

36. From Tribulation to Triumph

As the drama of history reaches its climax upon earth, what momentous preparations will be going on in heaven?

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which stands for the children of thy people." Daniel 12:1.

As events on earth move inexorably toward the final crisis, Heaven also is preparing for decisive intervention. At the precise time when the king of the north comes to his end at the hands of the combined forces arrayed against him, Michael, the great Prince-that is Christ -arises to play His part.

When Jesus ascended He sat down at the right hand of the Father "till His enemies be made His footstool." Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 10:13. Now that the final defeat of the forces of unrighteousness is imminent, He "stands up" to assume His rightful authority. (Compare Daniel 11:2-4)

The standing up of Christ has also a further significance. As we have before noted, He has through the ages been continuously occupied in the heavenly sanctuary, pleading the merits of His blood on behalf of the responsive of heart. The "standing up" of Christ, therefore, must also mark the close of that intercessory ministry, when He lays aside His priestly garments to array Himself in the robes of kingship.

The point of time brought to view in this verse is, therefore, a momentous one indeed. How near it is we cannot tell, but the fact that the earthly crisis which is to be the signal for these momentous heavenly happenings seems imminent must surely urge all to seek cleansing from the last trace of sin, so that when the divine Advocate ends His intercessory ministry and comes forth as judge and King, we may be among those who are "accepted in the Beloved."

With what fearful epoch will history close?

"And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Daniel 12: 1.

Between the "standing up" of Michael or Christ and His actual appearing comes the most fearful period in the whole history of Satan's rebellion, "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time!"

The reason is not far to seek. Probation has closed. The wicked, no longer restrained by the Spirit of God, are driven to their final desperate acts. And at the same time the seven vials of divine wrath are being poured out one after another upon a lost world. (See Revelation 16)

Who only will be delivered out of that terrible time?

"And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12: 1.

While the day of the Lord will be a day of terror to the rejectors of God, for those whose names are "written in the book" it will be the great day of deliverance and triumph. The great question, therefore, which all should be asking as the day of God draws on is, "Is my name written there?" It will be if we accept the merits of the shed blood of Christ and claim Jesus now as our "Prince and Savior."

As the living wicked are destroyed and the living righteous are delivered by the returning Christ, what awakening will come to the dead?

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2.

When Christ returns not only the living but the dead also will be profoundly affected by His presence. The Bible does not teach, as the Spiritualists suggest, that the spirits of the dead live on around us in some kind of ethereal existence. Nor does it teach, as Rome would have us believe, that they have a conscious existence in a remedial "purgatory" where they are prepared for admission to heaven. The Bible consistently declares that the dead are "asleep," unconscious of anything in earth or heaven, and that not until Jesus comes with the "keys of hell [the gravel and of death]" (Revelation 1:18), will they "awake" out of their sleep.

In this passage Daniel refers to the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked as if it were one event (compare also John 5:25-29). But in the twentieth chapter of his prophecy, John the Revelator reveals the fact that these two resurrections will actually be separated by a period of one thousand years, commonly known as the millennium. The resurrection of the righteous, which he calls the "first" resurrection, will

occur at the beginning of the millennium, while the resurrection of the wicked does not take place until its end. The relation between these resurrections we shall discuss more fully in due course.

What glorious reward will be granted to the saints?

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:1

How often down the ages the Gospel of salvation has been characterized as "foolishness" by those who are wise in their own conceits. "The preaching of the cross," was so regarded by the ancient Greeks (1 Corinthians 1: 18), and it is similarly thought of by many modern "Greeks," too. It is foolish, according to them, to credulously accept the Bible as the Word of God. It is foolish to imagine that there is merit for us in the shed blood of Christ. It is foolish to regard the Ten Commandments given to the Israelites millenniums ago as the standard of conduct for man in our enlightened times.

In the day of God, however, the real values will be manifested. The wisdom of the world will then be seen to be foolishness, while the "foolishness" of God will be seen to be true wisdom, and they who have followed it the truly "wise." The light of the worldly wise will go out in darkness, but those who have sought after and found the wisdom of God will shine forth as stars for ever.