

When The 1000 Years Are Expired

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"When the 1000 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 & 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"

—Rev. 20:7-9

IT SEEMS strange at first sight that a divine reign of 1000 years' duration should end in this manner. Fancy would suggest that the power and purity and beneficence of the government of Christ and his brethren would have so affected mankind everywhere for good that it would be morally impossible for rebellion to be conceived, still more that it should enlist the sympathy and support of nations and multitudes.

That such a result should be foretold is one of a 1000 evidences of the divine character of the Scriptures. Imagination would have drawn a very different picture. We should have had human nature—basking in the sunshine of divine government—represented as rising in the majesty of an unsullied and ever-soaring progress, towards the perfection of which the germ is supposed by every human philosophy to exist in every human breast, and which only requires the necessary conditions to ripen into a gorgeous flower.

Instead of that, we have the whole world in arms against a government that will have blessed them with a 1000 years of justice, righteousness, beneficence, plenty, and peace. How is it to be explained? The explanation is furnished in the opening sentence of the verses above—

"Satan shall be loosed out of his prison."

You recollect who Satan is—not the fiction of a Romanised & Paganised theology—not the immortal devil of pulpit discourse, who has no existence, except in the light literature & lighter talk of the people. Satan (a Hebrew word signifying 'adversary') is the name applied to the Dragon, and the Dragon we have indisputably identified as the heraldic symbol of human hostility to God, officially incorporate in the kings and governments in which that hostility is headed up.

The seizing and binding of this Dragon is the subjugation and suppression of the governments that oppose Christ at his coming, and the establishment of an iron rule throughout the earth, which effectually prevents their resuscitation.

What can the unloosing be but the removal of those repressions and restraints which keep rebellion down for 1000 years? It is a matter of no importance to know the particular way in which these restraints will be removed. A suspension of acts of rigor on the part of the saints in their several stations throughout the world, such as letting disobedience go unpunished and unnoticed, & allowing assemblies for political discussion, would be enough to give the native wilfulness of human nature scope for revival, especially if, as is possible, the saints were everywhere withdrawn to the imperial centre at Jerusalem.

The men of that generation will know nothing experimentally of the evils of human government. They will have known nothing but the order and prosperity and peace of the rule of the saints, accustomed to which, they will probably lose all perception of the connection between that rule and the blessedness of the age. They will suppose the blessedness a matter of course—a something that would be enjoyed under any government strong enough to take the reins of power.

They may get tired of these reins being in the hands of one class all the time. They will know that a 1000 years' previously, self-government was a power—exercised by mankind in various forms—all the world over. They may begin to question the right of any power to set this "natural birthright" aside.

Human longevity will be common in those days, and therefore the immortality of the rulers will be a matter of faith with the subject populations. Doubt may at last come to be cast upon it. There will be much specious sophistry employed, we may be sure, before the nations surrender themselves to the leadership of Satan let loose. Stirring orations, self-important conferences of delegates, the circulation of eloquent documents, will doubtless enter largely into the machinery of seduction.

At last the poison takes effect. The people lend themselves to the demagogues. They listen to the flattering doctrines to which they have been unaccustomed for centuries. They subscribe to the movement. They enrol themselves in the battalions: secret drillings go on everywhere.

As government takes no notice, the drillings lose their secrecy. The people take courage. The movement becomes an open one. From certain centres it spreads, until it commands the adhesion of entire communities, and lastly, of nations. It finally attains the proportions and power of an international armament.

The armies take the field. An expedition against headquarters—"the camp of the saints, the beloved city"—is projected. Christ, who could nip the whole conspiracy in the bud with a single act of power, allows the rebels a clear field. They come up in their unchallenged hosts "on the breadth of the earth." They arrive on the confines of the Holy Land, with which their annual journeys have made them familiar. They carry all before them. Flushed with complete success, they come within sight of the Holy City itself.

This is the "hitherto-and-no-farther" of their Korah-Dathan-& Abiram enterprise. While they are contemplating measures of siege, the devouring fire & crashing artillery of heaven burst suddenly upon their affrighted eyes and ears. The scenes of the pre-Millennial Armageddon are re-enacted on an enlarged scale. The earth opens her terrific jaws to receive the stunned and blaspheming multitudes, who are engulfed in a catastrophe that wipes the last trace of rebellion from the history of the earth—

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,
where the Beast and False Prophet . . ."

—here there is an elipsis in the original. It is supplied in the Common Version by the word "are"; but as the allusion is historic—pointing to what happened at the BEGINNING of the 1000 years—it seems more rational to make the elipsis historic, and to read, instead of "where the Beast and False Prophet ARE," "where the Beast and False Prophet WERE CAST," intimating that the fate that consumed the leaders of the Armageddon pre-millennial war now befalls those of the post-millennial insurrection—

". . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

This is the symbolic intimation of the fact that the divine affliction that overtakes the official heads and leaders of the post-millennial revolt against the camp of the saints will prevail over them without remedy. Sodom and Gomorrha are pointed to as examples of what we are to understand by a scriptural—

". . . *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*" (Jude 7).

The fire of God's judgment consumed them without remedy (Lam. 4:6). The leaders of post-millennial diabolism will be secured, and made the subjects of a formal and awful consignment to their well-merited fate.

