

God's Way Out

"For Us and For Our Little Ones"

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

Ezra 8:21.

Lesson 23. When the Great Way-Maker Comes

Perhaps you have often wondered if the world will continue to go on as at present forever. Will peace ever come to stay? Will sickness ever disappear? Is eternal youth possible? This chapter tells startling good news.

TILL He come. And Jesus will come again, have no doubt about that! He promised His disciples He would return, and He will keep His word. "I go to prepare a place for you," He said to them. "And 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." [1]

This promise the angels repeated to the disciples as they stood watching their Lord mount up to heaven on that memorable ascension day. "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," they declared. [2] Yes, it will be "this same Jesus," friend of sinners, healer of the sick, helper of mothers, lover of children, companion of men in the ordinary walks of life, our Elder Brother, He will come from heaven, again.

The Early Church Remembered It

How this promise cheered the early disciples! "Behold, He comes with clouds," rejoiced John, who had watched the cloud receive Him out of their sight. [3] "You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven," said Paul to the believers on the mountain-girt shores of Greece, the men of Thessalonica. [4] "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is," John assured the early Christians. [5] What a glad, glad event this is to be! It is the most spectacular piece in the restoration of man's lost glory. It will bring restoration of physical strength and beauty. Restitution of health and immunity from death.

Heaven received Jesus into its courts on that now far-off day of ascension, "until the times of restitution of all things." [6] All things that were lost when sin entered the Garden of Eden are soon to be restored through Jesus. For the "times of restitution" are now right upon us. The first act in the restoration of that Eden kingdom is to restore God's image in the hearts of men. "Behold, the kingdom of

God is within you," [7] Jesus proclaimed. The kingdom of God in the heart will bring the kingdom of God on earth in His appointed time.

This restoration of God's image in the heart is to take place before Christ comes again. Thank God, it is taking place in thousands of human hearts now. Thousands of ordinary men and women have been forgiven all sin and have received the nature of Jesus Christ into their hearts. But all the universe is looking forward to that glad day when Jesus shall appear in the clouds. He who was born "King of the Jews," shall come as "King of kings and Lord of lords." He will end the reign of sin, and will restore the body to its Eden strength and beauty.

David the psalmist saw that day in vision, and cried: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. "Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." [8]

Patriarchs Longed for the Time

This has been the great hope of the people of God in every age since man left the Garden of Eden. Adam himself looked forward to the time when Christ, the offspring of Eve, should "crush the serpent's head." Enoch, in the evil days before the Flood, saw this coming of Christ in prophetic vision. "Behold!" he said, "the Lord comes with ten thousands of His holy ones." [9] Of Abraham, the noble and unselfish man of faith, it is declared, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." [10] Moses, for this hope, turned his back on the shouting applause of Pharaoh's soldiers, and the royal throne of mighty Egypt with its treasures, "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." [11] He might have become king of Egypt himself; he could have dwelt among the music of its pillared palaces, courted and flattered by princes and princesses, priests and kings. But the glorious vision of Christ's coming kingdom faded out these worldly hopes as the glory of the rising sun fades out the stars.

The patriarch Job voiced this glad hope when he sat in his sickness and misery and pain. "I know that my Redeemer lives," he declared. "And that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." [12]

David Sang of It

Over and over, this vision of Christ's coming was granted to the psalmist, who declared: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour

before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heaven from above, and to the earth. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." [13]

And what solemn yet gracious words Isaiah the prophet spoke: "The Lord God will come. His reward is with Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." [14]

"He will swallow up death in victory; and will wipe away tears from off all faces."

"Thy dead men shall live," Isaiah declared; "together with my dead body shall they arise." [15]

There Would Be Signs When It Was Near

Nebuchadnezzar's dream showed forth the approach of the time of the coming of the King: "In the days of these kings [the final ten kings of Revelation 17] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." [16] And to Daniel himself, as we have seen, it was shown that the "roll" would be made up after 1844. Then the Papacy would again speak great words, but "the kingdom shall be given to the saints of the Most High."

Jesus Himself said very simply and clearly, "I will come again." He explained that first there would be given signs to show that His coming was near. But, "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." [17]

"What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" asked the disciples. Jesus replied: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." [18] That time has almost come. It is even at the door. In almost every country on earth the gospel message has been preached. Jesus will come again and that right soon.

In Almost Every Country They Are Expecting It

The black and brown men of Africa have listened to this message. "Jesus soon will come!" they repeat. Then men of India and Burma and Malaya, they have heard it, too. Solemnly they say, "Jesus is coming soon." You can hear the message spoken on the Yellow River's banks and in the towns on the Yangtse-Kiang now. It has stirred the hearts of dusky Indians of Bolivia and Peru; it has been echoed by Indians of the wide Amazon and the deserts of New Mexico.

Up in Alaska and down in Tierra del Fuego, in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and Japan; in every country in Europe, and in every state and province of North America, oh, yes, the gospel is being preached in almost all the world for a witness now. Jesus is coming right soon. Let us be ready for Him. Sad would it be if we or our loved ones were on the enemy's side in that day.

But When He Comes

Yes, soon He will come! While men are engaged in war and battle, while other men are working to alleviate the suffering of the world, while the mother performs the loving duties of the home, while others, careless of the future, are trampling God's commandments under foot, Jesus will come again. False science may declare it impossible, false preachers may deride the idea, persecution may arise for those who proclaim God's truth, but Jesus is coming again.

