

THE CHANGED HEAVEN AND EARTH

"Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." – Heb. 1:10-12.

THESE words are a quotation by the Apostle from Psalm 102:25,26. They are used to attest the fact that God had foreordained that our Lord Jesus should be very great – should be superior to all change. We quite agree with the Apostle's argument in our text and its context. However, a question arises in the minds of some as to how this declaration agrees with some Scriptural statements to the effect that the earth abideth forever, etc.

We have already shown in DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. I, and elsewhere, that the words "heaven" and "earth" are used in a figurative and symbolical sense in the Scriptures, as well as literally. We have shown that as symbols they represent the present order of things, which is to pass away and give place to a new order of things. We have shown that this is the sense of the Apostle Peter's argument when he speaks of the world that now is and the present heavens and earth, which are to pass away with a great noise (2 Pet. 3:10), and to be supplanted by the new heavens and new earth. As already shown, we understand that our physical earth has been the basis for "the world that was," "the present evil world," and "the world to come," and that the word "world," even in this instance, signifies the order of things that was, the order of things that is, and the order of things to come. The figure is carried out in detail by speaking of it as a heaven and earth, because the word "earth" is used to represent

the earthly systems, social and political, while the word "heaven" is used to represent the higher, the ecclesiastical, the spiritual things connected therewith. Thus, the heaven and earth which were before the flood perished, disappeared; not the literal heaven nor the literal earth, but the symbolical or figurative. That social order, or earth, that prevailed before the flood passed away, and at the same time there passed also the spiritual or superior rule of the angels which was connected with that epoch which preceded the flood. After the flood, a new order of things was instituted; society was reorganized under new conditions, but on the same physical earth, and a new spiritual government or rule or order obtained also. It is this symbolic heaven and earth that was organized after the flood which is to pass away with a great noise at the second coming of our Lord – not the physical earth nor the physical heaven. Similarly we understand the Apostle, "We look for a new heaven and a new earth," to refer not to some other planet, but to this same one, and to imply a new social order of things and a new ecclesiastical order or rule.

In view of these things, we feel justified in interpreting the words of our text in harmony with the other Scriptures referring to the changes of dispensation which are foretold to be coming to the world.

Hence, while agreeing with the Apostle's argument that our Lord Jesus was the Father's active agent in the creation of the physical earth and physical heaven, we understand the real thought to be that with him there will be no change, but with his creation, there will be change – not as respects the matter and form of the earth, but in respect to its highest interest, its social and religious order. To elaborate the statement further: The order which our Lord originally established in the world was right and proper – the Divine order. As for the earth, Adam was its king, created in the image and likeness of his Creator and given dominion over the beast of the field, the fowl of the heaven and

the fish of the sea. As for the spiritual heavens, they recognized the supremacy of the Almighty and that his will must be law to mankind. This beautiful arrangement originally established by our Lord was changed twice by sin, until today we have what is known as "This Present Evil World," in which neither the heavens nor the earthly ideals, regulations and arrangements, are in harmony with the original, but on the contrary, are quite unfit and ready for dissolution. They are about to be folded up and to be changed. They need a change, not because of any imperfection in the original arrangement, but because it was departed from through sin, disobedience and the penalty death. The new heaven and earth which the Lord will establish by his Millennial Kingdom reign will be the original [R4223 : page 246] restored. The law of love will then prevail amongst perfect men, and a direct responsibility will be realized to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and to the Lord Jesus, who not only was the Father's prime minister and agent in creation, but who during the next age will be the Father's prime minister and agent in bringing all things back to their primeval condition with added splendors.

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