

Lecture 10 — The Eternal State.

Rev. 20, Rev. 21: 1-8.

Behold the Bridegroom!

Ten lectures on the second coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

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Third Edition. Ninth Thousand. 1895.

For the last two Lord's Day evenings, we have been looking at the testimony of Scripture, as to the nature, and character, of the thousand years, of which the 20th chapter of Revelation speaks particularly. I need not, therefore, detain you with many remarks about it, because, what is before us this evening, is that which is subsequent to the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus. That He will reign for a thousand years, has been conclusively proved from the Word of God, and here in the scripture before us (4th ver.), we find three distinct companies, that lived, and reigned, with Christ, for one thousand years. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (ver. 5). The first resurrection, which includes Christ, and all that are His, is pre-millennial. It is marked off, by its own peculiarities, from the moment when "the rest of the dead" again live. This solemn event is not here called the second resurrection, because the separate taking out of the wicked, from their graves, for judgment, and the lake of fire, the Spirit of God would not, in this connection, call, by that blessed word, resurrection. He calls it the second death. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (verses 5, 6).

We have been looking at this blessed period, as given in Scripture, and we have seen the earth renewed, and blessed, under the sway of Jesus, and heaven, joining with earth, in owning, and praising Him. And now the Spirit of God carries us to the time, subsequent to this blessed millennial reign. "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison" (ver. 7). The thought in the minds of many is, that if the millennium came in, then, of course, everything would be fixed, and settled for ever. But not so. There is a period, fixed and limited, during which the blessed Son of Man, will have His mediatorial reign over the earth, but it comes to a close, for a reason which I shall show you presently, and now when it is ended, the first thing we find is this, that Satan is loosed out of his prison.

I understand, from this chapter, perfectly well, why the book of Revelation is so little read. I think I see clearly, why, even Christians, so little give themselves, to the study of this wonderful book. They often say, Oh, it is very difficult, and so full of figurative language, that we cannot comprehend its meaning. But that is not the reason. Do you think the devil likes that

you, and I, should ponder, carefully, a book, that speaks, first of all, of himself and his angels, being cast out of heaven (Rev. 12: 9), and then of his being cast, solitary, into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20: 1-3), and then, finally, hurled into the lake of fire (Rev. 20: 10)? Do you think the devil likes, that you and I should be occupied with his three-fold fall, till, at length, he finds himself the most miserable wretch in creation, for such, indeed, he will be, as, in eternity, he reviews the sorrow he has wrought through pride, terminating in endless shame? Nay, nay, you would not put into the hands of a man, a book that told of your downfall. You would put it at the back of the fire if you could. But there is yet another reason. "This is the book that brings out the final issues of all things, and the book, that shows, what is to be the end of the pathway of that lowly, self-humbled, blessed One, whom the world refused. This book shows His final exaltation, and glory, His reign over a Satan-delivered earth, for a thousand years, and then His dealing finally, and definitively, with the great adversary of man. Little wonder that Satan has persuaded Christians, that the book of Revelation, is a book that had better not be opened. It is remarkable, however, that in the first chapter, as well as in the last (Rev. 1: 3, Rev. 22: 6, 7, 10, 18, 19), God speaks of the blessing connected with reading, and keeping the sayings, of this book, so I fervently commend it to your attention, henceforth.

We now see, then, that Satan is "loosed a little season" (verses 3-7). He at once resumes his old tactics, the practice of which, for six thousand years, has rendered him an adept, and, for the last time, he goes 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." The reign of Jesus has been marked by peace, plenty, and prosperity, and all, outwardly, have owned the Lord, but not every heart really, for we saw, on a previous occasion, in Psalm 18: 44, and Psalm 66: 3, that "the sons of the stranger shall lie." While the manifest glory of Christ is irradiating the earth, they are quiet. So long as Satan — the prime mover of all evil — is off the scene, men are apparently not prompted to disobey, but, at this point, it would seem, that the Lord retires from the earth, veils His glory again, for a moment, and Satan is let loose. And what does he find? Alas! Gog and Magog, ready to his hand, and he will "gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