How blest that hour, Lord Jesus! "He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him."

He "shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." [19]

Yes, one day we shall look upward and see the firmament filled with the radiant army of the angels of heaven, Jesus with all the glorious heavenly host. It will be the most solemn and majestic sight this old earth has seen since its creation. But when that great day comes, we will hear those notes of music, louder and louder swelling, as the cloud in the sky draws nearer! Sweeter and more majestic than mortal ears have ever yet heard, all in divine harmony.

Hear the thunder roll and roll and roll again as the Lord draws near the earth. That radiant host of celestial beings! This is the mighty host of heaven. The sky seems full to overflowing. What glorious harmony of song! What heavenly music! What purity and strength in those dazzling radiant forms!

See the radiant splendor of the Leader of this heavenly army! God-like in His dazzling glory--yet strangely like the Man of Galilee whom we have loved to know. It is He! It is "this same Jesus," whom the disciples saw ascend up to heaven. It is the same Jesus who lived in Nazareth as a carpenter's boy. It is He whose gentle voice stanchd the tears of the mourners, and brought new health and hope to the sick and dying.

To Him, His angels gather all those who have imbibed His own loving helpful nature. But those who have rejected His loving entreaties call now in anguish of spirit for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them. They are destroyed by the brightness of His appearing. In flaming fire the Lord takes vengeance on the cruel,

the lying, the adulterous, the evil men who have rejected Him and brought misery on their fellows. Vengeance falls upon all those who have forgotten God. Let none deceive themselves, every unforgiven sin shall be punished!

“Before Him shall be gathered all nations.” Wicked, cruel rulers will be there, together with wise and kindly kings and queens. Unjust magistrates and incorruptible judges will be present. Ruthless and arrogant captains and mighty men will stand by the side of the chivalrous and noble-hearted. All shall be gathered before Him with the nations they have been leading. And “He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.”

Solemn and fearful indeed is God's retribution on those who have despised His grace and chosen the service of His enemy. But oh! what gladness He has in store for those who, in all ages, have accepted His great gift and have been loyal to Him in the simple duties of life!

Even the Dead Hear His Voice

“Gather My saints together,” He commands His angels. And with a voice that shakes the earth He calls: “Awake, you dead! Arise! Arise!” Oh, the widow of Nain has heard that command before. The sisters of Lazarus have heard that call to the dead. The heart of ruler Jairus has leaped before at the sound of that command. And, lo, they come! The dead are coming up through the crumbling, cracking earth at that command. From the dust of the Libyan desert, from the snows of the frozen North, they come!

The great sea tosses, and, behold! Its believing dead arise at the command of the Lord Jesus. A shout of joy goes up from the angels. A mighty chorus of shouts of joy is heard from the redeemed. These great deeps shall yield up the Christian heroes sleeping there.

A Glad, Glad Gathering

At the command of Jesus, angels gather together His redeemed from the four corners of the earth. How the risen ones shall rejoice as the angels clasp their hands and hasten them to their loved ones! Babes are restored to their mothers' arms. Joyful task! Task greatly to be coveted. How our tender mothers and sympathizing wives would love it! “Let me help in this, Lord Jesus,” you can hear them urging. “Oh, let me help the angels restore the loved ones to the bereaved.”

But how changed are all these who are raised from the dead! How changed are the living righteous, too! How noble and strong! How beautiful they are! What

triumphant songs come from their lips! What heavenly music! At the sound of the trumpet call, the living children of God "shall all be changed." [20] They will not become vaporous, nebulous beings - no! But the body which has been subject to disease and death is suddenly made immune from sickness, and made "non-dying." It is infused with life, youth, power, beauty, and music, as it was in Eden. The glow of perfect health lights every face. For this is the Second Act in the restoration of all things.

What a Transformation!

Now the garment of light is restored. Now "the righteous shine forth as the sun," [21] "as the brightness of the firmament," "as the stars, for ever and ever." And Jesus? He sees with joy the fruit of His toil and suffering. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." [22]

Thus at Christ's coming is completed the second great change, the long-sought change of the human body. But the third great change, the change of the earth, is not yet. Now the great Victor and Life-giver leads His people up to heaven, the Father's house, for His great triumph-day.

The wicked perish by the sword of the Lord--the breath of His mouth. Desolate and uninhabited, save by the devil and his angels, our earth shall lie in ruins for a thousand years.

Then shall come the Third Act of the great drama, when the earth itself shall be restored.

REFERENCES:

1. John 14:2, 3.
2. Acts 1:11.
3. Revelation 1:7.
4. 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10.
5. 1 John 3:2.
6. Acts 3:21.
7. Luke 17:21.
8. Psalm 96:11-13.
9. Jude 1:14 (Compare Matthew 25:31)
10. Hebrews 11:10.
11. Hebrews 11:26.
12. Job 19:25, 26.
13. Psalm 50:3-5.
14. Isaiah 40:10, 11.
15. Isaiah 26:19.
16. Daniel 2:44.
17. Matthew 24:30.
18. Matthew 24:14.
19. Matthew 25:31.
20. 1 Corinthians 15:51.
21. Matthew 13:43.
22. Isaiah 53:11.