

93. All Things New

What beautiful vision now appeared before the prophet's eyes?

"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." Revelation 21: 1.

Many have the idea that the redeemed are to spend eternity in heaven. But this is not so. While they are to find a temporary, yet withal a wonderful home there during the millennium, pending the renewal of the earth in its Edenic beauty, it is upon this purified and regenerated planet that the kingdom is at last to be set up.

"The heaven, even the heavens," declares the psalmist, "are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men." Psalm 115:16. "The meek," He says again, "shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Psalm 37:11.

Isaiah declared very plainly that God did not create the earth "in vain," but "to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18). And Daniel is equally clear that "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." Daniel 7:27.

In the beginning God set man upon the earth, and gave him dominion over all that He had created and made. And His purpose will not be fully realized until the "first dominion" shall be given back to the regenerated human race upon the earth.

So, out of the fires which will dissolve this "present evil world" (Galatians 1:4; 2 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:12) with all its sin, there will arise, "according to His promise," a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13. Last of all the scenes shown to John was a vision of this wonderful new world.

In referring to the replacement of one "heavens" by another, John is not, of course implying that the dwelling place of God needs renovation, as does the earth. There are actually in descending order, three heavens. The highest or "third heaven" is where God dwells. There is His throne (Revelation 22:1,2) and there Jesus awaits the time when He will enter upon His earthly dominion. (Revelation 12:5; Zechariah 6:13.) In this heaven the saints will dwell while the earth lies desolate (Revelation 20:4), and from thence the New Jerusalem will descend to become the capital of the new earth. (Revelation 21:2.)

This highest heaven John saw many times in vision, and to it the apostle Paul was on one occasion caught up. (2 Corinthians 12:2.) It is indeed deeply concerned in the affairs of the earth, but it is not affected by any of the successive catastrophes here below.

Nearer to our earth are the stellar and planetary heavens in which, in their appointed orbits, revolve countless worlds inhabited by unfallen created, beings. These also follow with deep concern the vicissitudes of our earth, but they also are in no way involved in its disasters.

Lowest of all are the atmospheric heavens. These have been jointly involved with our earth in the events which have befallen it. When the earth is cleansed by fire at the end of the millennium, they will dissolve in the burning heat and pass away "with a great noise." Together with the melted earth they will be renewed after God's own glorious plan.

It is significant that the word used to describe the heavens and the earth which are to rise phoenix-like out of the fires of divine judgment is not *neos*, which means simply "new," but *kainos*, which signifies new in kind and quality. Truly it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend in more than a feeble way the excellence of the coming kingdom of glory, for the earth in its present state provides no adequate basis of comparison.

It will be as real a world as this in which we live, and it will be inhabited by real people. But all the unlovely things which have marred the face of God's creation and the happiness of His creatures will be gone for ever, while its beauties will transcend, beyond the farthest stretch of the imagination, earth's fairest scenes.

The face of the earth will be restored in all its original Eden perfection. There will be no barren deserts or uninhabited jungles and swamps, "for the Lord ... will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord!" Isaiah 51: 3.

The climate of that new world will be universal and eternal spring. There will be no fierce heat or intense cold, nor any hurricanes, earthquakes, or floods to destroy the bounties which renewed nature will bring forth. There will be no cycles of good years and bad, for all the years will be very good. The whole earth will "yield her increase" continually and in abundant measure to meet the needs of all. (Psalm 67: 6.)

The statement that there will be "no more sea" may give some perplexity, for we are told

elsewhere that Christ's "dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth!" Zechariah 9: 10. The difficulty is not, however, in the inspired Word. It arises from the punctuation of the sentence, which is, of course, the responsibility of the translators. The phrase referring to the "sea" should really be linked with those concerning the "heavens" and the "earth," the whole sentence reading, "For the first heaven and the first earth are passed away, and the [former] sea was no more!" In other words, the present heavens and earth and sea will be replaced by a new heavens and a new earth and new seas.

So every trace of the curse which has come upon "the whole creation" will be removed. It will be a time of "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21), material as well as spiritual, and creation's groans and travail (Romans 8: 22) will be turned into a chorus of praise to its Creator, as the regeneration of nature synchronizes with the redemption of mankind.

How completely will life upon the new earth be transformed?

"And 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." Revelation 21:4.

Even more wonderful than the renewal of the physical earth in its Edenic beauty, will be the restoration of life upon the earth to its Edenic peace and joy by the eradication of sin and all its dire consequences.

What sorrow and tears, pain and death have resulted from all the strife and war which have ravaged the earth since Cain turned upon and slew his brother. In the earth made new, Christ will have made all wars to cease unto the end of the earth" and peace will reign supreme. (Psalm 46: 9.)

No conflict or revolution will disturb the tranquillity of that kingdom of peace. Never will its fair fields be drenched with the blood of ruthless carnage, nor its cities desolated by infantry's arms. But, says the prophet, the saints will "dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isaiah 32: 18.

As strife will be replaced by peace in the realm of redeemed humanity, so will it be also in the lower orders of creation. There will be no need of claws, fangs, and stings, nor any other instruments of defense and offence, for there will be no preying of one creature upon another. Nature herself will disarm, and there will be no more war among all her subjects. (Isaiah 11:6-9.) The struggle for existence will be superseded by harmony and mutual service.

