

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

Phase 2: “Cleansing the World—Completion of the Church”

by

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PROLOGUE

In Part 1 of *“The Restoration of All Things”*, we used the subtitle *“Times of Refreshing—Refining the Saints”*. Now we come to Part 2, which is subtitled *“Cleansing the World—Completion of the Church”*.

In the first part of this paper we looked at how “The Restoration of All Things” was set into motion and we then identified the leading characteristics of that first phase in the restoration process. We saw how, after the crucifixion, there was a stay of execution in divine judgement—a purposeful delay of judgement by God. We saw that this involved the restraining of the satanic powers from coming to their fullness in the deceiving of the nations into an all-out rage-filled war against the saints and the gospel which they would carry into the world. We saw how that “delay” in the execution of judgement is symbolized in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation as a chaining up of Satan for “one thousand years”—the so-called Millennium, which has been so abused in human eschatological systems.

So the first phase in “The Restoration of All Things” was the Gospel Age, the bringing of God’s people into the kingdom in the midst of a fallen world—renewing them, sanctifying them, preparing them for the full “Restoration of All Things” while the fruition of Satan’s pretended new world order was held at bay.

The second phase of “The Restoration of All Things” involves the completion of the process. While the first phase was heralded by John the Baptist preparing the way for Christ’s first coming, the passing from the first phase to the second phase is triggered by the very sudden Second Coming of Christ (like a thief in the night for unbelievers). The beautiful Incarnation of Christ was the turning point for the first phase, while the terrible Day of the Lord is the turning point for the second phase. It is that supreme moment when the Lord finally says *“Enough!”* to all the evil which has intruded into His universe. For in the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”, evil is allowed to come to its brutal climax.

How does that affect everyone? Is everyone affected in the same way? Does everyone have the same response? That’s the first thing that I want to address here:

I. THE TRANSITION FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND PHASE OF “THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS”?

Obviously, for the unbeliever, the change from the first to the second phase of “The Restoration of All Things” is a huge jolt. To pass from a world in which he or she can do anything—no matter how self-centred, thoughtless or evil—without any apparent comeback, into a world where everything is suddenly openly under divine judgement is the ultimate culture shock! So for the unbeliever there is this massive jolt from which there is no turning away or turning back.

What about the believer? Will it be as much of a shock for him or her? Not at all! As Paul says: *“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief”* (1 Thess.5:4). For the believer, it will be like coming home. For the believer, it will be like arriving

at his or her destination. For the believer, it will be vindication, overwhelming relief, gratitude, joy, long-awaited completion.

It will help us in our view of the Big Picture if we realize that there is a lovely link between the first and second phases of “The Restoration of All Things” in the life of the believer. For this first phase of “The Restoration of All Things” is our grand preparation for the second. In fact, it is just a brief preface to the second, which will be eternal. While for the unbeliever this first phase was an exercise in scoffing at any idea of a second phase, for the believer this first phase involves the ongoing deepening of hope for the second phase. For the unbeliever the idea of a second phase has been all that he or she despises. Whereas for the believer it has been everything that he or she desires.

So why do I say that there is a beautiful link between the first and second phases of “The Restoration of All Things” in the life of the believer?

We saw that the leading part in that first phase was the spreading of the Gospel and the renewal of the believer. That was the title of the paper: “*Times of Refreshing—Refining the Saints*”. In fact, the renewal of the believer is only the first phase in the recreation of a new universe out of the present fallen one. For although, in the first phase, we may be renewed according to the inner man—a new creation—we still inhabit a body and live in a universe which lie under the curses that God pronounced in the wake of the Fall (Gen.3:15-19). This can lead to an almost unbearable tension in the life of the Christian, as he or she strives to come to terms with being a new creation in the midst of a fallen world. An anomaly. Like a square peg in a round hole. This is the main reason why the believer must walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor.5:7).

However, the Lord has done a very interesting thing: So that we can have an absolute assurance of our future inheritance in eternal life, we receive the indwelling Holy Spirit as a ‘guarantee’ of that fullness to come. Two texts attest to that mighty fact:

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as **a guarantee**” (2 Cor.1:21-22).

“You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is **the guarantee** of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph.1:13-14).

Even more specifically, Paul uses the term ‘downpayment’: “*Now He who has prepared for us this very thing [eternal life] is God, who has also given us the Spirit as **a downpayment***” (2 Cor.5:5). The idea of a “downpayment” may seem somewhat crass to us but that is precisely what it is! It is like a ‘deposit’ made as ‘guarantee’ on the full payment of something which will eventually be rendered.

So another vital component in “The Restoration of All Things” has been to give the Lord’s people a pre-heavenly deposit—a foretaste of the glory which is yet to come.

But do you want to know the mystery of all this? The work that the Holy Spirit does in sustaining and upholding the new creation that the Lord has done for us and in us must be seen in a vastly wider context than mere human regeneration. For, although we are indeed a new creation, we are merely the *avant-garde*, the forerunners of a whole process which is still to be completed.

While we are presently living in a universe which is still groaning under the curse of the Fall, we have been made a new creation in advance, as it were. For the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation is not merely confined to the redemption of human beings. The whole universe is also in the process of being saved — again by the power of the Holy Spirit (as we see in Rom.8:18-23). The establishment of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men, women and children in this present age—this first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”—is but a comparatively brief prelude to the fullness of the kingdom in the age to come—the second phase of “The Restoration of All Things”.

Thus, the Holy Spirit within us is the guarantee of our full restoration. We, as a work of God's art, are the first glimmer of all the fullness of "The Restoration of All Things". The restoration which will be completed in the second phase has already begun within those who believe in the first phase. "*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil.1:6); "*It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Phil.2:13); "*For we are His workmanship*" (Eph.2:10); "*For our citizenship is in heaven*" (Phil.3:20). That is the reality—hidden from the sight of the unbeliever but very apparent (and increasingly so throughout his or her life) to the believer.

