

Know Your Bible

throughout the ages of eternity, never again to be broken by death. All the faculties of the human mind will be developed, the capacity for knowledge being constantly enlarged. No enterprise will be too great to be carried forward to completion. There will be no aspirations which cannot be reached. There will be no ambition which cannot be realized. The companions of the saved will be the angels of God and the sinless intelligences of the other worlds.

The millennium is not another opportunity to accept a rejected Savior. Men are not raised from their graves to be converted. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27. The resurrection is followed by reward or punishment, according to the deeds done in life.

Where will you spend that thousand years? If you have accepted Jesus Christ, followed His word, and prepared your life so that you can meet Him in peace, you will be among the redeemed who will reign with Him. You will pass from this world of sin to that city, of which Jesus promised: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3.

The controversy of the ages between good and evil will be forever ended. The plan of redemption, which centered in the life and death of Jesus Christ, has been completed, and "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isaiah 53:11.

Will you accept the gift of eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior and advocate? In the judgment His blood shall cover every confessed sin. Then you shall stand ready to meet Jesus Christ and spend the millennium in the mansions He has prepared.

Every man is privileged to choose between life and death, and his choice now will determine his destiny during the most momentous thousand years the earth has ever known. If you have not prepared for the millennium, it is time that you make your calling and election sure. For "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Hebrews 2:3.

06. IS THERE A HEAVEN?

A BEAUTIFUL earth came from the hands of its Maker. It was glorious to behold; everywhere was seen the handiwork of God, revealing His wondrous love toward all His creatures. The stately trees and the lovely flowers adorned the hills and the rolling plains. All things testified to the love of the Infinite One.

In creating this world, God purposed that it should be inhabited by a race of sinless beings who would love and serve Him. Affection craves affection in return, and the Lord placed man in the Eden home that he might love and obey his Creator in return for the wondrous love manifested toward him. "Thus said the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." Isaiah 45:18. "God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Genesis 1:28. It was the Creator's purpose that the earth should be filled with human beings who would obey their Maker through love. Willing obedience would ever keep them in perfect harmony with Him; thus only could they enjoy to the full the home prepared for them.

But a change came. Through disobedience the floodgates of sin were opened, and a veritable tidal wave of sorrow and death swept over the world. After their transgression, Adam and Eve could no longer remain in the home prepared for them. They were out of harmony with its peace and beauty. The earth itself was cursed because of man's transgression. No part has been exempt, and no race has been immune to the ravages of sin.

Could we look back through time, we should behold its terrible results all along the way. There have been oppression and war, calamity and destruction, sickness and sorrow, since sin first entered the world. Everywhere hearts have been crushed with grief as death has snatched away loved ones. Tears of sorrow have been shed, and vain have been the words of man to comfort the sorrowing ones. One after another of the human family has been touched by the hand of death, until this old earth has become a vast burying ground. Yes, "the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Romans 8:22.

God loved His children in spite of their transgression. He knew they were powerless to save themselves and would go down to eternal destruction unless divine love saved them. What could be done? Ah, the plan of redemption had been made, whereby man, through repentance, could be brought back to God; but the cost was no thing less than the blood of Christ, the Son of God. Neither silver nor gold nor even the life of an angel of heaven could pay the price of man's redemption. "For God so loved the world,

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that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16. Christ took upon Himself our human nature and died the death that was rightfully ours. The penalty was laid upon Him; He suffered that we might be made free: "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

It was a willing sacrifice that Christ made. The Father freely gave His Son, because He loved us; and Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." Titus 2:14. Thus love paid the price to save a rebel race; as it is written: "God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5: 8. And well may we exclaim: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3: 1.

Not only was the plan laid to bring men back to their Edenic state, but this plan also included the redemption of the earth—the reclamation of all that was lost through sin. The curse pronounced upon the earth will be removed. All sin will be wiped away. We now see the whole creation groaning and suffering under the curse. All nature is distorted from the original blueprint; but the plan of redemption includes its restoration. God gave the promise: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Numbers 14:21. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65: 17.

Not only is the whole creation groaning under the curse of sin, waiting "for the manifestation of the sons of God," but we, who are the children of God, "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Romans 8: 19, 23. We, too, are waiting, hoping, longing, "until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:14. Though the curse is now resting heavily upon the earth and though sorrow and death may be our lot, yet, through faith in the promises of God, we may say with the apostle Peter: "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

Long indeed has been the reign of sin, and terrible have been the results of its dominance in the earth. But a better day is coming. Sin shall not always reign, and death shall not always rule. This world will be renovated and purified by fire. It will be cleansed by that fervent heat in which the elements will melt and be dissolved. 2 Peter 3: 10, 11. It will be reclaimed from captivity and sin, to fulfill the original purpose of its Maker. Yes, the earth will be restored to its first estate, as glorious as it was when it came from the hands of its Maker.

