

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

righteousness.” 2 Peter 3: 12, 13.

“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.”

33. THE HOME OF THE SAVED

The Land of Peace

THE Bible opens with a new heaven and a new earth, perfect from the Creator's hand; with man sinless and having access to the tree of life in the midst of the Eden paradise, out of which flowed a river that spread its life-giving waters through the earth.

The Bible closes with a new heaven and a new earth; with man upright and sinless, having right to the tree of life growing in the midst of Eden; with the river of life flowing out from the garden of God, clear as crystal. Between the two scenes spreads out the panorama of six thousand years of conflict with sin. It is a story of the fall of man, of the loss of his Eden home, of the curse that marred the earth, of sin and sorrow and death overspreading all.

The Restorer

But from the hour when the shadow of sin fell upon the earth, there has been a light shining in the darkness. Amid the ruin that sin had wrought, there appeared the great Restorer. The inspired record gives a word-picture of Jesus taking man's place to win back the lost dominion:

“Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visits him? Thou made him a little lower than the angels; Thou crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Thy hands: Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus.” Hebrews 2: 5-9.

Just where Adam fell and lost his dominion over the earth, we see Jesus, the second Adam, taking man's place and winning back the lost inheritance. That is why the picture of the new earth and man's sinless state depicted in the first two chapters of the Bible is repeated in the last two chapters with even greater fullness of glory. God's original plan and purpose will be carried out, and this earth, renewed, will be the eternal home of sinless men and women, redeemed by grace.

Sin will be found not to have frustrated, but only to have delayed, the purpose of God. And what is six thousand years in working out the divine plan? In our brief span we may divide human history into ancient, medieval, and modern; but in heaven's life a thousand years are but as “a watch in the night;” and these six watches are to heaven but as one night of grief and of loving ministry in rescuing the lost.

It has cost all that heaven had to give. But the infinite Gift was made, and all heaven has wrought at the work. Of the angels it is written, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Hebrews 1: 14.

Bringing Back the Lost Dominion

Of all the worlds that shine in the heavens, declaring the glory of God, this earth is the one that was lost. Its light went out in darkness. It wandered from the fold of God's perfect creation.

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

Then the divine Shepherd came to find it and bring it back. And the angels that rejoiced when they saw this earth created, “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” will again rejoice as the Lord brings back His own, this earth, redeemed from the curse, shining in the bright universe again with the perfection of the glory of God.

Christ not only redeems lost men, but He is to redeem this lost earth. “The Son of man,” He said, “is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:10.

By sinning, man lost not only his righteousness and his life, but his dominion as well. Originally man had dominion “over all the earth.” Genesis 1:26. As the psalmist says, “Thou made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands.” Psalm 8: 6. He was prince and ruler of the earth. But when he yielded to Satan’s temptation, he yielded up that dominion to the enemy, thus placing himself in the power of his foe. Satan thus became the “prince of this world,” exercising the dominion wrested from man.

But through Christ, this dominion is to be restored. The prophet of old said:

“Thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.” Micah 4: 8.

The Hope of the Promise

The promise of the gospel of salvation is the promise not only of life eternal through faith, but of an eternal inheritance in the earth made new, the fulfillment of the Creator’s plan when He made this world to be the home of man. This was the star of hope that shone before Adam and Eve as they stepped forth from Eden into a dying world. It was the promise to Abraham, “the promise, that he should be the heir of the world.” Romans 4:13.

It was not the promise of the world in its present state. For the Lord gave Abraham “none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on.” Acts 7: 5. Abraham himself did not look for the promise to be fulfilled in this sinful earth, but in the earth made new, redeemed from sin. The Scripture says of his hope:

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country: . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:9,10.

It was in the new earth and the New Jerusalem that Abraham, the father of the faithful, expected to receive the eternal inheritance promised to him and to his seed. And there all the faithful will find their inheritance. “If you be Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29.