Many texts speak of this reality — this divine work within us as the bridging point between the first phase of "The Restoration of All Things" and the second phase. But what better text could there be than Paul's saying, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new*" (2 Cor.5:17). Yes! We are the forerunners in the process by which all things will be made new — are **already** being made new. It can be said that we have already died to life on this earth while our lives are really "*hidden with Christ in God*":

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Col.3:1-4).

Here, in the first phase of "The Restoration of All Things", we are the *avant-garde* of the second phase. I wanted to share this with you—to reiterate it to you—for the strengthening of your faith and to put all eschatology in its proper context. That context is the completion of God's creation in the full restoration of all things, especially His human creation.

Now before we look in more detail at the second phase of the "The Restoration of All Things", there's a subject which I think needs dealing with. It is this:

II. MODERN MISCONCEPTIONS OF "THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS"

The idea of "Restoration" goes back to the great prophets of the Old Testament. They foresaw the exile, but they also prophesied that God would restore his people to their own land. When this took place the conditions in Judah were not exactly ideal, and people began to look for a further restoration. In time this came to be associated with the Messiah. **But the big problem was that the Jews as a whole understood this restoration solely in terms of material prosperity—an earthly kingdom. It is that erroneous way of thinking which has continued to this very day in various mutant forms.**

Though they had Jesus' interpretation of the prophecy of Malachi, the disciples could still ask on the eve of His Ascension, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6). This question demonstrates the complete failure of the disciples to discern **spiritually**—to understand spiritual symbolism and see the movement of the Lord's great plan of salvation. They still didn't comprehend (and neither do many professing Christians today) that **the movement in the Lord's great plan of salvation—the movement across space, time and history—has always been from the earthly to the spiritual.** If one doesn't grasp this concept properly, there will be all sorts of muddled thinking in one's Bible hermeneutics.

In fact, it was precisely this ability or inability to distinguish the earthly from the spiritual—the literal from the symbolic—which marked the difference between the nominal Israelite and the true person of God in the Old Testament. Let me give you some examples:

"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise" (Psa.51:16-17).

The true believer in the Old Testament era knew very well that earthly sacrifices were merely a **necessary symbol** for something far deeper. This was the great secret understanding of the heart in the Old Testament saint with true faith. He heard the words of the Lord ringing in his head: “*For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings*” (Hos.6:6). When Saul tried to plead with Samuel that “*the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, in order to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal,*” Samuel replied:

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam.15:22-23).

Precisely! In Saul and Samuel (just as it was with Saul and David) we have a classic contrast between the unbelieving Israelite and the true saint of God. The unbelieving Israelite was always absorbed by the outward form of things—the material appearance—rather than the spiritual reality which lay behind it. The unbelieving Israelite was always satisfied by going through the motions of a ritual rather than grasping the spirit for which that ritual stood as a mere symbol.

In the Old Testament era, the great separating factor between the unbelieving Israelites (mostly the majority) and the saints of God (usually the remnant) was this ability to see beyond the earthly symbol right into the heart of the spiritual reality. Just look at the way that *tefillin* (small boxes containing Hebrew scrolls from the Torah, also known as phylacteries) have been developed over the centuries.¹ When the Lord commended His people not only to have His words in their hearts but also to “*bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes; you shall write them on the doorposts of your house*” (Deut.6:6-8), this was plainly the symbolic expression of a spiritual idea meaning for us to hold His words in our minds and in our deeds—between our eyes and on our hand. But this has been literalised into actual boxes containing the words of God having to be physically bound on our heads and hands.² The Lord Jesus strongly condemned the Pharisees not only for wearing them but for making them extra large in order to be seen by all (Matt.23:5). Again, there is a failure to distinguish between the physical symbol and the spiritual reality. The spiritual person (true believer) could never feel satisfied with merely having a box on his head or hand, whereas the literalist who loves to follow outward rituals will find it immensely satisfying to have gone through the motions.

This was not only the case with all the Levitical rituals and sacrifices—which of course pointed to the saving grace of Christ—but was also the case with the very land itself. The land of Israel—the hallowed Eretz, which held such a high importance for the Israelite—was only ever an earthly symbol of something far deeper, much more spiritual and infinitely longer lasting. For as the sacrifices and ordinances of the Levitical code pointed symbolically to Christ and His work on the Cross, so the land pointed symbolically to an eternal heavenly country where believers really belong. This was the great secret understood by all true believers in the Old Testament.

“They [the Old Testament saints] all died **in faith**, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb.11:13-16).

¹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tefillin> for details.

² The New Bible Dictionary states that “*they were a late innovation brought in by the Hasidaeans, being intended as a counterblast to increasing Hellenistic influence... Their use became universal before the end of the 2nd century AD*”.

A major hallmark of faith in Old Testament times was having a feeling that you were a “stranger and pilgrim” in the earthly land—that somehow there was something far deeper which lay beyond the mere symbol of the earth. Something spiritual. As Paul said:

“**For our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil.3:20-21).

This was well understood by the ever-present remnant of true believers in Old Testament times. As David put it:

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; **our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope**” (1 Chron.29:14-15).

Now **that** is the prayer of the true believer in Old Testament times. “*Our days on earth are as a shadow and without hope*”. The expectation of the unbelieving Israelite was always totally rooted in the physical earth and in material blessings. He couldn’t see beyond the symbol to the spiritual reality. So, for him or her, the Messiah must be an **earthly** warrior king like Saul (who would relish the idea), or David (who would be horrified at it), and the kingdom would have to be an **earthly** territory—physical Israel on a map; and any idea of “restoration” would only involve that mappable territory.

