

38. Deliverance at Last

THOSE who love and serve Jesus are soon going to heaven. The day of their final deliverance is just at hand. Man's misrule over God's earth and people is rapidly nearing its end. The time has come for the Prince of Peace to come and take His people to Himself.

Christ's purpose in atoning for the sins of men was that they might be with Him throughout eternity. Eloquently He pleaded with the Father on that fateful night in Gethsemane. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou has given Me, be with Me where I am." John 17: 24. It was the prospect of having this desire fulfilled that led Him to endure the shame and reproach of the cross. It was this that kept Him from turning back, when in the garden, as great drops of blood oozed from His brow, He drained the awful cup of bitterness that had been placed in His hands. With anticipation He looked forward to the time when He would have the privilege of presenting His redeemed people before His Father's throne as trophies of His supreme sacrifice. Then He would see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. See Jude 24 and Isa. 53: 11.

Yes, God's people are going to heaven. The cross of Christ has reopened the gates of Paradise to men. The veil that has separated God from His people for six thousand years is to be removed, and they are once again to be restored to His hearth and home. The flaming sword wielded by the seraphim that have guarded the gates of Paradise since man's expulsion from Eden is to be sheathed, never to be drawn again. Man's period of banishment is to be ended. Only when this is accomplished will the plan of redemption be consummated.

Jesus, Is Coming

When Jesus returns for His people, all the myriads of angels in heaven will accompany Him. (See Matt. 25:31) This is to be the chief event of the ages. John the revelator declared that there would be "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour". Seven days literal time—because the entire family of God in heaven will be on a tour to the earth to bring back the members of the family that have so long been isolated in an enemy's land. See Rev. 8: 1.

When the righteous dead come forth from the graves at the call of the Life-giver, it will be the angels of God who will gather them together.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 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." Matt. 24: 30, 31.

The Gathering of the Saved

What a gathering that will be! Our first parents, who were expelled from Eden, but saved by God's grace, will be there. Abraham, Noah, Job, David, and the apostles of Jesus will be there. Men and women of great stature from the early ages of earth's history will be there. The poor thief who received forgiveness as he hung with Jesus on the cross will be there.

Like the stars for multitude, shall they come from the north and the south and from the east and the west. Every tribe and nation of earth will be represented. For in all nations some have been found who were willing to accept God's great salvation. At that time all earth's artificial distinctions will fall away. Jews and Gentiles will be as one people. The slave and his former master will be on an equal footing. The rich will no longer have an advantage over the poor, for they will have all become one in Christ Jesus. These people, gathered from the four corners of the earth, constitute God's nation. They are the sons and daughters of God, and they will be bound together so closely by the cords of Christ's love that there will be perfect accord and unity among them. They are one people, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ... which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God." See I Peter 2: 9, 10.

Think of a company of untold millions of people, all of whom are upright, honest, and good—not a liar, thief, murderer, or drunkard among them. True, many there are who in the past were guilty of these sins, but they were saved from them through the grace of God. They are the overcomers. They, like Paul, have fought a good fight of faith—and have become victorious through the power of Christ. Now they are accounted righteous and are able to take their places among the redeemed host. They are fit to dwell even with angels, yea, to live in the very presence of God and His Son. And they are now going home! They are about to leave behind them all earth's sorrows, perplexities, and cares

and go to dwell in Immanuel's land. The breach that sin has made, and which separated men from God, is removed; and the saved will spend an eternity basking in the sunlight of His presence.

In Immanuel's land they will not be serfs, but kings and priests. Their former humiliation, which resulted from sin, is changed into marvelous exaltation; for they are to be higher than the angels who have never fallen into sin. Jesus, their Savior and King, is also their Elder Brother. He is of the same race as they, for He took upon Him the seed of Abraham. He recognizes these twice-born men and women from the earth, who have been saved through His sacrificial death, as constituting His nation. They will be dearer to the heart of God through eternity than any of the untold myriads of created beings who have never experienced the bondage of sin; for those whom the Lord forgives most, He loves most.

The Procession of the Ages

The greatest pageantry of all time will be witnessed when Christ leads this triumphant company of the sons of God from earth to heaven. The rapture of the saints is not to be secret. Far from it! God will make of this event the most wonderful demonstration of His power and glory that has ever been seen. Christ, who leads the mighty procession, will be clothed in His majestic robes and will be revealed in all His glory. As King of kings, and Lord of lords, He will ride forth at the head of His army. "His eyes" will be "as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.... And His countenance" will be "as the sun shines in his strength." (Rev. 1: 1416.) "A fire shall devour before Him," declares the psalmist, "and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him." Ps. 50: 3.

The saints, too, will have been glorified; and their countenances will reflect the glory of God, whose image has been restored in them. Their bodies, which were "sown in disolution" when they entered the grave, have been "raised in glory." Clothed in robes of light, they will present to the entire universe a demonstration of the transforming power of Christ the Lord; and they will be acclaimed God's sons, in whom He is well pleased.

For this crowning event of the ages, the entire universe has long been looking and waiting. In anticipation of this experience, the Apostle Paul exclaimed: "Why, what we now suffer I count as nothing in comparison with the glory which is soon to be manifested in us. For all creation, gazing eagerly as if with outstretched neck, is waiting and longing to see the manifestation of the sons of God." Rom. 8: 18, 19, Weymouth.

As the redeemed host wing their way past planets and worlds, where the curse of sin has never come, they will be the objects of the admiration and wonder of their unfallen inhabitants. But they cannot tarry; for they are on their way to the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. There a royal welcome awaits them.

The Gates Open

As they approach the gates of this city of wonders, the dwelling place of the mighty God, the voice of Jesus rings out over the multitude as He calls to His attendant angels, "Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." Isa. 26:2. At this command the gates of solid pearl swing ajar upon their glittering hinges; and Jesus bids His people enter, saying, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25: 34.

As the saints enter the city of God, they are escorted to the sea of glass, which is like crystal, and which is situated immediately before the throne of God. Here they take their stand in preparation for the most thrilling moment in their experience. They are to be presented to the Father. Jesus introduces them with the words, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me." Isa. 8: 18.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." "And one of the elders answered saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knows. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light oil them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:9,13-17.