In the new earth the conditions of life will be different from the conditions known to us here. A perfect environment free from all destructive elements—storms, earthquakes, pestilences—is the only thinkable condition in that new world. In that home it must be that the passing years will not bring senility. There will be no breakdown of the body, no diseases, no loss of our mental faculties. For this great change in our bodies and in our environment we wait, the apostle Paul says, traveling in pain with the whole creation. Romans 8:22.

But again our minds inquire, What will be our social relations in that perfect social order? In this life we have the family, the blood kin, the friends, the neighbors, the community, the nation, the great world of humanity, not to mention the most significant of all, the Christian brotherhood. These relations are dear to our hearts. What will they be in the "life everlasting"?

We cannot forget that all these relationships are undergirded by that supreme, God-given gift, love. That invisible but mighty force is supreme in the spiritual realm; it binds the husband and wife to each other, and unites the hearts of parents and children. Will this precious love tie, made vital and real in the very blood stream of our lives, cease? Will it be destroyed? Is not every gift of God essentially eternal? In some form it must live on, preserved and fused into the living atmosphere of our eternal home.

The wonderful love of husband and wife, of parents, of children, beautiful and infinitely precious as it is in the present life, will not be annihilated; it will be merged into that perfect love which is the very life of heaven itself. All the saved will be one family, with one God and Father; and in that perfected kingdom of God every saint will be to every other saint a perfect member of that redeemed family, the eternal brotherhood. In that perfect society there will be no cliques, no factions.

Once again we inquire, What interests will occupy the saints in heaven? What will be their occupation? Will our eternal home be a condition of mere rest and peace and quiet? Will it be fruition alone? Will all effort cease? It was the poet Browning who imagined himself offered the gift of continuous life with good health and good mental powers, with everything he asked for day by day with no effort, no work. Imagine such a listless, static earth or heaven. It surely would be a total perversion of God's nature, a flat contradiction of the fundamental law of the universe and of our own being.

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Dr. William R. Harper, the founder and the first president of the University of Chicago, on his deathbed prayed: "May there be for me a life beyond this life; and in that life may there be work to do, tasks to accomplish. If in any way a soul has been injured or a friend hurt, may the harm be overcome if that is possible." Is not that a fair picture of every normal soul as it faces the great change we call death? God's universe is not silent and static; it is, like God Himself, living and dynamic. And the life we are to live in that eternal home must be progressively richer, deeper, and fuller.

What tongue can describe the glory of that blessed home? What brush can paint, what pen can picture, the supernal beauty of the city whose builder and maker is God? By faith we view the Promised Land described in Holy Writ. By faith we see the tree of life in the midst of the city, with its branches bearing twelve manner of fruits and yielding its fruit every month. Revelation 22:2. No fading flower nor mark of decay will be seen in all that fair land, for it is written: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places!" "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isaiah 32:18; 33:24.

"They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and cat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat." "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 fading 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. . . . 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." Isaiah 65:21, 22; 11:6-9.

No sad messages announcing that a member of the family has been taken away by the hand of death will ever flash over the wires. There will be no funeral train leading the way to the silent place of rest. There will be no tears, for all cause for tears will have passed away. Well may we turn our eyes away from the sin-cursed earth with its pain and woe and by faith behold the fields of living green, which shall never know blight nor decay. By faith we may see the river of life "clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Revelation 22: 1. "As it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Would we be there? Then we must be willing to follow the teachings of Jesus here and now. We must obey His commands. Remember, it was disobedience that drove our first parents from their Eden home. Would we enter Eden restored? Then must we be willing to obey. Would we enter through the gates into the city of God? Then we must be willing to keep the commandments of God, for it is written: "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. Would we join that holy throng in the earth reclaimed? Then we must put away all sin from our lives, for only the redeemed will enter there. "There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:27. The question rings from heaven: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?" And the answer is given: "He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Psalm 24:14.

The reclamation is complete. The purpose of God is met. The entire universe is clean. If we are faithful, we shall be able to join in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb before the throne of God. Our voices will mingle with that celestial choir in their songs of praise to the Lamb. Yes, we must be there!

Jesus is coming again, and it will be a glorious day for the children of God. Here, they are scattered from one end of the earth to the other. We shall meet again, no more to part. When He comes He will send forth His angels to gather together His children and take them home to the place He has gone to prepare. During all the past ages, since the death of Abel, one after another of His children has been laid to rest in the grave. There they rest from their labors, but the Lord watches over them. He knows where they are, and in the resurrection morning He will call them forth from their dusty beds. Some have been sleeping for many years, others for only a short time. But they will all come forth, clothed with immortality. The angels will be sent to gather them together from every place and carry them to the city of God. The night of sorrow will then be ended, and the eternal day of peace will be ushered in. Then we shall be at home in Eden restored. Nevermore will fear, strife, and uncertainty trouble the redeemed who enter the kingdom. We must be there!