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The things which will announce, accompany and follow the return of Christ

No 10. "The End of the Old, the Beginning of the New"

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful, Revelation 21:5.

This is the final chapter in this brief study of some aspects of the events that will take place at the end of this age and usher in the everlasting state of joy and bliss for the blood-washed children of God.

It is our privilege, as believers, to possess a knowledge of how all things pertaining to this present world will end. It is a most desirable knowledge as is indicated by man's interest in every form of sooth-saying and prediction of the future. However, men refuse God's revelation of the future. This is because it reveals the doom of the wicked and the triumph of God and His people. The spirit that was in Ahab keeps men from the prophecies of the Bible. "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," 1 Kings 22:8. How men hate the truth of God and those who proclaim it and own it as true!

Such a knowledge is revealed for our encouragement and comfort —VICTORY IS ASSURED TO THOSE WHO TRUST IN CHRIST AS THEIR SAVIOUR.

What a difference this knowledge will make between the believer and the non-believer as the time of Christ's return draws near and the signs of the approach of that glorious day become ever more apparent. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh," Luke 21:25-28.

The prophecies of the last things are intended as a warning that nothing contrary to God will prosper. What God has purposed will surely come to pass. That will be seen in His actions against the Antichrist and His crushing of him in the land of Israel. "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isaiah 14:25-27. The immutability of God's purpose will be further demonstrated in the desolation of the land of Babylon, a witness to all throughout the Millennial reign of Christ. "Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant," Jeremiah 51:28-37.

But the prophecies of the end times are also given to us that we might testify to a dying world as Jonah did to Nineveh.

We have considered the Millennial reign of Christ and the blessedness of the earth during that time. But at the end of the 1000 years, there occurs an upsurge of sin again.



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I. THE FINAL REBELLION

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them," Revelation 20:7-9.

Please note what we may plainly learn from these verses :—

1. Imprisonment has not changed the devil. He has learned nothing of God's infinite power and wisdom. The same pride that initiated his rebellion in Heaven is at work within his being, driving him onward in defiance of God. He is unchanged by a thousand years in the bottomless pit under God's imprisonment. He was unable to break free of the divine restraint. He had to submit to it and yet, fool of all fools, he thinks himself still able to overthrow God and His eternal regime and mount God's throne and rule in His stead!

Is this not the same spirit that was seen a thousand years earlier when the judgments of God were upon the earth just prior to Christ's return? "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds," Revelation 16:8-11.

PRIDE

Pride blinds the eye and the mind to truth and reality in both sinner and devil. It presents a scene that is no more than a mirage, an invented notion of personal greatness and ability that is no more real than the drug-addict's stupor and daze and induced visions.

Just think! At the time of the events which we are considering, the devil has had before him the record of the defeat of his champion, Antichrist, and yet he has defied God.

He has had the humiliating experience of his one thousand-year imprisonment from which he could not break free. But still he rebels in the vain hope of victory!

He can read the Word of God as well as any of us. He has seen the very verses we are considering now. Furthermore, he has read how he will act when he is released after the thousand years. He has read how his rebellious folly will terminate and yet he will press ahead to his doom!

How incorrigible is Satan!

2. Privileges have not changed sinners. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles," Zechariah 14:16-19.

At the end of the Millennial reign there will be those amongst the nations of the earth who have not submitted in heart to Christ, though they have refrained from open defiance, since that would have brought punishment and retribution, as the above quotation from Zechariah shows. And yet, when Satan is permitted to unfurl his banner of rebellion after his release from the bottomless pit, there will be those ready to rally to it. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea," Revelation 20:7-8.

Surely there is a lesson for us today. The same spirit that crucified Christ and which is still abroad today, will motivate sinners in that future day. Despite all that has happened, no lesson has been learned. "Ye men of



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Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts 2:22, 23. Despite the signs of God's approval of Christ, wicked unbelieving men still crucified Him 2000 years ago. Away in the future, that same spirit will move wicked men to foolishly, hopelessly defy God again.

It is the same spirit that motivates you today. You have an abundance of evidences of the truth of Christ and the authenticity of His claims. You have the history of the last 2000 years to call upon for proof. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen," John 21:25. That which has proved sufficient for countless millions has been available to you but still you question and doubt and defy! How incorrigible are you who act with the same folly, as did they who defied the gospel call to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus in His day, and in the same frame of heart and soul as will those who will assemble around the banner of the devil in that future day of men's last futile defiance of God!