But as that prayer of David’s shows, just to have the land was to be hopeless. “*Our days on earth are as a shadow and without hope*”. Just to have an earthly king was hopeless. Just to have ritual sacrifices was hopeless. Just to have physical land was hopeless. All those things were hopeless unless there lay a deeper spiritual reality behind them and towards which they pointed and in which they would one day find their fulfillment. And indeed there was and indeed they did! **But the big problem today—and one which is little understood—is that the inadequate and unspiritual mindset and expectations of the unbelieving Israelite have been allowed to determine the eschatological expectations of the Church!** Please read that last sentence again in order to absorb it properly.

In spite of the fact that we are told: “*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...*” (Heb.12:22), and instead of looking for a worldwide undivided Church made up of believing Jews and Gentiles whereby the Lord has created “*in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity*”—instead of looking for all those things, many people are still looking for the reinstatement of Old Testament sacrifices in the temple of a restored Jewish kingdom on the Old Testament land of Israel, with Gentile converts as second-class citizens, an afterthought, a parenthesis, God’s “Plan B”, grafted into the people of God as a kind of sideshow.

Instead of looking—as the apostle Peter was—for the Day of the Lord coming “*as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; and both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up...*”, people are looking for a secret Rapture and a one thousand-year earthly kingdom in Jerusalem some years after that.

Instead of looking for “The Restoration of **All** Things” for **all** time, as the Bible intended it to be understood, people are looking for the restoration of an Israeli kingdom based in Jerusalem for a mere one thousand years.

My friends, we have been seduced by myths and fables based on a grossly distorted literalistic approach to the Bible. Those myths and fables have now become so normative for so

many of those who profess belief in Christ that when they hear otherwise they accuse us of false teaching. Well the time has come to turn the tables.

In Old Testament times the Lord, as it were, lisped to His people as a parent does to his or her small children—speaking baby-talk. But eventually that child comes of age and is old enough to be spoken to in more adult language, with everything more plainly spelled out. The true believer in the Old Testament era found the lisped symbols from the Lord to be inadequate to his spiritual aspirations and he craved something more profound—more fulfilling—more spiritually mature. Quite simply, he outgrew literalism and saw through to the spiritual reality to which the symbolism of Scripture pointed.

We, too, need to jettison this slavish literalism and treat the words of the Lord with the full respect that they deserve. It is insulting to the mind of God to dilute His perfect symbolism into such pedestrian prose now that we have come of age and have put off childish things. It is in this area that the Lord Jesus had to set the Pharisees straight. Whereas those unbelieving Jews were waiting for an earthly liberator warrior-king to restore Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed the **real** restoration work as beginning in the ministry of John the Baptist, who fulfilled the Elijah prophecy of Malachi 4:5 (Matt. 17:11; Mk. 9:12). Here, as we observed in the previous paper, He completely reinterpreted the Messianic concept which had become so distorted among the Jews of the time.

But that same distortion has not only been reintroduced today, it has also more or less become a touchstone of faith for the majority of professing Christians. Falsehood—in terms of taking a backward step into the view of the unbelieving Israelite—has virtually established itself as the truth by stealth and by coercion. This, I believe, is a form of apostasy—yes, that is how I see these erroneous ideas about Israel and the kingdom—a real sign of the times. I hope that we will grasp the enormity of this by the conclusion of this paper.

Having looked briefly at modern misconceptions of “The Restoration of All Things”, we now ask the question...

III. WHAT IS THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS?

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

Whereas in the first phase, it is the souls of believers which begin to be restored and the Gospel goes out into the world while the fullness of Satan’s madness is under restraint, in this second phase it is the entire contents of the universe which will be cleansed of all evil while the body of God’s people from all nations comes to the fruition of its fullness of glory.

This second phase in “The Restoration of All Things” is sparked off by the Return of Christ in the final judgement. **There is no other coming of Christ except the time when He comes in Final Judgement.** Any other notions of this are entirely false. It couldn’t be clearer: “*Heaven must receive [Him] until the times of restoration of all things*”. The confirmation that “The Restoration of All Things” is being completed will be His coming in glory—not to perform a Rapture, then soon after set up a one thousand-year earthly kingdom which will later descend into chaos, but to restore the universe. Completely!

The accepted teaching in so many circles today is that after the Jews refused Christ, He turned away from them to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, but, as they say, His dealing with the Gentiles is merely a temporary, parenthetical state of affairs, and that after a mysterious “rapture” of the Church from off the earth, God will begin to deal with the Jews again and that the Messiah will

come back to earth and establish an earthly kingdom reigning from a restored temple regime in Jerusalem for exactly one thousand years.

But that script could have been written by Caiaphas! This strange unbiblical teaching is based on what carnal, unbelieving Jews have taught for centuries and it must be a matter of great bemusement to them that so many Christians have come to believe the same thing. However, the timeline is crystal clear in the Scriptures, and it cuts across what so many are being taught today. To the Jews, Peter said that Jesus Christ was sent, “*who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*” (Acts 3:20-21).

We see from Acts 3:19-21 that: **1)** Times of refreshing comes when you repent; **2)** When the full number have repented, Jesus Christ will be sent again to gather in His people; **3)** He remains in heaven until the times of restoration of all things, the creation of the new heavens and new earth. It is not any Great Tribulation that the saints escape through their rapture to heaven but the Final Judgement. What place is there here for a one thousand year reign of Christ over an earthly kingdom following a rapture? The only rapture of the saints will be that which ushers in the final phase of the “The Restoration of All Things”.

Peter’s words in his second letter are clear: Heaven must receive Him until the times of “The Restoration of All Things”, “*which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*” (Acts 3:21). Since the world began. True prophets have always known about this Final Judgement which would herald “The Restoration of All Things”. The earliest recorded such prophecy would be Enoch:

“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam [near enough to the beginning!], prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him’” (Jude 14-15).