The psalmist said, “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Psalm 37:11. Christ repeated it: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5.

The New Earth and the New Jerusalem

Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord described the recreation of this earth to be the home of the saved:

“Behold, I create a 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.” Isaiah 65:17-19.

It is not of old Jerusalem that the Prophet is speaking, but of the New Jerusalem, which John saw coming down, with the saints, from God out of heaven. He saw it descending upon the earth at the end of the thousand years, and saw the wicked come forth from their graves to judgment. Then he saw the fires of the last day falling upon the lost, consuming sin and sinners, and purifying the earth itself from every trace of the curse. It is the day of which Peter wrote, “Wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” But he adds, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” 2 Peter 3: 12, 13.

Out from the dissolved elements of the earth and the atmospheric heavens the Creator’s power again calls forth new heavens and a new earth, the old creation cleansed and renewed in the perfection of the original Eden paradise. It is coining; for John saw it in vision. “I saw,” he says, “a new heaven and a

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” Revelation 21:1.

He saw the city which had come down from heaven those mansions that Christ is now gone to prepare—the New Jerusalem, the holy capital of the eternal kingdom of the saints, where Christ's own throne is set.

“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. 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. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” Revelation 21: 3-5.

It passes comprehension; but it is true. And the life of the saved in their eternal inheritance will be just as real as is life upon this present earth. “They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.” The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, said the Lord.” Isaiah 65:21,25.

The whole earth will be as the Eden paradise planted by God in the beginning. And from week to week and from month to month the saved will gather to worship before the glorious throne in the holy city.

“As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, said the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, said the Lord.” Isaiah 66:22,23.

The Glories of the Saints' Eternal Home

As the first two chapters of the Bible tell of earth's original perfection, so the last two chapters constitute one psalm of ecstasy over the indescribable glories of the earth made new, with its city of light, the walls of jasper, the gates of pearl, the river of life flowing from the throne of the Lamb, clear as crystal, with the wide spreading tree of life on either side of the river. And supreme above all, Jesus Himself, “the King in His beauty,” without whom there would be no glory even in that city foursquare; “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

“Oh, heaven without my Savior
Would be no heaven to me;
Dim were the walls of jasper,
Rayless the crystal seal

“He gilds earth's darkest valleys
With light and joy and peace;
Then what must be the radiance
Where sin and death shall cease?”

Next to the loveliness and grace of Christ our Savior, the glories of this world to come have inspired the sweetest hymns of hope for longing hearts. How often has the spirit been lifted above earth's trials as we have sung,

“O that home of the soul! in my visions and dreams
Its bright, jasper walls I can see
Till I fancy but thinly the veil intervenes
Between the fair city and me.

“That unchangeable home is for you and for me,
Where Jesus of Nazareth stands;
The King of all kingdoms forever is He,

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

And He holds our crowns in His hands.

“O how sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain,
With songs on our lips and with harps in our hands,
To meet one another again!

But as it is written, 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.”

Through the ages, the children of the promise have been journeying toward the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they have confessed themselves pilgrims and strangers in this present world. As they have followed the way of righteousness,- oftentimes a thorny path,- it has been with the shining city ever before their vision. As they have fallen in death, it has been with closing eyes fixed upon “that day” when Christ shall come to take His people to the New Jerusalem preparing above.

“The Lamb there in His beauty
Without a veil is seen.
It were a well-spent journey
Though seven deaths lay between.”

Now earth's course is nearly run. It is but a little way to the holy city, where the water of life flows clear as crystal from the midst of the throne. The water of life is really there; for the Lord showed it to the prophet John in vision, that he might tell us that he saw it. “I John saw the holy city,” he says, “and he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” Revelation 21:2; 22:1. Christ invites every one to share the eternal inheritance, giving assurance of His power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He is knocking at the door of every heart, asking admittance, in order that He may take away all sin, and prepare the soul for the heavenly home. And the glories of the holy city invite us to come:

“The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17. “He which testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”