3. How readily the sinner follows evil. There is an immediate response to the devil's call, irrespective of the universal display of God's power and the folly of rebellion. I refer you to a previous chapter where we gave some details of the mercies of God that will be put on display during the 1000-year reign of Christ. (No 8. "The firstfruits of Christ's reign on earth"). The Millennial reign will be a time of unprecedented gospel preaching and revival. It will be a time of unparalleled peace and joy. Physical life will be enjoyed without many of the miseries that the curse of sin and Satan brought upon mankind. The very climate of the earth will be akin to that which prevailed before the fall. The earth will be as the Garden of Eden. "For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody," Isaiah 51:3.

And yet, men will muster around Satan in recalcitrant defiance of God.
Oh the gullibility, the utter folly of the sinner!

4. This last rebellion is short-lived. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," Revelation 20:7-10.

The length of time between the release of Satan and the utter damnation of him and his fellow-rebels cannot be long. It is most certainly weeks or months rather than years.

There is no more patient forbearance or tolerance! There is no more restraining of wrath! The days of "waiting" spoken of by Peter in his first epistle, chapter 3, verse 20 are over. "The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing," but it waits no more. God now acts swiftly and all rebellion is finally and eternally put down under the fire of God's wrath.

Dear sinner, so will your rebellion end, though presently God does bear patiently with you, if you do not listen to the warning of the gospel and call upon God for mercy while you have the opportunity. This is the day when "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," Acts 2:21. But it will not last forever!

II. THE FULL AND FINAL FIERY JUDGMENT

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every



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man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And 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," Revelation 20:11-21:1.

Please note that the final judgment, the judgment of the wicked and the passing away of the old creation and the bringing in of the new heavens and the new earth, is the last event before the beginning of the eternal age. Consider:

1. The passing away of the present creation. Peter tells us that "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men," 2 Peter 3:7. This is what we have before us in Revelation 20:11-21:1. The time for change has come. "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Hebrews 1:10-12. This is the event about which Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." These words are the favourite text of those who deny the Word of God regarding the Millennial reign of Christ. It is claimed that the day of the Lord will bring an instant burning up of the earth and all its works and therefore there is no place for a 1000-year period according to this verse.

MISINTERPRET

But this is to misread and misunderstand what Peter says. The "Day of the Lord" is a prolonged period. It is not a 24-hour day any more than was "the day of temptation in the wilderness," Psalm 95:8, a 24-hour day. We are told in the verse 10 of that Psalm that that day lasted 40 years! "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Again, the Saviour used the term "hour" for a period which very obviously was much longer than sixty minutes. "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness," Luke 22:53.

It is not uncommon for terms which in other contexts refer to a very specific period of time to be employed when referring to a period much longer than the term normally refers to. Consider Isaiah 34:8. "For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." Here the Lord employs two measurements for this one period of time, a "day" and also a "year"!

The "Day of the Lord" is an example of the usage of such a term. It is a period of time which begins at the moment of the Saviour's return to this earth and which encompasses such a wonderful variety of events that clearly indicate that it lasts much longer than 24 hours.

Please consider the things which the Lord says will take place in the "Day of the Lord" as recorded in such passages as we have in Isaiah 34:8 and onwards; Joel 3:14 ff; Zephaniah 2:2 ff; Zechariah 14:1 ff.

So then, Peter says the "Day of the Lord" is a period "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

The events which Peter is referring to as taking place "in the Day of the Lord" do indeed take place within that day. They are the closing events of that day!

2. Sinners will suffer 'fiery indignation'. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," Revelation 20:13-15. Fire has ever symbolised God's judgment. Here is the eternal fate of the sinner.

Please notice the definition of "the dead." They are those whose name was "not found written in the book of life." I believe that this book is the record of the names of those who are God's elect, those upon whom He set His love from all eternity and whom He determined to save through the mediatorial work of His Son,



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the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider these two verses. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Revelation 13:8. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is," Revelation 17:8.

There is a people who have obtained life, even the life of Christ the Lamb of God. He came, as He Himself said: "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," John 10:10.

The very heart of the gospel is that which sets forth the means by which sinners obtain eternal life. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day," John 6:53-54.

