

purpose of the ages. “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:31.

The Bible teaches that Christ’s second appearing will be personal, visible, glorious, and premillennial. False christs may arise, do arise; but no child of God need be deceived; for even Satan himself will be unable to counterfeit or camouflage the glorious majesty of that event. When our Lord appears, no newspaper or radio broadcast will announce His arrival:

“For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matthew 24:27-30.

As the amazed disciples stood upon the crest of Olivet, looking intently upward for the last glimpse of their departing Lord, two shining angels stood at their side to convey the comforting, cheering promise. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11.

He ascended bodily and will return “in like manner”; He was borne upward in a cloud; and of His second coming it is written, “Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.” Revelation 1:7. Angels formed His cloudy escort to heaven; and when He returns in glory, “all the holy angels” are with Him. Matthew 25:31. Nineteen centuries ago He came as a babe in Bethlehem’s manger; He will come again in sovereign majesty.

Christ’s second coming is not at death, as some affirm, for He returns as the Life-giver to abolish death and destroy him who has “the power of death.” That event is not a mere “secret rapture” or an outpouring of the Holy Spirit; for “this same Jesus” returns personally to lead that majestic pageant of the skies.

His coming is not in the darkened rooms of the spiritualist medium; for “if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.” Matthew 24:26. Neither will it occur in the desert, for His appearing is a world-wide spectacle, marking the termination of the gospel age, and the dawning of eternity.

Friends, in this confidence we are not following cunningly devised fables. The coming of Christ is no longer to be considered as a remote or ridiculous impossibility. In this day when man has discovered some of the secrets of radio and radar, of cosmic and atomic energy, why should it be thought incredible that God can raise the dead or transcend the ordinary laws of nature to visit this planet and transport its virtuous citizens to some other part of His universe?

Yet such is the divine plan. This bruised and troubled world needs Jesus, and His return will not long be delayed. In striving for a peaceful, happy world, man has dismally failed. It is time for God to intervene in human affairs. From the chaos and gloom He now points the way out, and this “blessed hope” brings to the Christian fullness of joy and genuine optimism.

“Yes this is our hope, it is built on His word. The glorious appearing of Jesus, our Lord; Of promises all, it stands as the sum: “Behold I come quickly, hold fast till I come.”

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight.” 2 Peter 3:14, A.R.V.

16. Home At Last

Millions of our servicemen have returned from overseas. Others are on the way. But no matter where they go, what they see, or-the experiences through which they pass, there is one insatiable longing in every breast. There is one place to which their minds constantly revert, one spot of which they muse by day and dream by night, one city or town or countryside for which the spirit yearns-it is that dear and precious place called home.

Even in this changing world, with all its perplexities and sorrows, the cottage of a few years’ residence often tugs heavily at the heartstrings. How much -deeper and stronger should be our interest in a home where changes never come! But what about that future estate? Is it real? Is it actual?

In current magazines and over the radio we hear much of “the new world of tomorrow.” Architects, inventors, and scientists tell us of ultramodern homes with conveniences and comforts beyond our fondest expectations. Of agricultural equipment and methods enabling a few men to produce prodigious harvests; of manufacturing devices and processes that will equip mankind with marvelous new tools and

machines. Of transportation facilities capable of speeding passengers to the ends of the earth in but little more than a single day; and of new medical and surgical discoveries that will curb disease and lengthen the life span.

Others vision the elimination of city slums; of higher standards of living for all peoples; of fear, insecurity, and poverty banished from the planet; and of a world family of nations living in friendly and happy accord. A world-renowned publicist suggests that to effect these ideals might require a few million years.

But how may mortals proceed to inaugurate a truly golden age? By what magic or alchemy will they eliminate national jealousies, business rivalries, class struggles, racial friction, and social discords? Friends, the power that can transform human nature is alone to usher in the real Utopia. (Jeremiah 13:23; Ezekiel 36:26-28.)

For authoritative information concerning the future, we turn to the Book of books. In its pages we are assured that the fondest dreams of scientists, industrialists, and sociologists are as nothing when compared with the wondrous surprises God has in store for the inhabitants of this planet. Consider His remarkable promise of the future:

“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.” 1 Corinthians 2:9.

