

The End and the Beginning

“In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the Lord and Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’

“He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks . . . Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.

“Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, and no-one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken. All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

Micah 4 vv 1-5: New International Version

The Great White Throne

The millennium, and the history of the old world, ends with the defeat of Satan and his impending judgement, together with all those who have followed him since the beginning of creation. But the millennial blessings do not end with the release of Satan and impending judgements of the unbelievers. Jesus does not cease to reign over the nations of the world. Men and women do not cease to live their lives of disobedience and dissolution.

There are innumerable professing Christians whose lives are taken up with paying off a twenty-five year mortgage, “*saving up for a rainy day*”, paying up life annuity insurance, seeking a three-bedroom house in an up-market neighbourhood, near a superior school for their two or three children, two cars, and three television sets. Their “*Christian*” life has consisted of attending a church for an hour on Sunday mornings, listening to thirty minutes of mildly uplifting moralising from an ecclesiastically approved preacher, while thinking about what’s for lunch and the afternoon’s activities.

In heaven the scene of final judgement is being prepared with thrones being set and occupied with those who had been given authority to judge due to their close walk with God in the past. The heavens are rolled back like the raising of a theatre curtain, the limitations of earth are also rolled back, and a *Great White Throne* is revealed with the Presence of God arrayed in awesome splendour and judgement. Massed before the Throne are the dead unbelievers of all time, and all classes, waiting to hear their fate from the Judge of all Creation. The final resurrections of the believing saints have taken place, and now that of the unbelieving sinners to face what they have evaded throughout their lifetimes—accountability to their Creator.

The heavenly books of judgement are opened; the “*Book of God’s Remembrance*”, and the “*Book of Life*”. The former contains every instance of disobedience, defiance, and disinterest on the part of unbelievers since time began; and the latter contains every instance of pretence, hypocrisy, and secret pride. There is not a thought, an act, a wrong, a word, but is both evaluated in the sight

and presence of God, and final judgement passed.

“The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name is not found written in the book of life he was thrown into the lake of fire.”¹⁰⁴

Their life activities might be claimed as sinless as a monk’s in the monastery, or the nun’s in a nunnery, but if there is any unclean thought without the cleansing process of regenerated lives through faith in Christ Jesus the judgement is condemnation and *“they shall be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages”*.

The Bride and the Bridegroom

At last the sinful world is purged and Creation has been delivered from its creature-inspired taint to be as pristine as God ever intended to be before Satan’s intervention. Now the animal creation can live in amity with the human creation, and both can live in concord with the stellar universe and angelic hosts. The Apostle John sees *“a new heaven and new earth; for the first heaven and first earth are gone, and there is no more division of seas”*.

A myth has been allowed to grow since the Middle Ages that the world will be utterly destroyed, and a vague *“eternalism”* of streets of gold, harps and endless singing take its place. There is not a single verse in the Bible to justify this concept. Those passages which speak of the earth and heavens passing away do not mean extermination or cessation of existence; not even Peter’s words *“the heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire”*, which means dissolution to give place in transition from one state to another. Daniel prophesied that it would be an everlasting kingdom which will stand forever, and Paul said that Abraham and his righteous seed will inherit the earth forever. As the millennial righteous now live forever so does the earth they inherit.

Then John saw, *“. . . the city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the Throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is*

¹⁰⁴ Revelation 20: 12-15

*with humankind, and he will live with them, they will be his people and God himself will be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’.*¹⁰⁵(my emphasis)

The literal city of Babylon was portrayed as a Woman, a religious *Mother of Harlots* condemned to everlasting shame and destruction; the new literal Jerusalem is also likened to a Woman, but of eternal blessings, without anything impure, shameful or deceitful. The *City/Bride* is of pure gold, and without any institutional or ecclesiastical temple “*for the Lord God and the Lamb is its temple.*”

This is the fulfilment of what is known as the Lord’s Prayer: “*Thy kingdom come . . . Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” . . . ” This is the fulfilment of Abraham’s expectation when “*he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . .*” This is the fulfilment of the Lord’s words in the Jerusalem temple in his lifetime: “*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again*”. This is the fulfilment of the Apostle Paul’s vision of “*the new Jerusalem that is above is free . . . Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*” This is the fulfilment of God’s promise to Israel that she would be “*his wife*”, and to the Gentiles that they would be “*his inheritance*”.

An angel announces the city as “*the Bride, the Lamb’s wife*”, not because of the physical materials it describes, but because of the spiritual believers who inhabit it. They are the living embodiment of God’s love and workmanship, created from the dust of the earth to a transfigured inheritance of glory and beauty as a fit Bride for his Son, the “*Sacrificial Lamb*” of both *Old* and *New Testament* history, who wooed and won the Bride by his own sacrificial blood.

The “*New Jerusalem*” is said by Ezekiel metaphorically to be 1,500 miles long, wide and high, that is, it is perfectly equipped to rule in both earth and heaven. It is filled with the unobstructed light, glory and splendour of God as He has revealed himself from the beginning of Creation, and which was the means of the Apostle Paul’s dramatic conversion. This is the “*Paradise*” to which Paul was taken and which was beyond his powers to describe. This is the Paradise of every Overcoming believer married eternally to Jesus as Lord. This is the place which Jesus went to prepare for his

¹⁰⁴ Revelation 21:1-4

followers, and which he described as *"in my Father's house there are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you . . ."*

And it Jesus himself who signs off on the truth of the visions of the *Apocalypse*:

"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give everyone according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last . . . If any one shall take away from the words of this book, if any man shall add to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in the book."

To the one who believes in the life and words of Jesus, and who lives in the anticipation of all that has been revealed in the *Apocalypse*, there is promise of a life eternally with him. There are 30,101 verses in the *New Testament* and one out of every twenty-five is concerned with the second coming of the Lord Jesus. From beginning to end of the *Apocalypse*, despite the unveiling of the catastrophic events leading to the end of the old world, the focus is either on or related to the imminent appearance and validation of Jesus as Lord of Lords.

It is to them the words of Scripture are directed: *"Men and women are destined to die once, and after death face judgement . . . and unto those who earnestly look for him shall he appear the second time . . ."* To those who have given up every earthly ambition in the expectation of his second coming his promise is, *"Behold, I come quickly"*. My response, and the response of every believer who loves him and awaits the consummation of the *Apocalypse*, is *"Even so come, Lord Jesus"*.

EPILOGUE

God's Fools

*"Let me stand with the conquered
Who assayed a greater thing
Than sane men can imagine
Or pious hearts believe. Some love of Death
Seized all their being and hurl'd them against the World;
And mocking all intelligence they fell.*

*Such full abandonment possessed their spirit
That they contemned all prizes ever Man won
All works accomplisht, lives by men achieved.
And vied with the Creator to make Death
Impossibly the glory of all the glories.*

*Were they in love with Failure from the first
Because there is no new thing in Success
For praise to the high gods? Nor reckoned once
If there be flaws in failure, or if tears
Should o'er their broken bodies be expended.*

*The Holy Master of men found naught in prowess,
And so was lowly - and little to rejoice in
Among the reputable, so He poured
On reprobates His molten gold of friendship
And wooed the Crucifixion heaven adores.*

*Oh, what tame worship could such a Rebel brook!
Claims He not some defiance for his meed
Of things held fixt and legal and secured,
Passionate avowals that none else dare approve,
And hearts that cannot deign to be victorious?"¹⁰⁵*

W.H.Hamilton

¹⁰⁵ From Anthology of Scots Poems, published by J.M. Dent and Sons, UK