These hosts must not be confounded with the Gog and Magog, of Ezekiel 38 and 39, the old historic enemy of Israel — the Assyrian. They appear, and fall before the millennium, whereas, what is given us here, is post-millennial. Those premillennial hordes came only from Russia, and contiguous Eastern countries, but here, they come from "the four quarters of the earth." Satan brings from east, west, north, and south, against Palestine, all that are opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He easily manages again to "deceive the nations." It is his old business. He was a deceiver from the beginning, and he carries his character right on to the close (verses 3, 8, 10). This is the last trial of man, a needed trial, because the natural heart had not been tested, where all spoke of Christ; and present blessing — long life on the earth — was the part of those, who owned a visible, glorious Christ. To have been unfaithful to Him then, meant to be cut off (Isa. 65: 20). There was nothing to tempt them. But, alas, not even having seen Christ, basked in the sunshine of His glory, and enjoyed the fruits thereof, can secure the heart of man — mere, natural man. He is not to be depended on, and falls as soon as tempted. God they could not finally enjoy in that state, as proved by the ready way they fall into Satan's hands. It is the final effort of man, led on by Satan, to get rid of God from His own earth. This concludes man's history in responsibility. His last act is rebellion, even as his first (Gen. 3: 11).

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (ver. 9). The saints spoken of here are clearly the millennial saints, those who had been on earth, in the enjoyment of the love of the Saviour, through that thousand years. Attacked by the enemy, they are, apparently, left to be surrounded by their foe. They are tested, not only by seduction, but by violence — Satan's two great weapons with man. Had the Lord appeared visibly, Gog and Magog would, doubtless, not have come up, but the thoroughness of the trial, proves the faithfulness of the saints, who refuse Satan's seductions. The attack of the foe is once more upon the land, from which the eye of the Lord has never been withdrawn. Against that land the enemy goes up, determined, if possible, once more to sweep away the testimony to God, and His Son. Jehovah has been universally worshipped, and owned, and Jerusalem, "the beloved city," has been the very metropolis of the new earth, according to Isaiah 65: 17, 18. The enemy comes up against the metropolis, and we read, "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." The last open revolt of man upon earth, in time, is judged, by God, in the most solemn way possible. Fire from heaven devours them. What an excessively solemn thing!

Nothing, even on the new earth, but being converted to God will do for man. Not even a thousand years of displayed glory, prosperity, peace, and blessedness, under the reign of Jesus, will touch his heart, and, at the end of the thousand years, if the Lord retire, and Satan reappear, what material does the enemy find, of which to compose his hosts? It is only too true, that find, or put man, where you will, unless he be the subject of absolute grace, there is nothing in his heart but downright opposition to God. Affecting thought, opposition to God! Yes, my friends, opposition to God. If you are not a converted man, you are opposed to God. Till God, in His grace, converted me, over thirty years ago, I was opposed to Him. If you had then told me that plain, solemn, truth, in an unvarnished style, I have no doubt I should have been angry, but the truth would have been the same. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8: 7), and, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4: 4). One sees here the end of it all, that unless grace has really touched the heart, what it is, in its hidden springs, is sure to be made apparent, as in this final, and unsurpassingly solemn, exhibition of enmity against God.

But the patience of God is exhausted, and fire — always the figure, in Scripture, of God's judgment — comes down from heaven, and destroys Gog, and Magog. Thus they perish, but for their leader, untouched by this divine judgment, is reserved a worse fate, for "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and of brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (ver. 10). Thus God describes the final disposal, and overthrow, of His, and man's adversary. I know that pretty flights of fancy, about Satan's rule in hell, have been indulged in, and we have heard the phrase, "Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven," but do you think he really reigns in hell? I believe, that if there be one being, more miserable than another, in the lake of fire, for all eternity, Satan is that one. Therefore I say to you, most affectionately, do not, as you value your being, as you value eternity, as you value your immortal, precious soul, be his companion. There is only one way in which you can ensure not being his companion — it is by being the companion of Christ. If you are going to be the companion of Christ, in eternal glory, you must know the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in your earthly pathway. Whether you are a converted person yet I do not know. If you never have been, let me beseech you to turn to the Lord now. Bow to the Saviour now, because the day is coming, when you must bow to that blessed One. Here God describes

the end of the one, who has deceived man from first to last, — he is "tormented day and night for ever." The fate of his companions is no better. Do not then, I beseech you, be his companion.