It will be found a pleasant exercise to consider how appropriate a finish to the history of sin upon earth is this great appointed post-millennial revolt of nations. Sin is allowed the opportunity of coming to a great head, so to speak. It gathers up its power, comes into the presence of its destroyer, provokes mortal combat, and is finished at one terrible blow. There is a dramatic completeness about such an arrangement, which is in harmony with the beautiful wisdom that is manifest in all the works of God.

It involves certain details which will readily occur to us. While all the world is nationally implicated in this rebellion, there will, of course, be thousands, nay, millions, who take no part in it. We are not told in so many words, but it follows from certain things testified. For example, the saints accepted & glorified at the coming of Christ are styled the "firstfruits"(Rev.14:4).This designation is borrowed from the Mosaic shadow of these "good things to come." Israel were required to offer the first ripe fruits of the field in thanksgiving and joy before God. This was afterwards followed by the full harvest, when there was again a feast of gladness coinciding with the Feast of Tabernacles.

These Mosaic arrangements were of divine appointment & foreshadowed the ultimate purpose of Jehovah in Christ. Now as the glorification of 'the ecclesia of the firstborn' at the return of Christ is the antitype of the "firstfruits," there must be a counterpart to the feast of ingathering. There must be a great harvest of human life to glory, honour and immortality at the close of the 1000 years.

What else could come of an age when "the glory of the Lord" prevails on the earth like the spread of the mighty ocean in its bed? It is testified that the reign of Christ is to this end—that he put all enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25). And (v. 26)—

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

It consequently follows that at the close of his reign, there will be a vast multitude who have learned to walk in Jehovah's ways (Isa. 2:3), from whom the veil and the darkness of these gloomy times will have been removed, with the effect of making them turn to Jehovah with a fervent and joyful & faithful obedience (Isa. 25:7), in readiness for investiture with the glorious attribute of immortality.

These will not be found in the rebellious ranks of the Satanic multitude. Their refusal to join them may bring upon them evil consequences, permitted as a closing proof of their obedience. The unchecked success of the revolt up to a certain point, which may involve the preparation of years, will certainly be a sore trial to the mortal faithful. But the end will justify their refusal to be compromised. The sudden destruction of the presumptuous host will be followed by the recognition, praise and immortalization of the faithful multitude everywhere who have stood aloof from the popular conspiracy against the Lord's Anointed.

But will there be no dead waiting to stand in the same category of approbation? Will death have made no havoc in the populations under the reign of Christ and the saints? This question is answered (supposing there were no other answer) by the statement that:

"The LAST enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

If death is the last enemy to be destroyed, it follows that death is not destroyed until after the destruction of the Gog & Magog multitude of the post-millennial revolt. Consequently death is at work up to that point, though greatly weakened in its power, like every other evil at that time when the blessing of Israel's God sheds a healing beneficence on land and ocean.

There is direct evidence of the soundness of this conclusion in the directions given to the mortal Levitical priests of that age, to:

". . . come at no DEAD PERSON to defile themselves" (Ezek. 44:25).

—and in the permission to them to (v. 22)—

". . . take for their wives a *widow* . . . that had a priest before."

Likewise in the statement of Isaiah (65:20) that—

"The child shall die an hundred years old."

—that is, a man dying at 100 years old in those days will be considered a child. Human life will be much prolonged. Still, death reigns till abolished at the crisis brought on at the end of the thousand years by the revolt of the nations.

Now the aggregate of those who die during the reign of Christ must be very great, and as these will be times of great light, they will be times of great responsibility. Consequently when, at the suppression of the post-millennial revolt, the time arrives for the great antitypical harvest into life eternal, something like a general resurrection must take place, differing very much in its extent from that which takes place at the pre-millennial coming of Christ, on account of the great difference in the dispensation preceding it. This seems to be the teaching of the scene John next describes:

"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 no place found for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; & the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life.

"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 everyman ACCORDING TO HIS 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" (Rev. 20:11-15).

The import of the leading feature of this scene must be evident enough. A GREAT WHITE THRONE: the symbol of righteousness in judgment: the occupant of it, the Mighty One before Whose face the whole fabric reared by the post-millennial politicians had crumbled into nothing. THE DEAD: those who had died but were now raised. THE OPENED BOOKS: symbols of the law by which they will be judged. THE BOOK OF LIFE: the divine record (preserved on something more enduring than parchment) of those who are chosen for life eternal because of obedience.

THE CASTING OF DEATH AND HELL INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE: the obliteration of death and the grave from the earth by the giving over to the destroying judgment of God, of all who are divinely decreed worthy of death, leaving in the land of the living those only who by the same prerogative are adjudged worthy of the unspeakable gift of immortality.

When this mighty result has been reached, a new state of things upon the earth must result from the altered conditions. Till then sin and death will always more or less have prevailed, necessitating arrangements and institutions suitable thereto. But now the population will be without exception immortal, and socially and racially fused into ONE, as the result of assimilation to a common perfection of nature and harmony with God. What must come out of such a change but the alteration of constitution symbolically described in the next succeeding words of John (21:1-4)—

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had 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!"