Peter gave out much the same timeline in his second letter, when he showed that we’re not looking for any raptures followed by one thousand year earthly reigns of Christ, but for the Day of the return of the Lord, which will be contemporaneous with the Judgement and renewing of the entire universe— “The Restoration of All Things”:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet.3:10-13).

It couldn’t be any clearer than that. The next time we will see Christ is when He comes again to judge the world and take us to Himself. When Christ returns, there will not be a secret rapture followed by a one thousand year messianic reign on earth from Jerusalem. This is the stuff of fantasies—a failure to discern the difference between symbol and fact. Instead, the universe will be dissolved and the new heavens and new earth will be brought into being with no place for sin any longer. That is what the apostle plainly shows. All things will have been made new. We have to be careful not to be seduced by the many myths which have been put into circulation in these confusing days. As Paul put it nearly two thousand years ago: “*Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth*” (Tit.1:13-14 cf. 1 Tim.1:4; 2:7; 2 Tim.4:4).

2 Pet.3:10-13 is surely one of the most important passages in the whole of Scripture concerning the “Endtimes”. It shows us very clearly that Christ will return and immediately enact the Final Judgement and “The Restoration of All Things”. That is our real hope—not any Rapture followed by an earthly kingdom for one thousand years! Such things are myths designed by Satan himself to distract us from the spiritual reality.

Even in the classic “Rapture” passage in 1 Thess.4:13-18, the Scripture is plainly speaking about the resurrection (for we read there of the same “trumpet of God” as that in 1 Cor.15:52, Rev.8:6 & 10:7) at the Final Judgement and “The Restoration of All Things” — *“thus we shall always be with the Lord”*, said Paul, not engaged in an earthly kingdom for a mere one thousand years.

So what is Christ preparing while he is remaining in heaven until “The Restoration of All Things”? In fact, He told us the answer:

“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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn.14:2-3).

Again, we see here that He will be coming for us **not** to set up a kingdom on earth or He would have said: *“I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where you are there I may be also”*. But He didn’t say that. Instead He said: *“I will come again and receive you to Myself; that **where I am, there you may be also**”*. He will not be returning to be with us in some kingdom on this earth but He will be returning to take us to where He has been since the Ascension—in heaven.

The Second Coming of Christ in judgement brings in the completion of “The Restoration of All Things”. Yet, so many want to interpolate another coming of Christ before that time. This is so confusing and very distracting for the naïve believer. One Bible teacher who writes in this mould made the following statement:

“The Bible is clear that Christ will return to rule and reign for 1,000 years after the Battle of Armageddon. The millennial kingdom is called by many names in scripture. In Matthew 19:28, Jesus calls it *‘the regeneration’*. Acts 3:19 describes the kingdom as *‘times of refreshing’*, while verse 21 of that chapter calls it *‘the period of restoration of all things’*.

And this is very common thinking: that “The Restoration of All Things” will be the so-called “Millennial kingdom” of one thousand years of rule on earth by Christ. But the reality is that the Bible knows only one restoration of all things and it involves “The Restoration of **ALL** Things”. It is the Greek word *pantown* (in Acts 3:21). “The Restoration of **ALL** Things”. Absolutely everything—**not** just a nation—**not** just a country—**not** just partially—**not** just for one thousand years—**not** just in such a way that things can descend into chaos and evil once more. **We are talking about the eternal perfecting of everything triggered by the Second Coming of Christ, the completion of the Church.**

Many Scriptures attest to this. Obviously, there is Acts 3:19-21, which explicitly uses the phrase “The Restoration of **ALL** Things”. But that is not at all the only place where the concept of the transfiguration of the universe is mentioned. For example, in Isa.65:17, we read, *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind”*.

Please be aware that this present world was never intended by the Lord to be His final creation. From the first phrase in the Bible — *“In the beginning...”* — we can glean something special. For the very word ‘beginning’ implies that there will be ‘an end’. It wouldn’t be unreasonable to say that the first three words of the Bible represent an implicit prophecy of the Endtimes. The goal of all creation lies in a future recreation of the universe which will be without corruption. When the Lord Jesus returns there will be a universal judgement, but there will also be the restoration of all things.

Rev.21:1: “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”. [We’ll be looking at this particular passage in more detail shortly].

Now compare Rev.22:1-4 with Ezekiel’s vision in chapter 47 for another prophetic view of “The Restoration of All Things”:

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever”

Compare this with Ezek.47:1-12, esp. v.12 with Rev.22:2 (see words in bold above):

“Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all *kinds of* trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. **Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.**”

That is Ezekiel’s vision of “The Restoration of All Things”. It is precisely in line with John’s vision in Revelation 22. Yet, so many commentators strain the texts to make a rift between them in order to protect the false idea of the Millennium. Here is the Bible Knowledge Commentary:

“This reference to a river in Revelation 22 should not be confused with similar *millennial* situations such as those in Ezekiel 47:1, 12 and Zechariah 14:8. These refer to literal rivers flowing from the temple and from Jerusalem and will be part of the millennial scene. The river in Revelation 22:1 will be part of the New Jerusalem in the new earth”.

This is where so many go adrift—interpolating uncalled-for scenes into biblical prophecy and straining the natural understanding of the text in order to make it fit into a manmade system — thereby practicing *isogesis* instead of *exegesis*. There is no need for a restored Jerusalem other than as the heavenly city in “The Restoration of All Things”. All the prophets pointed to it. It is such a huge drain on our spirits to waylay us into looking for a future Millennium on earth rather than the real glory which is to come.

So that is “The Restoration of All Things”. The renewing of everything at the return of Christ in the Final Judgement and Resurrection. Next, we ask...