Now the Spirit of God carries us beyond the limits of time. Every earthly enemy of God has been judged. The last foe, in that sense, has been dealt with by the hand of the Lord, and we come to a moment of unspeakable solemnity. "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them" (ver. 11). Observe, the heaven, and the earth, fly from the face of Him, that sits on the throne, and I may ask, Who is it that sits there? Scripture leaves us in no doubt as to that point. It is clearly the Lord Jesus Christ. The One, who fills that throne, is without doubt the Son of Man. Have you any doubt about the point? Let us hear what Scripture says. In John 5 you will find to whom is committed the judgment. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (ver. 22). Again: "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. . . Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (verses 26-29).

Nothing can be plainer than, that it is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to be the judge. All judgment is committed to the Son. Nay more, He is given authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Why, because He is the Son of Man? Because He has come into the scene where man is a sinner, under judgment, and He, who has come into this scene — the blessed Son of God — became man, a man on whom death had no claim, absolutely, and perfectly holy. He it is, that, by-and-by, is to be the judge. And another reason, too. Man took occasion, so to speak, by the humiliation of the Lord Jesus — for He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant — to put Him yet lower. They cast Him out, and preferred a robber, and a murderer to the Saviour. And what is God's answer to this? "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly, and earthly, and infernal beings, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2: 9-11). As man, He is worthy to receive, and shall receive, what he can claim as God, in Isa. 45: 23. All judgment is committed unto the Son, but He has to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Some one may, however, say, Shall we not all be called out, by-and-by, together, to stand before the Lord? No, the Word of God is very plain, and in this 5th chapter of John, we find that the character of the resurrection is different. There is the "resurrection unto life," and the "resurrection unto judgment," — the resurrection unto blessing, and the resurrection unto sorrow. We have already seen, this evening, that there is an interval of a thousand years, between these two resurrections. The first resurrection — and blessed and holy is he that hath part in it — is before the thousand years, but "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

In Acts 17 we also see that the Lord Jesus is distinctly marked out, as the One who will be the judge, inasmuch as God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (ver. 31). Another scripture is found in 2nd Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4: 1). He Judges the quick — the living —

before the millennium, and the dead, at the end thereof. Mark, it is the very last act of the kingdom, this solemn work of judging the dead. You have doubtless observed, that in the 5th chapter of John, to which I have alluded, the Lord Jesus speaks of two hours: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (ver. 25). That is the hour of blessing, the hour of grace, and salvation, the hour in which the Son of God is now calling men to come to Himself. That hour began with Jesus' life ministry, and goes on up to this moment. It is the hour in which men are getting saved; but that hour is coming to a close, for He adds immediately: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming" (*not now, is*) "in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (verses 28, 29). The first hour has lasted for nearly two thousand years, but I am persuaded the moment is drawing near, when, to use a figure, the hour-glass is going to be turned. The hour of grace, and life-giving, is rapidly drawing to a close, and the next thing is, the setting in of the hour of judgment. Oh, my friend, get ready, believe on the Lord Jesus, get to know the Lord, be decided for Him, for, if you are not one of those, who have part in the first resurrection, then you must have your part, in that which comes out here, at this great white throne.

Jesus sits upon that throne. He, who is now the Saviour, must then be the judge. God has put all authority into His hand, once pierced for our sins, and He there sits, and wields the sword. The throne is called "*great*" because of the dignity of the One who fills it. It is called "*white*" because of the absolute purity of the judge. Everything must be according to the unsullied holiness of the nature, of Him who sits upon the throne. Now observe — "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." People have sometimes spoken of this as the Lord's second coming to the earth. But observe, there is no coming at all here. Why? Because there is no earth to come to. Heaven and earth have fled away, consequently the Lord Jesus must have come to earth, before this epoch, or He can never come at all. Evidently time is no more, and the relation of man to the earth, as it now is, ended. Hence, there is no thought of any coming here. Nay, heaven and earth flee from the face of Him, who sits on that throne, so solemn, so appalling, is the sight.

