"All Things New"

"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

HOW NATURAL FOR US TO like to have things 'new'—to have new things. But alas, how soon they become old! True are the words, "Change and decay in all around I see," as we view and apply them to the works of fallen man.

How different will be the case when the promise of our text is fulfilled. Speaking of God's 'new things,' Isaiah, in chapter 66:22, says, they "shall remain before me, saith the LORD."

What then is the significance of this newness as promised by God? In our present experience and order of things, newness does not always indicate perfection, but our Heavenly Father is the Creator and Maker of new and perfect works; nothing less, or short of this, can be attributed to him. It is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:3,4: "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God, . . . his work is perfect: for all his ways are . . . just and right."

A RENEWING

We should also notice that our text does not say, "Behold I make all NEW THINGS," for that is not God's intention. The process of renewing, as

concerns mankind in particular, is by resurrection; and, of course, this implies preexistence. So we learn from the Scriptures that the whole race of Adam, condemned through his transgression, will, if they render the required obedience to their Redeemer in the judgment day, experience a renewing of body and mind, which shall fit them for their perfect earthly home.—Acts 17:31

How good it is to know that, unlike the promises of fallen men, God's promises are sure! (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; I Kings 8:36) What assurance these scriptures give us that every promise of God will be fulfilled!

SYMBOLIC HEAVENS AND EARTH

The things to be made new, according to our text, all come within the scope of the "new heavens" and the "new earth." (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:1; see also II Pet. 3:13) Here we must be careful to distinguish between the literal and symbolical application of these expressions. The heavens in these scriptures clearly do not refer to God's dwelling place or throne; nor does the earth refer to this terrestrial planet, which is to abide forever, and eventually is to be made glorious.—Eccles. 1:4; Isa. 60:13; 66:1

We should understand the heavens and earth of Revelation twenty-one and II Peter three to apply in a symbolical sense to the rulers or governments of the present arrangement, and the society over which they rule. This is the sense in which they are referred to in Isaiah 1:2,10 and Psalm 96:11. By considering present conditions in the world, we shall appreciate more clearly the need for the establishment of the new heavens and earth. If we could see at close view the conditions prevailing over the

whole earth—the state of humanity spread out before us—what a deplorable, terrible picture it would present, with its turmoil, vice, unrest, distress, pain, sorrow, and death!

THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS

As we travel about in our small circles we see abundant evidence of the result of the rule of the present heavens, whose prince and chief ruler is Satan. (Eph. 2:2) All the depravity, wickedness, and injustice with which mankind is afflicted are traceable to the great Adversary, the "god of this world," and are perpetuated by those in authority, who have been largely influenced and blinded by him. (II Cor. 4:4; John 14:30) The Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:22, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"—a very apt description of earth's inhabitants, especially at this end of the age in which we are living.

What a contrast this is to the new earth conditions described by the Apostle John in Revelation 21:4, where he declares that "God shall wipe away all tears . . . ; 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." This will be the grand result when he [Christ] shall have put down [overthrown and destroyed] all opposing rule and authority, including both sin and death. (I Cor. 15:24-26) The Prophet Isaiah gives a very remarkable but true picture of the new earth society in chapter 65:17-25.

MANKIND LEARNS RIGHTEOUSNESS

The same prophet says in chapter 26:9, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the

world will learn righteousness." It will be only those who do learn righteousness, by willing obedience to the requirements of earth's new king, which will reap the benefit and blessings, and eventually become sharers in the new earth. (Acts. 3:19-23) The Scriptures reveal that it will require the whole of the thousand-year reign of Christ to complete the new earth 'wherein dwelleth righteousness.' It will be composed of resurrected members of Adam's race, who will have been individually regenerated by the "age-lasting Father" [Christ Jesus] and individually made new [perfect].—Isa. 9:6,7; Ezek. 36:25-28

A NEW COVENANT

How will this great work of renewing the earth be accomplished? We are not given in the Bible all the details concerning this immense work, but we are provided with much information, which helps us to some extent. We learn from the Scriptures that the new earth conditions will come into existence by means of the operation of the New Covenant which will be made with the house of Israel and Judah; and the blessings of the New Covenant will become available to whomsoever will of all the families of the earth. This covenant is described by the Prophet Jeremiah. (chap. 31:31-34) When that covenant has accomplished its purpose, Isaiah the prophet tells us that nothing [that has hitherto been a curse] shall "hurt nor destroy in all my [God's] holy mountain [kingdom]." (Isa. 65:25) A still fuller prophetic description of the blessed and enduring condition of the new earth is to be found in Psalm 145.