IV. WHAT ARE THE MAIN ASPECTS OF THE SECOND PHASE OF “THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS”

First, this is about the final complete cleansing of everything in this universe. Whereas in the first phase evil still flourished alongside of the saints who were being renewed, **in this second phase evil is not only eradicated but there will be no possibility of it ever happening again.**

A good starting point is in the Book of Revelation chapters 21 and 22. There we are given glimpses into something that is vital for us to understand about the kingdom of God—God’s New World Order (if I can put it like that, as opposed to the New World Order which Man and Satan had hoped to set up). What we see in the first six verses of Rev.21 is God’s New World Order portrayed as a return to the blessed paradise-state before the Fall of our first parents. In fact, it goes even

further than that, because, although it can be said that there will be a return to that state, it will be an even improved form of paradise.

The perennial aim of Satan throughout the ages has been to create a New World Order, to bring about his own version of heaven on earth.³ But the scene in the Garden of Eden was very different from what God's New World Order will be like in the new heavens and new earth. Merely to "*get ourselves back to the Garden*" would be a hugely retrograde step, because there we had people who were capable of falling, we had the possibility of interference from evil angels and we had the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (in which our first parents were warned not to partake).

There has been a vast movement towards the new restored universe throughout the whole of time. Here's how it has panned out in terms of our anthropology: In the beginning, for our first parents, it was **possible to sin**. After the Fall, it became **impossible** for human beings **not** to sin. As a result of the finished work of Christ, it becomes **possible not to sin** for those who follow the Lord. In the new universe (the second phase of "The Restoration of All Things"), it will be **impossible** for God's people to sin.

So we are not speaking here about a mere return to the Garden of Eden—for that would be a distinctly backward step in redemptive history. Everything there was indeed created "very good" but it wasn't the highest perfection in the sense of full completion. When all things have been restored, perfection will finally have arrived.

There are four vital aspects to this second phase of "The Restoration of All Things", which we can glean from the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation. The first of these is that:

1. The Rebellion of the Nations Will Finally be Brought to an End

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. **Also there was no more sea**" (21:1b).

The sea is a symbol of the raging, rebellious nations in the Book of Revelation (13:1; 20:13; cf. Isa.57:20). The evil of the nations came to its head at the end of the first phase of "The Restoration of All Things". But all that will have been dealt with forever with the Second Coming of Christ. His full power will have been displayed. As the psalmist said: "*You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them*" (Psa.89:9).

But all that was good in the nations—the converted Gentiles—comes into the New Jerusalem. See Rev.21:26: "*And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it*". So "The Restoration of All Things" will mean that the rebellion of the nations will have been brought to an end—silenced by the power of God at the second coming of the Son. "*There was no more sea*". Ever. After "The Restoration of All Things" has happened there can be no possibility for another Fall of man.

The second vital aspect of this second phase of "The Restoration of All Things" will be:

2. The Removal of the Curse

"And there shall be no more curse" (Rev.22:3).

There was a vast curse of judgement on the earth and on humanity which God brought into being after the Fall of our first parents. The aspects of that curse—as one can see from Genesis 3—were banishment from the presence of God, enmity with one another, death, sorrow, toil, pain, suffering and every other woe which results from them. However, in "The Restoration of All Things" all those things are removed:

³ Compare the words in the Joni Mitchell song "Woodstock", which says: "*We are stardust, we are golden, and we've got to get ourselves back to the Garden*". This is the fatally flawed utopian vision of the naïve, which is then exploited by the powers of darkness whose own "return to the Garden" is distinctly **dystopian**!

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev.21:3-4).

All those things signify the complete removal of the curse of God on this world. That curse was God’s wrath against sin and all the effects of it. But in “The Restoration of All Things”, the wrath of God will be finished forever.

The third vital aspect of this second phase of “The Restoration of All Things” is that

3. It will Involve the Eternal Separation of Good and Evil in the Final Judgement

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev.21:8).

To be a murderer, an idolater, sexually immoral, and sorcerer under the Mosaic Law brought physical death. But that was merely a type—a forerunner, a symbol—of what will be the fate of all those who die impenitent in these sins. For here we learn that they suffer the ‘*second death*’, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. The first death is physical death. The second death is hell. [Death, spiritually understood in Scripture, means separation from God]. The lake which burns with fire and brimstone is a symbol of the judgement of hell. The Final Judgement. Isaiah makes a superb link between “The Restoration of All Things” (the new heavens and new earth) and the Final Judgement in the closing words of his prophecy:

“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord, “So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh” (Isa.66:22-24).

The Lord Jesus Himself applies that text to the Final Judgement:

“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched — “where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— “where ‘Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—“where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched’” (Mk.9:43-48).

Yes, there will be a separation of good and evil in “The Restoration of All Things”. For there will be no place for evil in the new heavens and new earth. “*But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life*” (Rev.21:27).

The fourth vital aspect of “The Restoration of All Things” will be

4. The Abiding Presence of God

“They shall see His face” (Rev.22:4a).

The greatest and most devastating effect of sin is separation from God. We see it in its ultimate form in the Lord Jesus Christ's agonised cry from the cross: "*My God, why have you forsaken Me?*"; and in 2 Thess.1:7-9, we read about "*them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting **destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power...***"

This began in Eden after the Fall into sin. There we read, in Gen.3:8-10:

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and **Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God** among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself".

Previously, they had known the complete, unfettered fullness of God's presence, but the Word says that they had to hide themselves "*from the presence of the Lord God*". Shortly after that, God banished them from the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:24). The unity between God and humanity was broken, awaiting "The Restoration of All Things". For in "The Restoration of All Things" the presence of God will be restored. This is shown in four ways here in chapter 22 of the Book of Revelation:

a) The Presence of God is Seen in the River of the Water of Life

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev.22:1).

We will be partakers in the life of God. This was foreshadowed in Zec.14:8: "*And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem...*". It was foreshadowed also in Ezekiel 47:1-12, where we see water symbolically flowing from the threshold of the temple.