But, let us see, what takes place at that moment. You may get fuller light by listening to what Peter has to say. "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" (2 Peter 3: 10). God has but one way of purifying this sin-stained earth, and it is by fire. It will be a terrible day, indeed, when "the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." How it will be caused, it is not for me to say, but you all know that we live on the crust of a ball, whose interior consists of molten material, and flame. Whether God will let these mighty forces of nature then come into play, is for Him to decide, but all that Scripture says is this, "the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." So that, on the mightiest monuments of man's skill, and ingenuity, faith sees written in indelible characters, the words, "Reserved unto fire" (2 Peter 3: 7). It will be an awful day for the man who is not saved. This thought, therefore, leads the apostle to add: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent

heat." This last clause, you observe, is repeated, that there might be no mistake whatever, as to the way in which God will cleanse the earth, and the heavens too. "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3: 12-13). What Peter says he looks for, John writes that he saw. "We look for new heavens and a new earth," says Peter; but says John, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," and you will find all about them in Revelation 21. Peter reveals them disappearing, in flame, and smoke, and John shows them reappearing, in all the beauty of the new creation, for eternity.

Jesus sits, then, on that great white throne, the earth and the heaven flee from His face, and now there comes a moment, unparalleled in its solemnity, in the history of men. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." It is the closing moment of the second hour of the 5th of John. Is there any resurrection of the blessed here? Clearly not; they have been already raised more than a thousand years, and taken part in the millennial reign. The two resurrections are separated, as to time, by at least one thousand years, but they are separated more than that, by their utterly different character. They that have done good "have already come forth unto the resurrection of life." If the Lord came this evening, every sleeping believer would be so raised. But what about the unbelievers? They are left for this day — left for the "resurrection unto judgment" here, before the great white throne. It is a judgment of persons, not deeds, though they be judged according to their deeds — a judgment only of unbelievers — and though standing before the throne, they are all spoken of as "dead." They have been delivered from the grip of the first death, only to taste the second death, hence, they are still called dead.

"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life" (ver. 12). It is an assize; there is no hurry, there is no haste; and I may say more, if you stand there, you will have no advocate then, you will have no barrister to plead your case; further, you will have no plea. These dead — who are they? Those who have lived in sin, died in their sins, been buried in their sins, and now they are raised in their sins. Clearly they are raised in the body, but raised for judgment. But shall not we all be there? No, dear fellow-Christian, you will not be there — not a believer will be there. Nowhere, in Scripture, do we read of a general resurrection, and a general judgment. Not for ten thousand worlds, ten millions times told, would I be, in the class here described, for all are lost. If you are an unconverted sinner, you are in imminent danger of being in that class. Let me affectionately urge you now to step over the boundary line, from the power of Satan to God, and yield your heart to Jesus the Saviour, lest you have to stand before Him, as the judge, in that day.

"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*." Observe that. Will the Christian's place in heavenly glory be determined by his works? No, God forbid. We get that place, through grace, on the ground of the death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, as poor sinners. There is, on the other hand, no doubt that we shall appear before the Lord (2 Cor. 5: 10), and our position, in the kingdom of Christ, will differ, according to the character of our earthly service to the Lord, since we have known Him as our Saviour, but that is a different thing altogether. Here they are judged according to their works. The ground of judgment is twofold — positive and negative. Their works witness against them, and their names are not found in the book of life. Ah, is there not a single word to be said in favour of those trembling wretches that stand before the throne? Is there not one word of extenuation in favour

of yon trembling, guilty, sin-stained company of unbelieving souls, from Cain downwards, that have come forth — yea, been compelled to come from their graves — by the voice of the Son of Man, which they would not pay heed to, when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Not a syllable! They heeded Him not, in the day of grace, when He called them, to give them life, but they must heed, and obey Him, in the day when He calls them to judgment.

