

Rev. 21:4. Coming of the Perfect--departure of the Imperfect

by Horatius Bonar

The former things are passed away, and a new heaven and a new earth will be revealed, where righteousness and holiness will dwell.

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17, Matthew 5:5, Romans 6:4, Romans 8:21, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 3:21, Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Hope in Christ", "Renewal and Restoration"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the transformative promise of Revelation 21:4, where the former things of pain, sin, and decay will pass away with the coming of the perfect. He explains that our current earthly existence, marked by suffering and mortality, is temporary, and that through spiritual rebirth, we will experience a new creation free from evil and sorrow. Bonar reassures that not only will our bodies and souls be renewed, but the earth itself will be restored to a state of righteousness and beauty, free from the curse of sin. He concludes with a call to readiness for the imminent return of Christ, urging believers to prepare for the glorious future that awaits them.

Transcript

"The former things are passed away."--Revelation 21:4.

'The things which are seen are temporal,' says the Apostle Paul; and again he says, 'Old things are passed away;' and again, 'The fashion of this world is passing away.' These are words that suit us well in our changeableness, and vanity, and mortality. It would not be well for us, if our present earthly condition were immovable and eternal. Fading and dying, and then entering on the possession of an unchanging life--this is surely far better than a 'prolonged mortality of pain and weakness' like that which we have here and now.

The words do not teach annihilation of any kind--of man or matter. When one is renewed of the Spirit, there is a new creation--old things pass away, all things become new, yet the man's identity is unchanged. He is the same individual, and yet a new man. So is it here. Former things pass away, all things are made new--yet all are in the truest sense the same--the same, only without the sin, and the evil, and the pain, and the decay.

These former things are many--great and small, material and spiritual--all of them more or less connected with earth and man. Note some of these:

I. The former things connected with the BODY have passed away. Our bodies shared the ruin into which sin brought our race. Mortality and corruption took possession of them. They became subject to pain, and weariness, and disease--in every organ and limb. The one drop of poison coming from Adam's sin has spread itself out and pervaded every part of us. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. We begin with pain--and we end with it. Our flesh, from the cradle to the tomb, is feeble, broken, ready to faint--the cause and the inlet of a thousand sorrows. It is truly an 'earthly house,' a frail tent, in which we groan, being burdened; a 'vile body,' needing such perpetual care, and food, and medicine, and rest--yet, after all, incapable of being preserved; the seat of a daily warfare between life and death; in spite of all our pamperings, hastening on to the sick-bed and the separation from its guest, the soul.

All this shall yet be reversed. Former things shall pass away. This head shall ache no more; these hands and feet shall be weary no more; this flesh shall throb with anguish no more. 'God Himself shall wipe away all tears from these eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither, sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away.' 'He will take these vile bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like His own!'

He who once hung upon the cross, but now sits upon the throne, says, 'Behold, I make all things new.' 'This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and death be swallowed in victory!'

II. The former things connected with the SOUL have passed away. The beginning of this renovation was our 'being begotten again into a living hope.' This rebirth displaced the old things and introduced the new. The sin, and the darkness, and the misery, and the unbelief, and the distance from God--all these shall come to a final end. In their place shall come holiness, and love, and light, and joy, and everlasting nearness--unchanging and unending fellowship with that Jehovah in whom is life eternal. Every fragment of evil shall be expelled from our souls--and we shall then know what perfection is--perfection according to the mind and after the image of God--perfection without a flaw, or taint, or shadow--perfection without the possibility of reversal or diminishing. From our heart, from our conscience, our intellect, our feelings, our affections, from every part of our spiritual being--shall all evil depart. 'Former things shall pass away.' We shall be holy as God is holy; we shall be perfect as He is perfect; we shall be children of the light and of the day in the fullest sense--no trace of remaining sin in any part of us. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is! We shall be changed into His image from glory to glory! He who is righteous shall be righteous still; he who is holy shall be holy still.

III. The former things connected with the EARTH have passed away. Since man fell, this earth is the seat of evil. The curse came down on it--creation was subjected to the bondage of corruption--Satan took possession of it. It has been overshadowed with sin, overspread with misery. Its air full of sighs and groans--its soil made up of decomposed bodies--its cities the centers of ungodliness and rebellion--its thrones the fountainheads of misrule--God disowned--Christ rejected both in State and Church--the Bible despised--the gospel mocked--blasphemy resounding on all sides--evil everywhere!

These are the former things which shall pass away. Satan shall be bound, and his angels traverse earth no more. The devouring lion shall be in chains, and 'no lion shall be there.' The curse shall vanish from creation; the blight disappear. Beauty shall clothe all things. Paradise shall return. Holiness shall revisit earth. God shall once more delight in it and set His throne in it. The second Adam shall be its Lord and

Ruler. His scepter shall supersede the oppressive scepter under which the race has groaned from Nimrod downwards. Righteousness shall flourish, and holiness to the Lord be inscribed everywhere. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the lamb. The meek shall inherit the earth--and the glory of the Lord shall shine over all its skies. There shall be the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

And all this irreversible! No second fall. No second overflow of evil. No failure on the part of the righteous King. No waxing old; no ruin; no decay; no return of disease and death. All is everlasting! Messiah--even He who died for us and who rose again--is on the throne, and no usurper can assail it! He ever lives and ever reigns!

Blessed consummation and hope! It draws nearer and nearer. Soon shall 'time' no longer be. Soon shall this present evil world give place to the glorious world to come. Our king is coming! He will not tarry. Our Bridegroom is at hand! He is not slack concerning His promise. In an hour when we do not think, He will arrive. Are we ready? Is the oil in our vessels? Have we put on the garments of beauty? Are we preparing to bid Him welcome? 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him!

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