It is clear that John is applying these texts in the Book of Revelation to a completely New Universe, rather than some kingdom on earth issuing from earthly Jerusalem. When it says in Zec.14 that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem it cannot possibly be talking about earthly Jerusalem. The Lord very pointedly completely destroyed that in AD70 and its days were numbered as the Old Covenant gave way to the New. The use of the term "Jerusalem" in chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation refers to the Church Triumphant—the Church in glory—made of Jews and Gentiles. "*Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*" (Rev.21:2). And again in Rev.21:9-11:

"One of the seven angels said, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife". And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God".

That has always been the end which is in view. The Jerusalem of old in ancient Israel was but a symbol of the true spiritual glory which was to come. To revel in an earthly Jerusalem is to go backwards in redemptive history. [We will speak more about this in our concluding section].

So the restored presence of God in the holy city—spiritually understood—can be seen in the water of life in Rev.22:1. Secondly,

b) The Presence of God is Seen in the Presence of the Tree of Life

Rev.22:2: "In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month".

The corresponding text in Genesis 3 is in v.24:

“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life”.

Yet, in “The Restoration of All Things”, the tree of life is once more in place. Before, in Eden after the Fall, the way to it had to be barred by an angelic army lest evil people should attempt to attain immortality illicitly. Paradise lost. Paradise restored. Eternal life now guaranteed without interruption. So the restored presence of God in the holy city can be seen in the presence of the tree of life. Thirdly,

c) The Presence of God is Seen in the Presence of the Throne of God in the City

Rev.22:3: “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it”.

No longer is it in a distant heaven, but it is right in the midst of the people of God. This is truly “The Restoration of All Things”. Fourthly,

d) The Presence of God is Seen in the sight of His face

Rev.22:4: “They shall see His face”.

When Moses asked the Lord to show him His glory, He said:

“You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; **but My face shall not be seen**” (Exod.33:20-23).

So when John says: “*They shall see His face*”, this is so significant. Truly, “The Restoration of All Things” has come when we can see His face and live—that seeing His face, a symbol of the complete fullness of His glory—will be our life.

So that is the fourth vital aspect of “The Restoration of All Things”: The abiding presence of God in those above four senses.

The fifth vital aspect of “The Restoration of All Things” will be

5. Our Abiding Knowledge of God

Rev.22:5a: “There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light”.

Rev.21:23: “The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light”.

Our knowledge will be perfected. We will be full of wisdom and comfort, continually walking in the light of the Lord; and this not for a time, but for ever and ever. God in Christ will be an everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy to the saints in heaven. Paul prayed for the church at Colosse like this:

“that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col.2:2-3).

Such knowledge was always desired by the apostles for the churches. He says “*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*”. They were hidden then, as they are hidden now—although the devout soul would receive much, even though much is presently hidden. They are especially hidden from those who are wise in their own eyes. But this hidden treasure of

wisdom and knowledge doesn't remain bottled up in the Godhead, as it were. Much can be revealed to those who recognise themselves as spiritually-ignorant babes, and who hunger and thirst for those treasures to be revealed to them. But we remain in much ignorance by necessity because, frankly, we couldn't take it!

But in "The Restoration of All Things", the light and knowledge of the Lord will be open to all. Such knowledge has always been vital for us in this present less luminous phase of "The Restoration of All Things". As Paul added: "*Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words*" (Col.2:4). A knowledge of God and the light of Christ in His word has been the greatest antidote to deception in this evil age. But in the fullness of "The Restoration of All Things" there will be no more deception—only perfect knowledge. Our abiding knowledge of God will be a vital aspect of "The Restoration of All Things".

The sixth vital aspect of "The Restoration of All Things" will be

6. Our Eternal Reign with God

"They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev.22:5).

This is a designation with which some may not be familiar. But the fact that the saints are set to reign with Christ is another vital aspect of "The Restoration of All Things". At one stage, Peter said to the Lord Jesus Christ: "*See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?*" And Jesus said to the disciples:

"Assuredly I say to you, that **in the regeneration**, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt.19:27-28).

"*In the regeneration*" can only mean one thing: **When all things have been restored**. And, indeed, it's not only the immediate disciples of Christ who reign like this but it is also the destiny of every faithful believer. As Paul put it:

"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor.6:2-3).

Wow! That is our destiny! And that idea of enduring all for Christ and then receiving the reward of reigning with Him is a massive New Testament teaching. As the Lord said to the lukewarm church at Laodicea:

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev.3:21).

Although this is an essential New Testament teaching, there is more than a glimmer of it in a prophecy in the Old Testament.

"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and **the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom**" (Dan.7:21-22).

In fact, this idea of us reigning with Christ is also an integral part of the classic "millennial" text in the Bible:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ

for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev.20:4-6)

In Revelation 20, verses 1-6 speak of this one thousand year period about which so many have become fixated in a very literal sense. We’ve already looked at vv.1-3 in the previous session. Verses 1-3 describe what happens **on earth** during this symbolic time-period of 1000 years — the Gospel Age; while verses 4-6 depict what happens **in heaven** during the Gospel Age.

What we are being shown here is that — regardless of whether we are killed for the faith — we will reign with Christ. As Paul told the young pastor Timothy: *“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him”* (2 Tim.2:11-12). Of course, the awful parallel reality in the next words to Timothy is that *“If we deny Him, He also will deny us”*. But reigning with Christ is our destiny.

