creaking down the streets of glory. The bloom of eternal youth will be upon every brow. The defects of the former life having been left in the grave, everyone will be physically perfect.

That will be a country of riches without want, health without sickness, pleasure without pain, joy without sorrow, laughter without tears, and life without death.

‘God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, . . . I make all things new.... Write: for these words are true and faithful.’ Rev. 21:4,5.

But who can picture the glory of that land? Who can estimate the value of eternal life. Not in man's fondest dreams can he conceive it. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” I Cor. 2: 9. Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's love for His children, and this love will be made manifest in the reward that He waits to lavish upon them in the future life. Only then will we enter fully into the “more abundant life” that Jesus declared He had come to give.

The Bible opens with Eden lost, with the curse resting heavily upon man, who has been cut off from God and is under the sentence of death. It closes with Eden restored, with man fully reinstated

in his lost home and enjoying the honor and blessing of immortality and eternal life.

The Cross Stands Between

Do you ask the question, "What makes the difference," Our answer is: "The cross of Christ." It cost the life of the Son of God to bring sinful man again to his lost home. Christ is "the way" back to God and Paradise. Only through Him can man regain his forfeited "right to the tree of life" that he may eat and live forever. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee -the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." John 17: 3.

Will you come to Him today and be saved? He waits to welcome you to His heart and home. He longs to take from you the filthy garments of sin and clothe you with the white robe of His righteousness. He will wash you in His blood and make, your life as white as the driven snow. Even now His voice is calling you oh, so earnestly-saying, "My son, give Me your heart." He longs to have you with Him throughout eternity.

It was for you that He suffered, bled, and died on Calvary. Some time ago a man was travelling in the great Sahara, and had run out of water. He was famishing with thirst and was upon the verge of utter despair. As he attempted to struggle on a little further in the apparently vain hope of relief, he suddenly noticed by the side of the path a sign which said:

"Ten paces to the East, O Traveler, you will find the treasure of Paradise."

Quickly he took the ten steps, dug into the loose sand, and found clear water. His life was spared.

Just so the treasure of eternal life and heaven is near us, perhaps less than ten paces away. God is not very far from any one of us. In the light of eternity's joys, there is so little to give up. Will you just now take the few necessary steps to enable you to drink of the water of life freely? Christ beckons you to come.

For you He is even now preparing a crown of glory and a home in the City of God. Hear Him as He pleads, "Why Will you die?" It is to you He is speaking. Will you say to Him, "Nay"? Will you harden your heart against His great love? Will you say, "I am ashamed to own Him"? Oh, how can it be! How can we despise God's matchless love! How can we, by refusing to come to Christ, crucify Him afresh and put Him to open shame! How can we neglect His great salvation!

"To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Rev. 2: 7.

Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice oppressed.

I know not, oh, I know not
What holy joys are there;
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

O sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country,
That eager hearts expect!

Jesus in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
Who art with God the Father,
And Spirit ever blest.

BERNARD OF CLUNY

Bible Study Summary