The Inspired Word also reveals that we are approaching the end of the age, that “this present evil world” is soon to be completely renovated, and that a “new earth” with its new citizens and civilization is about to be established. That land, we are assured, is to be pure and beautiful, and the homeland of a just and virtuous people. (2 Peter 3:13.) The Bible also states that “the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth.” Proverbs 11:31. And from the lips of the Master came the promise, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5. Wonderful to contemplate! This old earth that has been so marred by the curse is to become the actual Paradise home of the redeemed.

It will not be a realm of idleness, but of activity with useful labor for tireless hands and enjoyable tasks for flawless artisans. Vineyards and orchards are to be planted and cultivated. Houses will be built, and beautiful parks and woodlands will adorn the countryside. Vast enterprises will be carried forward and the loftiest aspirations attained. (Isaiah 65:17, 21, 22.)

The prophet Isaiah presents a vivid pen picture of the new earth:

“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.” Isaiah 35:1, 2.

The animals of field and forest will be there, but their natures will be entirely transformed.

“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast,” requiring bars and cages; but with changed instincts “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 the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain.” Isaiah 35:9; 11:6-9. Likewise the citizens of that transformed country “dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.” Ezekiel 34:25.

Here we are afflicted with aches and infirmities, with losses and crosses. But in that day the fondest dreams will be more than realized; the anguish and disquietude will all be past; for “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” Isaiah 33:24. “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 an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” Isaiah 35:5,6.

Shall we recognize our friends in that glad tomorrow certainly, for the identity of each will be preserved.

“Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2. The capital of that country will be a city of architectural wonders and “far distances.”

“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.

With vivid imagination picture that celestial city, three hundred and seventy-five miles on a side,

and occupying an area nearly as large as the State of California, or approximately the size of all the New England States, together with New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Consider the enclosing jasper walls “great and high,” fifteen hundred miles in circumference, their twelve foundations “garnished with all manner of precious stones,” the color scheme of which is declared to be more intricate and beautiful than that of the rainbow. View the twelve massive, pearly gates, three on a side, each gate composed of “one pearl.”

Then what delight to walk along those majestic avenues which are paved with “pure gold, as if were transparent glass.” Residents of that metropolis will require no light of candle, torch, electric arc, or neon glow, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Outside the city, however, to gladden the vast areas of the re-created new earth, both sun and moon will shine with increased splendor. (Revelation 21:10-23; Isaiah 30:26.)

Describing the palace grounds, the seer of Patmos wrote:

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:1, 2.

Like a mighty banyan tree with trunks on “either side of the river,” the tree of life from the long-lost Paradise sends forth its spreading branches to arch the tide, and yield its never-failing monthly harvest of twelve manner of luscious fruits.

The years of eternity will continue to bring new wonders to admire, new themes to comprehend, and new vistas to gladden the senses. There all the sorrows of life will be healed and forgotten, its disappointments understood, and its perplexities made plain. We shall then the more clearly understand the ministry of trial, and sense in larger measure the surpassing love that inspired Jesus Christ to make the infinite sacrifice upon Calvary. We shall there see and associate with our Redeemer, and listen with rapt attention as the great Teacher unfolds the romance of creation, the mysteries of the physical world, and the science of redemption that has restored man to sonship with God.

Another vital feature intensifies our interest. This twentieth century, replete with fulfilled prophecy, emphasizes the thrilling fact that we near the time of the anticipated home-going; and the question of supreme personal import is, Will I, will you, be among the welcome guests? The answer is explicit: “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14.

Then follows the affectionate farewell invitation of Scripture, “Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17.

That “whosoever” is an appeal to you and me. Would we live in a postwar world without fear, hunger, poverty, accidents, crime, illness, or death, and where every reasonable desire will be abundantly satisfied? Come. Yes, do not delay; accept the divine, heart-warming invitation today, and make definite arrangements to enter God’s homeland and share in its captivating pleasures, congenial tasks, delightful research, and gratifying associations.