We’re not speaking about some interim kingdom on earth here, like Satan’s pretended New World Order under the Antichrist or a literal one thousand year kingdom on earth under Christ. This is the real thing—an eternal, new heavens and new earth. **We will be reigning as kings over God’s new creation—even reigning over the angels!**

Well that concludes our look at the vital aspects of “The Restoration of All Things”. At the return of Christ in the Second Coming to ring in “The Restoration of All Things”, there can be no room whatsoever for any interim earthly kingdoms of Christ. As we have shown, “The Restoration of All Things” involves the rebellion of the nations being brought to an end; the removal of the curse on the earth and on humanity; the eternal separation of good and evil; the abiding presence of God; an abiding knowledge of God, and our eternal reign with Him.

Now we come to our final section, which asks the question:

V. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CHURCH IN THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS?

We can discover that by looking at the descriptions of the perfected Church in glory. We are dealing with symbols again, which tell us a great deal. That’s the purpose of symbols—to convey information at a richer level than is possible with mere literalism. Unless we get to grips with biblical symbolism we will forever be confused. Unless we put aside our fear of not taking every word in the Bible literally we will never move forward in our understanding of the Scriptures. In fact, to take **every** word in the Bible literally will leave us ignorant and very often arrogant too. What I call “dumb literalism” is the scourge of the Church today.

Interpreting such symbols isn’t an arbitrary thing. It is actually common sense. When we are called sheep and Christ is called our Shepherd, we don’t panic at the thought of being theological liberals if we see those things as symbols. So it should be with all the other very obvious symbols: beasts, dragons, chains, one thousand years, and so on. We have to recognise symbols where they are used and interpret them in accordance with the context and the entire tenor of Scripture. So what are the primary symbols of the Church in the Book of Revelation? Here are the two most relevant texts:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev.21:1-2)

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and

showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Rev.21:9-11).

There is a double description here of the people of God as the bride—the Lamb’s wife—and the New Jerusalem. Let’s look at both of these:

a) The Bride of the Lamb

In the Old Testament, Israel was frequently spoken of as the wife of the Lord, her husband. The book of Hosea was built around this idea. Hosea had to go and marry a prostitute to symbolise God’s love for His wayward people. The idea is reiterated in the New Testament—not only here in Rev.21 but also in Eph.5:25-32 where, after telling husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her, he says:

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church”.

This idea of Christ perfecting the Church—made up of believing Jews and Gentiles—by taking her to Himself as His bride when He returns is foundational to New Testament teaching on “The Restoration of All Things”. It is **not** the case that the Church is being perfected here on earth so that she can be presented to Christ as the perfect bride on His return. Have you heard that one? It’s like Christ can’t return until the Church is perfect for Him. Very strange. For the Church will never be cleansed this side of the coming of Christ. The purpose of the coming of Christ is to cleanse the universe and to perfect the Church, so that there will no longer be a visible, nominal church but only the body of Christ glorified in heaven for eternity.

Actually, as a matter of great interest, it is worth noting here that we are not only being prepared for this glory in the future but there is also a little sense in which we are already glorified—although we have to understand this correctly. Paul says: “*Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified*” (Rom.8:30). Now the truly amazing thing in this verse is that the same past tense is used in the Greek in all the verbs here: predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Not only are believers predestined to salvation, called by God, justified—made righteous—by God, but they are also glorified by Him. In Rom.8:18, Paul has already declared that glory to be future: “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which **shall** be revealed in us*”. Yet, just twelve verses later he speaks of that glorification of believers as having **already** been accomplished. How come? It is because, in the mind and eye of God, it is **already** accomplished. Our future glory is a certainty. He is God and there is none like Him, “*declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done*” (Isa.46:10). Because of that mighty fact, this is an inheritance that *unquestionably* awaits us. Already, the power and eternal effects of sin—that judgement given by God on all human creatures—has been broken in those who are the children of God.

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col.2:13-14).

This is what happens in the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”: The renewal of the believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The true Church—the body of Christ—is being prepared to be the bride of Christ. That perfecting begins with the indwelling Holy Spirit but it is not finally accomplished until the resurrection. It is not the **visible** church which is the bride of Christ. That is mainly an impostor church filled with tares who will be revealed as such at the coming of Christ. It is the body of Christ—all true believers—who is His bride and who will partake in His glory.

Alongside of this idea of the Church as the bride of Christ is the Church in another symbol as

b) The New or Holy Jerusalem.

This is a very fitting conclusion to a paper on the subject of “The Restoration of All Things”. Remember our texts in Rev.21?

- 1) “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”.
- 2) “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God”.

We see here that the New Jerusalem and the Bride of the Lamb are really one and the same thing; but they portray different aspects of the Lord’s people. The Bride portrays the nature of the Church’s relationship with God; the New Jerusalem portrays the historical movement of that relationship, for it has never been static. There is a historical process to redemption—a fact sadly ignored or misunderstood by so many.

The Hebrew word Jerusalem means “the foundation of peace”. In redemptive terms, peace is not merely the space between two wars, as it is for the world. **Peace is what exists when God and Man are reconciled.** It is the goal of redemptive history. That is why the messianic hope was for the “*Prince of Peace*” to come (Isa.9:6). And in Him, it **has** come! “*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom.5:1). Christ came to bring peace—obviously, not before His Second Coming; but after that, there will indeed be peace.

So the whole idea of Jerusalem is absolutely wrapped up in the historical progress of redemption. To make the idea of Jerusalem remain merely as an earthly city ruling over earthly territory is to deny the flow of redemptive history. In fact, there have been three phases of Jerusalem from the point of view of the progressive revelation of the plan of God as shown in Scripture:

- **In Phase 1**, Jerusalem was the chief city of Canaan under the Jebusites, then under David the capital of the united kingdom and subsequently the chief city of the nation of Judah after the split.
- **In Phase 2**, after the Messiah had come, Jerusalem came to represent the New Testament Church in its broadest aspect. Paul speaks of this most eloquently in symbolic terms in Gal.4:22-26:

“it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — but **the Jerusalem above** is free, which is the mother of us all”.

