

THIS MIGHTY HOUR

the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.” [Revelation 16:18] At this the cities of the nations will fall and the overthrow of the wicked be completed. “And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried.” [Jeremiah 25:33]

Towards this day of judgment, the glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of the wicked, and the translation of God’s righteous remnant, the world is hastening in this mighty hour. What part shall we play in this most terrible, this grandest pageant of all time?

26. THE GLORIOUS TOMORROW

So vast will be the changes effected by Christ’s return that one almost hesitates to look beyond. Everything will be different then. Indeed, the Scriptures indicate that for a thousand years thereafter the world will lie desolate, without human inhabitant, while the redeemed taste the glories of God’s dwelling in the heavens. [Revelation 21:1-4]

Then, after a thousand years have elapsed, the earth will be cleansed by fire, and all traces of sin’s reign removed. [2 Peter 3:10] In those fierce flames, that will cause the elements to “melt with fervent heat,” all that may then remain of our vaunted civilization will also be consumed. Overgrown foundations of once famous cities, moss covered ruins of deserted cathedrals, rubble that was once king’s palaces, government buildings, universities, banks, and museums, twisted girders of collapsed skyscrapers, broken bridges, rusty machinery, derelict liners, abandoned railway trains, moldering airplanes—all will vanish for ever in that mighty conflagration.

Then from the ashes of that colossal funeral pyre, at the fiat of the Almighty, there will emerge a new and far more beautiful earth. The Apostle John saw the transformation that will then take place, describing his vision in the following exquisite language:

“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. 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. 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.” [Revelation 21:1-5]

THE TEARLESS LAND

Like a chime of silver bells the promise of that eternal day rings on our ears. No sorrow, no pain, no worry, no heartaches, only happiness without end! All the sadness of the past blotted out by joy abounding. No fears for the present, no anxiety for the future, only peace unbroken through eternal years. No sin to weaken, no age to cripple, no disease to spoil, only glorious, radiant youth for ever and ever.

“And God shall wipe away all tears.” With infinite tenderness He will remove from all His people every cause for crying, and none will ever weep again. They will have no unhappy memories, no more disappointments, no more partings, no more saying good-bye. As William Cullen Bryant says in his beautiful poem, “The Flood of Years”

“Beyond That belt of darkness, still the years roll on more gently, but with not less mighty sweep. They gather up again and softly bear All the sweet lives that late were overwhelmed And lost to sight, all that in them was good, Noble, and truly great, and worthy of love. As its smooth eddies curl along their way. They bring old friends together; hands are clasped In joy unspeakable; the mother’s arms Again are folded round the child she loved And lost. Old sorrows are forgotten now, Or but remembered to make sweet the hour That overpays them; wounded hearts that bled Or broke are healed for ever. In the room Of this grief-shadowed present, there shall be A Present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw The heart, and never shall a tender tie Be broken.”

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GOD'S SURPRISES

“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] Indeed the half has never been told of the innumerable joys of the home He is preparing for His people. No one has imagined a tithe of its glories, nor of the endless variety of interests and delights that will unfold unceasingly through the ages to come.

The earth itself will be altogether changed. Dreary deserts and great wastes of water will have disappeared. The whole globe will return to Edenic fertility. “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]

There will be no divisions and dissension then, no writhing of restless races, no mutterings of war, or rumblings of revolution, for all men will be at peace with one another, abundantly satisfied with the overflowing goodness of God. The very desire for strife will have been purged away, with every root of bitterness. Says the prophet Zephaniah: “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.” [Zephaniah 3:9]

HEAVEN ON EARTH

It will indeed be heaven upon earth at last, for the principles of heaven will be enshrined in the heart of every inhabitant. By beholding, all will have become changed into the similitude of Jesus. Their lives will bear in rich profusion the fruit of the Holy Spirit. “Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” will mark every action.

Contentment will pervade every heart. Unholy ambitions, greed, envy, and jealousy, will be unknown. There will never be anything to be sorry about, no unkind words to recall, no wounds to heal. Love will reign eternally in every heart. “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” [Zephaniah 3:13]

Even the animals will be at peace, and the life of the weakest will never be in danger. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, said the Lord.” [Isaiah 65:25]

Everybody will enjoy abounding health. There will be no hospitals there. Our good doctors and dentists, surgeons and nurses, so indispensable here, will happily find fresh occupation in the earth made new. For “there shall be no more pain,” and “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” [Isaiah 33:24] There will be no cripples in that glorious realm, no deaf or dumb, no blinded soldiers of the cross: for “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]

No slums will disfigure that happy land. Indeed, the New Jerusalem itself will be a garden city. No one there will be poor or under-nourished. Starvation, famine, and hunger will be unknown. There will always be plenty of food for everybody. Never will there be need to worry about the provisions of the morrow. God will care for all that. Says the Apostle John: “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 [literally “service”] of the nations.” [Revelation 22:2]

The city itself, he adds, will appear as one dazzling jewel, “like unto a stone most precious clear as crystal.” [Revelation 21:11]

NEVER-FADING HAPPINESS

Summing up the glories of that eternal home, and addressing it in exquisite language, the Lord through the prophet Isaiah says: “I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.”