Those who have not feasted upon Christ through believing the gospel have no life and are destined to stand as the "dead" before the Great White Throne and from there suffer the judgment of eternal death in the Lake of Fire.

3. Justice will be dispensed that day by God. Every man was judged according to his works, verse 13.

Those who embrace the gospel repudiate all hope in their own works as the means of salvation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast," Ephesians 2:8-9.

On the other hand, those who reject the gospel do so because they believe that they can obtain salvation by their own works. "I think that I am good enough" is the embodiment of the gospel-rejector's claim.

It is most just, therefore, that they are judged according to the works on which they have built their hope. But as the Saviour warned, such works are but a foundation of sand. "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it," Matthew 7:26-27.

At the judgment of God, the works of their hand will be found imperfect, flawed and as useless for the redeeming of the soul as was Cain's sacrifice of the fruit of the ground.

On that awful day, sinners will learn the truth of Paul's great declaration: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," Galatians 2:16.

May you, dear sinner, learn that truth in the day of mercy and not in the day of wrath.

III. THE EVERLASTING ABODE OF THE REDEEMED

Finally, having considered the everlasting abode of the damned now let us consider the glorious eternal abode of the saved.

Creation has been purged and renewed by the fire of God. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind," Isaiah 65:17. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain," Isaiah 66:22. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Peter 3:13. "And 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. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful," Revelation 21:1-5. This glorious and marvellous act is as easy as the changing of a garment for our Almighty God! "Of old hast



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thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Psalm 102:25-27.

As we periodically discard garments and don new apparel, so it will be at the time of this final change.

It is in these "new heavens and new earth" that eternal bliss will be fully and finally entered upon by God's redeemed elect.

1. The characteristics of the old world are gone. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away 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," Rev 21:1, 4.

Here are the four marks of this present sinful world — Death, Sorrow, Crying, Pain. Virtually every news story we read is centred upon such tragic ingredients. It is the daily lot of mankind. It stems from Adam's fall into sin. It is the legacy he passed on to all of his offspring. We enter this world with tears and our exit is marked in like manner. Christian service has ever been as Paul describes it in Acts 20:19: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations."

But all such earthly grief is ended in the new heavens and the new earth, the home prepared for us by our blessed Saviour. The saved can look forward to a dwelling place wherein none of these things will be found.

2. The hand of God lies behind it all. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Christians owe every mercy and kindness to the gracious hand of God. The hand by which the heavens and the earth were created and sustained is the same almighty hand which will wipe away forever the tears of the saints of God. It was this hand which guided and comforted and at times chastened and reproved us which will administer this final mercy - wiping away all our tears. What a gentle picture is here presented!

Dear Christian, you who presently weep under a heavy burden, look up and look away to that day for it shall certainly come.

3. It is an earth without seas. The seashore has ever been a symbol of separation. How many farewells have been uttered there? How many final embraces? There are no farewells or partings in heaven. We shall be forever with the Lord in the company of all the redeemed.

The sea has also been a symbol of sin. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isaiah 57:20. But in that blessed place "wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Peter 3:13, there is no more sin.

Indeed, in a marvellous way, I believe that the very memory of sin will cease, at least as a source of distress and troubling. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind," Isaiah 65:17. The Old has gone forever and the New will be established forever.

4. The longing of the saints of all ages will be satisfied. "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," Revelation 21:2-3. Here are the many mansions, promised by the Saviour. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:2-3.

Here is the place, the city, which Abraham of old longed for and believed he would see. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Hebrews 11:8-10.

Dear Christian, do we too not long and look for this same city? Let us, like Abraham, sojourn here and wait with patience for the manifestation of this city, "for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," Hebrews 13:14.



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5. The final reference to the lost. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death," Revelation 21:8. What misery is here denoted! What an eternity stretches before the lost!

Is there not mercy manifested here that the Lord should yet again present the sinner with a plain warning of the consequences of his sin? The book of the Revelation closes with a final invitation to partake of life through Christ just before its final Amen. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Revelation 22:17. As we conclude our study, let me emphasise that its purpose has been not just informing and encouraging the people of God by seeking to show what the Scriptures tell us the future holds for the redeemed, but also to warn the sinful and the negligent of what eternity holds for them, should they die without Christ. Escape, dear reader, to Christ and His blood lest you have your part in that "lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."