Hagar symbolically represents the mindset of the Jews, who continue to disbelieve in Christ and adhere to the Mosaic covenant, thus being still in bondage along with their children. But the image of Sarah prefigures the Jerusalem which is “above”, representing the mindset of the followers of Christ under the New (and better) Covenant, which is free both from the curse and bondage of the Old Covenant law. This New Covenant is said by Paul to be “*the mother of us all*” and into which all, both Jews and Gentiles, are admitted when they believe in Christ. (Remember that Paul was

writing to the Galatians because of a division caused by the ‘judaisers’ who had sneaked into the Church in order to undermine the New Covenant—just as they are doing today).

So Phase 2 of the movement of Jerusalem in redemptive history represents the New Testament Church in its broadest aspect.

➤ **In Phase 3**, Jerusalem symbolises the perfected Church Triumphant in glory:

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God” (Rev.3:12).

Whereas **earthly** Jerusalem was the centrepiece of redemptive activity in the Old Testament, **spiritual** Jerusalem is the centrepiece of redemptive activity in the New Testament. Thus, “The Restoration of All Things” brings the idea of Jerusalem to its highest perfection.

There is no point whatsoever in expecting earthly Jerusalem to provide the source of divine power and the throne of Christ today. If ever there has been a waste of the Christian’s energy it has been a belief in that! Redemptive history has a movement to it—more than a movement, an enlargement. Far too many people want to prevent the movement of that history and hinder its enlargement—which is precisely what happens when we try and drag the Church back into Old Covenant times.

Just a few final words now about the symbolic descriptions of the perfected city/Church, for they are stunning.

1) *The New Jerusalem is Pictured with Symmetry*

“Its length, breadth, and height are equal” (Rev.21:13,16).

Borrowing the theme from the symmetrical dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament, where the inner sanctuary was also of equal length, breadth and height (1 Kings 6:20), this symbolises the absolute perfection of the Church in glory.

2) *The New Jerusalem is Immensely Precious*

“The construction of its wall was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass” (Rev.21:18-21).

Here we see the vast amount of precious stones and gold involved in the description of the New Jerusalem, the Church of God. It was one of the great promises to the faithful, afflicted people of the Lord:

“O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones” (Isa.54:11-12).

One would have to be particularly earthbound to see those jewels in either the prophecy of Isaiah or the Book of Revelation as literal gemstones rather than the spiritual blessings which they plainly must be. When John had a vision of the throne of God in heaven, he says that “*He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance*” (Rev.4:3). If jasper is being used there as a symbol of God Himself and all His perfections, then the construction of the wall in Rev.21:18-21 shows that the security of the New Jerusalem comes from God Himself.

3) *The New Jerusalem is the fulfilment of both Old and New Testaments*

What we need to realize is that the New Jerusalem is the fulfilment of both Old and New Testaments. Listen to this Scripture:

“[The great city, the holy Jerusalem] had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev.21:12-14).

This gives us the composite and realistic view of the true Church: the twelve tribes of Israel provide the gates, the apostles provide the foundation. One has to understand the Church aright. There are two extreme views. At one end of the spectrum, we have the view that Old Testament Israel is completely where it's really at while the Church is just a parenthetical development—a temporary sideshow, God's “Plan B”—before Old Testament Israel is restored and brought to its proper glory in the country of old, centred on earthly Jerusalem. At the other end of the spectrum, we have the view that the Church has completely replaced Old Testament Israel as another entity altogether.

Both these views are wrong. Old Testament Israel was a physical nation which God began to deal with on earth. Wrapped up in that was the body of true believers which was not synonymous with the entire nation of Israel. It was always God's ultimate intention that His people would be a wholly believing people, and out of that earthly nation Israel came a people who would embrace the Messiah. The minority of Old Testament Israel were the faithful ones who were the foundation of the Church, the next phase in the idea of Jerusalem. This is progressive revelation in action.

The understanding which we need to have in order to dissolve any wrong-headed notions about Israel today is that the restoration of Israel and all the texts about that event in the Old Testament found its fulfilment in the Jews of Christ's time who came to faith in Him. That was where the real restoration of Israel began, as Israel underwent its divinely-appointed transformation into the Church which it was always meant to become.

So we can see from Rev.21:12-14 that the twelve Old Testament tribes provided a gateway towards the Church—a preparatory phase for the New Covenant. That era served its purpose until the time that a better covenant came into being. Then, out of the twelve tribes came the twelve apostles who then provided the foundation of the Church. It is not the other way round and never can be. Although the New Jerusalem is built on the foundations of the twelve Apostles, the names of the twelve tribes are not forgotten. But they are not, and never can be, the foundation of the Church.

Most important of all, we see here that it is not that the Church *replaces* Old Testament Israel so much as the Church is the extension and natural outgrowth of Old Testament Israel. It was the next phase in God's plan—not a parenthesis, not an afterthought, not a sideshow and definitely not God's “Plan B”. The redemptive plan of God moves on, progresses; and who are we to reverse that mighty process? The Church—the New Jerusalem; the bride of the Lamb—was where Old Testament Israel was always heading in the movement from earthly symbol to spiritual reality. There cannot be a return to the old order of things. Earth is earthly. Heaven is heavenly. Glory is glory.

EPILOGUE

So do we now have an overview of “The Restoration of All Things”? Although I have said it is in two phases, in reality those two phases are one grand overarching movement through space, time and history linked by the two comings of Christ.

He came to deliver the message of truth, then He went away for a time providing us with a delay in judgement while His message was taken by His servants throughout the world. As the parable says: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return” (Lk.19:12). Well we are now living in the time while he is in that “far country”. Heaven must receive Him until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Our duty is to speak of these things to others in such a way that their expectations are not based on earthly falsehoods but on heavenly truths.

Amen.

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