There will be no mistake *then*, because the books will show the truth. I do not know what your name may be. There may be ten thousand men, of the same name as yourself, but when the Lord puts His hand upon the book, it will be your book, and that of nobody else. What you are, what you have done, and not done, what you have been, the whole record of your life, will be there, and what a solemn record for a sinner, who dies now, in Gospel days, unconverted! Born in a Christian land, early sent to a Sunday school, perhaps "joined the Church" so called, but really loved the world, thought only of the world, put off repentance, and conversion, till a day that never came, never came to Christ, and at length, cut down, by some sudden judgment, at the hand of God, died, as you had lived, in your sins. As the book is opened, and the pages slowly turned over, on which is the record of your life, oh what an awful moment, for you, will it be, and if your blanched lips part, it will be but to confess — True, true. God have mercy on you, my friend, where you sit tonight, if you are still unsaved. By the blessings of the heavenly Gospel now pressed on you, and the certainty of coming judgment, I implore you not to miss God's salvation, while it is offered now. Do not let this scene, of which Scripture speaks so solemnly, ever be enacted in your case. Why should it be? I beseech you, come to the Saviour as you are, in your sins, all shall be forgiven, and you will be among those — holy and blessed — that have part in the first resurrection. Come to the Saviour now, all shall be pardoned, and you may henceforth go on your way, a happy believer, serving the Lord, and, in the day of glory, be the recipient of a full reward at the hand of the blessed Lord.

But not so is it here. "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." The sea, which has engulfed so many, and been the cause of the sorrow of such countless thousands, the sea must give up the dead in it. You may say, They have passed beyond the reach, and the ken of men. Quite true! How many a body has been brought to shore that nobody could identify, and how many have never been cast up. But God will be able to identify every one at that time, and the sea will cast him up, for God's identification, at the great white throne.

"And death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Now what does God mean by that remarkable expression, "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire"? Death held the body, Hades being the condition of the disembodied spirit; but then, as the wicked are brought to life again, Hades is no more inhabited in that sense, and Death no longer holds the body. They are no longer needed. They are here personified, as the enemies of God, and man, and are thus cast into the lake of fire. Oh! pitiful doom of every unsaved soul, taken out of the first death, which sundered him from his fellows, to meet, and taste "the second death," — eternal separation from God. We come here to the point where death is annulled. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." That is fulfilled by the raising of the wicked dead.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (ver. 15). This is a touching allusion to the wonderful grace of God, because the fact is, that if grace has not written our names in the Lamb's book of life, we shall find ourselves along with the number judged according to their works. Nothing but sovereign grace will do for you, or for me. Another has well stated it thus "Sovereign grace alone has saved according to the purpose of God. There was a book of life. Whosoever was not written there was cast into the lake of fire. But it was the finally closing, and separating scene for the whole race of men, and this world. And though they were judged every man according to his works, yet sovereign grace only had delivered any; and whosoever was not found in grace's book was cast into the lake of fire. The sea gave up the dead in it; death and Hades the dead in them. And death and Hades were put an end to, for ever, by the divine judgment. The heaven and earth passed away, but they were to be renewed; but death and Hades never. There was for them only divine destruction and judgment. They are looked at as the power of Satan. He has the power of death, and the gates of Hades; and hence they are for ever destroyed judicially. They will never have power again. They are personified; but of course there is no question of tormenting them, or of punishing them; when the devil himself is cast in, there is. But death was not then destroyed; for the wicked dead had not been raised for judgment. Now they had, and the last enemy is destroyed. The force of the image, I doubt not, is that all the dead now judged (the whole contents of Hades, in whom the power of death had been), were cast into the lake of fire, so that death and Hades, which had no existence but in their state, were entirely and judicially ended, by their being cast in. The saints had long since passed out of them, but they subsisted in the wicked. Now these were, consequent on the judgment of the white throne, cast into the lake of fire — the second death. The limit and measure of escape was the book of life." (Synopsis of J.N.D.)