Again, what sorrow has resulted from the false of the resources of the earth and the fruits of human toil by the concentration of the wealth of the world in the hands of the few, and the deprivation and privations of the many. Such inequalities will not exist in the new earth, for everyone will have an abundance of all things needful. There will be beautiful homes and happy occupations for all, and leisure to enjoy to the full the new creation of God. (Isaiah 65: 21-21)

Since the divine sentence, "Dying thou shalt die," was passed upon man (Genesis 2: 17, margin), the sicknesses and diseases which have wracked the human frame have probably been a more universal cause of pain and anguish than even the conflicts between man and man and his struggles with the brute creation. Glorious, therefore, is the realization that all the ills to which the flesh is now heir will likewise be banished from the new earth, with every other evidence of the curse.

There will be no need of either physicians or surgeons, for none will say any more, "I am sick." Isaiah 33:24. No epidemics or plagues will strike down the nations of the redeemed, nor will any insidious disease sap health and strength. There will be no crutches for weak and deformed limbs, for there will be no lame in that world. There will be no need of glasses for poor sight, or Braille for blind eyes, for perfect vision will be the possession of all. No hearing aids will be there for all will hear perfectly; nor any sign language, for none will be dumb. (Isaiah 35:5,6; 29:18) The bloom of health will be on every cheek, the freshness and vigor of eternal youth. Death itself will have been abolished, and the life of the new world will have no end.

No wonder the Lord will bid the redeemed: "Be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." Isaiah 65:18. There could not but be joy abounding in the day when suffering issues in sovereignty, and trial in triumph; when rest comes at last from pain and grief, toil and tribulation and death; when the saints emerge fully and finally from the "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:21.

By what will the glory of the new earth be consummated?

"And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as

a bride adorned for her husband. 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." Revelation 21:2,3.

To complete the blessedness of the redeemed, the throne of God will be established in the earth and the open communion which our first parents enjoyed in the days of their innocence will be restored. The redeemed will "see the King in His beauty" (Isaiah 33:17), and the prophecy enshrined in one of the names of Jesus will be fulfilled: "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matthew 1:23. (See also Isaiah 7:14.)

There will be no need of missions in the earth made new. Nor will it be necessary for any to say to another, "Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest." Jeremiah 31:34: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9.

What pronouncement did John hear God make concerning His new creation?

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21:5.

To enlarge upon all the promises which will find their fulfillment in man's future home, would involve quoting a substantial portion of the Bible, for the coming kingdom of God is both the warp and woof of the whole fabric of revelation. Suffice it to say that the participants of the kingdom of glory will be able to say with Joshua and with Solomon: "There hath not failed one word of all His good promises." "All are come to pass, . . . and not one thing hath failed thereof." 1 Kings 8:56; Joshua 23:14.

Who will be privileged to have a part in the earth made new?

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things." Revelation 21:7.

The rewards promised in the letters to the seven churches were in each case to the "overcomers." Here John reaffirms the qualification for entrance into the kingdom of God. "He that overcomes shall inherit all things."

What will be freely available to the redeemed?

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Revelation 21:6.

Not only will "all things" be for the possession of the saints, but they will enjoy them "always" for, partaking freely of the "water of life," they will never die.

What wonderful relationship will obtain between the redeemed and God?

"I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Revelation 21:7.

More precious, however, than all the "things" which the redeemed will everlastingly enjoy, will be the eternal relationship which they will enjoy with the Father.

Who, on the other hand, will be excluded from the kingdom?

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8.

In contrast with the overcomers, John lists those who will have no place in the earth made new. He begins with the "fearful," those who instead of braving the wrath of the dragon will capitulate to it, thinking thereby to "save" their physical lives. Tragic will be their discovery that they have lost what is of infinitely greater worth, the life everlasting.

Then there are the "unbelieving." "Whosoever believes" is promised that he shall "not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:15,16. "He that believes not," however, "is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

The word "abomination" is invariably associated in the Scriptures with idols and idolatry. The "abominable," therefore, are the idolaters of every kind and species, including the worshippers of the last-day idols of the beast and his image. God will cause all idols to "cease," and those who bow down before them will cease with them. Hence, the appeal with which John closes his first epistle: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5: 21.

Those who are not saved by Christ's sacrifice unite themselves with His "murderers" and must partake of their fate. The "whore mongers" are those who associate with the great "harlot" and her daughters. Such obviously can have no part with the true bride, the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 14:4; 17:1,2.) The "sorcerers" are those who traffic in the sorceries of the great apostasy. (Revelation 9:21; 18:23)

The terrible list ends with all "liars." Sin began with a lie (Genesis 3:4) and will culminate in Satan's last "lie." Thus the inhabitants of the earth in the last days will be divided into lovers of "the truth" and lovers of "the lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12. The latter, with the rest of the wicked, will perish in the "lake of fire" which is the "second death."

What assurance was John again given of the truth of these revelations? How fully will God's, purpose be fulfilled?

"And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done." Revelation 21:5, 6.

When the last of the vial angels poured out his final plague, a voice out of the throne declared: "It is done!" This same angel, after showing John the beauties of the new earth now declares by way of anticipation, "It is done!" And we may be sure that the promises of God, as surely as His judgments, will be "yea and amen" in Christ Jesus.

What will Jesus prove Himself to be?

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Revelation 21:6.
In the beginning Jesus was the Creator. Since the entrance of sin He has been man's only Redeemer. He will yet show Himself to be the Re-creator of all things. Time began with Him and He will dominate its end as it merges into eternity.