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[Isaiah 60:15-21]

It seems too good to be true. But it is true. God has it in His plan to provide for His people just such a home as this. And it will be a real home; let there be no doubt about that. It will not be some ethereal realm where disembodied spirits roam. It will be a real home for real people whose bodies will be as tangible as was the resurrected body of their Lord. Their dwellings will be as substantial as resurrected men shall need. Their employment will be definite and lasting. Stressing the reality of the earth made new, the prophet Isaiah said: "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. And Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." [Isaiah 65:21-23]

THE SUPREME JOY

But far transcending every other joy of the redeemed will be the presence among them of their Savior. Nothing in the glory land will compare with the spiritual ecstasy of direct and constant communion with Him. Golden streets, pearly gates, beautiful homes, exquisite scenery, would indeed be of little value without this priceless privilege.

"Oh, heaven without my Savior would be no heaven to me; Dim were the walls of jasper, Rayless the crystal sea." But Jesus will be there, "and they shall see His face." [Revelation 22:4] King of the undivided earth, and beloved of all His people, He will "lead them unto living fountains of waters," [Revelation 7:17] opening their minds to an ever fuller understanding of God's purposes, studying with them the mysteries of the universe, acquainting them more and more with the illimitable heights and depths of the wisdom and love of God.

It is a glorious prospect, a prize worth striving for, and one that all may share. For "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]

NOT FAR AWAY

Turning from this delight some vision to view again the distress in the world around us, its sorrows and tragedies, its conflicts and confusion, its wretchedness and misery, we cannot but wish that this wondrous heavenly home might soon be ours. Too long has sin reigned, blighting the earth and spoiling the lives of men. Too long have the wicked spread themselves as a green bay-tree. Too long have the powers of darkness wrought ruin in the earth. It is high time there was a change. Yea, "it is time, O Lord, for Thee to work." [Psalm 119:126]

Yet this change, so desperately needed, so often described by God's prophets, so long desired by His people, depends upon and awaits the return of Jesus in glory. It can come no other way. Without His advent all is lost. Unless He returns there is no hope for humanity. Well may we pray:

"O Prince of peace, who once did rise In splendid triumph to the skies, Before the rapt disciples' eyes, O come, Lord Jesus, quickly come! For Thy appearance all things pray, All nature sighs at Thy delay, Thy people cry, 'No longer stay' O come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!

"Hear Thou, the whole creation's groan, The war-swept nations' plaintive moan. The lands made deserts all forlorn; O come, Lord Jesus, quickly come! See signals of distress unfurled By states on stormy billows hurled; Thou Polestar of a shipwrecked world, O come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!

"Come with Thy beauteous diadem; Come with embattled cherubim, Come with the shout of seraphim. O come, Lord Jesus, quickly come! Come on Thy seat of radiant cloud; Come with the Archangel's trumpet loud; Come, Savior, let the heavens be bowed. O come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!"

Not long have we to wait now for this prayer to be answered. Though no man knows the day nor the hour of His appearing, [Mark 13:32] yet the stupendous happenings of these stirring times tell us plainly that He is near, even at the doors."

THE HOUR STRIKING

Ezekiel, addressing the inhabitants of the doomed city of Jerusalem, sent them this stirring

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message: “The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!” [Ezekiel 7:5,6]

Thus the events of this mighty hour are striking at every soul on earth today, warning of approaching judgment, telling the way of escape. “Flee from the wrath to come!” they cry, “Prepare to meet thy God!” “Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord’s anger come upon you. Seek you the Lord, all you meek of the earth which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.” [Zephaniah 2:2,3]

How shall we respond to this warning and pleading of the Lord? He wants to save us from the perils He knows are coming upon the earth. He longs to bestow upon us eternal life and take us to “ the glorious home He is preparing for His redeemed. Shall we not yield our hearts to Him now? Before it is for ever too late, shall we not each one say, “Jesus, my Lord, I come!” If we do, we shall be repaid a hundred fold both in this life, and in the life to come. To all who surrender their lives to Him, and take up His cross, determined by His grace to keep His commandments, to reveal His character, and nobly champion His cause of truth in this crisis hour, He whispers this comforting assurance. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed. For I am thy God: I will strengthen thee. Yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” [Isaiah 41:10]

And upon their ears, in the day of His appearing, will fall the words of His gracious welcome: “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” [Matthew 25:34].