The Spirit of God now opens up eternity — the end of all God's dealings with men. The final destiny of all unsaved souls, has come before us — they are apportioned the lake of fire. I know many may say to me, I do not believe that. Beloved friends, I do believe it, for when God says, "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," He means what He says. God never tells lies, although men may. When He speaks, He speaks solemnly, and truly. But turn now and see how beautiful is that which follows, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21: 1). A few verses before, John saw them fleeing away from the face of the Lord, now he sees them coming out, in all the radiance, and blessedness of this ever new, because eternal, condition of matters — "a new heaven and a new earth." Here you have them, just as the Christian will appear, by-and-by, in a real body — the resurrection body. What sort of body I do not know, but I know my body will undergo a wonderful change, for it will be "a spiritual body." In the same way, I take it, God carries the heaven, and the earth, through that scene of fire, and they come out "new" — in a new character — altogether suited to, and fitted for God, with every trace of the serpent's trail, and man's sin, removed from them. They come out "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein *dwelleth* righteousness."

Now, righteousness *suffers*, in the millennial day it *reigns*, but in the eternal day it *dwells* happily, it is quite at home. "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." This is not what Isaiah alludes to (Isa. 65: 17). His new heavens, and new earth, are only new, in a moral sense, as suiting the millennium, and the sea also exists, for he speaks of "the isles afar off," but here, every bit of the new earth is seen, brought into relationship with every other part, for "there was no more sea."

This would be impossible, as things now are, for man's life. Of course, there must then be a wonderful change in the character of our life, because, as things now exist, we could not get on without the sea. It is the great reservoir, from whence comes the moisture, that is necessary for man, and the earth. I do not know what the change will be, but God brings out here, that which is very simple, and plain, and which faith delights to contemplate, "a new heaven, and a new earth, and no more sea." God, if I might so say, in the new scene, will efface everything, that could bring to memory, the sorrows of man's heart down here.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Last Lord's Day evening we were occupied in looking at this holy city — the Bride — the Church. Then we saw that she was merely descending from heaven, towards earth, but now she comes right down to earth, because the new earth is divinely suited to this heavenly city. Look how she comes out? In the 19th chapter we saw the marriage of the Lamb, to His Bride, on the nuptial day, preparatory to the millennial reign. But now John sees her coming down, out of heaven, at the end of the thousand years. And how does she look? I have seen a good many brides in my day, and I have met them a few years after, and what furrows are on the brow, what cares evident on the countenance, and how soon grey hairs have appeared. A very few years will do it, in this scene down here. But what does John see? He sees, coming down from heaven, her, who has been the Lamb's wife, for one thousand years, and she looks as bright, and as beautiful, and as fresh, as the day she went up. Not a grey hair, not a wrinkle, can be seen; her condition is what I may call perennial joy. No change can ever be, thank God. The Christian is going to fixed happiness, and unchangeable blessedness with Christ. This is all told out in the lovely words, "coming down . . . 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." The moment has come when God takes up His place, upon this earth, in happy relationship with men — not paying them a visit, as He did to Adam, in the garden of Eden, but tabernacling with them, and the tabernacle is the Church, the assembly, the body of Christ, those who are, through grace, now united to the blessed Lord.

Observe, it is not now a question of nations — of Jews and Gentiles — distinctions which had to do with time, and are now all gone by. It is God dwelling with men, as being their God, and therefore, for that reason, in these first eight verses of Revelation 21, where you have eternity brought in, you have no mention of the Lamb. Jesus as the Lamb does not appear here. His mediatorial kingdom is over. It is all God — God is all in all. The moment, of which 1st Corinthians 15 speaks, has arrived: "Then cometh the end when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father; when he shall have annulled all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign until he put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that is annulled is death. For he has put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he says that all things are put in subjection, it is evident that it is except him who put all things in subjection to him. But when all things shall have been brought into subjection to him, then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him who put all things in subjection to him, that God may be all in all" (N.T., 1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

The blessed Saviour has already reigned, as man, over a renewed earth, and a thousand years have gone by; the righteous are blessed, the wicked are judged, and every foe subdued.