Having considered the wondrous prospect of the new earth, what does the Bible teach concerning

the new heavens? As mentioned earlier, the present heavens, or ruling powers, are made up of the 'god of this world,' the Adversary, together with those who have come under his power and influence. So the new heavens will consist of our glorified Lord Jesus, upon whose shoulders the government of the earth will rest (Isa. 9:6); and, also, the Scriptures tell us that those of his disciples who having faithfully followed his example of obedience to the Father's will, even unto death, will be granted joint-heirship with him in his reign and rule.—Rev. 3:21; Rev. 20:6; Rom. 8:17

As the original curse pronounced upon Adam has been perpetrated through the rule of the Adversary, Satan, the usurper of the present old heavens, so the blessings of life promised under the New Covenant will be realized through the righteous rule and power of the new heavens. This authority and power to rule and bless is the distinguishing feature of the new heavens.

How aptly the relationship of the literal heavens and earth illustrates this principle! We all know that our planet and everything upon it depends absolutely upon the influence and power of the solar system for its very life and existence. But, we may inquire, how are these future heavens, consisting of Christ and his followers, to be made new? They will be made new in the sense that perfect Divine beings will be in control of earth's affairs.

THE PRINCE OF SALVATION

In Hebrews 2:9,10, we are told that our blessed Lord Jesus was crowned with the glory and honor of perfect manhood for the purpose of suffering

and death as man's Redeemer, and also that to become the captain [or Prince, leader] of our salvation he was to be made perfect through suffering. (See also Heb. 5:8,9) The preparation of Jesus as the Sun of Righteousness in the new heavens is described prophetically by Isaiah in chapter 11:1-5.

It was after this great and important work of perfecting him that Jesus declared "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18) How glad we are to know in these perilous days this claim is still true! We know from God's Word that our glorified Master is even now King of kings and Lord of lords, seated at the Father's right hand of authority and power.—Ps. 110:1; Phil. 2:8-11

This, then, is the explanation as to our Lord's being made perfect. What is the process by which those who have been invited to become his joint-heirs in these new heavens are made perfect? We who have been thus favored know only too well—and the Scriptures repeatedly admonish—that we must be renewed, transformed. Paul, in II Corinthians 5:17, says that being in Christ, the Anointed, constitutes us New Creatures.—See also Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 12:2

A WORK OF TRANSFORMATION

Our Lord never needed to put off the works of evil, as we have to do, for he was never contaminated by the weakness with which we and all men are beset; but he, by virtue of his sacrifice and High Priest's work on our behalf, has made it possible for us, by faith, to put off the old disposition, and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. If, then, we would seek for a place in the new heavens, it is of the

utmost importance that this process of being made new is accomplished in our lives. This great work of transformation is only possible through the power of God's Holy Spirit working in us as the apostle indicates. "We all beholding the glory of the Lord in a face unveiled, are transformed into the same likeness, from glory to glory, as from the Lord, the Spirit." (II Cor. 3:18, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) All such changed ones will receive the "new name" (Rev. 3:12) and be able to sing the "new song," which only the little flock can sing.—Rev. 14:3

A NEW SOCIETY

When these new heavens are complete, then will come the time for the establishment of the new earth society. But before this great event, the present heavens and earth, the present evil order, must be removed as is described by the Apostle Peter in II Peter 3:7-14. The evidence of the fulfillment of this prophecy is to be seen all around us in this our day: the dire distress of nations, bitterness, animosity and strife, social unrest, and contentions of race and religion are all indications that we are indeed in the Day of the Lord, during which he is shaking all nations in preparation for the kingdom of righteousness which shall abide forever.—Heb. 12:26-29

The Prophet Joel also refers to this same time of trouble to precede the new day, and his descriptions of the signs which are to accompany this great distress of nations are very remarkable and significant.—Joel 2:30

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!"—II Pet. 3:11 ■