And what now? He surrenders His earthly kingdom, and thenceforward is Himself subject. We know, there never was a king in this world, that did not lose his crown, and his kingdom, either by some usurper stepping in, or by death sweeping him off, sooner, or later; but here is a king, who, after a reign of a thousand years, takes the crown from His brow, as man, and gives up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father. He who does this is God, but He has been a man, and while we joyfully remember, that His essential deity ever remains untouched, what we learn is, that Jesus passes into the eternal state as man, and He will never cease to be a man, and you and I, beloved fellow-believers, are going to be with Him for ever. God Himself — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — shall tabernacle with men, they, as delighted to have God's company, as He to be with them. Blessed moment, that God has ever looked on to, and that faith looks on to now! Then see what follows. "And he 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." Oh how familiar you and I are with these terms. I see many dressed, in deepest mourning, as I speak, and you sorrowfully rejoin, Death has come into my house, and robbed me of the one that I loved best. Thank God, there shall be no more death, no more pain. Man's history on earth is all expressed in these four words — death, sorrow, crying, and pain, but then "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. And he said unto me, It is done, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

Extremely beautiful are the verses that follow, as though God saw, that the description would make the soul, that heard about it, for the first time, desire to be a participator in that blessed scene. He therefore weaves in the Gospel, in the loveliest way possible, as He now says — "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." He gives the water of life! Yes, but more than that. I will give of the fountain, I will take you up to the source of it — my own heart. He that overcometh, who is that? The man that turns to Christ, and believes in the Lord, that turns his back, through grace, on all the deception, and guile, through which he is passing, and sets himself to follow the truth. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5: 5.) Will not Satan hinder you? Of course he will. He puts countless obstacles in every man's way, before he gets life, and blessing. But God would cheer, and encourage, and stimulate the believing soul, so He adds, "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Blessed promise!

And now we reach the most solemn "But" in all Scripture, as the Spirit of God gives a categorical description of those who, alas, are not blessed. "But the fearful, and the 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" (ver. 8).

I should like, as I close, to ask you this, — If God sent down, from heaven tonight, an angel, with the commission, to visit Edinburgh, and write on his tablet the names, or the characters of the persons, who most surely, by-and-by, will be in the lake of fire, where would he

begin? Do you fancy that that angel's visit would be to the slums of naked sin, or to the scenes of debauchery, that are, alas, too common? Nay, he would not begin his list there. And if he came into this hall, would the man, who is most sure to be in the lake of fire, be a notorious sinner? No! the list of the lost here commences with this, — "the fearful," the person who is afraid to confess Christ. Now, there is many a person in this hall tonight, who is not a murderer, an idolater, or a liar — nay, he is a person of a good character, but, up to this hour, never has he boldly confessed Jesus, as his Lord, and Saviour. I call your earnest attention to this, that it is the fearful, the timid, and the cowardly, the person who is afraid to come out for Jesus, whose name is first given in this list of the lost.

If, my friend, you have been a timid person, until this hour, may God, by His grace, drive out your timidity, by the sense of His love. When you have got in your heart the sense that the Lord loves you, then your fear of owning Jesus will all go. I tell you what it is, there is nothing grander, or brighter, or more blessed, under the sun, than to be a Christian, and if you have not been a Christian, up to this hour, you have missed a grand opportunity. But, thank God, you have still time, and I say, now turn to Him, drink of the living water, believe His grace, and then go on your way rejoicing. Then I shall meet you in glory. I shall never meet you in hell, mind that. I shall not be there through grace. I charge you, beloved friends, meet me yonder with Jesus, meet me in the air, when the Saviour comes.

We have only now to wait, and watch for Him. He is coming for us, coming out from heaven, the Bright and Morning Star, who will take us up to be for ever with Himself. The Lord keep us waiting, and watching for Him, and serving Him, till He come, for His own precious, and blessed name's sake.